1-1-1975

Rhode Island: Tradition of independence, 1636-1776.

James Vincent Gialanella

Follow this and additional works at: http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd

Part of the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation


This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.
RHODE ISLAND:
TRADITION OF INDEPENDENCE, 1636-1776

by
James Vincent Gialanella, Jr.

A Thesis
Presented to the Graduate Committee
of Lehigh University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in
History

Lehigh University
1976
This thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

(date)

(Professor in Charge)

(Chairman of Department)
## CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................. 1

Introduction ............................................................................... 3

**Chapter I** .............................................................................. 9  
Rhode Island: Challenge  
To Puritan Theocracy

**Chapter II** .......................................................................... 42  
Rhode Island: Struggle  
For Territorial Integrity

**Chapter III** .......................................................................... 94  
Rhode Island: Roots of Independence  
To Fruits of Opposition to Britain

Conclusion .................................................................................. 175

Bibliography .............................................................................. 185

Vita ............................................................................................ 201
ABSTRACT

As America enters its bicentennial celebration, American historians should be wary of the impulse to return to "nostalgic" or "heroic history" and a celebration of the American Revolution rather than an attempt to explain or understand it. This temptation may be averted if historians better appreciate the "uniqueness" of each colony's movement toward independence and avoid interpreting it simply as a national event.

As a case study, Rhode Island's "unique combination of characteristics" produced a response to the re-assertion of British authority which was "peculiar" to that colony. Specifically, Rhode Island's early history displayed a continual struggle by that colony for political and religious independence against its more powerful Puritan neighbors, who viewed the colony's religious deviations and political instability as a direct threat to the spirituality of their settlements, thus a threat to the very matrix of Puritan society. In addition to the Puritan apprehension of the influence of a colony of heretics to their theocracy, they were jealous and suspicious of the close relationship between the Rhode Islanders and the powerful Narragansett Indians.

Rhode Island's attempts to retain its sovereignty were impeded by the vague and conflicting colonial boundaries and charters of New England. The indecisiveness of the king and his royal commissions only served to accentuate the controversies.

Another factor in Rhode Island's early history is the rabid internal factionalism which remained a major element in its political life right through to the Revolution. The early feuding between William Arnold, Samuel Gorton and Roger Williams, the aversion of the authoritarian William Coddington toward the liberalism of Providence, the assemblymen
who "preferred the paternalism of Connecticut to the individualism of Rhode Island, the schemes of William Harris and others of the "proprietary party" of Providence to monopolize the original Providence purchase, and the Quaker sentiment which acquiesced to pro-Connecticut pressure to avoid "strife and retaliation" all increased Rhode Island's vulnerability to the encroachments of its neighbors.

Rhode Island's legacy of suspicion of external power continued into the eighteenth century. The colony resisted the admiralty jurisdiction of Boston and refused to be commanded by officers of other colonies during the inter-colonial wars. Because of its relative independence from British authority as a corporate colony, its dependence on the "triangular trade," and its past experience with encroachments by external powers, Rhode Islanders reacted more vigorously to the strict enforcement of the acts of trade and revenue and the reorganization of the admiralty courts in America. The factions within the colony during the 1760s and the 1770s demonstrate this point; all of them staunchly defended their chartered government which safeguarded their political patronage.

My study of Rhode Island's early history has prompted some general thoughts concerning the American Revolution. First, I have a stronger feeling of inevitability concerning the movement toward Independence. Second, the miscalculations by the British regarding the unlikelihood of colonial unity is better appreciated. Third, since we live in a time of rapid change, experiencing a kind of "future shock," I sincerely hope historians will not allow their commemoration of the events to suppress their comprehension of the American Revolution's origin and meaning.
INTRODUCTION

"The political development of each British American colony was molded by a number of local conditions which varied from colony to colony—owing to the different types of government; contrasting geographical features which resulted in economic and sectional differences; an assortment of religions...diverse customs and traditions; and a host of other factors. Rhode Island exhibited a unique combination of characteristics which produced the peculiar struggle described here, and an understanding of the peculiar struggle helps explain why Rhode Island left the Empire in 1776."

David S. Lovejoy in his Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760-1776.

The American Revolution, like all cataclysmic events of history, has fostered a variety of interpretations concerning its causes. The bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution will no doubt add to the plethora of viewpoints on the subject.

Initially, historians defined the Revolution in terms of the young, innocent, proud and growing republic. These "romantic or heroic" historians celebrated the Revolution with every stroke of their pens. Still influenced by the early New England chroniclers of our colonial period, George Bancroft saw "the footsteps of Providential Intelligence everywhere" in the conflict between the enlightened, egalitarian and visionary Americans and the oppressive, short-sighted British. Noble, humanitarian ideals moved the Americans. "They were rushing toward revolution... they were possessed by the truth, that man holds inherent and indefeasible
rights...the contest involved the introduction into political life of ideas which had long been hovering in the atmosphere of humanity."

Despite the "scientific" approach of later historians of the nineteenth century, and despite their diminution of the role of divine providence in bringing about the American Revolution, their "germ theory of politics," which praised the superior genius of Anglo-Saxon thought as expressed by Revolutionary leaders, still identified the Americans with enlightened ideals and constitutional principles.¹

Imperial historians began to question this view of the farsighted, egalitarian Americans fighting for freedom from the tyrannical British. They asserted that there were many adequate precedents for the Sugar Act of 1764 and for naval participation in the repression of contraband trade. Earlier historians had failed to look at the British Empire as a whole. The imperial historians pointed to the physical, social and political obstacles which naturally caused the colonies to "repel restraint" and made administration of the colonies an "incessant struggle," especially after the French and Indian War. They also probed the problems of statesmanship, placemanship and bureaucracy in London. Previous historians had seen Britain's actions as "usurpations" because the actions of the mother country were always "taken out of their historical setting."

Lawrence H. Gipson emphasized the natural, unavoidable strain in relations which resulted from the French and Indian War or, as he called it, "the Great War for the Empire." After that conflict, the divergent needs of

Britain and the colonies which existed prior to the war were magnified, and the preoccupation in defining their economic and political relationship became more acute.²

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Progressive influence affected many historians and their ideas concerning the roots of American independence. Self-interest, shaped by social and economic forces, replaced the focus on Revolutionary ideals and constitutional principles. In the 1920s and 1930s, this influence even led to the fashionable trend of "debunking," as many historians portrayed Revolutionary leaders as mere "puppets of economic and social forces." Historians also began to stress conflict, not between England and the colonies, but within the colonies themselves! "The American Revolution was a contest both for home rule and who should rule at home." Clashing economic interests and sectional, class antagonisms became the important, motivating forces toward Revolution.³


Many historians began to reject the Progressive approach to studying the American Revolution. The consensus historians of the 1950s stressed and celebrated what they perceived as the traditional strains of American thought and the uniqueness and influence of the American environment in the events leading to 1776. Later, historians examined the development of colonial institutions to find the road toward Independence. With the growth of colonial capitals as centers of authority, the pluralism and fluidity of colonial politics, and the development of competence in the areas of commerce and the professions, the colonies possessed by 1750 "virtually all the conditions necessary for self-governing states." 4

More recently, historiography concerning the causes of the American Revolution has come "full circle," with the emphasis again on the power of ideas as expressed in republicanism and constitutionalism. Entwined in this historiography is the neo-Whig emphasis on the fundamental principles of British liberal thought. To Bernard Bailyn and his students, the ideas were not rhetoric but real. The concepts concerning corruption, the corrosive and aggresive nature of power, and the necessity for a mixed government, as expressed in the writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, "ranked with the treatises of Locke." A wide acceptance of these concepts allowed isolated, detached British actions to appear interrelated, and all part of a conspiracy to subvert colonial liberty. 5


Although historians have attempted to ascertain general themes in their study of the causes of the American Revolution, those attempts should not de-emphasize the fact that the development of each British American colony "was molded by a number of local conditions which varied from colony to colony." Likewise, the development of Independence varied from colony to colony. In the case of Rhode Island, that colony exhibited "a unique combination of characteristics" which helps explain why it left the Empire. That unique combination of characteristics included an early struggle to retain its right to both freedom of conscience and territorial integrity, inseparable objectives given the religious and political matrix of the Puritan society from which the vast majority of Rhode Islanders fled, and an excessive amount of factionalism which the colony displayed throughout its history. 6

Many elements made the maintenance of Rhode Island's early independence difficult, principal among them being the Puritans of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The very existence of Rhode Island threatened seventeenth-century Puritan theocracy, and the Puritans made several attempts to destroy the independence of the colony that became a sanctuary for religious heretics. The friendly relations between the Rhode Islanders and the Narragansett Indians further angered Massachusetts and its allies in the Confederation of the United Colonies in New England. The conflicting colonial charters of the New England colonies, and the subsequent indecisive attempts of the crown to define the borders, resulted in numerous boundary disputes which threatened the precarious existence of Rhode

Island. The abundant flare-ups of internal factionalism assisted the colony's more powerful neighbors in their efforts to engulf Rhode Island's territory and destroy its sovereignty. Rhode Islanders quickly became aware of the necessity of continued vigilance against any encroachments from outside authorities.

That vigilance and suspicion continued into the eighteenth century. Rhode Island's militia consistently refused the leadership of any but native officers. The colony contested the military and admiralty jurisdiction of Boston at every turn. Rhode Island, the only corporate colony besides Connecticut, was relatively free from much of the supervision endured by royal or proprietary colonies. The colony was internally more liberal and politically fluid than its neighbors. Its legislature was in a state of constant flux, sometimes experiencing turnovers close to one-hundred percent in the house of assistants. The re-assertion of British authority brought a more widespread feeling of deprivation and deviation from what had been accepted as the normal, everyday state of affairs in the colony. The factionalism throughout the colony's history reveals something about its susceptibility to its more powerful neighbors, but it also will reveal something about Rhode Island's movement toward Revolution.7

The following paper will examine Rhode Island's early history, which involved its struggle for political and religious independence, its internal factionalism which many times hampered and intensified that struggle, and the influence of that struggle into the eighteenth century when the threat to the colony's political sovereignty came, not from Massachusetts or Connecticut, but from Great Britain.

7Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 2-4.
CHAPTER I
Rhode Island:
Challenge to Puritan Theocracy

"...he went into Rhode Island where he affronted what little government they had. These wicked Gortonists began to seize the lands of certain Indians...and sow discord among the English, and threaten all matter with bloody confusion. In the meantime, this crew of miscreants not only kept blowing up a flame of war between the English and the Indians, but also sent into the Bay one libel on top of another. Massachusetts could not in this extremity do God and the King better service than by 'going out of their line'...to lay hold of these malefactors as the enemies of mankind."

Cotton Mather's remarks concerning Samuel Gorton in his Ecclesiastical History of New England, Book VII.

Cotton Mather's remarks reflect the sentiments of Puritan New England toward Samuel Gorton in particular, and the religiously and politically radical Rhode Islanders in general. Mather's comments concerned the seizure of Samuel Gorton and his followers, an affair which included intrigue between a few Rhode Island settlers, the sachems of Shawomet and Pawtuxet, Chief Sachem of the Mohegans, and the Government of Massachusetts. This intrigue, which entailed interwoven threads of political rivalry, religious persecution, territorial claims, and Puritan hatred toward the Narragansett Indians, has been viewed by some historians as a "painful" and "unfortunate" chapter in the history of Massachusetts. In an effort to understand the actions of Massachusetts against the Gortonists and the response of the settlers of Rhode Island and Providence.
Plantations, we must first at the Antinomian controversy in Massachusetts seven years earlier. ¹

William Hutchinson and his wife Anne arrived in Boston during the first wave of Puritan migrations in 1634. Both achieved prominence in the community, William from being a well-to-do land owner in England, and Anne from being a midwife, an eminently useful person in a society which regarded a physician's presence at childbirth as indecent. Soon, Anne was delivering informal midweek commentaries on the previous Sunday's sermons which questioned the teachings of the clergy and their spirituality. After Mrs. Hutchinson gained the following of perhaps a majority of the Boston congregation, the conflict took on political as well as religious overtones. In 1636, the Antinomian party succeeded in replacing John Winthrop, the perennial incumbent, with Sir Henry Vane, one known to be sympathetic to the Hutchinson party. But the pendulum swung the following year. Winthrop was re-elected and those sympathetic to the Antinomian cause were dropped from political office. Tensions mounted and "there was great danger of a tumult that day." As days passed, the threatened clergy gained even more support from the surrounding towns, and the Antinomians were tried for heresy and sedition and promptly banished from the colony. ²


²Antinomians literally meant those "against the law." They were so named for their belief that Mosaic Law applied only to Adam's sinful descendants "prior to" the sacrifice of Christ. They believed in "direct
Samuel Gorton, a London clothier and son of a London merchant, left England "to enjoy liberty of conscience in respect to faith toward God." Gorton, his wife Mary and two or three children, arrived in Boston in 1637, during the height of the Antinomian controversy. Two months later, he was in Plymouth. Contemporaries John Cotton, Cotton Mather, and William Hubbard charged that Gorton left Boston to escape payment of a debt he owed in London. But "the courts were as open at Plymouth as at Boston and he might have been followed to Plymouth, yet he was not." It is much more probable that he left Boston because he sympathized with the Antinomians. Most contemporary and later historians either omit or deny Cotton's allegations.  

Inspiration" from God, while the Puritans believed the last men to experience direct inspiration were the Apostles. Hutchinson and her followers thought that the Covenant of Grace was not to be cheapened by what the Puritans felt was proof through a life of sanctification and good works. When the Antinomians charged the Boston clergy (except for John Cotton) with being "unregenerate," the political structure of Massachusetts, which was dependent upon conformity in religious matters, was also threatened. See Stow Persons, American Minds: A History of Ideas (N. Y., 1958), pp. 44-50; The sentiment that the challenge of Anne Hutchinson really "sowed sedition" is conveyed by many of the contemporary accounts. See Reverend William Hubbard (Ipswich minister), General History of New England (originally published in Boston, 1682), in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XV-XVI (Boston, 1848): 280-98; Reverend Edward Johnson, History of New England (originally published in 1654) in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XIII-XIV, especially XIV (Boston, 1814-1816); Johnson saw such activity as part of "The Devil's plan to divide and conquer." See also Winthrop's History, I: 239-77; Nathaniel Morton, (Secretary to the Court at New Plymouth), New England Memorial (originally published in 1669) ed. by The Congegational Board of Publication (Boston, 1855), pp. 133-6. 

3 Field, I: 57; Hubbard, p. 401; Arnold, I: 164; Winthrop, II: 70-1; Cotton Mather, The Ecclesiastical History of New England, from its First Planting in the Year 1620 unto the Year of Our Lord, 1698 (originally published in London, 1702), (N. Y., 1972), Book VII: 11-12; Although Mather claimed Gorton's debt was 100, Adelos Gorton asserts that papers in London, verified by Newport Town records, show that on June 18, 1635, Samuel Gorton was "released of all actions and claims of action, etc, from the beginning of the world to that date." See Adelos Gorton, The Life and
While at Plymouth, Gorton and his family boarded at the residence of Reverend Ralph Smith. Gorton apparently first expressed his beliefs consistently and openly at Plymouth. His views contrasted sharply with many opinions professed by the Separatists of Plymouth colony, especially those of Reverend Smith. When Gorton threatened to contaminate the members of the Smith household, the minister ordered Gorton to leave. But the boarder refused to go, claiming Smith had contracted a four year lease with him in return for housekeeping services. Smith went to court to annul the contract and eventually succeeded in ridding himself of Gorton when the latter was banished over the Ellin Aldridge episode.  

Although Gorton "gave some hope that he would have proved a useful instrument" to the settlers of Plymouth, after the open breach with Smith, they found him to be a "proud and pestilent seducer, deeply leavened with blasphemies." Soon after Gorton's disagreement with Smith, Gorton confronted the Plymouth colony magistracy over the Ellin Aldridge episode. The woman was seen "smiling in church" and was known to have made "offensive speeches." She was also Gorton's servant, and when the court ordered her to appear, Gorton and his wife hid the woman. Gorton then appeared

Times of Samuel Gorton (Philadelphia, 1907), pp. 11-15; The villification of Samuel Gorton has been attacked by many Rhode Island historians, such as Arnold, Staples and Callender, and even modified by some Massachusetts historians, such as Governor Hutchinson and Winthrop scholar, John Savage, who praised Gorton. Savage was convinced of the "uprightness of his character." See also footnote in sixth edition of Morton's Memorial, by the Congregational Board of Publication, pp. 138-9.

in court in place of the widow Aldridge and angered the elders with his conduct. For his "misdemeanor in the open court toward the elders, the Bench, and stirring up the people to mutiny in the face of the court," he was fined £20 and given fourteen days to leave the colony.⁵

In December of 1638, Samuel Gorton and his followers moved to the island of Aquedneck, a settlement of Antinomians who had earlier been banished from Massachusetts. The exiled Antinomians, "not knowing where they might sit down safely," petitioned Plymouth to allow them to settle in their jurisdiction. Although these Antinomians had their "errors and as great dislike as those from whence they came," the more tolerant Plymouth settlers still considered them "their countrymen and fellow subjects" and granted their request. When Gorton arrived at Aquedneck, he was initially welcomed, since he too had come to that settlement to exercise "soul liberty."⁶

Although they all agreed "not to trouble one another on account of religion...in other principal and fundamental points of civil power there was no small difference between them." The settlement soon split into two factions, one behind the elected judge, William Coddington, and the other behind Anne Hutchinson. Mrs. Hutchinson publically announced that "she and her party would have no magistrates." Gorton supported the

⁵There is agreement among all historians that Samuel Gorton was rarely overawed by authority. See Morton; Winslow; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, I (Boston, 1855): 100, 105-6; Ad Gorton claims that the action by the Plymouth court against Gorton was very unpopular, Life and Times, p. 18.

⁶Ibid; Morton, p. 134; Aquedneck was the island portion of the present state of Rhode Island, surrounded by the Narragansett Bay. Just south of the colony of Plymouth, Aquedneck was later divided into Portsmouth in the North and Newport to the South.
Hutchinson party, not because he was an anarchist as many contemporaries have charged, but because he believed that any government without the approval of the Crown of England was illegal. Finally, in April of 1639, Mrs. Hutchinson, inspired by a "revelation" during an earth tremor, led a coup d' état against Coddington, ousted him from the position of judge, and replaced him with her husband as the leader of the settlement. Realizing his defeat, Coddington and his followers traveled south and organized a "New Body Politic" at Newport, with himself elected as judge.  

Coddington immediately endeavored to extend his authority over the whole island. Throughout the winter of 1639-40, he negotiated with the "Brethren of Pocasset" to bring about a union under his leadership. Finally, in March of 1640, a majority of the Portsmouth settlers, Mrs. Hutchinson and friends of Gorton among them, agreed to reunion, and an election was held with William Coddington chosen as governor.

7 Hubbard, pp. 336-40; Gorton and his followers even refused to elect officers for their own settlement of Shawomet (Warwick) until their settlement was approved by a Royal Chatter in 1647. See "Warwick Records," in John Russell Bartlett, ed., Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, I (Providence, 1856): 129, and the "Portsmouth Town Records," in the same volume, pp. 70, 87; Although not labeled "judge," William Hutchinson's name replaced William Coddington's name at the top of the list of Aquedneck settlers on April 30, 1639. Also of interest is the first inclusion of Samuel Gorton and three other followers of his, namely John Wickes, Samuel Shatton and Robert Potter. See also Chapin's introduction to Winslow's Hypocrisie Unmasked.

8 Ibid; "Coddington's Deposition," in Elisha R. Potter, The Early History of Narragansett (Providence, 1825), p. 5; in the Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, II. Pocasset was another name for Portsmouth, the northern settlement of Aquedneck. Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II 93-101. The latter followers of Gorton that submitted to the union were Richard Carder, Randall Holden, and Stephen Shatton. It was possible that the reasons behind the eagerness of the Portsmouth group to join Newport were fear of Massachusetts and the possibility of an Indian war. Only through collective action could they hope to stay free from Puritan control.
Gorton refused to abide by the laws of the new government, even though he was an inhabitant of Portsmouth. It was not too long before an incident brought on by a cow again resulted in Gorton's appearance before a court. An elderly woman encroached upon Gorton's land to retrieve her cow which had eluded her. Once upon his land, a woman servant of Gorton's allegedly attacked the old woman, "tearing her hair," and "abusing her." The old woman reported the incident to Lieutenant Governor Nicholas Easton, who in turn ordered the servant to appear in court. As he had done in Plymouth, Gorton appeared instead. In the confrontation that followed, Gorton verbally attacked the magistrates, calling them "Just Asses" and charging Easton with "abetting of a riot," and he denied that Coddington and his government had any right to jurisdiction over him. Gorton raised such a commotion that he was ordered to prison. When the marshall attempted to take him, some of Gorton's followers, two of whom were John Wickes and Randall Holden, attempted to aid him in resisting. Gorton and his party cried that Coddington should be the one taken to prison. The situation was so out of hand that the governor himself had to rise and assist his officials in quelling the disturbance and carrying out the decision of the court. Wickes was put into the stocks, while Gorton was indicted upon fourteen counts. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to be whipped.  

9

9Winslow, Hypocrésie Unmasked, pp. 51-6. John Wickes (or Weeks) and his wife became followers of Gorton at Plymouth. He was later disarmed and disfranchised from the island of Aquedneck. Holden, one of the original purchasers of Providence with Roger Williams was a witness to Coddington's purchase of Aquedneck, was also disfranchised and disarmed, as were three other followers of Gorton: Sampson Shatton, Robert Potter, and Richard Garder. See Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 111-4; Hubbard, Winslow, Morton, Mather and Winthrop all stated that Gorton was whipped at Aquedneck. The only historian I have encountered who refutes this was William Staples. See Hubbard, p. 343; Morton, p. 136; Winthrop, II: 69-71;
The increase of Coddington's power in Portsmouth resulted in Gorton's decision to leave that settlement. His family, along with six or seven other families, journeyed to Providence, the settlement founded by Roger Williams and other Salem refugees in 1636. But Gorton was denied admission as an inhabitant unless he first renounced his actions at Portsmouth. Providence was already having enough problems with antagonistic factions within the community. Roger Williams wanted to get a charter for an independent colony. William Arnold, also an original purchaser of Providence, believed the only way to end the chaotic affairs of the settlement was by submitting to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. To many in Providence, this was certainly out of the question, since they faced punishment if they ever again entered the jurisdiction of the Bay colony. Williams' and Arnold's supporters squabbled as early as 1637 over the question of "liberty of conscience" and how it related to family authority. An Arnold supporter lost the right to vote by opposing Williams on this point. To make matters worse, Gorton added a third faction: those who would not abide by any law until buttressed by a charter. So while Arnold and Williams opposed each other, Gorton opposed both of them. Roger Williams wrote in desperation to John Winthrop that "all suck in his poison as at first they did at Aquedneck." Williams believed that Gorton and his followers were so "bemadding (sic) poor Providence" that he seriously considered moving to nearby Patience Island.

--

Footnotes:

One probable reason why Gorton was denied admittance as an inhabitant of the town was that William Arnold and some of his friends were the "disposers" of Providence. These "disposers" were five individuals elected to handle applications for settlement and to supervise and coordinate the division of land plots and town stocks for the settlers. This served only to accentuate the hostile attitude between Gorton and Arnold and their respective followers. 11

That hostility reached an impasse on November 15, 1641. As noted earlier, the government at Providence was chaotic, with many people seeking legal action against each other. To aid in solving these difficulties, arbitrators were chosen to settle these disputes. But in one particular case, arbitration by Arnold and Williams supporters resulted in violence. When they demanded that Francis Weston, an original purchaser of Providence, pay £15 in commodities, he refused. Weston had become a follower of Samuel Gorton and probably believed that the arbitrators had neither the right nor the power to exercise jurisdiction over him. Weston was warned as early as 1616 to "improve his ground" or pay a fine. 12

While the decision of the arbitrators was being tacked to a tree, Arnold gathered a group of his followers to go to Weston's house and

11 Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 28-9; Field, I: 34; Arnold, I: 74.

12 Weston was warned as early as 1616 to "improve his ground" or pay a fine, Ibid, p. 15, 27-31; "Complaint to Massachusetts," in Joshua Coffin, trans., Documents, Letters, Pertaining to Rhode Island, Transcribed from the Files of the General Court of Massachusetts, I (listed under "Massachusetts Manuscripts" in the Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence, R. I.): 1-6; Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 191-3.
demand compliance. Gorton and some friends discovered the plan and "quarrelled" with Arnold and his partisans "in the streets, and made a tumultuous hubbub." Some blood was spilled on both sides before the riot abated. Still determined, Arnold and his party proceeded to Weston's home to seize $15 worth of his cattle. While they were driving the cattle, Weston "came furiously running" and cried repeatedly for help. Soon, Randall Holden, John Greene and other Gortonists "came riotously running...and hurried away the cattle." After the rescue, the Gortonists threatened similar action if such an attempt was ever made again. 13

Roger Williams somehow "pacified" the two groups for the time being and averted any further immediate violence. But Arnold and his companions were not satisfied that Williams's temporary mediation would protect them from Gorton and his cohorts, who proved to be "the stronger party" when they "came armed into the field." Arnold believed that protection and redress could only be provided by turning to Massachusetts for aid. 14

Two days after the riot, Benedict Arnold, son of William, wrote a letter concerning the Gortonists to the government of Massachusetts, complaining about the "numberless number of their wrongdoing, taunts, assaults, and threats." Signed by twelve other Providence citizens, the petition implored Massachusetts to "consider our position, lend a helping hand and send us such assistance." The Bay Colony answered that unless the complainants submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of Plymouth or Massachusetts, they "had no calling or warrant to

13 Mass. MSS; Gorton, Symplicities Defense; Winthrop, II: 69-70.
14 Ibid.
interpose in their contentions." But, if they did submit to the jurisdic-
tion of Massachusetts, "they then had a calling to protect them."\textsuperscript{15}

The petitioners who lived in Providence had little chance of winning
approval from a majority of that town's settlers for submission to the
colony that had "banished" most of them. Arnold's only other solution
was to move away from Gorton and his followers, and he and a few others
decided to do just that. After they moved to nearby Pawtuxet, there
seemed no immediate need to accept the advice of Massachusetts, and the
Bay Colony "heard no more from them for a time."\textsuperscript{16}

But their freedom from the Gortonists was shortlived. Unwelcome in
Providence, Gorton and many of his friends followed Arnold and also
settled in the Pawtuxet area. This was the last straw for William
Arnold and his son. In September of 1642, their families, along with
the families of William Carpenter and Robert Coles, again wrote to Massa-
chusetts, and this time "offered themselves and their lands" to that
colony. The Puritans eagerly accepted this submission, and placed those
Pawtuxet settlers and their lands under their "government and protection."\textsuperscript{17}

The solution was a mutually beneficial one for the Pawtuxet settlers
and their neighbors to the North. Arnold now had the power to deal with
Gorton; and Massachusetts now had an excuse to come into the territory
and seize heretics and other dangerous elements. Since the escape of

\textsuperscript{15}Mass. MSS; Gorton, \textit{Symplicities Defense}; Winthrop; "Hutchison Papers," in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XX (Boston, 1846): 1-5.

\textsuperscript{16}Winthrop, II: 69-71; 210; Arnold, I: 174.

\textsuperscript{17}"The Gortonist Controversy," in the Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, (Providence, 1843): 46; Arnold, I: 111-2; Winthrop, II: 102; Hubbard, p. 344.
Roger Williams from Salem and his founding of Providence in 1636, the Puritans of Massachusetts saw Rhode Island as a source "from whence the infection would easily spread to these churches." The basic premise of people like Roger Williams, who believed in a separation of church and state, eroded the very foundation of Puritan society. Less than a year later, Rhode Island was denied membership in the United Colonies of New England, which had brought together Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth, and New Haven in mutual defense against the Indians. In addition to its desire to act against heretics, Massachusetts wanted more control over the Narragansett Indians in the Rhode Island area and an outlet into the Narragansett Bay.\(^\text{18}\)

After Arnold's submission to Massachusetts' jurisdiction, Gorton and his company felt it imperative to leave the Pawtuxet area to avoid Puritan rule and retribution for their religious beliefs. In January of 1642, the Gortonists purchased land from the Narragansett Indians at Shawomet, just ten miles south of Providence. The sale was made by Maintonomi, Chief Sachem of the Narragansett Nation, and also signed by Pumham and Aocononoco, petty sachems of Shawomet and Pawtuxet.\(^\text{19}\)

Arnold was angered by the sale of Indian lands to Gorton. The territory was still too close to his settlement to suit him, and he probably saw the purchase as a challenge to his influence over the Indians in that


\(^{19}\) Anne Hutchinson left Aquedneck after Arnold's submission because she feared she too would soon be under hostile jurisdiction. She was later killed during an Indian raid after she moved to Dutch territory in New York. See postscript by Staples in Gorton's *Simplicities Defense*, pp. 262-271, and for the Shawomet Deed see Document XIII: 253-4; Hubbard, footnote, p. 134.
area. Also, Gorton was no longer within the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, and Arnold could not count on that colony's assistance against his adversaries. To attain that assistance, Arnold had to bring Gorton and his companions again under the formal control of Massachusetts. He devised a plan to give the Bay Colony a semblance of control over the Shawomet lands, and to benefit his settlement at Pawtuxet. 20

As stated earlier, part of the "intrigue" regarding the seizure of Gorton and his followers in 1643 involved the suspicion and hatred that Massachusetts and the other New England colonies (except Rhode Island) harbored against the Narragansett Indians. "Their comparative strength and importance may have been in part the cause," but another reason for the injurious treatment these Indians received from the Puritans "arose, undoubtedly, from the aid and assistance they afforded to the heretical first settlers of the State of Rhode Island." In addition, the Narragansetts refused conversion, an "insuperable objection to the zealots [who] of course were very much offended." 21

20 Field, I: 64; Arnold I: 177; "Randall Holden to Massachusetts," Mass. MSS, III: ca. 20; Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 92-3; One does not have to look only to Gorton or Rhode Island historians for this reasoning behind Massachusetts' support of Arnold. One only has to refer to Winthrop himself who gave the purposes of the support to Arnold. Winthrop listed the reasons as gaining control over the Narragansetts, retarding the "offensive" character of the Gortonists against Arnold, and attaining an "outlet into the Narragansett Bay." Governor Winthrop believed the Arnold-Gorton confrontation offered Massachusetts a golden opportunity, and "thought it not wisdom to let it slip." See Winthrop, II: 102.

21 Staples in Gorton's Symplicities Defense, pp. 155-6; Potter, introduction, p. x; Conflicts and tensions were rare between the Rhode Islanders and the Narragansetts since many of the settlers believed deeply in liberty of conscience, and felt attempts at conversion or indoctrination "involved compromises with sin that eventually contaminated the elect." See Persons, pp. 50-62; For a more contemporary account of the "Praying Indians," see John Eliot's Account of the Number of Indian Churches in -21-
The Pequot War in 1636 also accentuated the mutual suspicions between the Narragansetts and the New England colonies. The Pequots were the most powerful Indian Nation in Connecticut and also controlled some tribes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The New England settlers had always been fearful of the Pequots' power and their warlike nature, but a terrible small-pox epidemic befell the Indians of New England in 1634 and greatly weakened them, especially the Pequots. When the Pequots began attacking settlements in Connecticut in the summer of 1636, the English felt strong enough to retaliate. But they first had to ascertain the disposition of the powerful Narragansett nation. Their assistance, or at least their neutrality, was a necessity. The Narragansetts were the arch-rivals of the Pequots and constantly at war with them. The Narragansetts had to decide whether or not to oblige the English. Of their decision, Nathaniel Morton stated:

"Insomuch that the Narragansetts were once wavering and were half-minded to have made peace with them (the Pequots) and join them against the English; but again, when they considered how much wrong they had received from the Pequots, and what an opportunity they had now, by helping the English to right themselves, revenge was so sweet to them...and so they resolved to join with the English against them..."22

New England, (originally published in 1673), in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, X (Boston, 1809); Daniel Gookin, Historical Collections of the Indians in New England (originally written in 1674), ed. by Jeffrey H. Fiske (Towtaid, Mass., 1970), also vol. I of the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections; In all fairness, it must also be pointed out that peaceful relations with the Narragansett Indians was a practical necessity for the Rhode Island settlers. Most of the time, guns and ammunition could only be purchased from Boston, and the "jealousy of the sister colony seldom allowed them to do it." See Potter, introduction.


-22-
During the war, the Puritans and the Narragansetts became further estranged. The English soldiers feared the Narragansetts would turn their backs on those they professed to be friends, and join with the Pequots. Commanders complained of the lack of cooperation from the Indian allies. When the combined forces of Connecticut and Massachusetts, numbering about eighty men, came upon the Pequot fort at Groton, Connecticut, half of the approximately five-hundred Narragansetts who came, left before the battle commenced. Those who remained "stood around aloof, from all danger," and waited outside the fort, allowing the English to carry the fight alone. The Narragansetts finally did get involved in the fight by helping to cut off the Pequot escape from their fortress after it had been transformed into a burning inferno by the English.

After the battle, Captain Underhill complained that his Indian guides had left his forces in a "distressed condition, not knowing which way to move out of the country," still in danger of a Pequot counter-attack. In light of the day's earlier events, the soldiers resented the later rescue of fifty Narragansetts, who had earlier fled from battle, from a Pequot

—23—

For two very good contemporary accounts of the Pequot War, see Captain Underhill, the Commander of the Connecticut forces, and his History of the Pequot War (originally published in London, 1638); and P. Vincent's History of the Pequot War (originally published in 1637), both in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XXVI (Boston, 1837): 1-28; 29-44; See also Morton, p. 128; Increase Mather, A Relation of the Troubles which have happened in New England by Reason of the Indians There From the Year 1614 to the Year 1675 (originally published in Boston, 1677), (N. Y., 1972): 27-58; John Tebbel, The Compact History of the Indian Wars (N. Y., 1966), pp. 17-21; George W. Manypenny, Our Indian Wards (N. Y., 1972), pp. 11-13; Sylvester, I: 183-339; To appreciate the fearful apprehension of the English, one had only to realize that they numbered up to about one-hundred men. They were attacking a force of approximately five or six-hundred Pequots, with the same amount of Narragansetts, of dubious loyalty, guiding them through hostile territory. Had the Narragansetts decided to warn or join the Pequots, all of the English in the expedition could have easily been slain.

-23-
ambush. This activity hampered the English efforts to track down the remaining Pequot warriors. Compared to the actions of the Narragansetts, fifty Mohegans under their sachem Unkas "behaved themselves stoutly."24

The behavior of the Narragansett Indians during the Pequot War was totally understandable and practical. These Indians, under the noble and able Sachem Maintonomé, had natural misgivings about helping white men against their red brethren, even if the Pequots were their traditional enemies. The firepower of the meager English force and the manner of its easy victory over a vastly superior force in numbers had a "depressing effect on the resentments and ambitions of the other tribes." Following what really amounted to a massacre of braves, women and children, many Narragansetts saw the continued hunt of the Pequots through the swamps as an attempt by the English to "make more profit of the victory than they the Narragansetts were willing they should."25

Following the defeat of the Pequots, the English rewarded their Indian allies with the subjugated tribes and what remained of their territory. The Pequot lands were divided between Unkas and his Mohegans, and Maintonomi and his Narragansetts. The Narragansetts were upset

24 Underhill, p. 26; Vincent, p. 39; Morton, p. 128; Increase Mather, p. 53; Unkas and his Mohegans were close allies of the New England colonies, excluding Rhode Island of course. Unkas had everything to gain by his participation in the Pequot War. Since he was subjugated by the Pequots, it meant liberty to himself, and additional power he could then use against another powerful enemy, the Narragansetts.

25 Underhill, p. 28; Tebbel, p. 21; Bradford stated that at least four-hundred were killed. Mather stated that at least six-hundred were slain, while the English suffered only about five killed and twenty wounded. See also Manypenny, pp. 12-13; Vincent; Morton.
because they felt they deserved a larger share than what they received, and they resented the greatly increased power of Unkas. The Narragansetts had seen the destruction of one powerful one, only to witness the creation of a new one. The warfare and hatred between the Narragansetts and the Mohegans increased, while Unkas retained the New Englanders' support.  

With the events of the Pequot War in mind, it is easy to understand why Massachusetts would have no qualms about injuring the Narragansett nation in its plans concerning Shawomet. First, Arnold and his friends wrote to Massachusetts and objected to the Shawomet purchase by Gorton. Arnold and his company claimed that the Indians of Shawomet were free and independent, not subject to Maintonomi, thus negating the sale. But no action was taken. Maintonomi quickly supplied Massachusetts with a copy of the deed with the signatures of Pumham and Sacononoco, the two area sachems. It seemed that nothing could be done. But Arnold soon talked the two sachems into submitting their lands to Massachusetts jurisdiction in return for guarantees of safety from that colony. Pumham and Sacononoco "voluntarily" submitted and promised "to give speedy notice of any conspiracy (of the Narragansetts)." But even this submission "could not invalidate the deed of January proceeding."  

26 Morton, p. 122; Unkas won more support from the English, not only due to the Narragansett assistance to Rhode Islanders and their opposition to conversion, but because he personally had the Chief Sachem of the Pequots Sassacus (who was his father-in-law) beheaded when he sought refuge among the Mohegans. Unkas then sent Sassacus's head to Boston as proof of his loyalty. See Tebbel, p. 21.  

27 "Submission of Pumham and Sacononoco to the Massachusetts," Document XV, Gorton, Symplicites Defense, pp. 92-4. Staples correctly asked if it was "possible that the Narragansetts, a powerful nation, would have permitted two sachems with only two or three hundred men to remain independent in the very heart of their territory?" Ibid., pp. 255-6
Arnold then went to Massachusetts with Pumham and Sacononoco, and acted as an interpreter. Both Indians told the authorities that they had been "injuriously wronged" by Gorton and his company, and that their land had been taken from them by "surreptitious ways." The two sachems claimed to be "free and independent" Indians, unaware of the terms of the Shawomet deed, and unjustly forced by Maintonomi to sign the purchase. They all charged that Gorton was "improving the tyranny of Maintonomi." Although the territory was "not within our line," Massachusetts officials claimed they still "had to protect the Indians under their jurisdiction."28

Massachusetts demanded that Maintonomi and the Shawomet settlers appear before the General Court in Boston. On August 18, 1642, Governor John Winthrop sent a warrant to the settlers of Shawomet that was personally delivered by William Arnold. The warrant stated in general terms the intention of William Arnold and others at Pawtuxet to contest the Gortonists' purchase. The warrant asked them to come to the court in Boston to answer the charges brought by Pumham, Sacononoco and Arnold, and promised them "equal justice." But Winthrop included a subtle threat: "If you should proceed to any violence, you must not blame us, if we shall take a like course to right them."29

The response of the Shawomet settlers was clear and uncompromising. They called their accuser, William Arnold, a "liar," and ridiculed the "equal justice" of the Puritans by listing the various forms of punishment


29 "First Warrant," Ibid., p. 53; This warrant was sent before Pumham and Sacononoco formally made charges against Gorton and Maintonomi.
the Puritans used against heretics. They charged that Massachusetts considered them "not worthy to live" by forbidding the sale of powder to them. Of the justice and spirituality of Massachusetts, the Gortonists responded "for we know that the spirituality of your church is the civility of your commonwealth, and the civility of your commonwealth is the spirituality of your churches." They declared themselves totally out of Puritan jurisdiction and charged the court with standing on its "tiptoes to stretch yourselves beyond your bounds."30

Perhaps the harshest segment of the Gortonist response concerned religious matters, citing "Papal" analogies in Puritan religious thought and restating opinions the Puritans thought blasphemous. Massachusetts sent another warrant in July of 1643, following the charges of Pumham and Sacononoco in Boston against Maintonomi and Gorton. The warrant stated that Massachusetts realized that many of the Gortonists were banished from the colony and faced possible retribution upon reentering, but the court guaranteed that all would have "free egress and regress unto us."31

The Gortonists did not even answer the second warrant. One week later, a third warrant arrived at Shawomet. The facade of friendship was gone, and the notice was characterized by open hostility. The government of Massachusetts was tired of their "contemptuous and disdainful answers." The court decided to send Edward Johnson, Humphrey Atherton, and forty soldiers under Captain George Cooke to satisfy itself "by force

30 Ibid., pp. 60f.

31 Of the Gortonists at Shawomet, practically all were banished from Massachusetts. John Greene was almost imprisoned when he attempted to visit someone within the Bay Colony. Ibid., pp. 86-90, 95.
of arms" if necessary. When the Gortonists heard of the expedition, they wrote to Captain Cooke informing him that if he had any hostile intent, it would be "upon your peril, and that if any blood be shed, upon your own heads shall it be." They also reinforced their determination by telling Cooke they would "resist him unto death." 32

John Peise, a Massachusetts man who had a father-in-law at Shawomet, carried the letter to the commissioners, and returned to Shawomet with their response which pointed to the real crime of Gorton and his followers. The charges concerning land titles and treatment of the Indians were only excuses to punish them for their real offense; their religious opinions. Their religious mistakes had to be corrected and the commissioners meant to "convince them of their evil ways." Only by "repentance" could they "preserve their lives and liberties." If no contrition was forthcoming, the commissioners and their troops would "look upon them as men prepared for slaughter." 33

When the response of the commissioners reached Shawomet, many fled, including all the women and children. The wives of John Greene and Robert Potter died from "exposure in the flight." The remaining male inhabitants, numbering about a dozen men, took refuge in the house of Samuel Gorton. There, they intended to make their stand. 34

32 Ibid., pp. 97-9; Despite the efforts of contemporaries like Hubbard, Morton, and Winslow to color the warrants as attempts "with all gentleness and courteous expression," and the later expedition of forty soldiers as only an effort to "secure their agents from injury," the record shows that their intentions were hostile and prejudiced from the start. See Hubbard, p. 403; Morton, p. 139; Winslow; Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 233-45.

33 Ibid., pp. 100-2; Savage's comment in Winthrop, II: 71.

34 Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 102-3; A. Gorton, The Life and Times of Samuel Gorton, p. 49.
When the soldiers made ready for their assault, some Providence settlers pleaded with the commissioners to negotiate and avoid bloodshed. The officials' response was that the opposition would be done away with in "one quarter of an hour's work." But, although many of the soldiers were at first "mad to fight" and eager to fall upon the Shawomet men "without speech or parley," after they saw their pitiful state and heard them speak, some of the soldiers became "discouraged to fight." Captain Cooke had to order his men to refrain from mingling with the Providence settlers who came to prevent bloodshed. Finally, the commissioners agreed to open negotiations. Gorton refused to listen unless four of the Providence settlers could serve as witnesses to the parley. The Massachusetts representatives agreed, and then formally presented their charges: injury to the subjects of Massachusetts, meaning both the Indians and white settlers at Pawtuxet, and blasphemy. They demanded that the Gortonists repent and submit their case to the General Court of Massachusetts, or be "put to the sword and pay for the entire expedition out of their goods."  

Gorton and his company refused to submit to the judgment of the General Court because they believed Massachusetts to be a "party" to the case and, therefore, unable to make a fair, unprejudiced ruling. The Gortonists would only submit to "arbitration by indifferent men, mutually chosen." The Providence men agreed that that was the best solution, and

---

35 The four Providence witnesses were Chad Brown, a Baptist minister who came from Massachusetts in 1639, Thomas Olney, who was excommunicated from the Salem Church for his solidarity with Roger Williams, William Field, one of the first Providence settlers, and Thomas Wickender, a Baptist pastor who had been imprisoned in New Amsterdam for his preachings. See Ibid., pp. 103-4; Pumham and Sacononoco charged that they had "not land to plant" and that Gorton and Maintonomi would not help them find food. See Winslow, Hypocrisy Unmasked, p. 3.
the commissioners ultimately concurred. The commissioners sent a message to the government of Massachusetts asking for official permission to continue along these terms. 36

During the truce, the Massachusetts men broke into the settlers' houses, took away their writings, killed their cattle "for themselves and the Indians," and commandeered their "bedding with other necessities for the soldiers to lie upon." Meanwhile, the Gortonists had to survive on what they had, since the soldiers shot at anyone who attempted to supply them. 37

Governor Winthrop answered the request for further instructions on August 3, 1643. He told his representatives at Shawomet that the decision to send them "was not rashly and unconsiderably drawn up," but was formulated by "the mature advice of the wisest and Godliest amongst us, assembled in a General Court, which I have no power to reverse or alter." Winthrop interpreted the Gortonists request as an attempt to "delude us, by winning time, under pretense of arbitration...and to discourage the Indians under our jurisdiction." Winthrop also referred to the letters from the Shawomet settlers which contained "horrible and terrible blasphemies against God and all magistracy." The governor ordered the expedition to carry out its original orders, and reminded them that, if the Gortonists answer in violence, "let the hurt they receive be on their heads." 38

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., pp. 104-5.
38 Ibid., pp. 109-12; Winthrop would not allow arbitration by Providence or Aquedneck because both would have been prejudiced against Massachusetts. Winthrop also thought it "neither seasonable nor reasonable" due to Mantonomi's recent murder.
When the governor's letter arrived at Shawomet, a shot was fired to end the truce, while the soldiers seized the settlers' cattle. Gorton attempted to speak with Captain Cooke, but a warning shot kept Gorton and his friends "entrenched." The commissioners warned the Providence settlers present that if any of them approached the heretics, the soldiers "would take them for their enemies." The Gortonists then ran up the British flag, but the troops fired upon it. Gorton believed the troops intended to make "the house we were in, our grave." The settlers had fortified the house with mud walls, making the refuge "musket proof." If they were to be captured, they planned to put up a good fight. 39

The siege lasted for "divers days." Contrary to expectations, the Massachusetts soldiers fought on the Sabbath and endeavored to burn down Gorton's house. However, a strong wind blew the fire away from the refuge, and the return fire of the defenders forced the soldiers to fall back. The small garrison "could have easily done them yet the soldiers much hurt but were loath to spill the blood of their countrymen." They only intended to keep the soldiers away from the house. 40

When the soldiers from Massachusetts realized the Gortonists meant to fight and could shoot with "some certainty," they refused to fight. The commissioners had to send for reinforcements. With an overwhelming force soon to confront them, Gorton and his followers finally surrendered in order "to prevent the spilling of blood which they could no longer refrain in the defense of themselves." Although their captors promised

39 Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 112-15; Winslow, Hypocrisie Unmasked, p. 4; Winthrop, II: 168.

40 Gorton, Symplicities Defense, p. 115; Actually, the troops attempted to set fire to Gorton's house at least three or four times. See Winthrop, II: 169.
to allow them to "go along with them as freemen and neighbors," they were seized and told they would be shot if they sought to escape. They were then marched to Boston for trial. 41

Meanwhile, the fate of Maintonomi was much worse than that of Samuel Gorton. Massachusetts had always been suspicious of his power and displeased with his amiable attitude and aid toward the religious renegades of Rhode Island. Further angered by the sale of Shawomet to Gorton and encouraged by the prodding of William Arnold, Massachusetts seized the opportunity to act when open warfare finally erupted between Unkas and Maintonomi.

Before the plan to contest the Shawomet purchase took shape, Connecticut had complained to Massachusetts that Maintonomi was plotting and conspiring with the other tribes to make war upon the settlements of New England. When the matter came before the Massachusetts General Court, that body ordered Maintonomi to appear and answer the charges. At first, the sachem refused. But, finally, he agreed to come to Boston. The chief insisted that his accusers be brought before him and demanded "those might

41 Gorton, Symplicities Defense, p. 15. The entire list of Providence witnesses before the affair was completed was comprised of: Richard Scott, Stukely Westcott, William Barrows, John Field, Thomas Angel and Adam Goodwin. Although some of the settlers of Providence had been angered by the activity of the Gortonists concerning the riot in November, 1641, by the point of complaining to Massachusetts, many of the same settlers did not expect not want what transpired at Shawomet. In addition to the above names, the following Providence settlers also sought to avoid bloodshed and mediate at Shawomet, although they had earlier signed the letter of complaint to Massachusetts on November 17, 1641: William Field, William Harris, William Reynolds, Thomas Harris, Hugh Bewitt and Joshua Winsor. Ibid., pp. 116-17; It is important to note that Plymouth refused jurisdiction over Shawomet, and the deputy-governor, John Brown, was openly unsympathetic toward the action of Massachusetts. See Field, I: 67; John Brown appears to have been amiable toward Samuel Gorton. See Document XI, "Letter from Samuel Gorton to Nathaniel Morton," in Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 246-50.
be punished who had raised this slander" if he were found innocent. The Narragansett Chief charged that the allegations were instigated by his enemy, Unkas, and demanded to meet him face to face in court. The General Court opposed such a confrontation, especially since Unkas was its close ally. But the court was greatly impressed with the noble and knowledgeable attitude of the accused. "In all his answers, he was very deliberate and showed good understanding in the principles of justice, legality and ingenuity withal." Later, the governor, the magistrates, and the elders concluded that the charges arose "from false ground, and out of the enmity which was between the Narragansetts and the Mohegans." Therefore, there was insufficient ground to risk war with the Narragansetts, and the court sent a letter to Connecticut in an effort to dissuade them from acting against the Narragansett nation.

Although Massachusetts had been reluctant to act against the powerful Maintonomi, the outburst of open warfare between the Narragansetts and the Mohegans, compounded by Maintonomi's involvement in the sale of Shawomet to Samuel Gorton, prodded the Bay Colony to act. Following the Shawomet purchase, Unkas began a quarrel with Sequassen, a sachem on the Connecticut River whose tribe was allied with the Narragansetts. When Unkas attacked their village and killed many of the tribe, Maintonomi demanded revenge. Maintonomi asked the governor of Connecticut if that colony would allow him to make war upon Unkas, but Governor Haynes expressed misgivings about the request and refused to encourage any

42 "Relation of the Indian Plot," in the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XXIII (Cambridge, 1833): 161-4; It was also charged that Maintonomi wanted to make his son sachem of the Pequots, in violation of a treaty with Massachusetts. See Winthrop, II: 97-100.
retaliatory action. The Narragansett Sachem then inquired into how Massachusetts would react to a war between himself and the Bay Colony's closely ally, Unkas. Governor Winthrop responded that if Maintonomi felt Unkas had done him and his friends wrong, and would not give satisfaction, we should leave him to take his own course. But, within the next several weeks, in May of 1643, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Haven, and Plymouth joined in a "Confederation of the United Colonies of New England" for the purpose of mutual protection in the event of an Indian war. The Shawomet purchase, the refusal of Maintonomi to appear before the Massachusetts General Court concerning the sale, and new, exaggerated reports of a Narragansett-inspired conspiracy against the United Colonies, heightened the English suspicion and hostility toward the sachem and his people. Unkas soon became the tool for Maintonomi's punishment. 43

Late that summer, Maintonomi led an assault against Unkas before the latter chief could make ready for defense. Despite the advantage of surprise, and superior numbers (at least two to one), the Mohegans defeated the Narragansetts and even captured Maintonomi himself. Since Unkas feared further retaliation from the Narragansetts if he harmed his captive, he brought Maintonomi before the Commissioners of the United Colonies in Hartford. The commissioners transferred the prisoner to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. Maintonomi was then brought before the General Court in Boston to stand trial. 44

43 Sequessen was also a relative of Maintonomi, Potter, pp. 38-9; "Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies of New England," in Bradford, pp. 382-9; No doubt the increased sense of security and power fostered by the new Confederation had a role in the actions taken against the chief of the Narragansetts.

44 Winthrop, II: 157-60; Bradford, pp. 388-9, Maintonomi even wore

-34-
The Massachusetts General Court decided Maintonomi should be put to death. They ordered Unkas to carry out the sentence and promised him protection from Narragansett reprisals. Gorton and the settlers at Shawomet sent a letter to Massachusetts demanding Maintonomi's release. The Narragansetts paid a ransom to Unkas and to Massachusetts in an effort to save their sachem's life, but to no avail.

Unkas took Maintonomi beyond Massachusetts jurisdiction and into Mohegan territory. Two Englishmen accompanied Unkas to verify that the Mohegans did not torture their captive. Massachusetts kept the decision to execute Maintonomi secret as long as possible in order to allow Unkas time to carry out the verdict of the court before any attempts to rescue the doomed chief could get under way. Finally, at a place now known as "Sachem's Plain," Unkas killed Maintonomi with a blow to the back of the

an armor shield given to him by Gorton. The Mohegans deceived their assailants by attacking under the pretence of a truce. The Mohegans were generally considered fiercer and more able warriors than were the more peaceful Narragansetts. The same was true in 1676, when it was the chief of the much smaller tribe of Wampanoags, King Philip, who led the uprising against the English, while the Narragansetts followed their lead.

The General Court was also angry at Maintonomi for refusing to turn over a Pequot who had attempted to kill Unkas. Instead, Maintonomi had the Indian executed. Whether he killed the Indian as a just punishment, or to hide his own duplicity in the assassination plot, I cannot determine, although the insinuation from unfavorable contemporary sources is clear. See Bradford, pp. 388-91; Winthrop, IIY 154-60. The only mention of Narragansett gifts by Winthrop is from Maintonomi's brother, Pessicus, who attempted to purchase the neutrality of Massachusetts in his war against Unkas. Winthrop stated that he denied neutrality and rejected the gifts. Ibid., pp. 170-1; Winthrop denied that any ransom for Maintonomi was paid. At a court hearing in Connecticut in 1645, the Court of the United Colonies denied that the ransom was paid and threatened the Narragansetts if they did not end their war of vengeance against the Mohegans. A treaty was forced upon the Narragansetts later that year. James Savage, once treasurer for the Massachusetts Historical Society in the 1860s, and editor of Winthrop's history, believed that the ransom was paid and cites a letter from Governor Haynes of Connecticut to Governor Winthrop as proof! See Ibid., p. 160.
head with his hatchet. By September of 1643, the contest of the Shawomet purchase resulted in not only the capture of Samuel Gorton and his followers, but also in the death of Maintonomi and the weakening of the Narragansett Empire.  

After the death of Maintonomi and the Shawomet siege, the Gortonists were taken to Boston. Of the eleven defenders, one died before the surrender and three escaped. At Boston, the remaining captives were put in jail until their trial. The letters they had written to Massachusetts were used as evidence against them, and as proof that their ideas were Antinomian. "Heresy was the only charge against the Gortonists, and the sole object to which the attention of the court was directed." Their crime having been "sufficiently proved," only their punishment had to be determined.

46 Winslow, p. 80; Winthrop, II: 157-8; Winslow stated that the Narragansetts "thanked" Massachusetts for the manner in which they allowed Maintonomi to be executed. They were grateful because Unkas did not torture the chief, and the sachem was given an "honorable burial." But subsequent events demonstrate that nothing could have been further from the truth. The Narragansetts immediately stepped up their fighting against Unkas until a threat from the superior United Colonies forced a treaty in 1645. Of the death of Maintonomi, the Massachusetts historian, James Savage, stated in his edition of Winthrop's History, "Of several parts of this history, many readers will perhaps form an unfavorable judgment, but none has been so painful in the whole progress of my labors, as this which relates to the treatment of Maintonomi by our fathers. Such a case of perfidy or cruelty, or both, it is impossible to pass without animadversion." Of the murder, Rhode Island historian William Staples said, "As it was, he was sacrificed because he was more liberal in his views than his Christian neighbors, more benevolent in his actions - more catholic in his religion. His memory should be embalmed in the greatful recollections of every inhabitant of the state of Rhode Island." See Gorton's Symplicitie8 Defense, p. 156.

47 The one defender who died was Sampson Shatton. The three who escaped were John Greene, Richard Waterman and Nicholas Power. Power and Waterman were either recaptured or turned themselves in shortly after their escape. Waterman was released on bond and Power was freed totally since he had not signed any of the inflammatory letters that were sent to
At first, the court attempted to have the captives denounce their beliefs. "After divers means had been used in both public and private to reclaim them, and all proving fruitless, the court proceeded to consider their sentence." All of the magistrates but three demanded death for the heretics, but "the greatest number of deputies dissented and carried the vote." In the end, Gorton and his companions were sentenced to labor in chains in separate towns throughout the colony during the "pleasure of the court." 48

But the sentence of the court, and the spreading of the dissidents throughout the colony only compounded the problem for the Puritan leaders. Instead of being penitent, the zealots were corrupting the people with their heresies. According to the decision of the court, in November, they would suffer death if they persisted in their preachings and beliefs.

But the court decided in March of 1644 to have the Gortonists "banished" from the colony within fourteen days. Gorton and his fellow prisoners travelled to Boston to meet and leave for home together within a few days. But Governor Winthrop considered it unwise to allow them together in Boston for any amount of time where they could "seduce some of the


48 Winthrop, II: 176-7; Shurtleff, Massachusetts Colonial Records, II: 52-3; Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 137-47; Samuel Gorton went to Charlestown, John Wickes went to Ipswitch, Randall Holden went to Salem, Richard Carder to Roxbury, Francis Weston to Dorchester, John Warner to Boston, and William Woddall to Watertown. Their cattle was kept to pay for the court fees and the expense of the expedition. See Mass. MSS, III: 10-11. The decision of the court came in November of 1643.
townspeople." Three days after the original decree, the governor gave the Gottonists until noon of the tenth of March to leave the colony. Facing death if they refused, Gorton and his followers immediately departed for their homes at Shawomet. 49

After the Gortonists arrived at their old settlement, they inquired of Governor Winthrop whether Shawomet was considered part of the area of banishment. Winthrop replied it was and told them they lived there at the "peril of your lives." Gorton and his friends then left their homes and traveled to the island of Aquedneck and safety. 50

The Gortonists did not falter in their attempt to regain the Shawomet territory. The first step in that effort was the remarkable "Act of Submission" from the Narragansett Indians in April of 1644. When Gorton and his friends returned from Boston, the Narragansetts "marvelled much at their deliverence and release." The Indians believed that England was inhabited by two great races, the "Wallaconogas," who migrated to the new world, and the stronger race of Old England, called the "Gortonogas" after the release of Gorton and his cohorts. The release of Gorton's followers from the powerful colonial government of Massachusetts led the Indians to believe them to be representatives of the stronger power of

49 Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 147-9; Shurtleff, Massachusetts Colonial Records, II: 51-7; Mass. MSS, III: 14.

50 Gorton, Symplicities Defense, pp. 149-52; Arnold, I: 189; Although they were warmly received at Aquedneck, Governor Coddington was not too enthused about welcoming home the man who had supported the Hutchinsons in their coup against him in Portsmouth in 1640, and who spoke to him so disrespectfully in court a year later. Coddington wrote to Winthrop in August, 1644, that Gorton was "here against my mind...and shall he not be by me protected." See Mass. MSS, III: 31-6.
Old England, and they therefore looked to them for assistance. 51

The Narragansetts were angered by the murder of their sachem
Maintonomi, but his death was only the beginning. The Bay Colony demanded
that the Narragansetts desist from warring against Unkas and ordered
Maintonomi's brother, Pessicus, to give Benedict Arnold one hundred
bushels of corn to be distributed among Pumham's Indians. The Narragan-
setts then sent a letter to the government of Massachusetts protesting
the death of their sachem and claiming that they had given ransom for
his life. They informed the Bay Colony that they were submitting them-
selves and their lands, not to Massachusetts, but "unto the government
and protection of the honorable state of Old England." 52

Buttressed by the "Act of Submission," Samuel Gorton, Randall Holden,
and John Greene journeyed to England in the winter of 1644-45 in an en-
deavor to win back their homes. While in England, Gorton wrote his
Smplicities Defense, outlining his charges against Massachusetts and
putting forth his arguments for reclaiming the Shawomet lands. They
presented their case before the Committee on Foreign Plantations. One


52 Mass. MSS, III: 17; Gorton, Symplicities Defense, p. 162; "The
Act and Deed of Voluntary and Free Submission of the Narragansett Indians,"
in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 134-6; Of the "Act of Submission,"
Rhode Island historian Edward Field stated, "This act, considered in the
light of subsequent events, was of the most vital importance to Rhode
Island. Had it not been accomplished, the vast Narragansett territory
would have inevitably fallen into the hands of Massachusetts, and Rhode
Island, limited to three small, isolated settlements scattered along the
waterfront, could never have withstood the attacks of her aggressive neighbors. Deprived of the body and backbone, the extremities would surely have been split up and parcelled out among the adjacent colonies... it is not too much to say that this cession, together with the obtaining of the Patent of 1644 and the Charter of 1663, was one of three events in our history that insured Rhode Island's existence." See Field, I: 70.
of the commissioners was Sir Henry Vane, who had been sympathetic to the Hutchinson faction while governor of Massachusetts during the Antinomian controversy of 1636-37. The Committee on Foreign Plantations decided to order Massachusetts to permit the petitioners to live at Shawomet until the matter could be resolved at a future hearing.  

Armed with this ruling, John Greene and Randall Holden returned to Boston to deliver the decision to the Massachusetts authorities. Exactly two years after their imprisonment and trial, the magistrates were offended to have the heretics in their midst, let alone arrogantly delivering such an embarrassing order. The directive "gave rise to prolonged debates" concerning the amount of subordination England had a right to expect from its colonies. Massachusetts immediately commissioned Edward Winslow of Plymouth to travel to England and represent them in the controversy. Winslow's response to Gorton's charges appeared in a book entitled *Hypocrissie Unmasked*, which also related Samuel Gorton's earlier problems with the courts at Plymouth and Portsmouth. Despite Winslow's efforts, the Commission ordered on May 25, 1647, that the Gortonists be allowed to inhabit their Shawomet lands.

Although Providence, Portsmouth, Newport and Shawomet (renamed Warwick)

---


54 *Ibid.*; "Letter from Samuel Gorton to Nathaniel Morton," Gorton, *Sympllicities Defense*, pp. 248-50; To bolster the Gortonist claim, the Patent of 1644, secured by Roger Williams and John Clarke, included the Shawomet purchase. See Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, V: 60. Shawomet was renamed Warwick in honor of the Earl of Warwick who headed the Parliamentary Commission and also supported the Gortonists in their attempts to regain the territory purchased from Maintonomi in January of 1642.
were settled at different times, under different leadership, and often quarreled among themselves, the conditions which prompted the Shawomet episode gradually made it evident to these plantations that some form of union was necessary "to the preservation of their distinct existence."

The encroachments by Massachusetts and that colony's intrigue with the Pawtuxet Indians, Unkas, and the Arnolds, the threat of an Indian war without admittance into the defensive confederation of the New England colonies, and claims by Plymouth under the Bradford patent to jurisdiction over Aquedneck, all combined to surmount the excessive spirit of individualism in the plantations and bring them into a practical, although uneasy, union for their mutual defense.  

CHAPTER II
Rhode Island:
Struggle for Territorial Integrity

"The onus of blame for this aggression upon her lands — and this fact most historians of Rhode Island have either failed or have been unwilling to note — should be visited upon her own disloyal inhabitants, rather than upon her grasping neighbors."

Edward Field in his *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*

Internal disloyalty and factionalism was "the chief obstruction to Rhode Island's progress" during the seventeenth century, according to the Rhode Island historian, Edward Field. Rhode Island's internal feuding did give to its neighbors both the incentive and the opportunity to extend their authority over the tiny colony.¹

The earlier quarreling between Williams, Arnold, Gorton and their followers made it easier for Massachusetts to seize the Gortonists and their Shawomet lands. This chapter will examine the other conflicts within the colony of Rhode Island which accentuated its susceptibility to its more powerful neighbors. The scheme of William Coddington in 1651 to detach Aquedneck from the Williams Patent of 1644, the attempt by pro-Connecticut assemblymen to see that colony gain at Rhode Island's expense, the "monopolistic" interests of William Harris and the

"proprietary party" of Providence, and the Quaker influence upon the general assembly in the mid-1670s were all additional factors in the colony's vulnerability to the land grabbing schemes of Connecticut and Massachusetts.  

Other important factors must also be noted in Rhode Island's early struggle for independence and self-preservation. The conflicting and mutually exclusive charters of Connecticut in 1662 and Rhode Island a year later, the continued religious bigotry of the Puritan colonies toward religious refugees, the suspicions of and contempt for the Narragansett Indians by the United Colonies, the unstable conditions in England, the equivocal action taken by the mother country in many of the colonial boundary disputes, the intensified animosity resulting from events during the war with King Philip in 1675-6, and royal intrigue to usurp colonial authority—all these factors further augmented the inter-colonial disputes.

"Boundary disputes occupy a larger place in the history of Rhode Island than that of any other colony." This fact clearly permeated the prolonged and difficult struggle of that colony to firmly establish its own territorial sovereignty. After the seizure at Shawomet in 1643, the settlers of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations realized the urgency for some attempt at unity. Along with the threat to Providence by the encroachment of Massachusetts through Pumham and the Pawtuxet submission, Plymouth colony claimed as being part of its patent the whole island of Aquedneck! The Antinomians who settled the island had  

---

petitioned Plymouth in 1638 for permission to settle there after their banishment from Massachusetts. Also, as a result of the murder of Maintonomi, all the settlers of New England feared a major Indian war spearheaded by the vengeful Narragansetts. The United Colonies denied membership to Rhode Island, thus leaving the tiny settlement alone and surrounded by Indians in the face of such a war. All of these factors contributed to the dispatch of Roger Williams to England to procure a charter. Despite intrigue by Massachusetts to attain the territory under the title of a "Narragansett Patent," Williams returned to Providence Plantations with a charter from the Earl of Warwick in September 1644. The charter allowed the towns of Providence, Newport and Portsmouth to unite under one government.  

But, again, internal bickering threatened Rhode Island's unity and its ability to resist the aggression of its neighbors. William Coddington of Newport, an authoritarian concerned about the "excessive individuality" of the Providence Plantations, opposed the patent and instead sought an alliance with the United Colonies. The alliance would not only separate his settlement from the liberalism of Providence, but it would also provide the necessary protection should an Indian war erupt. But the commissioners refused to agree to any alliance unless the island surrendered to the jurisdiction of Plymouth or Massachusetts. Coddington then

attempted to withdraw the island from the Williams Patent of 1644 and
the subsequent parliamentary confirmation in 1647. 4

Coddington "appeared to be striving underhandedly" to affect the
overthrow of the Williams Patent. The general assembly finally brought
charges against Coddington and informed him that if he again sought
assistance outside the colony, John Clarke would replace him in the
assembly. Coddington refused to attend the assembly and sailed for
England in October 1649 to seek a separate patent for Aquedneck and
Conanicut Islands. Massachusetts and Plymouth immediately revived their
claims to the Narragansett territory before the commissioners of the
United Colonies, and Edward Winslow of Plymouth appealed to England in
an effort to obstruct Coddington's labors, claiming the island of Aqued-
neck as part of the Plymouth patent of 1620. Coddington succeeded and
returned to Rhode Island in 1651 with a lifetime commission as the gover-
nor of the islands of Aquedneck and Conanicut. 5

But Coddington's commission was not favorably received in Providence
Plantations, nor was it popular in his own settlements of Newport and

4Richman, II: 10; Osgood, I: 362-3; Warwick became party to the
Patent of 1644 three years later when a parliamentary commission, headed
by the Earl of Warwick, decided that Shawomet was included in the Williams
Patent. See "History of Rhode Island," in the Rhode Island Historical
Society Collections, V (Providence, 1843): 60; Remember, Rhode Island at
this time refers to both Newport and Portsmouth. See also "Act of the
Commissioners of the United Colonies," September of 1644 and 1648, in
Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, IX:
23, 110; The Charter of 1644 was not immediately put into effect due to
the precarious nature of affairs in England at that time between Charles
I and parliament. If Charles I defeated parliament, the patent would be
worthless.

5John E. Pomfret and Floyd M. Shumway, Founding the American Colonies,
1583-1660 (N. Y., 1970), p. 222; "Coddington Petition," March 20, 1650,
"Order of the Committee of the Admiralty," April 17, 1650, and "Coddington
Commission," April 3, 1651, all in Noel Sainsbury, ed., Calender of State
Portsmouth. The inhabitants of Newport and Portsmouth sent John Clarke to England in an effort to have the Coddington commission rescinded. Providence and Warwick convinced Roger Williams to join Clarke in that endeavor. The uproar against Coddington's "double treason" was so great that the governor intrigued with the Dutch for soldiers to assist him in squelching the opposition he faced on the island. Coddington found it so uncomfortable at Newport that he retired to Boston where, in the spring of 1652, he surrendered his sole proprietary claim to Aquedneck. Meanwhile, the labors of Williams and Clarke proved fruitful, and Coddington's commission was officially recalled later that year. Such internal strife made the colony's posture of defense in territorial disputes appear weak indeed.  

One area of contention was the western part of the present state of Rhode Island, now called "Westerly," which had been under the control of the Pequot Indians until their defeat by the forces of Connecticut and Massachusetts under Captain John Mason in 1637. In the subsequent division of the spoils, some of the area was given to Narragansetts and the Mohegans, but Massachusetts claimed the right of jurisdiction to all of the Pequot territory east of Connecticut. In 1658, the United Colonies officially ruled in favor of Massachusetts and allowed that colony to annex the territory, which they renamed "Southertown," to its Suffolk
After the collapse of Pequot power, many settlers from Connecticut and Massachusetts moved into the area. By 1658, four germinal settlements — Pawcatuck, Wequetequock, Mystic and Stonington — made up the township of Southerstown. The township bordered the Mystic River on the west and extended to the east several miles beyond the Pawcatuck River into the present state of Rhode Island. Massachusetts believed its claim was justified by the "right of conquest" and its response to those settlers in the area who petitioned the Bay Colony to exercise jurisdiction there.

Meanwhile, Rhode Island's intentions to encourage settlement in the Pawcatuck River area did not remain dormant. According to its patent in 1644, the colony extended north to Massachusetts, east to Plymouth, and west to the Pequot or Pawcatuck River. When Massachusetts annexed Southerstown, Rhode Island protested since the Bay Colony's claim included territory on the east side of the Pawcatuck River. One month after the


8For the names and sources of these settlers see Richard A. Wheeler, History of Stonington and Genealogies (New Haven, 1900), pp. 1-12; Henry Robinson Palmer, Stonington By the Sea (Stonington, 1913), pp. 1-14; for a map of the Stonington boundary, see p. $5; Anne Chesebrough Wildey, Genealogy of the Descendants of William Chesebrough of Boston, Rehoboth, Massachusetts, The Founder and First White Settler of Stonington (N. Y., 1903), pp. 1-12; William Haynes, 1649-1949, The Stonington Chronology (Stonington, 1949), pp. 1-13; Captain George Denison, of Massachusetts, a hero of the Pequot War, was designated to manage the affairs of the township. See Shurtleff, Massachusetts Colonial Records, IV, pt., 1: 353.

-47-
annexation, the Rhode Island general assembly passed a "forfeiture act,"
which forbid anyone to introduce a foreign jurisdiction and threatened
confiscation of the property of anyone who submitted to the government
of any other colony.\footnote{Roger Williams to John Mason," Publications of the Narragansett
Club, IV (Providence, 1874): 333-51; "Letter" and "Forfeiture Act," in
Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 403-4; 458; Narragansett Mortgage:
The Documents Concerning the Alien Purchases in Southern Rhode Island
(Providence, 1925), p. 15; William Arnold and those of Pawtuxet who had
submitted themselves and their lands to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts
during the Gortonist controversy may have anticipated the action of the
Rhode Island assembly. In March of the same year of the forfeiture act,
they requested that their submission to Massachusetts be terminated. See
Joshua Coffin, trans., Massachusetts Manuscripts: Documents, Letters,
Pertaining to Rhode Island, Transcribed from the General Court of Massa-
chusetts, I: 102.}

In March of 1661, approximately thirty-six planters from Newport
and Portsmouth purchased land on the east side of the Pawcatuck River
from Sosoa, an ally of the Narragansett Indians. The sale angered the
Pequots, who disputed the Narragansetts' right to the territory. The
Pequots had planned to farm the land now sold by Sosoa to the Rhode
Islanders.\footnote{N. B. Vars, trans., The Records of Tobias Saunders and His Descen-
dents, both vols. in one book, paragraphs: 26, 30; "Footnote," Richman,
II: 227; "Testimony of William Chesebrough," September 3, 1661, Bartlett,
Rhode Island Records, I: 455; Nellie W. Johnson, The Descendants of Robert
Burdick of Rhode Island (Syracuse, 1937), p. 2; "Petition of Pequot

The settlers of Southertown also opposed the Rhode Island migration
into the area. Part of Misquamicut had been granted to some Southertown
settlers by Massachusetts. Some of the inhabitants of the township in-
quired for "the reason of their intrusion into other men's rights; tell-
ing them those lands were within the bounds of Southertown and appropria-
ated to several persons." But the new settlers made it clear they would
not be party to any jurisdictional trial anywhere "but in Rhode Island."
Massachusetts quickly informed Rhode Island that the Bay charter extended "from the Pequot River to the Plymouth Line," and that the intruders should move. The problem with the Massachusetts interpretation was determining just how far south it went. Theoretically, it could have been construed to include most, if not all, of Rhode Island! That colony naturally refused to terminate its claim of jurisdiction over the new settlers or to withdraw its support from them.  

On October 25, 1661, Massachusetts acted. The General Court issued a warrant for the arrest of those settlers that "in a riotous manner entered upon, and took possession of the lands" of the township. Within a week, the constable of Southertown, William Palmer, had arrested three Rhode Island settlers, Robert Burdick, Tobias Saunders and Joseph Clarke, all from Newport. Some Providence men attempted to rescue the three on their way to trial in Boston, but missed the escort because they had "gone to dinner" at the time the posse passed. Saunders and Burdick were imprisoned until their trial three weeks later. They were then convicted of "Forcible entry and intrusion into the bounds of Southertown," fined £40 each, and required to post £100 security each "for their peaceful conduct in the future." Both refused to pay. Massachusetts then asked Rhode Island to pay the fine, but that colony flatly refused.

---

11 The area of the Rhode Island settlement was known as Squamcuck or Miskonaticut. In 1669, it was formally named "Westerly." See James H. Trumbull, ed., The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, II (Hartford, 1852): 92; "Testimony of William Chesebrough" and Letter from Massachusetts to Rhode Island," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 455, 461.

12 Johnson, Robert Burdick, pp. 2-3; "Court Sentence," Shurtleff, Massachusetts Colonial Records, IV, pt., 2: 44-5; Vars, Records of Tobias Saunders, paragraphs: 25-6; Joseph Clarke was released "upon a very urgent occasion," See Court Sentence," and "Massachusetts to Rhode Island,"
The imprisonment of Saunders and Burdick "exasperated" the new settlers of Misquamicut and "led to a system of reprisals and acts of violence." Rhode Island constables told the Southertown inhabitants to "remove their habitations" from the east side of the Pawcatuck River. If someone resisted, the constables threatened to "carry him to prison, drive away his cattle, cut his grass," or even have his house "torn down." Both groups used the Indians against each other. The Pequots, who sought protection from the encroachments of the Rhode Islanders and the powerful Narragansetts, looked to Massachusetts and Southerton for assistance.

The Narragansetts, who never befriended or trusted the New England colonists, did get along well with Rhode Island, especially the settlers at Misquamicut. While the Narragansetts "did plunder and take away" many of the "goods and horses" of the settlers of Southertown and dispossessed the Pequots under their sachem Harmon Garrett, the settlers of Southertown paid the Pequots "in corn" to improve lands claimed by the Rhode Islanders. The religious differences were also a source of animosity, since most of the settlers of Southertown were Puritans, while many of the settlers of Misquamicut were refugees from Massachusetts.

Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 456-8; Saunders and Burdick appealed to the king, but to no avail. See Shurtleff, p. 181.

13 Samuel G. Arnold, History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, I (N. Y., 1859): 282; "Complaint by John Frinke," "United Colonies to Rhode Island," and "Meeting of the Commissioners of the United Colonies," in Hazard, Historical Collections, II: 467-8, 477; "Order to Daniel Gookin," in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, I: 463; Vars, Records of Tobias Saunders, paragraph: 28; Saunders' Records contain passages referring to the great trust and respect the Narragansett Indians had for Tobias Saunders, who was usually conservator of the peace, or deputy to the general assembly from the settlement. Even before the settlers from Rhode Island arrived at Misquamicut, the settlers of Southertown complained to the United Colonies about the conduct of the Narragansett Indians. See Documents VIII in Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, I: 576-8; Haynes, Stonington Chronology, p. 16; Saunders and
In 1662, Connecticut re-entered the contest over the Pawcatuck territory with the renewal of its charter. After the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 and the restoration two years later, all of England "was in a state of uncertainty and instability." The corporate colonies of New England felt insecure because parliament, not the king, had issued their charters. Connecticut and Rhode Island sent agents to England to secure confirmation of their patents. Connecticut succeeded first in April 1662, while Rhode Island secured its confirmation in July 1663. Because Connecticut could interpret its charter to include the disputed Pawcatuck area and a great portion of the Narragansett territory around Providence, many in Rhode Island believed that Connecticut had obtained its charter through "underhand dealing."  

The agent from Connecticut, John Winthrop, and his counterpart from Rhode Island, John Clarke, foresaw the probable conflict in the interpretations of their respective charters. The Connecticut charter of 1631 stated the colony was bounded "on the east by the Narragansett Bay, where the said River falleth into the sea." If the eastern boundary really extended to the Narragansett Bay, that colony's bounds included Providence and Warwick. The new charter procured in 1662 repeated the same description of Connecticut's eastern boundary. The Rhode Island Burdick were held for two years until they were exchanged for two Massachusetts officials seized in retaliation by Rhode Island authorities. One was the deputy-marshall of Suffolk County, William Marble, who was sent by Massachusetts into the disputed area to inquire into the complaints by his people of Rhode Island reprisals. See Johnson, Robert Burdick, p. 4; The Records of the Court of Trials of the Colony of Providence Plantations, 1662-1670, II (Providence, 1920): 21-2; Reverend William L. Burdick, ed., Samuel Hubbard's Journal, circa 1633-1686: Manuscripts Relating to Samuel Hubbard of Newport (Providence, 1940), pp. 35-6.

charte in 1663 put the two colonies on a collision course by confirming its bounds to be from "three miles east of the Narragansett Bay" in the east "to the middle of the channel of a river commonly called Pawcatuck" in the west. The whole of the Narragansett territory west of the Narragansett Bay to the Pawcatuck River was in dispute. 15

Winthrop agreed with Clarke to have a specific clause inserted in the new Rhode Island charter. The agents "agreed that the said Pawcatuck River shall be also called the Narragansett River, and be deemed to be the Narragansett River mentioned in his majesty's late grant to Connecticut Colony, as the eastern bounds of that colony." The clause stressed that "any grant or clause in the late grant to the governor and company of Connecticut Colony in America, to the contrary thereof in otherwise not withstanding." What the Rhode Island charter had in essence done, was change or modify the previous patent to Connecticut! Charles II acquiesced in the agreement because of his faith and confidence in Winthrop's ability to win support for the settlement upon his return to Connecticut. 16


16. "Brief History of the Boundary Disputes," and the "Clarke-Winthrop Agreement," Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 526-9; Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, III: 1-21; "Rhode Island Charter," and "King's Instructions to Royal Commission," April 23, 1664, Documents #512 and #717, in Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, I: 148-50, 202-3; The agreement was signed by Winthrop and Clarke on April 7, 1663. The agreement was prodded by four arbiters who supported Rhode Island on the question of the eastern boundary. The Rhode Island charter was finalized on July 8, 1663. See Field, State of Rhode Island, I: 100-108.
But the settlement was denounced by Connecticut officials. They asserted that their charters of 1631 and 1662 had precedence over the latest Rhode Island patent. They also castigated Winthrop and claimed his agreement with Clarke was "without authority or approval of the general court" and that his "agency had terminated" before he entered into the agreement. 17

Massachusetts withdrew its claims to the Pawcatuck territory in favor of Connecticut, and the latter colony revived its "right of conquest" to the area as a result of its participation in the Pequot War. As expected, the United Colonies supported Connecticut in its efforts to "prevent the intrusion of those of Rhode Island and their injurious dealing with divers of our people." The commissioners of the United Colonies instructed the Rhode Island general assembly to have its settlers in the area "withdraw themselves," and buttressed the demand with a subtle threat of force if the disturbances in the area continued. 18

Whether Stonington was under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts or Connecticut, the relations between the town and the Rhode Island settlers across the river remained strained. Stonington settlers complained that "several cattle were stolen by Rhode Island men" and requested assistance from Connecticut. But that colony did not respond with the speed and force expected. Earlier, the settlers were angered by the lack of support they received while Rhode Island sent constables to assist its settlers. Part of the problem entailed contested land titles from Massachusetts and


Connecticut settlers, and no real action was taken against Misquamicut while those internal altercations were before the United Colonies for resolution. 19

The Stonington settlers took things into their own hands in early 1664. "Twenty or more" of the town crossed the Pawcatuck River into Misquamicut and "there assaulted, and by violence broke open" the home of James Babcock, and "hailed" him away "to the great a frightenment of the women and children that were in the house." Fearing further violence, the governor of Rhode Island proposed a meeting of commissioners from the two colonies to negotiate a boundary between the settlements. The agents were chosen, but the meeting was doomed from the start since Rhode Island would not give up Misquamicut and Connecticut ordered its agents "not to give away any part of the bounds of its charter." 20

During this time contention over the whole Narragansett territory intensified, not only around Stonington, but around Wickford (now North Kingston) and the area south of Providence and just east of Newport. While this area had once been claimed by Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island rarely made extensive arguments for the area. Although their charters could be interpreted to include the territory, the issue was moot since no settlements existed in the tract, except for a few who


20 "General Assembly," March 2, 1664, "Governor of Rhode Island to Governor of Connecticut," March 10, 1664, and "General Assembly," October 26, 1664, in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II: 34-6, 71-2.
settled around Richard Smith's trading house at Wickford in 1641 and the tiny settlement of Pettaquamscut in 1658. 21

But Rhode Island and Connecticut soon locked horns over this territory too when a company of Connecticut and Massachusetts men purchased some of the tract from the Indians in 1659. This "Atherton Purchase" heightened Rhode Island's suspicions concerning the plans of its New England neighbors. That apprehension increased when members of the Atherton Company, with assistance of military pressure from the United Colonies, claimed all the territory of the Narragansett Indians in 1660 through what became known as the "Narragansett Mortgage." 22

The "Narragansett Mortgage" arose from the circumstances surrounding the war between the Narragansetts and the Mohegans. Following the death of Maintonomi in 1643, the enraged Narragansetts warred against Unkas until the power of the United Colonies forced the Narragansetts to sign a treaty in 1645. They were ordered to restore all the land taken from the Mohegans and pay reparations to the tribe and the United Colonies.

21 John Bull of Boston, Samuel Wilbur and three others from Portsmouth settled the "Pettaquamscut Purchase" in July, which included the southeast quarter of the Narragansett country. See Field, I: 98; Richard Smith purchased a small portion of the Narragansett territory in 1637, while he was a resident of Taunton, Massachusetts. Later, settlers from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth and Rhode Island joined Smith to purchase lands from the Narragansett Indians. The settlement was named "Wickford!" and Roger Williams was also one of the original purchasers of the territory. See Daniel Updike, Richard Smith: First English Settler of the Narragansett Country, Rhode Island (Boston, 1937), pp. 15-17; The prominent members of the "Atherton Company" were Major Humphrey Atherton, Richard Smith, Sr. and Jr., Lieutenant William Hudson, Amos Richardson, all of Massachusetts, and Governor John Winthrop of Connecticut. See Document VII in Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 541.

But the commissioners of the United Colonies were frustrated in their attempts to secure fulfillment of the treaty. Periodic threats and rumors of an Indian war heightened the tension. Finally, in 1660, the United Colonies ordered the Narragansetts to pay the reparations or lose their lands. When they failed to defray the indemnity, the whole Indian territory was mortgaged. At that point, Major Humphrey Atherton and his associates paid off the mortgage and received all of the Narragansett territory. 23

Clarke and Winthrop had attempted to settle the dispute of the Atherton settlers and the possible conflict of jurisdiction over Wickford. In return for the clear designation of the Pawcatuck River as the western boundary of Rhode Island in the charter of 1663, the Atherton settlers and others around Richard Smith's trading house in Wickford were to be allowed to "choose for themselves" the colony to which they wanted to submit. Almost immediately, Wickford applied to Hartford, and Connecticut appointed Richard Smith as constable. 24

The settlers of Wickford believed Rhode Island could not offer the authority and security they needed. Concerning their choice, Richard

---


24 The Clarke-Winthrop Agreement did not mention if the settlers around the Smith house could submit all the lands that they claimed to another jurisdiction. This was a point of disagreement between Rhode Island and Connecticut. See "Clarke-Winthrop Agreement," Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 528-9; Document #512, in Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, V: 148-50; "Hartford Reply to Wickford," William R. Staples, trans., Connecticut MSS, III: 33-5. It is possible that Winthrop's concern in the agreement with Clarke involved some self-interest, since he was one of the Atherton purchasers, whose claim would be safer if the settlers in the Wickford area were allowed to submit to Connecticut. See "Narragansett Mortgage," in Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 541.
Smith commented:

"Rhode Island is a roddle to those who love to live in order.... To have our Narragansett lands settled under the jurisdiction of Connecticut... will be an effective means of planting those lands with a sober and considerable people knit together in the best order of a well managed government." ²⁵

Rhode Island insisted that the Clarke-Winthrop agreement applied to only Richard Smith and a few settlers around his trading house, not all the settlements or future settlements in the Narragansett territory. Others in Connecticut interpreted the agreement to allow the settlers in the area to submit all of their lands (wherever they may be) to Hartford jurisdiction. After the Narragansett Mortgage, that could be applied to the whole Narragansett territory except for Providence and Warwick. Rhode Island made known its intentions in the area claimed by Atherton and his associated well before the Clarke-Winthrop agreement. Part of the intent of the forfeiture act of 1658 against purchases in Rhode Island without the consent of the general assembly was directed toward the area where Atherton and his company later laid claim. The Atherton settlers at Wickford complained in June of 1663 that "many turbulent, spirited fanatics, inhabitants of Rhode Island, have disturbed petitioners by cutting down their houses in the night." Richard Smith informed Connecticut that "by force and violence they intend to fetch others" from their homes. Smith warned that the area "may be easily overturned by them if Connecticut stick not to us since they are resolute to drive all before them." ²⁶

²⁵Updike, Richard Smith, p. 21. It seems strange that while Connecticut denied the validity of the Clarke-Winthrop agreement, they argued over its interpretation.

²⁶"Petition of John Scott, John Winthrop, Simon Bradstreet, Daniel
In April of 1664, the king commissioned Robert Carr, George Cartwright, Samuel Maverick and Richard Nicholls to investigate the "differences and disputes arisen upon the limits and bounds of the several charters and jurisdictions." These contentions were threatening to "damage and discredit English interests" in America. Secretly, the commissioners had two other objectives. Concerning internal relations among the English colonies, they were to "ascertain the true state of those several colonies," encourage the election of those who would "support the king, inquire into all laws passed" and examine their conformity to the laws of England and the regulations of the crown. Concerning external affairs and defense against the Dutch, they were to secure the appointment of one of their members, Colonel Richard Nicholls, as the governor of New York, and to also insure the appointment of a second member, Colonel George Cartwright, as the major-general of the province. 27

From the outset, relations between the United Colonies and the royal commission were strained. Despite the king's guarantee that "all their liberties and privileges would continue without the least violation of his majesty's favor towards them upon all occasions," and that no agreement

---

Denison, Josiah Winslow, Thomas Willet and Richard Lord to the King," and "Petition of Captain William Hudson, John Paine and others to the Commissioners Cartwright and Maverick," Documents, #493, #929, in Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, V: 143, 275; "Smith Petition," and "Rhode Island to Connecticut," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II: 45, 47-8, 376-8; Staples, Connecticut MSS, III: 33-5; Rhode Island's position was weakened by the support of Charles II to the Atherton purchaser against the "unreasonable and turbulent spirits of Providence Colony." He advised Atherton and company to seek protection of the United Colonies "against the unjust oppressions and molestations." See "King to Governors of the New England Colonies," June 1, 1663, Document #494, in Sainsbury, V: 143-4; Trumbull Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 542.

would be reached without "mutual consent," any settlement had to curtail some colony's privileges. The United Colonies believed from the start that the commissioners would abridge their privileges rather than those of tiny Rhode Island.28

Colonel Nicholls never took an active role in the transactions of the commission, since he directed his energies to New York and the problems with the Dutch. He was the only commissioner Massachusetts and Connecticut would have received with hospitality. Regarding the other three, the colonies of the New England Confederacy were "not at all pleased with their commission." Samuel Maverick had caused their governments "ill treatment" in England and he was acknowledged "to be their professed enemy." Cartwright was considered "a Papist," while Carr "kept a naughty woman." Concerning investigations, such as the inquiry fostered by the Gortonist petition against the Shawomet seizure, Massachusetts forbid its subjects to testify concerning the charges together with the Answers thereto, from 1635 to 1749, and other Original Documents (Hartford, 1836), pp. 47-51; Hazard, Historical Collections, II: 638; "Commission," and "Secret Instructions from the King to the Commissioners," Documents, #708, #711, #713, in Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, V: 199-201.

28"King to Rhode Island and Connecticut," April 23, 1664, Documents, #717, #719, Ibid., V: 202-4. The animosity of the commission was not directed against Rhode Island, but was aimed at Connecticut and Massachusetts. Many in England, especially the commissioners, were becoming suspicious of the "spirit of independency" that characterized the corporate colonies of New England. The power of the United Colonies, and Massachusetts in particular, was growing. Connecticut and Massachusetts were expanding, at the expense of their neighbors, by the use of oppression and violence." Their interests appeared to be toward self-aggrandizement rather than toward loyalty to the king. While the commissioners identified Massachusetts and Connecticut as symbolizing a dangerous trend in America toward self-reliance and self-government, compared to their arrogance, Rhode Island was seen as setting a "good example." In Rhode Island, "their civility and loyalty to the king was greater than in any other places." See "Commissioners to Massachusetts," "Cartwright to Nicholls," and "Lord Clarendon to Maverick," Documents, #1020, #1007,
against the colony.  

Robert Carr also had a motive to oppose the claims of Connecticut and certain Massachusetts settlers, such as Atherton, to the Narragansett territory. He agreed to participate in the commission if the king promised "something there (in New England) should be granted him" for his efforts. Carr made repeated attempts to remind the king about the pledge, and began to express an interest in a parcel of the Narragansett territory. Due to these factors and "old discourtesies," the final decision of the commission was never in doubt.

The commission ruled the Atherton purchase and the Narragansett mortgage "void," and demanded the settlers under the purchase to "quit said lands." Due to Gorton's negotiations and the subsequent Narragansett submission of themselves and their lands to the king in 1644, he, not the Atherton company, owned the land. The commission was very critical of the United Colonies' treatment of the Narragansett Indians who were "generally hated by these colonies who endeavored in several ways to suppress them, and maintained other Indians against them." The commissioners also ruled that the grants by Connecticut and Massachusetts in the disputed Pawcatuck area, sanctioned by that usurped authority called the United Colonies," were void, and they ordered all those inhabitants concerned to "move themselves and their goods by September 20, 1665."

#963, Ibid., V: 310-11, 305, 288.


The whole Narragansett territory, from the Pawcatuck River in the west
to the area of Wickford and the Atherton purchase in the east, was named
"King's Province" and designated to be under the jurisdiction of the
"magistrates and justices of the peace of Rhode Island...until his
majesty's pleasure be further known."\(^{31}\)

Massachusetts and Connecticut responded to the commission's report
with anger and protests, while the king and Colonel Nicholls remained dis-
satisfied, and confusion continued in the disputed areas. The United
Colonies declared the commission's findings "invalid" because Colonel
Nicholls had not given his opinion and, therefore, a quorum had not
existed when the commissioners reached their conclusions. The king, who
wanted more action against the Dutch, and the French, thought the commis-
sion devoted too much time and effort to inter-colonial bickering over
the Narragansett territory. Colonel Nicholls, who objected to the evic-
tion of Pawcatuck and Atherton settlers, had the report amended to allow
those settlers, who held grants not procured through Rhode Island, to
remain "until the king's pleasure be further known." Confusion in the
disputed area continued because Connecticut ignored the decision, and
even Rhode Island, by far the victor in the commission report, ignored the
Nicholls amendment and continued to arrest settlers in the area.\(^{32}\)

\(^{31}\)"Commissioners to Nicholls," March 20, 1665, #965, "Robert Carr to
Lord Arlington," December 14, 1665, #1103, "Carr and Maverick to the Jus-
tices of the Peace and Magistrates of Rhode Island," August 2, 1665, #
1033, Ibid., 288-90, 341-2, 317; "Royal Commission," April 4, 1665, Bartlett,
45-6.

\(^{32}\)"Meeting of the United Colonies," Ibid., pp. 109-113; "Carr to King,"
August, 1665, #1031, and "Carr to Morrice," December 5, 1665, in Sainsbury,
Calendar of State Papers, V: 316-7; 338-9; "Massachusetts Reply to Royal
displace settlers in Stonington were Mr. Haines, Roger Plaisted, and
In January of 1665, George Cartwright wrote Colonel Nicholls that if the boundary question was "not determined by spring, it is thought much blood might be spilt." The dispute over the legality of the commission and the indefinite nature of "the duration of his majesty's pleasure," invited violence. The arrests by Rhode Island officials continued, as did the expansion of the Misquamicut settlers into Stonington. Stonington settlers complained about John Crandall, James Babcock, James Lewis and others of the Misquamicut for plotting territory on the west side of the Pawcatuck River. These intruders had also "taken possession of weirs on the Pawcatuck River and prohibited Stonington men from fishing." At first their threats seemed "rediculous;" yet they "built, fenced, improved and forcibly settled, and were now growing more numerous, threatening the west side of the river." Stonington settlers were "prohibited from mowing" their own land and threatened with $1000 fines if they persisted. The Rhode Islanders antagonized the Pequots friendly to Stonington, "forbidding them to plant there and threatened to plunder them if they would not pay rent." The Pequots charged that they "would have perished had not the settlers on the west side assisted in food." Connecticut threatened "to use just means to repesssuch enormous and turbulent disturbances." Settlers within the Atherton purchase continued to petition Connecticut to step in and take action against Rhode Island. But Rhode Island remained undaunted. The colony admitted Misquamicut into the general assembly in 1669 as "Westerly," the fifth town of the small Narragansett colony. Both colonies finally agreed to choose commissioners to meet in

New London to negotiate a settlement.  

When the commissioners met in June of 1670, Connecticut expected little from the encounter. The officials of that colony had already approved a contingency plan which was to go into effect immediately if the negotiations failed. The commissioners were "invested with full power to reduce those people of Squamacuck and Narragansett to the obedience of the Connecticut government, and prosecute those that have injured them." Of course the conference failed, and the Connecticut commissioners immediately appointed constables in Westerly and Wickford.  

Officials in both Rhode Island and Connecticut were appalled at the quick action of the latter colony. Roger Williams wrote to Captain John Mason, protesting the action. Governor Winthrop himself dissented from the efforts of his commissioners to exercise jurisdiction east of the Pawaatuck, since it violated his previous agreement with John Clarke. Captain John Mason, the Connecticut military hero of the Pequot War, made perhaps the most extensive objections to the actions of his friends. He  

---


contested the value and importance of the Narragansett territory to Connecticut, as compared to the costs to seize it. "A wise man reckons the cost before he builds his house," he wrote to Connecticut officials. He believed the cost of taking the Narragansett territory by force would "amount in reason to more than the whole country...will be worth." Mason had many other arguments against the action of the Connecticut commissioners which would only lead to a new royal commission or a demand from the king to hear the case in England. The cost of the trial and the transportation involved for "rocks, swamps and sand heeps" would be "very great and access to his majesty cannot be expected." He also remembered the indecisiveness of commission decisions and the vague meaning of "the duration of his king's pleasure." The nature of these decisions in the past had been unclear and indecisive. "When it may be issued, who knows," asked Mason. "Did we not think we had been beyond all trouble when we received our new charter?" Mason then asked what would happen if the people refused to submit? After all the initial costs, they would have to "erect a government over a people that will come under no government, neither civil nor ecclesiastic." Finally, Mason demanded that if the case did go to trial, let "those who are interested in the matter defray the charges, for I must confess, I see no reason why hundreds of poor men who are never like to receive any benefit by it should be charged to procure it,"


Rhode Island quickly responded to the actions of the Connecticut commissioners by ordering a Stonington settler, John Frinke, to warn his fellow townsmen to appear at Captain Gookin's house on June 17, 1670, to hear an order from Rhode Island. But Frinke ignored the command and none of the Stonington settlers appeared. James Babcock of Westerly then arrested Frinke, Benjamin Palmer, and Thomas Bell. 36

Connecticut promptly ordered Tobias Saunders and James Babcock to appear at Captain Gookin's house to answer for the seizures. Both of them were pressured into submitting to Connecticut jurisdiction. Benjamin Palmer somehow escaped his earlier arrest and traveled to Wickford with two others on the 21st to warn the settlers there of the actions of Rhode Island at Stonington. Two of the three were intercepted and arrested by constable Thomas Mumford and two others of Rhode Island. Captain Daniel Denison of Wickford and Captain Thomas Prentice went to Pettequamsicut and demanded of Samuel Wilson, a Rhode Island official, the release of the two Stonington settlers. Wilson flatly refused to comply. By this time the Connecticut commissioners and a force of fifty mounted men arrived in Wickford and, by threat of force, secured the release of the two Stonington men. A Wickford commission was then appointed and sworn in. The commission demanded that no one exercise power in the name of Rhode Island. 37

II: 534, 536; Amos Richardson of Stonington accused Captain Mason of being "a traitor." Mason sued Richardson for slander in June of 1671, and was awarded damages. See Haynes, Stonington Chronology, p. 21.

36 Captain Gookin's house was the usual assembly site for Stonington town meetings. The order probably demanded those in the area to submit to Rhode Island jurisdiction and threatened all those who submitted to Connecticut. Frinke, who refused to carry out the directive, was sent to Newport and imprisoned. Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II: 319-20.

37 It is probable that Connecticut threatened them with imprisonment if they did not submit. That they did submit is evidenced by the
The governor of Rhode Island wrote to the Wickford commission and charged them with making "an intrusion into our jurisdiction," and demanded the withdrawal of their forces. The governor announced that an appeal would be made to the king and added "we doubt not that you will be ready to meet us there." He informed the commissioners that Rhode Island would continue to exercise jurisdiction in the disputed area.38

On July 11, 1670, Thomas Flounders of Wickford murdered Walter House, also of that settlement. The many witnesses had no disagreement as to the circumstances of House's death, but discord existed concerning who would apprehend and prosecute Flounders! The Connecticut officials buried House and issued a warrant for the arrest of Flounders. Rhode Island instantly protested, and sent its own coroner and officials from Newport and Pettequamscut. They met with the Connecticut officials and asked them to assist in seating a twelve man jury for an inquest. The Connecticut officials refused, and then asked the Rhode Islanders to serve on their jury. Neither side could secure the necessary twelve members, and the situation appeared stalemated. But the Rhode Island

appointment of Saunders and Connecticut as a "Commissioner of Squamacuck" with two Stonington settlers, Thomas Stanton, Jr., and Thomas Minor. James Babcock later reluctantly re-submitted to Rhode Island jurisdiction within a year. Even though Saunders and Babcock submitted, they were both bound until they appeared at court the following June. See "Commissioner of General Assembly," June 23, 1670, "Report of the General Council at Westerly," May 16, 1671, Ibid., II: 335, 386-8; Captain Hudson was a member of the Ather- ton Company which purchased much of the Narragansett territory. See "Narraga eens Mortgage," Documents VII, in Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Recor- ders, II: 541; Mumford and the two others were from Pettequamscut, the purchase made by Portsmouth settlers just south of Wickford. See Bartlett, Rhode Island Recorders, II: 321-2, 333-4; Arnold, History of the State of Rhode Island, I: 344.

38 "Governor and Council," and "Governor of Rhode Island to Wickford Commissioners," June 20, 1670, Bartlett, Rhode Island Recorders, II: 333-4, 324. John Clarke and John Greene (of Warwick) were chosen as agents to "vindicate" their charter before the king. See Ibid., 339.
officials, under Henry Palmer of Newport, decided to hold an inquest with only six jury members. Because they did not recognize the Connecticut coroner's report, and because they believed House was "illegally and disorderly buried," Palmer demanded that the victim be dug up so they could officially proceed with the legal formalities and hold their inquest. After this farcical episode, the body was once more consigned to the earth, but "Rhode Island jurisdiction was maintained."  

The officials on both sides threatened each other with arrest, and Samuel Eldridge and John Cole, the officials of Connecticut, were arrested and taken to Newport immediately after the episode for their "interference" with Rhode Island's attempts to handle the case. Connecticut lost the race to find the murderer, since Rhode Island apprehended him just four days after the killing. Rhode Island refused to surrender their captive to Connecticut, and had him tried, convicted, and finally executed in Newport five months later.

During the Flounders episode, the Stonington settlers took advantage of the introduction of Connecticut forces at Wickford and acted against the Rhode Island settlers at Westerly. Sixteen horsemen from Stonington confronted John Crandall and ten others from the east side of the Pawcatuck. The Stonington force "forwarned them from cutting grass" until

---


40 Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II: 346-7; Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 535; Records of the Court of Trials of the Colony of Providence Plantations, II: 97-8; Connecticut issued warrants for Thomas Mumford and Samuel Wilson for "pretending to exercise Rhode Island authority" at Wickford. See Bartlett, Rhode Island Records.

---
they submitted to the government of Connecticut. But Crandall and his men, "being very loath to submit to the government of Connecticut... maintained their rights." The Stonington settlers then gave the Rhode Islanders six days to ascertain just how much assistance they could receive from their colony. When Crandall and the others realized that "they were in a bad situation with low stores of food," the group admitted that they "must and will submit" if Rhode Island failed to support them. In the light of the recent events, the Stonington settlers increased their pressure on Westerly believing "it would be good to follow the business now it is warm." 41

Stonington took advantage of the situation and "made incursions upon the town of Westerly...knocked down, carried away...imprisoned, and sentenced several persons of the said town, to the great affrightenment and disquieting of the rest." Rhode Island responded by enforcing the forfeiture act against those who were "plotting, contriving, or acting in such zimmons and rebellious proceedings in east Pawcatuck" and against those who would "submit" to alien jurisdiction. Anticipating assistance, a month later John Crandall, Tobias Saunders, and a "company of Rhode Island men armed with clubs" drove off Thomas Stanton and Thomas Minor of Stonington while they attempted to plot ground on the east side of the river. The constables of Stonington were informed of "several late

41 "Thomas Stanton to John Allen," July 14, 1670, Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II: 345-6; At a meeting of the Connecticut general court held at Captain Goodine's house in Wickford on June 21, 1670, Daniel Gookin of Stonington presented a "declaration" against the Westerly inhabitants, especially John Crandall and James Babcock. The declaration charged that Crandall, Babcock and others "invaded Gookin's farm and, in a more secret way, broke and burned down the fences, turned the cattle and swine on their own and grass...cut and carried away abundance of hay...and more openly, forced the individuals from their planting lands." See "Declaration of Daniel Gookin," and the "Testimony of Thait Strickland, His Wife, and James Noyes," in Staples, Connecticut MSS, III: 30-4.
threatenings against persons and estates of some of the inhabitants of
Stonington, by some on the east side of the river," Plots devised at the
home of Tobias Saunders resulted in the "demolishing of houses and divid-
ing the boards as spoils."\(^{42}\)

In a further effort to thwart the Connecticut offensive, the Rhode
Island general assembly arranged several meetings of the court of justices,
which had exclusive jurisdiction in the King's Province according to the
royal commission of 1664-5. The sessions were held in Westerly and other
places to examine the boundary situation in the colony and restore quiet
and loyalty among its inhabitants.\(^{43}\)

The court of justices, comprised of Governor Arnold, Deputy-Governor
John Clarke, and the assistants of the general assembly, convened at West-
erly on May 16, 1671. The constables of the town were required to warn
the inhabitants of the settlement to appear at the house of Tobias Saunders
at eight o'clock the following morning. James Babcock, arrested by Connecti-
cut in 1664, and pressured into submitting to that colony in June 1670,
refused to notify the settlers. Suball Painter assumed Babcock's responsi-
bility, and the settlers assembled to hear the court read its orders.\(^{44}\)

\(^{42}\)"Rhode Island General Assembly," April 2, 1671, and "Order from
the Constables of the Town of Stonington," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records,
II: 367-9, 406; It appears that the loyalty of Tobias Saunders to Connecti-
cut did not last to long beyond his appointment by that colony as a commis-
sioner. See "footnote," in Trumbull, Connecticut Colonial Records, II:
537; Before the court met at Westerly, John Crandall was arrested by Com-
n sympathetic officials. See Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II: 373; Vars,
Records of Tobias Saunders, paragraph: 31; Arnold, History of the State
of Rhode Island, I: 344.

\(^{43}\)"General Assembly," May 2, 1671, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records,
II: 283-4; Arnold, I: 350.

\(^{44}\)"Court of Justices," May 16-17, 1671, Bartlett, Rhode Island
Records, II: 283-7.
Prior to the arrival of the court, Westerly officials threatened to cut off the weirs on the Pawcatuck River from Stonington. While the court of justices was in session, some of those in Stonington believed the time was fortuitous to express their anger and respond to the recent intimidation and surge of confidence on the east side of the Pawcatuck. Thomas Minor led thirty or forty horsemen to the Saunders house, and inquired "by what authority and for what purpose" did that court convene. One of the constables of Stonington "asserted the authority of Connecticut over that territory and required the court to desist to sit or act." The Rhode Islanders were "apparently afraid and acted nothing more." There was not a blow struck, nor hot words," but a "resolute" determination on the part of the invaders to cause dismay among the Rhode Island settlers. At this, the force under Minor was "very cheerful and much encouraged."45

Despite the initial plans of Rhode Island to send Clarke and Greene to England after the failure to arrive at a settlement in June of 1670, the voices of moderation in Connecticut, as exemplified by Mason and Winthrop, gave Rhode Island some hope of the possibility of an agreement. Because of the immense costs to send agents to England, Rhode Island made an effort to avoid that action. Connecticut acknowledged "many disuniting expressions" within its own ranks, but expressed to its adversary that such discord would "moderate and allay" in time. The stumbling block for negotiations was the place for the respective commissioners to meet. Rhode Island objected to New London as too "unsuitable" and proposed Seekonk or New York. They also recommended that the conference be "open...before all men present...and the whole discussions that

passed between them be in writing." Connecticut replied, suggesting Seekonk or Boston as the site for the talks. Rhode Island agreed to Seekonk in October 1671, and they scheduled the meeting for the following April. But a month later, Rhode Island informed Connecticut that such negotiations could not "alter, change, or give away any part of the bounds" of their charter or alter the decisions of the royal commission in 1665. Connecticut immediately responded by stating that their efforts to arrive at a solution were only "labors in vain" and the attempts to negotiate were not revived until spring of 1672.46

To further our understanding about the contest in the Narragansett territory, three other factors must now be examined: the pro-Connecticut representation in the Rhode Island general assembly, the growing Quaker influence in the colony, and the proprietary claims of William Harris.

In 1672, those settlers seeking Connecticut jurisdiction in the Narragansett territory were represented by assistants Richard Smith, Jr., and Francis Brinley. Smith was the son of Richard Smith, the first settler of Wickford and, like his father, was a member of the Atherton company. Brinley favored strong authority and "preferred the paternalism of Connecticut to the individualism of Rhode Island."47

Alone, Brinley and Smith could do little. But the growing number

---


47 "Atherton Purchase," Ibid., 541; Richman, Rhode Island, II: 249-51.
of Quakers in the colony assisted them in their efforts to secure Connecticut jurisdiction for their lands. The Quakers did not favor Connecticut over Rhode Island, but they wanted to avoid "strife and retaliation" and any contest that could result in bloodshed. This sentiment "cleared the way for the designs of a few, energetic, pro-Connecticut spirits in Newport and in Narragansett."48

The schemes of William Harris further weakened Rhode Island's ability to respond to Connecticut's attempts to control the Narragansett territory. Harris was one of the "proprietary faction" in Providence who endeavored to limit ownership in the Providence and Pawtuxet areas only to those who made the original purchases. While Roger Williams intended to "indefinitely enlarge the fellowship" for those who might flee from the Puritans because of religious persecution, Harris's design was "that of the narrow, exclusive town proprietor."49

Harris's scheme to insure a closed proprietorship involved incidents concerning the deed to the lands. When Williams and the other twelve original purchasers bought the land from the Narragansetts in 1636, they did not receive a written record of the sale. A deed in the form of a "memorandum" was obtained in March 1638. However, more territory was added, which Williams had not included in his original purchase. In

48 The Quakers in the general assembly in May, 1672, were: John Easton, Thomas Harris, Joshua Coggeshall (assistants), and Walter Clarke, John Could, Peter Easton, Daniel Gould, and Henry Bull (deputies). Ibid. Sentiment against violence, even preparations for self-defense, was evident in Rhode Island prior to 1672. During rumors of an Indian uprising in 1655, militia service met "armed opposition" from those asserting liberty of conscience. Ibid.; Stow Persons, American Minds: A History of Ideas (N.Y., 1958), p. 61; Arnold, History of the State of Rhode Island, I: 257; William R. Staples, Annals of the Town of Providence: From its Settlement to the Organization of the City Government in June, 1832 (Providence, 1843), p. 143.

October 1638, a second memorandum was drawn up, one which omitted the clause allowing others to become members of the purchasers' fellowship. In the subsequent years, confirmations were secured from the Indians which added more territory to the purchase; while still rendering its overall clarity in reference to boundaries "tenfold more uncertain." This deed was supposedly damaged accidentally by William Arnold's wife, and a supposed true copy was submitted by William Harris to be put on the records. The "vagueness and uncertainty" of the boundaries of the purchase resulted in suits between fellow purchasers and claims by Harris to the Warwick lands of Samuel Gorton and his followers. In 1663, Harris and others of the proprietary faction were elected to the town council. They immediately opened for sale lands outside Providence to be developed into towns. Harris and his friends then planned to claim the lands and collect rents.  

Harris's cooperation with Connecticut authorities matured as he and his associates realized their cause was hopeless in the Rhode Island courts. Perhaps if Harris assisted Connecticut in acquiring jurisdiction over the tract, he could find a more favorable court to hear his case. Harris worked diligently for the remainder of his life to see the Narragansett territory fall under the jurisdiction of Hartford. 

The May 1672 session of the Rhode Island general assembly illustrated the cooperation among Harris, the Quakers, and the pro-Connecticut faction.

---


51Ibid., 80.
in the assembly. A year previous, Harris drew up a protest against taxing the Narragansett territory because he asserted the land belonged to Connecticut. The Rhode Island court of justices in February of 1672 ordered him committed to prison without bail for "speaking and writing against his majesty's gracious charter granted to his colony...and subverting the government." While Harris was in prison, the general assembly confirmed the forfeiture act against those settlers from Stonington found "plotting" or acting in the recent riots against Westerly. The damage was to be "sustained by the perpetrators," and the assembly also ordered their immediate arrest and punishment.  

But a month later, a newly elected assembly sat at Newport. That assembly included Smith, Brinley, and an increased number of Quakers. They immediately secured the release of Harris and repealed the acts of the previous assembly against Stonington. They also rescinded the act to send Clarke to England to argue the case of Rhode Island in the boundary dispute before the king. Instead, another commission to deal with Connecticut was appointed, and the assembly dropped the demand of a neutral town and agreed to meet the commissioners from Connecticut at either New London or Richard Smith's trading house in Wickford. Of the eight Rhode Island commissioners chosen, two were Quakers, and two more were Smith and Brinley. In November, the assembly entertained motions to revoke the forfeiture act totally and to declare the Atherton purchases were "good and lawful estates and titles."  


53 For a list of the assemblymen, see footnote 48, "General Assembly," May 14 and November 6, and "Rhode Island to Connecticut," May 1, 1672, Ibid., 458-61, 478.
As stated earlier, the efforts of William Harris were fruitless in the courts of Rhode Island. Even when one court favored his claim, those on the contested land resisted the execution of the court's decision. In the summer of 1675, Harris petitioned the king for a hearing on the subject. Harris suggested, and the king concurred, that the governors of the four New England colonies choose a commission to settle the dispute. But the Harris commission had to wait. That same year, the Wampanoags under King Philip led the New England tribes in the decisive struggle known as King Philip's War. 54

Philip, the son of Massasoit, angrily watched the steady encroachment of the English upon his lands. Two years after his father's death in 1660, his brother, Alexander, was seized by Plymouth men under Josiah Winslow and taken to Duxbury for questioning regarding rumors of an Indian uprising. Alexander died immediately upon his return to his people, and the Indians believed that the English had poisoned him. Philip bided his time and waited for the chance to avenge his people. 55

When Philip attacked Swansea, Massachusetts on June 34, 1675, the United Colonies immediately made attempts to discern the intentions of the Narragansetts. Although the tribe did not openly assist Philip, Conanochet, the son of Maintonomi, did allow the warring Indians to leave


their women and children with his people. Massachusetts demanded a meeting with the Narragansetts, and a large force was sent into their territory to make an "armed demonstration" in an effort to coerce the tribe into an alliance with the United Colonies. The force then threatened to arrest Canonchet unless he and his people complied. The proud and insulted sachem immediately joined Philip and all of southern New England was ablaze with the savage struggle. 56

Governor Josiah Winslow of Plymouth led an expedition of one-thousand men from that colony, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and a small number of Rhode Islanders under Captain Benjamin Church of Little Compton against the Narragansetts who had built a well fortified system of palisades in a swamp outside Wickford. On December 19, 1675, the English assaulted the bastion and completely devastated the Indians in what has been known since as "the Great Swamp Fight." 57

Rhode Island was just as suspicious of the activities and movements of the troops of the United Colonies as it was of the actions of the Indians. While taking only defensive measures, and even those measures


57 The "Great Swamp Fight" was a replay of the destruction of the Pequot fort thirty years earlier. For contemporary accounts of the "Great Swamp Fight" and the war with Philip, see Benjamin Church, The History of Philip's War, ed. by Henry M. Dexter (Boston, 1854); Charles H. Lincoln, ed., Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699 (N. Y., 1952); Reverend William Hubbard, A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England, 1607-1677 (Boston, 1677); "Benjamin Batten to Sir Thomas Allen," June 29, July 6, 1675, #614, "Governor Leverett to Sir Joseph Williamson," December 18, 1675, and June 15, 1676, #876, in Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, IX: 251-3, 317-9, 405-6; "A Further Brief and True Narrative of the Great Swamp Fight in the Narragansett Country (originally published in December, 1675)," (Princeton, 1912). Ironically, near the end of the war, Canonchet, the son of Maintonomi, was executed by the son of Unkas.
were taken late in the war, Governor Walter Clarke ordered Captain Arthur Fenner not only to defend against the Indians, but also to watch the movements of alien troops, "their unlawful intrusions, and to forbid their settling of garrisons without our advise and knowledge." The migration of Rhode Island settlers to safety on the island of Aquedneck left the Pawcatuck and Narragansett territory west of Newport "void of inhabitants," and many in Rhode Island feared that Connecticut would take advantage of the situation. At the close of the war, the Harris commission was revived, Rhode Island and Connecticut renewed their contentions, and a few new altercations arose out of the conduct of the war.  

In accordance with the king's instructions prior to the war with Philip, eight judges, two from each of the four New England colonies, assembled in Boston on October 3, 1677, to empanel a jury to hear the case of William Harris. From its very inception the commission was "hardly disinterested." It was well understood that Harris was in league with Connecticut, that Plymouth had territorial claims conflicting with Rhode Island's arising from the Indian war, and that Massachusetts could never be expected to support the colony of religious heretics.  

---


59 "Petition of William Harris," #585-8, Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, IX: 242-3; The jury consisted of four members from Massachusetts, two from Plymouth, three from Connecticut, and three from Rhode Island. See Staples, Annals of Providence, p. 583; Of the Harris court, Rhode Island historian Sydney S. Rider stated "Rhode Island seemed doomed to destruction." See Rider's, "Forgeries Connected with the Indian Deed to Roger Williams," Tracts: 83-4; Rhode Island and Plymouth were at odds over the territory of the defeated Wampanoags at Mount Hope. This tract was across the Narragansett Bay to the east from Aquedneck Island. See "Rhode Island to Charles II," August 1, 1679, in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, III: 48-9.
The jury moved to Providence in November to hear five cases involving the claims of William Harris. On November 21, 1677, the court favored Harris in all five cases. But when Providence authorities were ordered to run the property lines according to the decision of the court, Harris and the town officials disagreed upon exactly how to interpret that decision. The jury was recalled to clarify the verdict, but one of the Connecticut commissioners, Daniel Wetherell, was unable to attend. The Rhode Island commissioners argued that any subsequent proceedings would be "destitute of power" without the attendance of all, and then departed. When the other commissioners made plans to continue, the three jurors from Rhode Island also withdrew in protest. Needless to say, the court upheld the previous decision and ordered the Providence officials to draw the line.

Randall Holden and John Greene of Warwick protested against one verdict of the court which awarded tracts in Warwick to Harris. The two founders of the settlement traveled to England, where they convinced the king that "Warwick should not be bothered," since the settlement did not appear to be any part of the Pawtuxet lands. The king issued a stay of execution against the decision awarding the Warwick lands to Harris. Harris, angered, also left for England to speak with the king. Again, the equivocal and uncertain nature of the king's decisions was made evident. Although the king allowed the stay of execution to stand, he was not totally positive in that action. He demanded to hear Randall and

---

Greene again before he would finalize the decision. While the Warwick question remained unclear, the king ordered that the other decisions be carried out. But he ordered that "the governors and magistrates of the colony of Rhode Island...be strickly charged to put the said William Harris and his partners into quiet possession thereof...within three months." This was tantamount to allowing the fox to guard the chicken coup! Of course, Harris and the Rhode Island officials were still at odds concerning where to draw the property lines. In October of 1679, Harris again journeyed to England to argue his case, and to act as an agent of Connecticut and Wickford, presenting their cases for the Narragansett territory. Unfortunately for Connecticut and Wickford, and especially for Harris, he was seized by a Barbary corsair and imprisoned for ransom in Algiers. Connecticut paid the ransom, but Harris died immediately upon his arrival in England. The Harris plot then slowly died, no longer being a paramount threat to Rhode Island.  

Concurrent with Harris's maneuvers following Philip's War were repeated efforts by Connecticut and many of the settlers of Wickford to attain royal recognition of that colony's sovereignty in the Narragansett territory. Immediately after Indian hostilities abated, Rhode Island had proclamations posted at Wickford forbidding anyone from exercising jurisdiction in the territory or selling land there without authority from Rhode Island. Connecticut did not hesitate to respond. When many settlers

who had "long since engaged fidelity to Rhode Island" moved back to their Narragansett lands, they were "forcibly taken from their habitations by authorities of Connecticut and bonds extracted from them for their appearance before the Hartford court."  

Rhode Island was irritated when posters advertising the sale of lands in the Narragansett territory by the Atherton company were circulated, even in Newport itself! The Atherton purchasers stated that the time was perfect for such sales. Settlement prior to that time had been hindered "by the ravages of Indian warfare." Now that that threat was eliminated after the demise of King Philip, the whole area was much more attractive. Rhode Island advised that it considered the sales illegal, and that those purchasing such lands would be dealt with as intruders. By December of 1678, the king received a protest for the sales from Randall Holden and John Greene of Warwick. Charles II re-affirmed the decision of the royal commission to have the magistrates and justices of the peace of Rhode Island exercise authority in the King's Province "until his majesty's pleasure be further known." At this point, Harris was captured by the Barbary pirates, and Connecticut was forced to adopt a new approach. While the colony reiterated old debates, it had the Wickford settlers themselves petition the king, and new charges surfaced concerning the conduct of the respective colonies during the late Indian upheaval.

---


63 "Narragansett Ad.," July, 1878, Ibid., II: 544, III: 267-9; The foolish proprietor who posted the ad in Newport was John Saffin. He was arrested, fined, and forced to forfeit all his lands in the colony. The same action was attempted against Richard Smith, Jr., of Wickford, but
The Wickford settlers criticized Rhode Island's contribution to the efforts to defeat the Indians in the recent war. "So cold was their charity to their poor neighbors in distress," claimed the settlers, that repeated requests for aid were denied. Yet, since the conflict, Rhode Island imposed taxes on them when they "had hardly anything left." Much of the criticism was aimed at the governor of the colony, who was a Quaker. Those in Wickford charged that his beliefs against bearing arms resulted in that colony's refusal to assist others in self-defense. Because of the Quaker leadership in Rhode Island, their lands were "ravaged," and they pleaded to return to the jurisdiction of Connecticut.

Connecticut officials again pointed out the precedence of their charters of 1631 and 1662, their right to the Pequot territory by conquest in 1637, the illegality of the Clarke-Winthrop Agreement, and the sentiments of the settlers of Wickford in favor of Connecticut jurisdiction. Since the king had recently confirmed the royal commission's decision of 1665 concerning jurisdiction in the area, Connecticut tactfully avoided in its argument an attack on the legality of the commission. Connecticut instead charged that Rhode Island had violated the decision because it "exercised authority not as justices of the peace of King's Province, but...


64 "Petition of Richard Smith and Others to the King," 1678, and "Petition from the Inhabitants of the Narragansett Country to the King," July 29, 1679, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, III: 50-1, 58-60; Sainsbury, #1080, Calendar of State Papers, X: 402-3.

-81-
as governor and assistants of Rhode Island." With regard to the conduct of the Indian war, Connecticut supported the accusations of the Wickford settlers and charged that wounded men were "forced to pay dearly for what relief they had there." The late Governor Cranston of Newport was condemned for "taking indenture of their soldiers to serve him for years for what they had had, before he let them pass." Connecticut politely refused the king's request to meet with agents from both that colony and Rhode Island. Connecticut had paid for William Harris's agency, then his ransom, only to have him expire before he could do that colony service. Governor Leete informed the Earl of Sunderland that the colony was too poor because of its contribution in the Indian war to afford a new agent. He told Sunderland that the colony "rested on the king's wisdom and justice for protection against unneighborly intruders," and that he would make certain that all relevant documents would be sent to the king.  

Rhode Island answered the charges with accusations of its own. William Coddington scoffed at the complaints of the United Colonies, since Rhode Island cared for their wounded while Quakers were "forced to run the gauntlet because they refused to bear arms." Regarding the military claims of the United Colonies, Rhode Islanders gloated that it was a force commanded by Captain Benjamin Church of Rhode Island that killed King Philip himself in August of 1676. In defense of the colony, Randall Holden and John Greene of Warwick argued that the Quakers commissioned
sloops, well manned, to transport the soldiers of the New England Confederacy, "risking their lives to assist them and the wounded back to the ships." In reference to the complaints of the Wickford settlers, particularly Richard Smith, Jr., Greene and Holden asked what assistance they received from the United Colonies. The troops used Smith's house as a headquarters, garrisoned it, "yet suddenly deserted it," allowing it to fall to the Indians who subsequently burned it.66

Rhode Island officials even questioned the necessity of the widespread bloodshed and destruction arising out of Philip's war. They were convinced that "if matters had come to a just inquiry concerning the cause of the war," it would have been demonstrated that the Narragansetts "were forced to war" by the United Colonies. The Rhode Islanders claimed that there was no "manifestations of war against us from them, but always the contrary." Therefore, the war could have been localized in Plymouth and parts of Southeastern Massachusetts, and Philip could have been defeated much sooner.67

66 Although "the Quaker dominated Rhode Island government made but feeble efforts to resist attack," they did give care to many wounded soldiers of the New England Confederacy on Aquedneck Island. Major Peleg Sanford of Newport "furnished quarters for a large body of wounded, supplying 244 lbs. of mutton, 66 lbs. of butter, 74 lbs. of sugar, and 28 5/8 gallons of rum." See Richman, Rhode Island, II: 181; 165-7; "Peleg Sanford and Richard Baily," April 21, 1677, "Rhode Island to Charles II," August 1, 1679, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, II: 579, III: 40-1. Although Captain Benjamin Church lived in Little Compton, he and his family moved from Plymouth where he served in the militia. See Tebbel, Compact History of Indian Wars, p. 24. Despite the allegations made against the Quakers for their pacific sentiments, not all of these sectarian stood aloof from actual combat. Five Quakers joined Church when he returned to Plymouth to offer service against the Indians. One of the five was the deputy-governor of Rhode Island, John Easton. Another Connecticut source claims "one hundred Quakers of Rhode Island joined to fight." See Richman; "Ben Bratton to Sir Thomas Allen," June 29-July 6, 1675, #614, Sainsbury, Calendar of State Papers, IX: 351-3; "Answer of Holden and Greene to Petition of R. Smith and Others," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, III: 60-2.

67 "Rhode Island to Connecticut," October 25, 1676, Bartlett, Rhode
While all the arguments were being presented in England, and arrests were being made in Wickford, the Pawcatuck region was anything but placid. The Rhode Island settlers of Westerly had taken refuge in Newport during the Indian war. After the death of Philip, the settlers of Westerly returned. Rhode Island attempted to reassert its jurisdiction in the area, and held a court in the settlement on September 17, 1679. Thirty-three settlers took oaths of allegiance to the colony, and Tobias Saunders and John Crandall were reaffirmed conservators of the peace. Connecticut responded to the action, complaining that the Pawcatuck settlers were refusing to honor Connecticut warrants, claiming loyalty to Rhode Island. Although Connecticut was earlier "willing to sit silent during the interim," officials advised Rhode Island "not to be hasty to drive on commentators" which would require a more forceful response from them. Rhode Island denied setting up any new jurisdiction, but maintained that its officials

*Island Records, II: 556-8.* Even in confrontation, the Narragansett sachems and Rhode Island leaders still shared a mutual respect and a memory of warm relations in the past. One such occurrence took place at Providence during the Indian war. The Narragansett sachems listened to Roger Williams as he attempted to intercede between the warring Narragansetts and the defenseless town. "While they assumed him of personal regard in memory of the past," they urged him "not to expose himself, as their young men were enraged." This legend is included in Richman, *Rhode Island, II: 167," and is quoted by Richman from Backus's *History of New England, I: 427.* There is validity in the Rhode Island charges against the United Colonies concerning the Narragansett Indians. The combined forces of Plymouth and Massachusetts could have easily trapped Philip on the eastern shore of the Narragansett Bay and "the war would not have extended beyond that locality." But Massachusetts chose to send a "demonstration of force" into the Narragansett County to induce them to guarantee peace. Imperial historian Herbert Osgood made a critical point which may have been an influential factor to the United Colonies. At the time of the expedition, it was by no means certain that the Narragansetts were inclined to make war. But, "in that case the power of the Narragansetts, as well as that of the tribes of central Massachusetts, would have remained unbroken, and the English would have found them a constant source of peril when at a later time the struggle with the French began." See Herbert L. Osgood, *American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, I: 548.*
were only continuing the jurisdiction as authorized by his majesty's commission of 1665. The settlers also declared "neither flattery nor threats can withdraw us from our loyalty." But Connecticut moved ahead, "assessing, fining, and imprisoning" planters at Westerly.

The whole conflict was further complicated by the frustrations of the people in the disputed areas. Although preferring Connecticut to Rhode Island, they were not always pleased with the former either. Many Stonington settlers had refused to pay the levy imposed upon them by Hartford to pay for the efforts to secure that colony's charter in 1662. Stonington settlers felt "caught in the middle" of the jurisdictional disputes between Rhode Island and Connecticut and the conflicting land titles of Connecticut and Massachusetts. The loyalty of some of those settlers toward Massachusetts died slow, and for others it never waned, while the conflicting land titles caused conflicts between the two members of the New England Confederation long after Connecticut assumed sole jurisdiction in Stonington. The settlers of Wickford also felt caught in the middle and even came to the point where "in truth, they knew not whom to submit to!" Because of the "animosities still arising in peoples'
minds, as they stood affected to this or that government," it was probable that many would "be wronged and injured by either government."

Therefore, the settlers of Wickford began to ask for a charter of incorporation allowing them to be an "entire new province." 69

At this point, it is easy to understand how, despite the royal commission in 1664-5, the Harris commission in 1677, and the king's confirmation of the decision of the royal commission in 1678, the question of the King's Province was not settled. The equivocation of the crown gave those who lost ground in the past confidence they could attain dominance in the future. In July of 1682, the Lords of Trade and Plantations suggested that a new royal commission be assembled, headed by Edward Cranfield, the governor of the new royal province of New Hampshire. The king concurred and commissioned Cranfield and eight others in April of 1683 to "examine the Narragansett claims and titles," and, hopefully, to bring the issue to a final determination. 70

The Cranfield commission must be seen in light of a more extensive

---


development, the sentiment by many in England, especially Charles II, to tighten administrative control over the New England colonies. During parliamentary rule in England, the New England colonies experienced an increased latitude of freedom from the mother country, a latitude that was viewed with suspicion in England upon the restoration of Charles II. As noted earlier, many actions of the New England Confederation of the United Colonies were perceived as "usurpations," and the power that emanated from that confederation led Massachusetts to act arrogantly toward England, as exemplified in the treatment of his majesty's commissioners in 1665. It was also becoming increasingly obvious that those colonies were passing laws contrary to the laws of England and were making only token efforts to see that the king's navigation acts were enforced.

In the year King Philip's War erupted, Charles II appointed a special committee of the Privy Council, known as the Lords of Trade, to devote its attentions primarily to colonial affairs, especially to tighten the administrative strings of the empire. That same year, Governor Edmund Andros of New York attempted to use the Indian war to bring Connecticut under the proprietary government of James, Duke of York, and brother to the king. When his overtures of aid were correctly perceived to be "but only a pretext," Andros endeavored to usurp authority in Connecticut by attempting a surprise attack at Saybrooke. When Andros realized he would meet stiff and resolute resistance from Connecticut forces, he withdrew, but the threat of losing their charters remained for the New England colonies. 71

Saltonstall, Jr., all from Massachusetts. See Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, III: 174-5.


-87-
The Cranfield commission, while it reflected an anti-Rhode Island bias due to the fact that seven of the nine commissioners were from Massachusetts, also reflected the English suspicions about the New England colonies through the membership Governor Cranfield of the royal province of New Hampshire and Edward Randolph, a royal customs agent in Massachusetts. In 1679, Charles II took New Hampshire from Massachusetts to set up the royal province. The Lords of Trade dispatched Randolph to Boston to assist in the enforcement of the navigation acts. Because of the friction between the Bay Colony and Randolph, and the refusal of the colony to recognize his commission, legal proceedings were in motion to revoke Massachusetts' charter while Randolph sat on the Cranfield commission.  

"This commission, from the very character of its composition, could scarcely be expected to render a fair decision." This factor Rhode Islanders quickly understood. When the previous royal commission arrived in 1665, Rhode Islanders took advantage of the anti-Massachusetts anti-United Colonies sentiment of the commissioners. The colony courted the commissioners and reaped the benefits of the commission's decision. But the Cranfield commission was different. Its scope was limited to the Narragansett territory and its make-up was hostile, not to the United Colonies (with the exception of Cranfield and Randolph), but to Rhode Island. That colony made no effort to court the Cranfield commission. In fact, just as Massachusetts was arrogant and uncooperative toward the Carr commission in 1665, Rhode Island easily matched that antagonism to the point of open hostility toward the Cranfield commission.  


The commission announced that it would convene at the house of Richard Smith, Jr., at Wickford on August 22, 1683, and that all claims should be made then, all concerned should be present, and all relevant documents should be presented. The Rhode Island general assembly, which was assembled at Warwick, demanded that Cranfield come before them to present his commission before he commenced with his proceedings. Cranfield did not appear, and while his commission was meeting at Richard Smith's house, the general assembly moved their proceedings from Warwick to the home of a Mr. Fones, not far from the Smith house. The general assembly dispatched John Greene and William Allen to go to Cranfield and formally notify him of their order demanding him to present his commission. Upon receipt of the message, Cranfield inquired "who was it from." When the envoys informed him that the order came from the governor of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Cranfield retorted "that he knew of no governors in the King's Province." Cranfield would have read the commission there, but Greene would not hear it, the assembly probably demanding nothing short of a personal presentation before them.  

The assembly immediately responded and issued an "order of prohibition" against the Cranfield commission, forbidding it to sit. A Rhode Island official, probably Greene, returned to Smith's house "in a riotous manner with a great number of horsemen." The force demanded the proceedings be terminated and instructed all the commissioners to depart from

the colony's jurisdiction. Despite this threat, the commission remained for two days before it departed to reassemble in Boston. On September 3, the commissioners asked for any new or contradictory claims to be presented in Boston, but no one from Rhode Island responded. The incident gave Rhode Island an excuse to withhold recognition of the Cranfield commission, a decision probably made when news of that commission first arrived.

The decisions of the commission surprised no one. It reiterated the Connecticut arguments and decided that Connecticut could not be bound by the Clarke-Winthrop Agreement due to the expiration of Governor Winthrop's agency, and that the decisions of the royal commission in 1665-6 were invalid because of the non-participation of Colonel Nicholls. The Atherton purchases and the Narragansett Mortgage were confirmed, and Connecticut was awarded jurisdiction of all the disputed territory, with the exception of the claims for tracts in Warwick.

The verdict was, of course, a victory for Connecticut and Massachusetts. But Cranfield and Randolph did not support the decisions because they were pro-Connecticut or pro-Massachusetts. To them, the Rhode Islanders were just as disrespectful and arrogant as their neighbors, even a little more so. To the two men, they were "all corrupt," but Rhode Island was "more arrogant." The actions of that colony "hindered prosperous settlement" in the area. Rhode Islanders were "a people utterly incapable of magnanimous government." Cranfield then made the ultimate

---


threat to Rhode Island sovereignty when he stated that Coddington's purchase of Aquedneck Island (the location of Portsmouth and Newport) and the earlier purchase of Providence were valid only during the lifetime of the settlements founders, since "the purchase being not made in the name of the government and their successors."\(^77\)

Randolph also had other plans for the territory. During the commission proceedings he supported, not the claims of Connecticut, but the claims of the Duke of Hamilton. The Duke had been given a tract of the Narragansett territory prior to the English Civil War. The royal commission in 1665 disqualified his sixty-square-mile tract because he made no improvement or permanent settlement in the area. Despite Randolph's support, the Cranfield commission dismissed the claim due to the "statute of limitations."\(^78\)

As expected, this commission did not settle the question either. In March 1685, the Atherton purchasers protested the sales of their lands by Rhode Island. They pointed to the pro-Atherton laws passed during the pro-Quaker, pro-Connecticut assembly in October of 1672 and the Cranfield commission decisions. But the colonial claims became submerged in the imposition of the "Dominion of New England" in 1686 with Sir Edmund Andros as the governor, and the revocation of all the charters of New England. Following the overthrow of Andros after the Revolution of 1688


in England, Connecticut and Rhode Island renewed their quarrel over the Narragansett and Pawcatuck territories.  

Rhode Island modified its position in January of 1698 when the general assembly stated that those settlers from other colonies claiming any right or property in Rhode Island "shall not be obstructed or in any ways molested in asserting, settling and improving their just rights and property...provided it be done in an orderly and legal way." Despite this modification, the two colonies were still deadlocked.

Violence again erupted in the Pawcatuck area and in Kingstown (Wickford). In May of 1699, both areas were taxed by the Rhode Island general assembly which threatened penalties if anyone refused to comply. When resistance occurred at Westerly, the offenders were tried under the Sedition Act. The ruthless action by the colony's officials alienated some of its own settlers. When a jury convicted the settlers because of the government 'officials' actions in intermittently adding more members to the jury, the forman of the jury wrote a protest to the governor and to Lord Bellomont, governor of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York. When Rhode Island sent an armed force into Kingston to collect the taxes, it found open rebellion. Fifteen settlers were indicted for riot on April 22, 1700, but they "absconded themselves...and could not be found by the officials appointed to apprehend them." Re-evaluating the situation, the colony's officials must have realized the consequences of further threats and violence in the area. The general assembly disavowed the actions of the court at Kingstown, saying those proceedings

80 Ibid., 355-67.
"were not agreeable to law" because of "some remissness or oversight in their proceedings." The fines were then remitted for the rioters. In retaliation, Connecticut had arrested a sheriff of Rhode Island and several of his posse who attempted to collect taxes in Westerly.  

On May 12, 1703, commissioners from Rhode Island and Connecticut met in Stonington and agreed that the middle channel of the Pawcatuck River would then "and forever remain to be the fixed, and stated line between the said colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island." Rhode Island agreed to "preserve" all land grants made by Connecticut in Westerly. The total western boundary of Rhode Island was finally adjusted in 1728.

Rhode Island had survived both the onslaught of its neighbors and the internal strife that troubled it from its inception. The heritage the colony took with it into the eighteenth century reinforced its suspicion of external powers and its sense of self-reliance and independence. With this thought in mind, I shall now turn to the action directed toward another external adversary, not Massachusetts or Connecticut, but toward Great Britain itself!


82 "Settlement of Boundary," May 12, 1703, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, III: 474-5; Cady, Rhode Island Boundaries, p. 15.
CHAPTER III
Rhode Island:
From Roots of Independence
To
Fruits of Opposition
To Great Britain

"From the very beginning, Rhode Islanders were noticeably independent in their attitude toward the British government. Once the revolutionary movement commenced, this independent attitude became even more apparent, and, even from the crisis over taxation to the Declaration of Independence, Rhode Island seemed one step ahead of her sister colonies in the defiance of the power of parliament and the authority of the crown."

David S. Lovejoy in his Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1770-1776.

After examining the early history of Rhode Island, it is easy to understand why it seemed "one step ahead" of the other colonies in expressing opposition to the re-assertion of British authority. Rhode Islanders "were noticeably more independent" because of a legacy of conflict that made them suspicious of any encroachments by external powers. From its inception, the colony was on its own. The United Colonies refused to allow Rhode Island to join them, thus Rhode Island had to depend upon its own diplomacy with the Indians since they could expect little aid from its neighbors. The religious sectarians believed that what happened to Samuel Gorton and his followers at Shawomet could also happen to them. To protect themselves against retribution for their religious beliefs, the settlers of Rhode Island had to be ready to defend themselves against any encroachment, no matter how minor initially, which might lead to the
ultimate absorption of the entire colony, as exemplified by the northward expansion of Massachusetts into Maine and New Hampshire and by the engulfment of New Haven by Connecticut. The vigilance of the settlers could not moderate as a result of assurances from royal commissions, charters, or even the crown itself. The only assurance of survival for the colony came from its inhabitants; and, even then, the wide diversity of thought within its communities and the less authoritarian framework of its government left the colony in a situation where the resolve and the perseverance of its inhabitants had to excel. Whether in the Narragansett or on the banks of the Pawcatuck, the line had to be drawn, and the colony had to defend itself or perish. Independence of thought and action was not a luxury for the early planters of Rhode Island; it was a necessity!

Therefore, it is no surprise that Rhode Island "never fitted very well into the empire" in the eyes of many British officials. Although the royal commission in 1665 praised Rhode Island's "civility and loyalty to the king," that sentiment was due primarily to the immense suspicion of the United Colonies, especially Massachusetts, held by many in England. Rhode Island appeared as a victim of colonial disloyalty, corruption, and usurpation, not as a participant. But that impression quickly abated, and Rhode Islanders were soon viewed by British officials as a most "scandalous sort of people." With respect to its elected government, "Rhode Island was dangerously democratic." Although the colony's laws were to be in no way "repugnant or prejudicial to Great Britain," many were. The colony failed to keep adequate records of its laws, to require legal oaths for its officials, or to relay copies of its laws to England. Rhode Island's contributions to the defense of the empire were at best minimal. Throughout the Indian and inter-colonial wars, many Rhode
Islanders refused to fight, either because of the Quaker sentiment of their leadership, or because of the militia's refusal to be commanded by anyone but native officers. Military posts were fine prizes to factional stalwarts within the colony, while Rhode Islanders were notorious for trading with the enemies of the crown, they rarely cooperated with the desires of the Board of Trade in enforcing the Navigation Acts.  

The Board of Trade faced some major obstacles when it tried to enforce the Navigation Acts through the colonial admiralty courts. Because of "loopholes" in the Statute of 1696 which established admiralty courts in America, "the area of their jurisdiction was not precise and was

frequently encroached upon by the courts of common law in Rhode Island."
These courts, with their native judges elected by the house of deputies, could issue "writs of prohibition" which prevented the execution of an admiralty judge's decree. Admiralty judges who proceeded in spite of the prohibition could be punished for contempt of court. Many times, customs officials were reluctant to initiate cases because they could be prosecuted by the courts of common law if it was determined that the seizure was made "without reason or contrary to law." Judges sympathetic to local merchants would call trials on such short notice that the customs officials and the advocates (prosecuting attorneys) frequently failed to appear. In such a case, the merchants or ship's captains "who had been caught red-handed were dismissed on the pretext of a lack of evidence." Even condemnation of the prize usually led to its sale to the original owner for a "trifle" of its real value. Many customs officials played it safe and bargained with the merchants, attaining an annual payment in return for unmolested passage.

The merchants of Rhode Island had long been reputed as being "most notoriously successful" in the evasion of British commercial restrictions.

---2---

2 Towle, Records of the Admiralty Court of Rhode Island, III: 81-5; The Rhode Island general assembly first authorized the supreme court to issue such prohibitions in 1735, but the practice had existed before that time due to the resistance of Rhode Islanders to Boston admiralty jurisdiction. See "Mr. Armstrong to Council of Trade and Plantations," #135, #153, 1720, in Headlam, Calendar of State Papers, (London, 1933): 68-9; "Caleb Heathcote to Lords of Trade and Plantations," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, IV: 258-60; Other colonies did not have the chartered freedom Rhode Island did to establish courts and elect their justices. The limitations of the other colonies in comparison to Rhode Island can be examined in Joseph H. Smith, "Administrative Control of the Courts of the American Plantations," in David S. Flaherty, ed., Essays in the History of Early American Law (Chapel Hill, 1964), pp. 281-335; Carl Ubbelohde, The Vice-Admiralty Courts and the American Revolution (Chapel Hill, 1960), pp. 18-9; Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 42-3, 93-99; Stephen Hopkins, The Rights of the Colonies Examined (Providence, 1764); Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 422; Morgan, Stamp Act Crisis, p. 42.
Popularly elected officials and judges elected by the house of deputies were always understanding and helpful toward the merchants in the face of trade regulations. Only the customs officials and the vice-admiralty courts remained a problem. Here, the "unique" nature of Rhode Island's political structure allowed that colony to enjoy a greater degree of success against admiralty jurisdiction when compared to the attempts by other colonies. In Rhode Island, the popularly elected governor paid more heed to the sentiments of the electors than he did to the opinions of officials in Great Britain. Many of the governor's electors were the merchants from the coastal towns. But in the royal colonies, the governors owed their stations to the pleasure of the crown, and these governors, their supporters and their appointees usually buttressed the admiralty courts to stay in his majesty's good graces.3

Nathaniel Kay, collector of customs at Newport, was concerned about some of the practices of Rhode Island, especially regarding that colony's practice of enacting trade laws prior to their approval in England. In November of 1718, Kay wrote to the Board of Trade seeking guidance in the matter. The Board of Trade responded by sending an order to the province demanding it refrain from passing laws which were "prejudicial" to England. The Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations then notified Nathaniel Kay to collect copies of the colony's laws and send them to England for examination. But when Kay confronted Rhode Island officials with the demand for a copy of their laws, especially those concerning recent trade acts, the officials claimed that they had never received such orders from Britain, and they refused to comply with his demands. Kay also complained to Britain that he suffered some measure

of indignity in his attempt to collect the trade laws. 4

One of the recent trade acts of the colony reduced the fee the British authorities had ordered its customs officials to collect for clearing vessels in Newport harbor. Kay, still feeling the sting of his earlier confrontation with colony officials, continued to demand the higher fee. In June of 1719, the customs collector seized some illegally imported hogsheads of claret. In this action, Kay had a warrant from Governor Samuel Cranston and also secured the assistance of the high sheriff. Before Kay and the sheriff could complete the seizure, "the townspeople had the insolence to rise upon them and insult both them and the civil officers, and in a riotous and tumultuous manner rescued and possessed themselves of the seizures...stove them open, and with pails drank them out," throwing the remainder into the streets. 5

As soon as the tumult ended, John Wanton, a noted citizen involved in privateering, colonel of the militia, long time member of the Newport town council, and assistant in the Rhode Island general assembly, arrived on the scene. Instead of giving Kay assistance, Wanton issued a warrant for Kay's arrest for procuring greater fees for the clearing of vessels than allowed by the law recently passed by the general assembly. Governor Cranston, following an examination of the case, released the customs collector, claiming that Kay had not taken a fee greater than t

---


that allowed by the colony. By releasing Kay, Governor Cranston probably attempted to alleviate the situation and avoid an investigation by the Board of Trade. Also, John Wanton and his brother William of Newport were "bursting upon the political scene" after their great success in privateering during the inter-colonial wars. It is possible that the lack of cooperation between Cranston and Wanton reflected a blossoming political rivalry between the Wantons and other leaders of Newport, including Governor Cranston. Despite the governor's move, John Wanton repeated his efforts and issued a second warrant for Kay's arrest on the same charge. The customs collector was arrested and jailed without bail. Kay was soon released, but he had learned the nature of Rhode Island's independent attitude and its intention to retain the powers and privileges traditionally exercised by its general assembly. He also experienced the factionalism of the colony, even within Newport itself!

The eruption against Kay, and the actions of John Wanton "to please the crowd" and possibly enhance his own political fortunes, did not reflect a mood of open rebellion against Great Britain. In the eighteenth century, Britain and Rhode Island quarreled over piracy, violation of the Navigation Acts, and the issuing of paper money. But these arguments never presented an immediate threat to the independence of the colony. Although these real tensions existed, they were not yet fundamentally divisive. Such confrontations occurred in isolated incidents. Rhode

---

6 Town Council Records of Newport, Rhode Island, III, 1714-1719, Newport, Historical Society Library, Newport, Rhode Island: 32, 107, 159, 214, 245; The Wanton family was famous for being one of the most seafaring families in Rhode Island, especially in the field of privateering. See Bartlett, "History of the Wanton Family," Tracts: 1-30; Javis M. Morse, "The Wanton Family and Rhode Island Loyalism," Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, XXXI, no. 2 (1938): 33-44; "Heathcote," in Bartlett,
Islanders never detected a concerted policy to subvert their charter in the previous regulations and quarrels. But tensions and sentiments became more pronounced and divisive following the French and Indian War and the resultant attempt by Lord Grenville to improve the neglected imperial system.

The Seven Year's War severely drained the British treasury. During the war, its debt had doubled. Prime Minister William Pitt liberally dipped into the national treasury to finance the conflict. Correctly assessing the reluctance of the colonies to have their own legislatures raise money for the war and the amount of time that would have been consumed in such an effort, Pitt proposed "reimbursements" to the colonies for their assistance in defense of the empire. Although costly to the mother country, the colonies did respond under those terms. While Britain reimbursed the colonial war claims, the probable additional costs of providing ten thousand soldiers for the defense of the colonial frontier made the situation desperate. The ministry could not look to the British taxpayers. Their recent tumults provoked by a new cider tax clearly indicated that they thought that Americans were grossly undertaxed in


comparison with Englishmen. The funds would have to come from America. Despite the assertions by some colonials that they would be able to undertake the burden of defense on their own, "the very proportions of the task were an insuperable obstacle to leaving it to the colonies." The problem of taxation and the dull routine of garrison duty had proved the colonists lacking in the previous war. The inter-colonial rivalries in the Western territory, exemplified by Pennsylvania and Virginia both claiming the upper Ohio Valley, and the unlikelihood of attaining a unity of command further complicated a colonial solution. 8

George Grenville's ministry began in April of 1763, and he wasted no time in attempting to solve the financial situation on Great Britain. In October, he ordered strict adherence to the Navigation Acts and ordered the British navy to patrol the colonial coast to search for smugglers. While local customs officials were easy to bargain with and control, strange captains and their crews would be less likely to fall in with the merchants. In April of the following year, he pushed through parliament the Currency Act, which forbid the issuing of paper money throughout all the colonies. That same month, parliament also passed a new Sugar Act. 9

Although the new Sugar Act reduced the previous duty on foreign molasses in half (from six 

pence to three pence per gallon), this time Grenville intended its collection. The act also added new items to the duty list, such as indigo, sugar, coffee, wine, and textiles. It also


required more paper work and procedures for the clearing of vessels in and out of ports. The myriad of procedures led to many violations of the trade acts by merchants and ships' captains who simply and unintentionally overlooked minor items in the code. This, of course, added to the disgust of the merchants and to the bargaining power of the customs officials. Finally, and perhaps most threatening to the colonies, the act made some alterations in the court procedures within the colonies. In trade cases which were to be tried in the admiralty courts, the burden of proof was passed on to the defendants. They were responsible for the court costs, even if they were acquitted, if a "probable cause for seizure" could be demonstrated by the prosecutor. Prohibitions in the common law courts against admiralty court decisions were forbidden. If a merchant sued a customs official for damages in a common law court and won the case, the court would be able to fine the official no more than one shilling if the agent demonstrated "probable cause." Yet, if the merchant lost the case, "treble costs" would be authorized against him. Also, upon the request of Admiral Colville, Commander of the North Atlantic fleet, the admiralty court at Halifax had concurrent jurisdiction with all the admiralty courts throughout the colonies. Prosecutors could take their cases out of the hands of local courts and judges and have them tried by an admiralty court judge, without a jury, in Nova Scotia.10

Before the Sugar Act was adopted, the colonists moved to dissuade Britain from passing the trade legislation. The merchants of Boston sent

correspondence to the Newport merchants outlining their plans for remonstrating against the act. Not long afterward, in early January of 1764, Governor Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island wrote "An Essay of the Trade of the North American Colonies" which was published in both the Providence Gazette and the Newport Mercury. Immediately following its publication, Hopkins met with other merchants from Providence to draft a statement concerning the nature of Rhode Island's commerce. They forwarded their draft to Newport, where a committee of both towns drew up a remonstrance to be presented to the general assembly late that month. Rhode Island's economy depended greatly upon the "triangular trade." This involved the sale of rum to Africa for slaves, the sale of slaves to the West Indies for molasses, and the manufacture of molasses into rum. Although the molasses from the British West Indies entered duty free, it still cost the colonists from twenty-five to forty percent more than the molasses imported or "smuggled" from the French islands. Furthermore, the English West Indies could only supply one-eighth of the quantity consumed annually by all the provinces, and only one-fifth of the amount necessary for Rhode Island's more than thirty distilleries. The Rhode Island general assembly pointed out that while they consumed £120,000 worth of British manufactures each year, they only produced £5,000 worth of exports. Only the profits from the molasses trade enabled the colony to pay for these goods.  

Although Rhode Island's remonstrance was the first colonial objection to the Sugar Act sent to England, factionalism within the colony delayed its arrival there until the Sugar Act had already been enacted. Evolving from the Greene-Wanton factionalism of earlier decades, Stephen Hopkins of Providence and Samuel Ward of Newport perennially fought for the governor's seat, control of the general assembly, and the spoils of office, which included two hundred and fifty official appointments by the lower house. Since 1755, the struggle pervaded the colony and even split families. Now that the official remonstrance was ready to be sent to England, Samuel Ward's brother, Henry, viewed the likely praise of Hopkins throughout the province, indeed throughout the colonies, with disgust. A true partisan, Henry Ward used his position as secretary of the colony to diminish that potential approbation. Although the secretary fully supported the action of the assembly, he delayed in forwarding the document to Governor Hopkins for almost three weeks! Ward probably hoped that he would not tarry long enough to injure the remonstrance's effectiveness, but hold the document "long enough to embarass Hopkins politically in the colony." The action enraged many merchants who begged Ward to send the remonstrance. The incident was a major issue in the next election, arguments which attempted to show the mutual economic damage the act would involve. See "General Assembly Remonstration to Parliament," January, 1764, in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 378-83; Of particular interest is the argument that Rhode Island did not really suffer from the strict observance of the Navigation Acts, including the New Sugar Act. It has been asserted that the "French planter absorbed the three pence tax on molasses by accepting lower prices." In addition, "the years immediately preceding the Revolution were not marked by a high degree of insolvency." See Jack M. Sosin, Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution, 1763-1775 (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965), pp. 48-9; also Peter J. Coleman, "The Insolvent Debtors in Rhode Island, 1745-1826," William and Mary Quarterly, XXXI (1965): 421. Yet, one could interpret this as not due to the undamaging nature of the act, but more due to Rhode Island's circumvention of its implementation.
as Hopkins partisans accused Ward and his cohorts of delaying the protest until it was too late to be of any use in preventing the passage of the Sugar Act. Despite the charges that Henry Ward deliberately injured the colony's cause against Great Britain, Henry Ward "weathered the storm" and retained his post as secretary.  

While the colonists hammered out their remonstation to Britain, they kept a wary eye on the British navy. In accordance with Lord Grenville's orders, the H.M.S. Squirrel, a warship of twenty guns, sailed into Newport harbor in December of 1763. The immediate threat of military force unsettled many NewPorters. In the past, although threats were made and inquiries demanded, the communications limitations of the era allowed priorities, sentiments, and even personalities to shift before British officials rendered a final judgement. The result very often defused the initial tension surrounding a given controversy. From complaint to inquiry, to report, to consultation, and then to recommendation of judgement often took at least six months to a year! But, after Christmas in 1763, the royal navy brought British authority much closer to the colonies. In addition to the increased tension in Newport emanating from naval pressing and procurements, the very proximity of an immediate  

12 Providence Gazette, March 17, 1764; Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 33-4; Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 397; The Ward-Hopkins controversy has been seen by some historians as a social conflict between the "conservative merchants" of Newport and the "radical farmers" of Providence. See William B. Weeden, Early Rhode Island, A Social History of the People (N. Y., 1910), pp. 249-50; Merrill Jensen, The Articles of Confederation: An Interpretation of the Social-Constitutional History of the American Revolution, 1774-1781 (Madison, Wisc., 1940), p. 40; Yet, the Ward-Hopkins rivalry really reflected the growing commercial and political competition between the two leading trade centers. It had nothing to do with the social polarization of Providence and Newport in general, or the question of loyalty to England between Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward in particular. See, Mack E. Thompson, "The Ward-Hopkins Controversy."  

-106-
authority and the quick availability of force presented a new danger. Time and space no longer separated transgression and tension from consultation and conclusion. The response of British authority would be immediate, in the heat of the moment, with no time for shifting principles, priorities, or personalities. Everyone concerned would find it more difficult for cooler heads to prevail.  

The use of the British navy to patrol colonial waters in search of smugglers and violators of the trade acts intensified the problem of impressment. Impressment in America had a clouded and "doubtful legality." An order in council in 1696 had given royal governors sole power to issue impressment warrants in America. But this directive was dropped from the governors' instructions in 1708, after the Act of 6 Anne, Chapter 37 (later referred to as the American Act), declared that "no mariner or any other person...in any part of America...could be impressed by naval officers or any other person whatsoever." Unlike many other orders sent to the colonial governors, the act forbidding impressment had no cut off date.  

As late as 1743, British officials complained to Rhode Island that their "captains had been insulted by the populace and forced to release" those they pressed, while "other captains had been imprisoned or forced to give exhorbitant bail upon actions brought against them for impressing..."


seamen." All of this, bewailed the Lords of Admiralty, stemmed from the "prevailing belief among the people here that the American Act made in the War of Queen Anne, which forbade pressing in America, is still in force." But British officials insisted that the "American Act expired with the war in which it was made." Finally, the Lords of the Admiralty directed the naval captains in America to refrain from pressing in times of need only if it "distressed" American trade. Yet, if the American Act was no longer in force, was the previous order of council of 1696 again in effect? When parliament passed the Act of 19 George II in June 1746 which forbid the press in the West Indies (except in cases of desertion) without the consent of the royal governors, it added to the uncertainty surrounding the American Act. While some saw this act solely as a response to the pleas of West Indian merchants, others interpreted it as a sign that such an act in America was unnecessary because the "Sixth of Anne" was still in force. 15

From the very beginning, death, illness, crime, rum, and desertion resulted in shortages of seamen and the idleness of needed ships. With the arrival of the Squirrel in Newport, Admiral Colville requested that Governor Hopkins assist the ship's captain in recapturing four deserters by printing information concerning them in the newspapers. The Admiral informed Hopkins that the situation was serious because the ship needed a crew. The only alternative to the British was the press, but Colville was reluctant to issue such an order. He simply directed his captains

to "procure all themmen they could without distressing trade, but with no
instructions concerning the method of procurement." Many naval commanders
easily interpreted the dispatch to allow the use of the press, "which
became quite active in 1764 and 1765. 16

The horrible conditions of seamen on royal frigates offered only
one reason for the massive desertions. American merchants "deliberately
enticed" seamen away from the king's ships by offering them triple the
king's wages. It was not uncommon for British ships to abandon prizes
because of the desertion of their crews. Some detected a conspiracy
afoot to deprive the royal navy of seamen, thereby minimizing the effect-
iveness of the recent trade acts. 17

Popular opposition to impressment remained dormant until British
naval commanders interfered with colonial commerce, especially in the
1760s when England tightened enforcement of its commercial policy. Only
when impressment threatened commerce and was viewed as part of a broader
conspiracy to subvert the political independence of the colonies did the
common seaman attain a semblance of popular support. 18

16 "Admiral Colville to Stephen Hopkins," October 22, 1763, Bartlett,
Rhode Island Records, VI: 376; Stout, "Manning the British Navy," pp. 75,
79, 81.

17 Ibid., pp. 170, 177; Roland G. Usher, Royal Navy Impressment
During the American Revolution," Mississippi Valley Historical Review,
XXXVII (1950-1): 685; "Extract from Admiral Colville to Halifax," October
26, 1764, in Munro, Acts of the Privy Council, VI: 374-6; also in Bart-
lett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 428.

18 "In all this the seaman himself becomes all but invisible. The
attitudes toward him in the protests are neutral, and often sharply antag-
ontic. Their interests are sacrificed to the merchants, and even the
laws which seem friendly to the seaman benefit the master." See Jesse
Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of
also Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in
Barton J. Berstein, ed., Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American
John Temple, surveyor-general of the Northern District and responsible for the enforcement of the acts of trade, arrived in Newport just one month after Captain Smith and the Squirrel. Temple had earlier intimated that he would exercise "the same indulgence...as had been heretofore usual." To the merchants, this could only mean that he would be on the take, as he had been in Boston when Governor Bernard expressed his displeasure with Temple's customs activities. When Temple arrived in Newport, he made it clear that he was on the take, and also that he would do all the taking! He rounded up the colony's customs officials and "declared it to be his full resolve that the Sugar Act be executed with the utmost rigor." John Temple was an angry man. Just as he arrived in Newport, he ordered the seizure of a sloop, Rhoda, for a breach of the acts of trade. But before he could prosecute, the sloop was "carried off by persons unknown." Temple posted a fifty pound sterling reward for information concerning the culprits who took the sloop, but to no avail. The general assembly then refused to allow Governor Hopkins to swear in the new customs officials; Exhibiting a "haughty and illiberal mind," Temple left for Boston without hiding his "contempt" for the Newporters. Upon his departure, he threatened to "lock up all the ports in the colony in such a manner that not a vessel should come in or go out." Temple now had the ships at his disposal to do just that.  

---

History (N. Y., 1968), pp. 1-45; The other activities I refer to are the procurement methods of many British naval officers, competition among mariners, British soldiers and townspeople for employment, and the restrictive and "conspiratorial atmosphere" augmented by the presence and actions of the British navy. See George C. Mason, "The British Fleet in Rhode Island," Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, VII (Providence, 1885): 299-327.

One of those ships was the British schooner, *St. John*, commanded by Lieutenant Thomas Hill. Lieutenant Hill met "very little success" in his attempts to enforce the acts of trade within the Narragansett area, partly because the merchants were able "by threats and promises to prevent seamen from entering" his vessel for service. Another difficulty arose from the feuding between British customs officials and naval commanders over the prizes of captured trade violators. On June 30, 1764, Hill received information that a brig from New York, the *Basto*, was unloading smuggled goods in a creek near Howland's Ferry. Although the *Basto* had sailed by the time Hill arrived, the British confiscated the unloaded goods, ninety-three hogsheads of sugar, and captured the brig the following day. Just after Hill had the *Basto* reloaded, its owner had the British lieutenant arrested, fearing Hill would transfer the case from local Newport jurisdiction to Halifax. The commander of the *St. John* was soon out on bail and ready to renew his efforts when John Robinson, collector of customs at Newport, seized the brig and its cargo from Hill, claiming the lieutenant "was not properly qualified... since an oath of office had been omitted." Lieutenant Hill immediately set out for Boston to consult with John Temple.20

Lieutenant Hill was particularly offensive to the townspeople of Newport. Besides utilizing impressment, he often transgressed the normal procedures involved in the procurement of provisions for a king's ship. Hill refused to use a "victualizing agent" or professional contractor, and purchased goods with his own hand to "promote his own interests."

While he was in Boston conferring with the surveyor-general, Newporters squared-off with the crew of the *St. John.*

The spark occurred easily on the morning of July 9, when a few men from the schooner came into the town and stole some pigs and chickens from William Harrison, the town miller. Harrison then obtained a warrant for the arrest of the culprits. One of them still ashore, named Humphreys, was immediately apprehended. He quickly confessed and informed the town officials that his "accomplices were on board the *St. John.*" Two sheriff's deputies, Robert Lillibridge, Jr., and William Hammond, attempted to board the schooner to demand the surrender of the other chicken thieves, but they were turned away by the ship's crew. Around two o'clock in the afternoon, the *St. John* dispatched a small boatload of seamen ashore to seize Thomas Moss, an impressed native of the town who had escaped a few days earlier. The commander of the small expedition, Richard Doyle, had also been a participant in the pig and poultry poaching earlier that day. Doyle and his crew attempted to drag Moss back to their boat, when a mob came to Moss's rescue and seized Doyle. The crowd also wounded most of the boat's crew "with stones which fell as thick as hail around and in the boat." The mob threatened to "sacrifice" Doyle if the *St. John* refused to relinquish the miscreants. Some even threatened to "haul the schooner on shore and burn her."

---

21 Mason, "The British Fleet in Rhode Island;" British naval captains were also known to impress seamen, allow them to escape, and then claim victuals for their number. See Stock, *Proceedings and Debated of Parliament,* V: 126-7.

Shortly after the seizure of Doyle, some townspeople, including Lillibridge and Hammond, rowed out to the Squirrel, which was also in Newport harbor. They relayed their side of the story, suspecting that the crew of the St. John would make a "misrepresentation of the whole affair." Lieutenant Blachie, commander while Captain Smith was ashore, agreed to send the offenders to the authorities. But at the same time, he ordered the schooner to set sail. The concerned representatives of the town protested, fearing the ship, with the wrongdoers would escape. They threatened to fire on the schooner from Fort George (a fort in the middle of the harbor on Goat's Island) if it attempted to leave the port. Blachie assured them that the schooner would not attempt to escape, but only endeavor to move closer to the Squirrel for protection. Once along side of the Squirrel, Blachie told the remonstrators that the schooner would lower its anchor. The lieutenant implored the Newporters to carry this message back to town to avoid any misunderstanding. Whether the envoys did not have the chance to return with the message in time, or whether the Newporters did not believe Blachie, the guns at Fort George opened fire on the schooner, one shot tearing through its mainsail. Once the fireworks begun, a few boatloads of excited townspeople rowed over to the fort and joined the gunner in the cannonade.  

23 "Lieutenant Blachie's Account," and Captain Smith's Account," in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 429-31; "Deposition of Daniel Vaughn," Chalmers Papers, N. Y. Public Library, N. Y. City; Newport Mercury, July 16, 1764; "Report of Deputy-Governor William Wanton," Ward MSS; Colonists could not always count on the crews or captains of his majesty's ships to return crewmembers to shore who were accused by the civil authorities there. One example concerned the killing of a merchant seaman in South Carolina by a press gang from the British ship, Tartar. The British ship refused to surrender the men charged with the murder to the community authorities, and even threatened to sink a boat carrying the justice of the peace. The crew then proceeded to hold a "mock trial," and all hands accused were acquitted! See Stock, Proceedings and Debated of Parliament, March, 1742, V: 128-30.
In the midst of the firing, Lieutenant Blachie rowed to the fort to ascertain who was in command of the tumultuous proceedings. He found no other officer than the gunner and the mob who "said they had orders to fire, and they would fire." Blachie was then struck and subsequently knocked down. He quickly scrambled to his feet and hastily made his way back to his boat. Angered, Blachie returned to the Squirrel and readied the warship for action. Only after the warship brought the crowd on Fort George under the command of its broadside did the cannonade cease.24

That very evening, Lieutenant Blachie returned to shore and informed Deputy-Governor William Wanton that he demanded satisfaction. Wanton asked the naval officer for descriptions of his assailants. Blachie, realizing the impossibility of such a task since he had been confronted by a mob of no less than fifty people on Goat's Island, abruptly left the deputy-governor. The next day, Lieutenant Blachie and a number of his crew landed on Goat's Island, seized the gunner, and detained him on board the Squirrel. Then Lieutenant Blachie returned with Captain Smith, who had been ashore the day before, and demanded to see the deputy-governor and the other magistrates. The Rhode Island officials defended the action against the schooner. The order to fire upon the ship had been given by two assistants, Peleg Thurston and Gideon Cornell. Captain Smith found the magistrates uncooperative and a "set of very ignorant council." The captain only regretted that the mob "ceased firing before we had convinced them of their error."25

24"Blachie and Smith Accounts," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI.

25Ibid., and "Governor Ward to Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations," June 28, 1765, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 429-31, 444; "Governor Ward to Agent Sherwood," October 29, 1765, Kimball, Correspondence of Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, II: 365; "Deposition of Daniel
Early in March 1765, the king announced that he wanted an inquiry made into the St. John affair, together with the "names, descriptions of the offenders, and what means were used at the time of the tumult by the government and magistracy of the colony." But Rhode Island authorities offered neither energetic nor cooperative responses. They were more concerned about the impending Stamp Act, which was enacted later that very month. On the surface, Governor Samuel Ward promised to support the investigation, but his subsequent excuses revealed his true sentiments. Ward, who had just replaced Stephen Hopkins for the second time in May 1765, answered the directive by informing the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations that he was "not in the administration last year, and was out of town when the affair happened." Ward skillfully used the art of procrastination in the matter. If anyone knew the affairs of Newport, it was the crafty, partisan Samuel Ward! Yet, he told the Lords, "it will require more time to acquaint myself with, and prepare a statement of the case properly authenticated." He added that he could not do much anyway until the general assembly met in September. Even the questioning of the gunner at Fort George revealed the extent of governmental duplicity. The magistrates were not as concerned with who gave the orders as they were with "why he hadn't sunk the schooner." When the general assembly convened in September, they authorized the governor to issue a proclamation for the apprehension of the rioters. But this statement was greatly overshadowed by the recent

Vaughn," and "Assistant's Order to Daniel Vaughn," Chalmers Papers; "Governor Ward's Report," and "Deputy-Governor William Wanton's Report," Ward MSS. Daniel Vaughn, the gunner at Fort George, was released following the meeting between Captain Smith, Lieutenant Blachie, and the magistrates of the colony. Within a few days, the culprits aboard the St. John were surrendered to the town for prosecution. Ibid.

-115-
passage of the Stamp Act and the subsequent efforts by the assembly to have it repealed.26

By the time the assembly met to discuss the recent act and respond to the king's inquiry concerning the attack on the St. John, another violent confrontation intervened. That incident was the anti-impressment riot in Newport involving his majesty's ship, the Maidstone.

Like the St. John, the Maidstone experienced some misfortune in its attempts to enforce the acts of trade. At Providence in March 1675, Lieutenant Jenkins of the Maidstone assisted John Nicoll, comptroller of customs at Newport, in the seizure of the brig Wainscott and the sloop Nelly for running molasses. The customs officials took the case to the Rhode Island admiralty judge, John Andrews. When the colony finally succeeded in attaining an admiralty court of its own and not subservient to Boston in 1758, Stephen Hopkins recommended to the Lords of the Admiralty that they appoint Colonel John Andrews of Providence to the position. This move insured satisfactory decisions for many of the local merchants without interference from Bostonians, or a judge who was not native born. The wisdom of the decision for Rhode Islanders was evidenced in this particular case. While the customs officials readied themselves to have the case heard in Newport, Judge Andrews announced that he would

26 "Secretary Sharpe to the Governor of Rhode Island," March 19, 1765, "Ward to Commissioners of Trade and Plantations," June 28, 1765, "General Assembly," September, 1765, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 427-8, 444, 450-2; "Ward to Agent Sherwood," June 28, 1765, Kimball, Correspondence of Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, II: 365; Daniel Vaughn, the gunner at Fort George, stated that he could have sunk the schooner "had he been so disposed, but fearing the orders aforesaid could not support him in so violent an act, he threw the shot accordingly." The actual orders to Vaughn stated thus: "You are hereby commanded to stop the Schooner St. John from departing this harbor until further orders." See "Deposition of Daniel Vaughn," and "Order to Daniel Vaughn," in Chalmers Papers.

-116-
convene the proceedings in three days, and that the trial would not be
in Newport, but would be heard in Providence! Nicoll did not have enough
time to serve his summonses, and the court advocate, James Honeyman, did
not even show up to present the case for the prosecution. Although the
court issued new summonses, Honeyman refused to adjourn to allow the
prosecution more time to round up witnesses and claimants. Since the
prosecution could not present the case, Andrews aquitted both vessels.

To Robinson, Nicoll and Jenkins, it was evident that the Rhode Island
court gave "more convenience to the owners of the vessel" than they did
to justice, since both the judge and the advocate were "natives of the
place, and their connections with the people are such that it influences
them...by favoring the merchants to the prejudice of the crown."27

Less than one month after the ill-fated proceedings began against the
Wainscott and the Nelly, the Maidstone again assisted in an unsuccessful
customs seizure. The sloop Polly arrived in Newport from Surinam and
registered sixty-three casks of molasses before heading toward Taunton,
Massachusetts, its home port. John Robinson became suspicious that the
ship might be carrying a lot more casks, so he ordered the Maidstone
to
give chase. The warship captured the Polly outside Dighton, Massachu-
setts, and discovered that the sloop was loaded with twice its reported
cargo. After Robinson arrived on the scene, he wanted the sloop taken
immediately to Newport. But Captain Antrobus, commander of the Maidstone,

27 "Complaint of Robinson and Nicoll," June, 1765, "W. Mellish to
Governor of Rhode Island," September 14, 1765, "General Assembly Report,"
October, 1767, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 457-9; "Robinson and
Nicoll to Governor Ward," February 22, 1766, "Samuel Ward to Lords Commiss-
ioners of Trade and Plantations," Kimball, Correspondence of Colonial
Governors of Rhode Island, II: 374, 376-9. The customs officials appealed
the case for two years before the general assembly and Great Britain, but
to no avail. See above "Report."
could not spare any seamen to maneuver the *Polly* since he had barely enough hands to sail his warship. Robinson and Antrobus returned to Newport to raise a crew, while Robinson's servant, Daniel Guthridge, and Nicholas Lechmere, a customs official from Newport, guarded to sloop.

The next afternoon, the two rowed ashore for a few drinks. Meanwhile, a few boatloads of men rowed out to the *Polly*, unloaded its cargo, and severely disabled the ship. After Robinson heard of the incident, he quickly returned, only to be arrested by the local magistrates upon complaints for damages against the *Polly*. Robinson remained in jail for three days until John Temple bailed him out. Soon afterwards, Captain Antrobus was able to bring the limping sloop back to Newport. Robinson let it be known that he was going to take this sloop to Halifax for adjudication.  

To carry out its duty, the *Maidstone* needed more seamen. When the ship arrived in Newport in December 1764, Captain Antrobus promised the town sheriff that his press gangs would not seize any inhabitants of the town. But by the spring of 1765, the *Maidstone* began "the hottest press ever known in this town." Men were taken from "wood boats and river crafts plying in the bay." Even while Antrobus tried to keep his word by avoiding the impressment of townspeople, the consequences of the intensity of the press proved "fatal to the inhabitants of the town." The fishing boats that "daily supplied the town" were periodically "fired at" until they "dared not go out of the harbor." Boats with fuel would not enter the harbor, and the people feared a "hard winter ahead." Some visitors from other towns were "detained for several days on board the *Maidstone*."

---

Maidstone. Lieutenant Jenkins angered the Newporters more than Captain Antrobus did. While the ship's captain was absent many times, Lieutenant Jenkins was very intolerant to solicitations for the release of various people who brought food and fuel into the harbor. But there were some in Newport that antagonized Jenkins. Ship's captains or merchants would go on board to pay impressed mariners back wages. The merchants greatly increased wages to entice the mariners to desert. Realizing this fact, the lieutenant naturally viewed such visits to the seamen as nothing more than simple seduction. However, seamen found little comfort in the high wages offered by the merchants. They preferred unemployment rather than run the press. 29

On the afternoon of June 4, 1765, the Maidstone impressed the entire crew of a brig that had just arrived from Africa. Late that evening, a boat from the Maidstone encountered a "wood boat" in the harbor containing only two men. The Maidstone dispatched a small boat to detain the craft and seize one of its occupants. The press gang decided to let the other man row the boat while they followed it right to the wharf. After the press gang attempted to seize the remaining occupant, it quickly found itself surrounded by an angry mob of about "five hundred sailors and boys." The crowd seized Lieutenant Jenkins who commanded the press gang. While Jenkins was detained, the mob took the Maidstone's longboat and dragged it through Queen Street to the commons where they burned it "amid the

29 "O.G. Letter," in Newport Mercury, June 10, 1765; "Governor Ward to Captain Antrobus," Junel, July 12, 1765, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 444, 446-7; Stout, "Manning the Royal Navy," p. 170; Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen From the Bottom Up," pp. 20-1; Despite assurances from Captain Antrobus to the sheriff of Newport that Newporters would remain unmolested by the press, some inhabitants of the town were detained on board the Maidstone. See "Ward to Antrobus," supra.
shouts of the excited mob." Jenkins barely escaped with his life, as two unknown gentlemen intervened to quiet the crowd and secure the lieutenant's release. 30

Captain Antrobus demanded that the magistrates of the colony take punitive action against the rioters, but to no avail. Governor Ward was positive that "no persons of the least note were concerned with the riot," but those that had committed the crime were nothing more than "the dregs of the people and a number of boys and negroes." Ward informed Antrobus that, although the incident had given him "the greatest uneasiness," the fault of the riot was the responsibility of the Maidstone's crew. Chasing boats right to the wharf "encouraged the populace and was the immediate occasion of the riot." Ward went on to assert that the "impressing of Englishmen is an arbitrary action, contrary to the law, and inconsistent with liberty." The governor "could not conceive of any possible reason sufficient to justify the severe and rigorous press carried on" by the Maidstone's crew. Ward then further chastised Antrobus, declaring that the Maidstone, "while she lies in the body...of the county of Newport, all of the officers and men are within the jurisdiction of the colony and ought to conform themselves to the laws thereof." Others in Newport warned the captain that if he continued "impressing from the very bowels of the town," the people would take positive measures for "self-preservation, and for safety of life and property." 31

30 Newport Mercury; Bartlett, Rhode Island Records; Lemisch, "Jack Tar," p. 391; "Lords of Admiralty to the Same," #86, 1766, Redington, Calendar of State Papers; 26-7.

31 Ward to Antrobus," June 11, July 12, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 444, 446-7; Newport Mercury.
In both the St. John and Maidstone riots, and in the interference with customs seizures, British authorities could only remonstrate to their superiors. The governor again was conveniently out of town at the time of the riot, as were a number of other magistrates. British officials considered complaints to the colonial authorities a waste of time. The Lords of Admiralty wrote:

"Don't expect redress, the magistracy being composed of a very ignorant and turbulent set of people, and being rather the planners and countenances of these riotous measures than the supporters and protectors of regulated government. Many of the delinquents, being electors of the governor...he can't afford to bring them to justice, or else he shall not be governor...in the ensuing year."\(^{32}\)

While Rhode Islanders expressed popular sentiments against the regulatory and pressing activities of the British navy and the enforcement of the acts of trade by customs officials, word of the impending Stamp Act reached the colonies. Lord Grenville did not conceal his consideration of the measure. With the passage of the Sugar Act, Grenville floated a trial balloon by including a statement that the Stamp Act was under advisement and could possibly be enacted in the near future.\(^{33}\)

Rhode Island newspapers expressed the fear that the Stamp Act would be only a prelude to further encroachments upon the internal affairs of the colony. Knowing the extreme burden of taxation in England, Rhode Islanders believed any new demands for revenue would be directed toward the colonies. When news of Grenville's intention reached the colonies,

\(^{32}\)"Lords of Admiralty to the Same," Redington, Calendar of State Papers; 26-7.

\(^{33}\)"Sherwood to Hopkins," Kimball, Correspondence of Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, II: 360-1.
the discussion over parliamentary power intensified.  

Not all Rhode Islanders shared in the apprehension of the power of parliament and the antagonism toward the acts of trade. The "Newport Club" was a group of about fifteen to twenty men, mostly customs officials and others "of conservative temper and united in their distaste for the popular form of government" prevalent in the colony. The most notable figures of the group were: Martin Howard, Jr., a representative with Stephen Hopkins to the Albany Congress in 1754 and a candidate for the colony's attorney-generalship in 1761; Dr. Thomas Moffat, Jr., a Scottish physician, librarian and director of the Redwood Library in Newport; Augustus Johnston, a popular attorney-general of the colony who defeated Howard for the position in 1761; John Robinson, the very unpopular collector of customs; and John Nicoll, the comptroller of customs for Newport. Howard and Moffat began to write letters to the Newport Mercury under the pseudonyms "XY," "OZ," and "Halifax Gentlemen." These letters expressed their disgust with the "notorious" smuggling traffic in Rhode Island and the general "ingratitude in the colonies for the mother country whose arms and money so lately rescued them from the French." Furthermore, they loathed the "corruption" in the collection of customs and in the admiralty courts, which were "subject to merchantile influence," and the factionalism and which gripped the colony. But all of the factionalism and corruption in Rhode Island was a symptom of the greater disease — the excessively democratic charter of 1663 which they viewed as "nothing but a burlesque upon order and government."  

34 Newport Mercury, April 9, 1764; Providence Gazette, April 24, 1764.  
35 Morgan, Stamp Act Crisis, pp. 47-8; Martin Howard, Jr., Letter from
In November 1764, Stephen Hopkins wrote *The Rights of the Colonies Examined*. Looking ahead to the passage of the Stamp Act, Hopkins's work supplemented his earlier "Essay of the Trade of the North American Colonies," which had been published in January of that year to protest the Sugar Act. While the earlier work addressed the king and ignored parliament, Hopkins's *Rights* attempted to zero in on the basic question — the relationship between the colonies and parliament. Parliament was explicitly the object of the work, and its right to legislate in the internal affairs of the colony was denied, although somewhat equivocally. Such a denial was not new in Rhode Island.

The charter itself 'established in effect' a self-governing colony.' Events of the previous century in relation to the colony's opposition to the New England Confederacy, particularly Massachusetts and Connecticut, and the general independence of its towns during the Dominion of New England, contributed to its sense of independence. In the eighteenth century, Rhode Island's various actions against outside military and admiralty control, and its free exercise of domestic politics without the royal pressures and intrigue found in many other colonies further

---

reinforced its attitude of self-reliance and self-government. 37

Events within the domestic affairs of the colony added to this sentiment. In 1731, when Governor Jenkes vetoed an act of the general assembly to emit paper money, both sides appealed to the king. His majesty's attorney and solicitor-general returned the opinion that, according to the charter, the governor could not veto an act of the general assembly. Indeed the crown itself had "no discretionary power of repealing laws made in the province," unless they were "contrary to the laws of England." During a libel case in 1757 between Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward, Hopkins was reported to have stated that the king and parliament "had no more right to pass any act...to govern us than the Mohawks," and that "nothing could be more tyrannical than our being obliged by an act of parliament to which we were not parties." Perhaps most brazen of all was the superior court decision against two Newport Jews, Aaron Lopez and Isaac Elizur, who sought naturalization in 1761. Lopez and Elizur asserted that they had complied with an act of parliament which required seven years residency prior to naturalization. But a year later, the superior court interpreted the parliamentary statute as a violation of a general assembly act of 1663 which refused admittance as freemen to non-Christians. Their application was summarily denied. 38

As in Hopkins's earlier remonstrance, his Rights dwelt a great deal

37 Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 74-6; "Given its conditions, its local needs, and its relative unimportance, Rhode Island was better able to get along with the Dominion of New England more than Massachusetts, primarily because it was let alone. Of later significance was the fact that the English courts never annulled the Rhode Island charter." See Lovejoy, The Glorious Revolution in America (N. Y., 1972), pp. 202-3.

38 Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 74-6.
on the nature of the colony's trade and economy. But when Hopkins turned
to the constitutional arguments, his assertions became ambiguous. While
referring to the "general power" of the empire, Hopkins stated "everyman
of least knowledge of the British constitution will be naturally led to
look for and find it in the Parliament of Great Britain." Yet, he stated
later in the pamphlet that parliament was but "one branch of the great
legislative body of the nation." While he clearly stated his point that
parliament should not interfere in the internal affairs of the colonies,
he never confronted the possibility of resistance. In fact, the reader
gets the impression that he saw an inherent wisdom within the body which
would realize the error of its way and refrain from enacting such legis-
lation as the Stamp Act upon the rational argumentation of the colonies.
Hopkins also avoided altogether the question of attaining actual repre-
sentation for the colonies in parliament. 39

Martin Howard did not overlook these inconsistencies in his Letter
from a Gentleman at Halifax to His Friend in Rhode Island, published in
the Newport Mercury in February 1765. Howard scored debating points
left and right. He was only too eager to point out the contrary themes
of a parliament with "general powers" and a system of duel legislative
bodies. Howard pressed Hopkins by following his dualism to its natural
conclusion. What if parliament did pass the Stamp Act, did not repeal
the Sugar Act, and increased its control over the internal affairs of the
colonies? Behind the defense of a legislative body with parity to par-
liament lurked the corollary of colonial disobedience. 40


40 Martin Howard, Jr., A Letter from a Gentleman in Halifax to His
Friend in Rhode Island, see Bailyn's Pamphlets for text of Howard's work
and assessment, I: 524-44; Assessment by Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, p.78.
Hopkins answered Howard in the *Providence Gazette* later that month. But it was evident that Howard won the debate, and that the governor was on the defensive. Hopkins "pulled in his horns." He attempted to extricate himself from the charge that he advocated disobedience by claiming that he never denied parliament's right to tax the colonies. He only stated that it would be "uncomfortable with the British principles of government." James Otis then entered the fray with *A Vindication of the British Colonies*. The Massachusetts firebrand brought the debate from one of constitutional principles to one mostly of personalities. Yet, Howard did succeed in having Otis and Hopkins retreat from earlier positions, as well as somehow having them disagree with each other. The pamphlet warfare continued to the end of the summer. Then the mob had the last word.\(^{41}\)

The publication of the *Halifax Gentleman* came after news of an overt attempt by the "Newport Club" to rescind the colony's charter enraged many Rhode Islanders. Earlier, many read the "ZY" and "OZ" letters with dissatisfaction, but never immediate alarm. That changed when Governor Hopkins informed the general assembly in November 1764 that people in Newport petitioned the king to revoke the colony's charter. Martin Howard had written to Benjamin Franklin in November asking him to include the sentiments of the "Newport Club" concerning the political conditions in Rhode Island when Franklin attempted to get officials in London to revoke Pennsylvania's charter. (Franklin, of course, had different reasons for wanting his colony's charter revoked and taken out of the

hands of the proprietors.) Franklin had corresponded with Moffat and Howard in the past, and the two must have felt that he might turn a responsive ear to their overtures. In addition, a member of the "Newport Junto" and also collector of customs at New Haven, Joseph Harrison, took the petition with him on a trip to London in October. The recall of the Rhode Island charter would not be an action beneficial to either the Ward or Hopkins faction, since it allowed both factions to use their political patronage. Deprivation of the charter would destroy the political system they had nourished for their own advantage and profit. The superior court questioned the printer of the *Newport Mercury*, Samuel Hall and some demanded that a libel suit be brought against him. Deputy-Governor Joseph Wanton, Jr., wanted the general assembly to take official action against Hall. But moderation prevailed. Yet, the tensions within the colony were not cooling, and with the action by the "Newport Club" and the passage of the Stamp Act, it looked like the colony was in for a hot political summer.

Partisans of Stephen Hopkins could not allow the incident to slip by without attempting to secure some political advantage from it. They looked upon the publications of the "Newport Club" and the subsequent news of its attempt to revoke the Rhode Island charter "as a club to beat their opponents." Howard had some affiliations with Samuel Ward. He had been a Ward candidate in 1761 when he lost the race for the

---

42 Although Franklin corresponded with both Moffat and Howard, the Pennsylvanian sought to prevent the passage of the Stamp Act. Howard anticipated the possible coolness of Franklin's response, and wondered if he was not "too forward," or if he "presumed too far" in soliciting Franklin's aid. See "Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson," May 1, 1764, "Martin Howard to Benjamin Franklin," November 16, 1764, Labaree, *Franklin Papers*, XI: 185-8, 459-61; Vernon W. Crane, "Benjamin Franklin and the Stamp Act Crisis," in Esmond Wright, ed., *Benjamin Franklin: A Profile* (N. Y., 1970), pp. 105-32; Bailyn, *Pamphlets*. 

-127-
office of attorney-general to Augustus Johabtoa, a Hopkins man. In
light of the earlier procrastination of Henry Ward in forwarding the
Sugar Act Remonstrance to the governor in January, Hopkins stalwarts
attempted to link the efforts of the "Newport Club" to Ward and his
supporters. At the same time, they painted Hopkins as the symbol of
the colony's freedom and the leader in the recent efforts to defeat
British attempts to assert parliamentary authority over Rhode Island.
But the voters may have seen through the facade. Hopkins may even have
been hurt by his retractions in the recent pamphlet war with Howard. W
Ward just kept his mouth shut during the controversy between Hopkins
and Howard, and his supporters succeeded in getting him elected for
governor in April 1765. For Rhode Island, it was certainly politics as
usual.  

As the date for application of the Stamp Act drew nearer, stronger
protests were aired by Rhode Islanders. The tax was to be paid in
sterling money on documents involved with just about every colonial
business transaction. All newspapers, legal documents, business papers
and papers involved in clearing vessels needed stamps.

The Providence Gazette, in a special issue entitled "Vox Populi, Vox
Dei" (Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty), listed the
"Providence Resolves." Published on August 24, 1765, the resolves con-
tained six major points. First, they emphasized that British rights,
liberties and immunities were transmitted from England to America.
Second, the resolves asserted that these rights were passed on from
generation to generation, from the first English planters to the present
generation of Americans. Third, such powers as taxation, internal police,

43 Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 81-2; Bailyn, Pamphlets.
and self-government were always exercised by colonial legislatures, and this fact has never been assailed by Great Britain; in fact, it has always been recognized. Fourth, only local assemblies within the colonies could tax inhabitants in those colonies; to violate that right was not only a blow to American liberty, but a destruction of British freedom as well. Fifth, the resolves attacked the modifications in the admiralty court procedure, especially the threat to take violators of the new Stamp Act and try them in admiralty courts, which could mean a trial in Halifax with the denial of the right to trial by jury. Sixth, the resolves finally closed with a warm expression of appreciation to Isaac Barré for his defense of the colonies during parliamentary debate. 44

Another method of opposing the Stamp Act was to convince the stampmaster to refuse his commission. In late spring, the Lords of the Treasury announced that Augustus Johnston would be appointed stampmaster of Rhode Island. For the British, this seemed to be a wise choice. Johnston was a native, and extremely popular in the colony. It was only recently that he became the object of community disfavor because of his association with members of the "Newport Club." It appears that Johnston was convinced by someone, possibly his friend Stephen Hopkins, to refuse the forthcoming commission of stampmaster. In August, Johnston "openly declared that he would not attempt to execute his office against the will of the Sovereign Lord the People." The "former conduct" of the attorney general, along with his acquiescence to renounce his commission,

44"Vox Populi, Vox Dei," Providence Gazette, August 24, 1765. The "Providence Resolves" were a product of a special committee comprised of Stephen Hopkins, Nicholas Cooke, Samuel Nightengale, Jr., John Brown, Silas Downer and James Angell. They were all appointed at a town meeting on August 7. See Arnold, History of Rhode Island, II: 257.
was "quite sufficient to wipe away any evil impression" he acquired from his recent association with Martin Howard and his cohorts. 45

Some of Newport's leading merchants thought that further action was necessary to warn Johnston against reconsidering his declaration, and to make it clear that they were not going to allow any more petitions against their charter. They also wanted to deter anyone from seeking to replace Augustus Johnston as stampmaster. These merchants formulated a plan to hang Johnston and the once anonymous authors of the "ZY" and "OZ" letters in effigy. The demonstration was to take place about noon, August 27, right in front of the Colony House where the general assembly would be in session. About a week before the incident, Martin Howard uncovered the plot and relayed his discovery to Dr. Moffat. Upon being "exactly informed of the names of the projectors, the place of their meeting, program and obstacles," the targets of the scheme immediately went to see Governor Ward. The governor told them that he "approved of the affair," and that he believed it would not go beyond the original plan to hang effigies. But the next day, Governor Ward was less assured about the plan, which began to cause him "much concern." He concurred with Moffat's request to contact Samuel Vernon and William Ellery, two of the "ringleaders," and voice his reservations. 46

45 Ibid.; Newport Mercury, June 3, 1765; Johnston was so popular before his appointment as stampmaster that in 1759, when a township was set off from Providence, it was named "Johnstown" in his honor. See Howard W. Preston, "Rhode Island and the Loyalists," Rhode Island Historical Society Quarterly, XXI (1928): 109-16.

46 Martin Howard had made overtures to Benjamin Franklin to assist him in securing the position of stampmaster. This could have also been a factor in the decision to demonstrate on the 27th, and the subsequent attack on his home. See "Martin Howard to Benjamin Franklin," May 14, 1765, Labaree, Franklin Papers, XII: 129-30; "Moffat's Account of the Riot," -130-
The day before the demonstration took place, Moffat approached Samuel Vernon to express his shock and dismay at the merchant's design. Vernon replied that it was nothing personal, and that he "loved and respected" Moffat, but that Moffat's associate, Martin Howard, had angered him by branding the Rhode Island merchants "smuggling, which accusation alone deserves death." Moffat shared the attitudes of Howard and the other members of the "Newport Club," so that not even his close friendship with Vernon could reverse the growing polarization between them. Moffat parted company with the merchant, warning that the plan could very well go beyond their original designs and result in "acts of violence, pillage or blood." 47

The demonstration commenced smoothly at eleven o'clock in the morning. The crowd conducted itself "with moderation and no violence offered to the person, or property of any man." The crowd hung three effigies on the gallows, right in front of the Colony House where the general assembly had gathered. The effigy of Augustus Johnston had a big "S" on it. On Howard's effigy, the crowd had put "Martinus Scriblerius," and on Moffat's effigy was posted "that mawgazeen of knowledge, Dr. Murphy."

Those were the names ascribed to them by James Otis in the recent pamphlet and "Thomas Moffat to Joseph Harrison," October 16, 1765, Chalmers Papers; "Captain Leslie's Account," #1959, Redington, Calendar of State Papers: 609-11. Despite the account in the Providence Gazette on August 24, Johnston's resignation was still uncertain. His effigy was included in the demonstration convince Johnston to refuse his commission, and to deter others, like Martin Howard, from accepting it.

"Moffat's Account and Letter," Chalmers Papers; "Captain Leslie's Account," Calendar. Edmund Morgan has pointed to a letter from J. Avery to J. Collins of Newport dated August 19, 1765, in the Stiles Papers which "suggests that the instigators of the Newport riot may have been in correspondence with the Loyal Nine in Boston." (The Loyal Nine were the forerunners to the Boston Sons of Liberty.) See Morgan, Stamp Act Crisis, pp. 121-2, 146.
war. Howard and Moffat were hooked together by a rope bearing a reference to the "OZ" letters. While the assembly sat in session, Samuel Vernon, William Ellery, and Robert Crook, all merchants, carefully guarded the effigies and "paraded under and before the gallows in muffled big coats, flapped hats and bludgeons." Augustus Johnston prepared to make an attempt to break-up the proceedings, but some of his friends warned him that the crowd would not take kindly to his interference. About five o'clock in the evening, when it appeared as if the crowd might go home, the leaders sent out messengers to round up more participants, and "planted strong drink with cheshire cheese and other incitements" to keep the crowd numerous and spirited. The crowd seized the effigies and burned them. When it became known that the objects of their anger had fled from town, the people went home.

The news of the violence and destruction of the second Boston riot reached Newport the next evening, August 28. The news could have instilled in some people the sentiment that they too should go beyond the simple hanging of effigies. To make matters worse, Howard, Moffat and Johnston had returned to town, thinking that the previous day's events concluded the demonstrations. About eight o'clock that evening, John Robinson, Martin Howard and two others (possibly Moffat and John Nicoll) were walking down Queen Street. Suddenly, a man named Samuel Crandall stepped out from among a small group of men and grabbed Robinson. The two men then wrangled over a personal "picque." Howard moved in and assisted

Robinson in breaking away from his assailant. Howard then proceeded to
lecture the group, but when their hostile intent was clearly detected,
Robinson and his company quickly departed. A large mob quickly appeared,
"having their faces painted and being prepared and furnished with broad
axes and other roots of desolation, rushed into the streets with loud
huzza, and proceeded to Mr. Howard's house." Once the crowd reached the
residence of the author of the *Halifax Gentleman* letters, it entered,
"demolishing all the furniture, beating into pieces instantly all his
china and looking glasses...plundering every apartment, breaking open
his cellar, drinking, wasting and carrying off all the wines and liquors."
The mob then assailed Dr. Moffat's house and repeated the destruction.
Upon its arrival at Mr. Johnston's house, his friends told the crowd
that the designated stampmaster would resign. The mob spared his house.
Yet, the crowd was still in a spirited mood and returned to Moffat's
house once more and Howard's house two more times to complete their
destruction. 49

The next morning, Thursday the 29th, the situation did not calm. A
young Irishman, named John Webber, about twenty-one years old, who had
been in town for only about four days, had been very active in the riot-
ing up to that point. He demonstrated around the town, "declaring him-
self to be the chief conductor" of the earlier proceedings. He insulted
many of the townspeople, including those who had originally designed
the protest. Webber was not satisfied with the action taken so far,
and he desired more "mischief." The initial plan, as in Boston, had

49 On August 24, 1765, a second riot occurred in Boston. This time
Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson was the object of the mob and
extensive damage was done to his house. *Newport Mercury*; Preston,
"Rhode Island and the Loyâlisists;" "Moffat's Account of Riot and Letter,"
Chalmers Papers; Boston Gazette.
clearly gotten out of hand. "Apprehensive and frightened of the boisterous Webber," the primary leaders seized him and turned him over to British authorities aboard the warship Cygnet, claiming that he was the "ring-leader," to be rid of him and also to "mask their own villany." But when many of the mob discovered the betrayal of Webber, they "turned on those who had set them on" and threatened destruction to their homes and the sheriff's home as well! Ellery and Vernon, believing their property safer if Webber was released, had some men row out to the Cygnet and claim that the surrender of the hot Irishman had been a mistake, all of which was a "scandalous lie as to the man's innocence." 50

But once Webber returned to town, he renewed his threats against the original demonstration leaders and their property. His former cohorts "begged and entreated" him to give up. They bribed him with money, clothing and "anything he pleased." Sheriff Joseph Wanton "groveled and cringed" before the young rabble rouser. "What would you have of me?" implored Wanton. "I will do anything to satisfy you; I will lay myself down and let you tread on my neck if that would satisfy you." Evidently, Wanton's tempting offer did not phase Webber who still refused to yield. Upon detecting Webber's firm intent to continue in the violence, especially against themselves, a group of the merchants, led by Geofrey Malbone, Jr., threatened to "oppose force with force" if Webber didn't stop. Finally, the crowd began to disperse. 51

50 Ibid.; "Captain Leslie's Account," Redington, Calendar of State Papers; Newport Mercury.

51 Ibid.; "Captain Leslie's Account," Calendar; Boston Gazette. 

There is no doubt that the original planners of the demonstration were wary of the possibility of events getting out of hand when news arrived regarding the pillage done by Ebenezer Makintosh and his followers to the
Yet, Friday morning, Webber was at it again. Bragging, threatening and parading through the town, he accidentally ran into Augustus Johnston, who had just returned from the safety of the Cygnet, and who had formally announced that he would not accept the office of stampmaster. Abused by Webber, Johnston, with the help of others apprehensive of Webber's conduct, "seized upon him and clamped him into jail." Some of Webber's followers attempted to free the radical, but they failed, and two of their number joined Webber behind bars. Weeks later, in desperation, Webber attempted to hang himself. Governor Ward, fearing the rescue of the Irishman would lead to more violence, installed a military watch to prevent such an attempt. 52

There was more trouble brewing for the customs officials. The Polly, seized by John Robinson and Captain Antrobus of the Maidstone after the customs collector's unfortunate three days in Dighton's jail the previous April, remained under the safety of the guns of the British warship in Newport harbor, the Cygnet. After Robinson's problems with the Rhode Island admiralty court, it was obvious that he planned to take the sloop and the small amount of illegal cargo that had been recovered to Judge William Spry for adjudication in Halifax. While Robinson, Moffat and home of Thomas Hutchinson and the general unwieldiness of the mob. Because of the open threat by many merchants, Newport was spared the extent of damage and fear that befell Boston.

52 Since Newporters did not harbor the disgust toward Johnston as they did toward Moffat and Howard, he returned following the riots which damaged the homes of the latter two. Meanwhile, Howard and Moffat boarded the ship Friendship, and set sail for England on September 1. Johnston had also complied with the demands of the mob and signed a paper stating his intention to refuse his stampmaster's commission. In Providence, violence was averted since the crowd there only hung an effigy of Johnston from a bridge and later burned it the following day, August 30. See Newport Mercury, September 2, 9, and November 4, 1765.
Howard were safe on the **Cygnet** immediately following the second day's riotous activity that resulted in the destruction of the homes of "Martinus Scriblerus and Dr. Munchance," Robinson received a message from Samuel Crandall, his assailant on Queen Street. Crandall informed the collector of customs that he would not be allowed to return to Newport until he released the **Polly** and until he agreed that the general assembly had the power and the right to set the wages of the customs officials. If Robinson refused to comply with these demands, Crandall threatened to have the **Polly** seized; and if the **Cygnet** resisted, Crandall's followers would bombard the warship from Fort George.  

Captain Leslie, commander of the **Cygnet**, demanded to know the status of such a plan and what Governor Ward planned to do about it. Ward answered that the reports carried to the **Cygnet** were "so idle and the plan...so chimerical, that nothing but regard" toward the captain caused him to respond to the charges. Ward had even conferred with Samuel Crandall, and the governor told the nervous Robinson that he was convinced the man, although angry at the collector because he had "personally used him ill," meant no violent or physical harm to him. According to the governor, there was "not the least foundation" to these allegations.

---

53 "Captain Leslie to Governor Ward," September 1, 1765, "Robinson to the Governor of Rhode Island," September 1, 1765, "Ward to Robinson and Others," September 1, 1765, "Ward to Leslie," September 2, 1765, all in Bartlett, *Rhode Island Records*, VI: 454-7; In two books of the genealogy of the Crandall Family, I could not find any information concerning the Samuel Crandall of the Stamp Act Riot. Crandall was a prominent name, but it appears that the Samuel Crandall that threatened John Robinson may not have been a leader in the community. See *Genealogy of the Crandall Family*, Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence. Edmund Morgan claimed that Samuel Crandall was not a merchant. See his *Stamp Act Crisis*, p. 148; "Letters to Robinson," *Ward MSS*, f. 57.

54 Bartlett, *Rhode Island Records*; *Ward MSS*; The sentiment toward the **Cygnet** in Newport was influenced by the warship's previous encounter.
Captain Leslie remained unconvinced. He remembered all too well what befell the schooner St. John when it attempted to frustrate the demands of Newporters one year earlier. It was Newport's magistrates who ordered the gunner at Fort George to prevent the St John's escape. Although Ward characterized the captain's news of a plot as "idle and chimerical," Leslie told the governor that it was "well founded, and was frequently repeated by some of the principal people of the town." Leslie believed "the madness of the mob may carry them to such lengths, without interposition by the government's authority." Captain Leslie then returned the threat. He informed the governor that if he and the Rhode Island magistracy would not scuttle the plot and defend authority, the guns of the Cygnet would. Leslie promised to return any fire from Fort George, and added that it would not be his fault if some shot fell off its mark and landed in the town itself.\(^5\)

Like many of the shocked and astonished instigators of the previous riots in Boston, Ward and the merchants were of the opinion that the rioting in Newport had gone too far. An attack on the Cygnet would be tantamount to open rebellion. If the events of the recent few days fell short of military reprisals, further action would not. Due to a consideration of these ramifications, and the probable damage to Newport from a naval bombardment, the principals of the plot to free the Polly were in King's Road, Boston, with a vessel while searching for deserters. A scuffle ensued resulting in one passenger of the boat being severely wounded by the press gang. Although the wound was inflicted in self-defense, the press gang being violently attacked by the men of the other boat and even thrown overboard, the inflictor had to flee to England to escape prosecution by a colonial court. The event received unfavorable reporting in the Newport Mercury, December 10, 1764; See also Stout, "Manning the Royal Navy," p. 181.

\(^5\) "Orders to Daniel Vaughn," Chalmers Papers; "Ward to Leslie," -137-
probably convinced by more moderate elements to desist.

Great Britain's demands for an investigation into the matter, along with orders for the indemnification of Howard, Johnston and Moffat, fell on reluctant and uncooperative ears. Rhode Island officials, as usual, dragged their feet in the investigation of the riots and in making payments to the damaged parties for "some little injury done." However, Britain had a trump card to play. In 1755, Rhode Island had supplied provisions for an expedition against the French at Crown Point. The following year, in accordance with Pitt's policy of colonial reimbursement, Rhode Island had sent a list of the costs to England. Immediately a disagreement arose concerning the inventory submitted and the proper receipts. From that time forward, the colony sought to obtain its claims. Just when it seemed as if the British were about to honor the claims, the Stamp Act riots occurred. Great Britain did not intend to repay the colony until it first indemnified those individuals who suffered losses in the riots. The issue remained a constant thorn in the side of any attempt at amicable relations between the colony and the British ministry. Although the general assembly finally compensated the injured persons of the Stamp Act riots in 1772, the Rhode Island claim of 1756 remained unsettled.


In the addition to fear of military retaliation, Governor Ward's assurances of safety to John Robinson and the other customs officials were probably sincere for another reason. Robinson and his subordinates informed the governor that they planned to remain on board the Cygnet and continue "to shut up his majesty's customs house until the government affords us such protection and support." As a consequence, Rhode Islanders were fearful of sending out their vessels without proper clearances, and such a standstill of commerce would "be attended with the most pernicious consequences." Governor Ward and other colony officials insisted that "the fury of the population hath entirely subsided," and that the government's protection could be "entirely relied upon." Finally, Robinson opened the customs house and Newport's commerce resumed.

charged that the claimants unfairly wanted to be reimbursed for "time and expenses in going to, and remaining in Great Britain." In addition, they refused to "give an account of particulars under oath" of all items they owned before the riots, and they wanted reparation for "any loss they pretend to have suffered by leaving their business in this colony." The assembly further charged that their estimates of the damages were "estimated at a rate higher, beyond all proportion, than the real losses suffered." Even members of the Board of Trade advised Hoffat, Howard and Johnston that the amount sought be lowered to a "moderate" figure. Finally, the indemnity was paid in the winter of 1772, but only at one-eighth the amount demanded by the claimants. See "Governor Wanton to the Earl of Hillsborough," June 17, 1769, "Sherwood to Governor Wanton," July 2, 1768, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 590-3; Preston, "Rhode Island and the Loyalists," pp. 115-16; Arnold, History of Rhode Island, II: 271; Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Political Mobs and the American Revolution, 1765-1776," American Philosophical Society Proceedings, LXXIX (1955): 248; Even during the earlier episode involving the attack on the schooner St. John, Rhode Island's agent in London viewed the incident as hurting the chances to attain the claim of 1756. See "Sherwood to Governor Ward," June 28, 1765, Ward MSS, f. 54.

57 "Robinson, Nicoll and Lechmere to Governor Ward," August 30, 1765, "Gideon Wanton, Jr., to Robinson and Company," August 31, 1765, "Governor Ward to Robinson," August 31, 1765, all in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 453-5; Ward MSS, f. 57; Newport Mercury, October issues show that vessels were being cleared.
Although the Stamp Act riots ridded Newport of Moffat and Howard, it did not prevent the act from going into effect on November 1st. The Rhode Island general assembly met in September to discuss what should be the next move. In June, the colony received an invitation from Massachusetts to send representatives to a Stamp Act Congress to be held in New York City in October. Here, factionalism of the colony again entered the picture. The two men chosen by the general assembly to go to New York were staunch Ward partisans: Henry Ward, the governor's brother and secretary of the colony, and Metcalf Bowler, a Ward deputy from Newport. In contrast to the campaign of Hopkins and his followers a year before, Ward and his men wiped out the charges against their secretary and their disloyal implications, and in turn painted the Ward party as the party that stubbornly defended the chartered rights of the colony in the face of the adverse events which had occurred in the past year. Ward won much praise for his refusal to take the oath to uphold the Stamp Act in Rhode Island. With the appointment of the governor's brother and Bowler as Stamp Act Congress representatives, any further credit for the defense of the colony's privileges through inter-colonial cooperation would go to Ward.  

Of course, opposition to the Stamp Act was a bipartisan issue in Rhode Island. The general assembly drew up a set of "Stamp Act Resolves," which declared the rights of privileges of the colony. There was nothing novel in the first five resolves. They repeated earlier claims that English "privileges and immunities" were transmitted to America with the

first planters; that the charter of Charles II in 1663 guaranteed that
those "privileges and immunities" would be extended to the inhabitants
of the colony and their descendants; that the "right to be governed by
their own assembly in the articles of taxes and internal police" was a
right "never forfeited but constantly recognized"; that any attempt by
any other person or persons to lay taxes and imposts upon the colony was
"unconstitutional"; and that "internal taxation" could only be levied by
the general assembly. But, most significant of all was the very point
where Otis and Hopkins had retreated earlier: the point of disobedience.
Here, Rhode Island was a "step ahead" of the other colonies. When November 1st arrived, all colony officials were to "proceed in the execution
of their respective offices in the same manner as usual," and the general
assembly promised to "indemnify and save harmless all the said officers,
on account of their conduct, agreeably to this resolution."

In October, the stamps arrived in Newport and were loaded on the
Cygnet. Although Augustus Johnston signed a brief statement declaring
that he would not exercise the office of stampmaster, his position still
appeared unclear. Something more formal, such as a resignation witnessed
and approved by a justice of the peace and sent to England, was necessary.
Immediately following Johnston's signature on a paper brought to him by
the mob during the Stamp Act riots, Ezra Stiles, a prominent pastor of
the Second Congregational Church in Newport, told the crowd that the

59 "Stamp Act Resolves," September, 1765, Bartlett, Rhode Island
Records, VI: 451-2; Rhode Island came closer than any other colony to
Patrick Henry's Virginia Resolves. Its only exception to Henry's reso-
lutions was the omission of his seventh, final resolution which called
it treasonable to the colony for anyone to side with parliament over the
issue of taxation. The position of Rhode Island went beyond the final
draft of the Stamp Act Congress's resolutions. See Ibid., 465-6.
signature alone meant "nothing." Stiles claimed that Johnston could resume his title at any time, especially since he had not yet formally received his commission. Tension mounted with the approach of November 1st. The merchants had sent out as many ships as possible before the Stamp Act was to go into effect. Threats were made against Robinson and the other customs officials if they attempted to demand the use of stamps for the clearing of vessels. Governor Ward informed Robinson and Nicoll on October 29 that he felt special measures to guarantee their safety were unwarranted at the time. Instead he implored them to continue their duty without the stamps.

Within a few weeks, trade fully resumed, and all legal functions continued without the stamps. Robinson, probably to protect his own position in England, requested Johnston to go aboard the *Cygnet* and begin to distribute the stamps. He and Nicoll asserted that they wanted them for use in the customs house. This action relieved the collector of customs of the responsibility and passed it on to the stampmaster. Johnston was reluctant to accept it. He referred to his earlier pledge during the riots, and told Robinson that "for the security of my life and property...it is out of my power to comply with your requisition." In the meantime, Governor Ward and other colony officials were attempting to get a legal resignation from Johnston. In late December, Ward told him to

60 Despite Stiles's assertions that he took no part in instigating the Stamp Act riots, whether intentionally or unintentionally it appears evident that his speeches did instill in many a feeling of the necessity for action, especially against Augustus Johnston. Johnston later complained about Stiles's conduct. See "Ezra Stiles to Benjamin Franklin," October 23, September 77, November 6, 1765, Labaree, Franklin Papers, XII: 332-7; "Captain Leslie's Account of the Stamp Act Riot," #1959, Redington, Calendar of State Papers; 609-11; "Moffat's Account and Letter," Chalmers Papers; Newport Mercury, October 21, 1765; "Ward to Robinson and Nicoll," October 29, 1765, Kimball, Correspondence of the Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, II: 372-3; Ward MSS, f. 58.
appear before him and the governor's council, with a justice of the peace, to formally resign his office. Johnston appeared, but would not sign or give any positive commitment to what he intended to do. Finally, after some pressure and threats of future mob action against his home and even himself, he returned the next day and acquiesced in the council's demand. Ward then informed British officials that, since the Stamp Act was "inconsistent with their natural rights and privileges," Augustus Johnston resigned his post as stampmaster, and it was unlikely that any native of the colony would enforce this unconstitutional act. Rhode Island would continue to function without the stamps. The position was not under the authority of the colony; therefore, any replacement of Johnston would have to come from Britain. The Stamp Act had been successfully circumvented.61

In January 1766, news arrived in Rhode Island that the Stamp Act was unpopular in England and might soon be repealed. Because of a policy of nonimportation by many merchants in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, British manufacturers "were on the verge of ruin." These British merchants and manufacturers believed that they had been "ruined by the Stamp Act," and they petitioned parliament in January 1766 for its repeal. The "successive short lived ministries" in Britain during this period prior to the American Revolution contributed to the inconsistency in British policy toward America, and with the demise of the Grenville ministry, another change in policy was imminent. By January, the Stamp Act was

practically nullified in the colonies. Parliament formally recognized this and repealed the act in March. But to save face, especially in light of testimony by people such as Moffat and Howard who gave an unfavorable account of the attempts by such colonial governments as Rhode Island to protect defenders of the crown, parliament coupled the repeal with the passage of the "Declaratory Act." This act claimed parliamentary supremacy over the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." But the act was vague enough to suit both hardliners against the colonies and those who distinguished a legislative supremacy from the right to assess taxes in the colonies. This vagueness only added to the constitutional conflict later. 62

The celebration in the colonies was short lived. After another shuffle in the British ministry, the Rockingham Whigs made way for the return of William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham. Yet, due to very bad health, 

Pitt was only a figurehead for the Chancellor of Exchequer, Charles Townsend. Remembering many colonial remonstrances that protested parliament's "internal" taxation of the Stamp Act, Townsend hit the colonies with "external" taxation in the form of import duties on many British manufactured goods, such as glass, paint, tea, lead and paper. The act also reorganized the customs service by removing the Board of Customs Commissioners from London to Boston. As in the Stamp Act, violators would be tried in the admiralty courts. Parliament also voided the acts of the New York general assembly until it complied with the instructions of the Quartering Act passed two years previous. The Townsend Acts were to go into effect on November 20, 1767.63

In January 1768, the Massachusetts general assembly sent out a circular to Newport and Providence, as well as to other colonial ports, in an attempt to organize a nonimportation policy against Great Britain. Although Rhode Island publicly praised the Bay Colony for refusing to rescind the circular, and the colony's newspapers published articles urging cooperation with and support of nonimportation of British manufactured goods, Rhode Island continued to trade with the mother country. By the summer of 1769, the colony "was considered a receptacle for British wares." Merchants of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York protested to Rhode Island and even threatened to boycott it if the merchants there did not honor the nonimportation effort. Finally in October, the Newport merchants agreed to sign a pledge of nonimportation. But the pledge permitted the sale of goods imported before January 1, and the merchants

63"Agent Sherwood to Governor Hopkins," August 7, 1767, Kimball, Correspondence of the Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, II: 497; Townsend Acts and Declaratory Act," #43, #41, Commager, American Documents, pp. 60-3.
summarily endeavored to order large quantities of manufactures which would arrive before their boycott went into effect. Providence agreed to join the boycott, but the items on their list were minimal compared to the pledges of the other ports. Even after the promises of cooperation from the Rhode Island ports, British goods still arrived in the colony. To make matters worse, Boston merchants discovered that British goods being sold to shopkeepers in Western Massachusetts had come from Rhode Island! 64

Early in 1770, when parliament finally repealed the Townsend Acts except for the duty on tea, Rhode Island was the first colony to quickly renounce its nonimportation pledge. Merchants from New York, Philadelphia and Boston were enraged. Their boycott of Rhode Island continued, with Connecticut and New Jersey joining the others against the colony. But by the fall of 1770, the policy of nonimportation collapsed in the other ports as well. During Rhode Island's defection, although Providence's actions were "far from exemplory," the mercantile elements in Newport clearly violated the agreements more than the merchants of any other port. "Nonimportation cut deeply into one of the few means Rhode Islanders had to support themselves." The colony had less home manufactures than its sister colonies. They cooperated reluctantly only after the other colonial ports threatened to boycott Rhode Island's coastal trade. As they

64 "Massachusetts Circular Letter," February 11, 1768, #45, Ibid., pp. 66-7; The Jews of Newport appear to have been the most chronic violators of the nonimportation agreements, especially Aaron Lopez. See Rhode Island Politics, pp. 142-7. Besides the Newport Mercury, Lovejoy derived much of his information concerning the nonimportation conflict from the Moses Brown Papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library in Providence, and from the Brown Papers in the John Carter Brown Library, also in Providence. See also Hedges, The Browns of Providence Plantations, II: 202-5. Newports and Providence merchants even argued with the townspeople over the nonimportation pledges. See Lovejoy, "supra."
had done throughout their history, "Rhode Islanders balked at any external
force which interfered with their government or economy."\(^{65}\)

In 1769, during the nonimportation policy of the colonies against
the imposition of the Townsend Acts and Rhode Island's attempts to
justify its refusal to indemnify Howard, Moffat and Johnston, another
violent altercation occurred in Newport against a ship of his majesty's
navy. John Robinson, who had secured a promotion from the Newport
customs house to the recently transferred Board of Customs in Boston,
dispatched his majesty's sloop, *Liberty*, under the command of Captain
William Reid, to Newport. Reid's mission was to assist in the enforcement
of the acts of trade and revenue, and the captain immediately made his
presence known. Upon his arrival, he seized a Providence vessel for
some customs violation.\(^{66}\)

The *Liberty* was in Newport only about a month before Captain Reid
made two more seizures. On July 17, 1769, Reid brought in two Connecticut
vessels: a brig named the *Thames*, charged with some "illicit act," and
a sloop named the *Sally*, charged with carrying "contraband goods." Two
crewmembers of the latter vessel were detained on board the *Liberty*,
possibly pressed. Two days later, the suspicions against the brig proved
false after its crew reported its cargo at the customs house. Since "no
proof appeared against the brig," its commander, Captain Joseph Packwood,

\(^{65}\)Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations*; In addition to the
political rivalry between Newport and Providence evidenced by the Ward-
Hopkins factionalism, nonimportation alienated the merchants from the two
ports against each other, and even threatened to split Hopkins's little
support in Newport, and Ward's little support in Providence from the re-
spective factions. Providence merchants claimed that they were being un-
justly punished by merchants from the other ports for the violations of
the nonimportation pledges committed by Newport. See Lovejoy.

\(^{66}\)Newport Mercury, May 22, 1769.

-147-
attempted to go aboard his vessel to "get his sword and some necessary apparel." At this point an altercation erupted.67

While Captian Reid was in town, the officer in command, with part of the Liberty's crew, stood guard on Packwood's brig. The officer refused to allow Packwood aboard to procure his apparel since he claimed it all had been removed from the captain's brig and taken on board the Liberty. Captain Packwood then observed some of the Liberty's crew unbending the brig's sails. The master of the Thames immediately objected, but his efforts only "elicited "abusive language" from the British crew. Angered since his ship had not been charged with anything, Packwood began to leave the vessel when he realized that he had forgotten his sword. He returned and demanded to know the whereabouts of his sword. After the British crew informed him that one of their fellow seamen "lay on it in the cabin," Packwood went down to get it. "A volley of oaths and imprecations" ensued, and when Packwood seized his sword, "the sloop's men endeavored to wrest it from him." The captain managed to make his way back to his rowboat alongside the brig by using his sword to defend himself. While Packwood and a few of his men commenced their return to shore, the British officer on the brig quickly hailed the Liberty, and ordered the sloop to fire on Packwood and his men. "A musket, with a brace of balls was fired at the boat, which nearly proved fatal to the captain, as both balls flew close to him." The British then leveled a swivel gun at the small boat, but the cannon "only flashed." The Liberty's crew "then attempted to fire several more guns upon him, which

67 "The Destruction of His Majesty's Sloop Liberty," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VI: 593-6; Providence Gazette, May 27, 1769, July 22, 1769, also Newport Mercury, July 22. Extracts from both papers in Bartlett, "supra."
happily all snapped or flashed, and could not be discharged."68

The whole proceeding was witnessed by "a number of people on the wharf." The action "enraged a number of persons," who believed that the crew of the sloop should "answer for their conduct." Around eight o'clock that evening, while Captain Reid was returning to his sloop, he noticed a large group of people on Long Wharf and became "suspicious and apprehensive of their design." The misgivings of the British officer were realized when he was suddenly "surrounded and seized by a great number of men." The crowd called Reid a "damned rascal" for having "seized many of their vessels," and intended that he "should now pay for all." Reid recognized Captain Packwood who was with the owner of the brig, Nathaniel Shaw, who told Reid that he "had not five minutes to live if he didn't order the two freemen (seized earlier from the Sally) ashore." The mob also demanded that John Carr, accused of firing at Captain Packwood earlier that day, be turned over to them to face the Newport magistrates. Reid agreed to send for all his crew, but for one mate to remain on board. But once the crew departed from the Liberty, "a number of men, chiefly from Connecticut," boarded the British sloop, sent away the remaining mate, and "threw everything that was valuable overboard...cut her cables, cut away her mast, scuttled her, and carried both her long-boats to the upper part of the town (commons) and burnt them." The crowd then freed the Sally which was "laden with prohibited goods."69

68 "Destruction of the Liberty," Bartlett, Rhode Island Records; "Deposition of Captain Reid," Chalmers Papers; Like Dudingston of the Gaspee, Reid did not show his commission to Governor Wanton.

But the final indignity toward the Liberty was yet to come. The following evening, the high tide caused the scuttled vessel to drift to Goat Island, in the middle of Newport harbor. The sloop then grounded at the North end of the island very near the burial place for notorious pirates. The Newport Mercury irreverently quipped, "What this prognosticates we leave to the determination of astrologers." Two nights later, the remains of the sloop were set ablaze until it was "almost entirely consumed." 70

Charles Dudley and John Nicoll, customs officials at Newport, presented a memorial to Governor Wanton concerning the "riotous and tumultuous" actions against Reid, his crew, and the wanton destruction of his majesty's vessel. Governor Wanton issued a proclamation directing all officers of justice to see that everything possible be done to bring the guilty people to answer for the act. The customs commissioners offered 100 reward for any information that could lead to the arrest of the offenders. Yet, no arrests were made, and Captain Packwood took his brig Thames out of Newport harbor unmolested that Friday, just two days after the riot. Reid had refused to show the governor his commission, had alienated the town by his seizures of both men and ships, and his crew had attacked Captain Packwood in broad daylight, within full view of many Newporters. Again, Rhode Island's magistracy was more concerned about the threat of force and repression, symbolized by the British fleet, and its connection with present and future unpopular parliamentary acts, than they were with punishing those who expressed their opposition to that same threat. 71

70 "Destruction of the Liberty;" Newport Mercury, July 31, August 7,

71 "Destruction of the Liberty;" After the escape of the Sally and
Despite the impression by some historians of the period which characterize the years from 1770-1773 as one of relative contentment, prosperity and quiet — even one of repression of radical elements — this characterization does not fit Rhode Island. As in the total pre-revolutionary period from 1760 to 1775, Rhode Island experienced, between the repeal of the Townsend Acts and the passage of the Tea Act, more uprisings against British authority than in any other colony.\footnote{Richard M. Brown, "Violence and the American Revolution," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., Essays on the American Revolution (N.Y., 1973), pp. 81-120, especially p. 92 and Appendix 2 on pp. 119-20.}

Customs officials found their jobs difficult if they attempted to strictly enforce the acts of trade and revenue. Two Rhode Island customs officials were viciously attacked in July of 1770. But the attack upon Charles Dudley, John Robinson's replacement as Rhode Island's collector of customs, epitomized the futility of a customs official attempting to meticulously adhere to the acts of trade and revenue.\footnote{Maier, From Resistance to Revolution, p. 8. Professor Maier cites}
In the evening of April 2, 1771, the **Polly** arrived in Newport. It was "universally known" that the vessel was expected from St. Eustatius, and Dudley kept "a watchful eye for her arrival." Yet, the searcher boarded the ship at ten o'clock that evening and either failed to make a proper search or just ignored what he saw. The outdoor officers had been "repeatedly admonished" by Dudley because they were "rather the servants of the people than of the crown." It did "not comport with their views that illicit trade should be restrained, for that would lessen the wages of their corruption." Since the collector did not trust his subordinates, he attempted to check the **Polly** himself to ascertain its cargo.

After midnight, when Dudley discovered that the **Polly** was towing into the dock, he realized that an attempt to unload its probable smuggled goods was in progress. Customs officials who were to stand watch on the vessel until morning had gone. Dudley quietly boarded the vessel and got a few glimpses of smuggled East India indigo and tea. He then confronted Mr. Chamlin, a Newport merchant and brother to the master of the vessel. When the collector informed Champlin of his intentions to seize the **Polly**, he received a violent blow behind the head that knocked him unconscious.

---

temporarily senseless. When he regained his bearings, he found himself surrounded by men who proceeded to punch him with their fists, beat him with sticks, and kick him. Dudley pleaded with his assailants not to murder him, that if his life would be spared he would let them go about their business. But the attack continued and Dudley had to jump overboard to escape his attackers on the ship, only to stagger into "the savage fury of the people" waiting for him by the wharf. He was "knocked down again and afterwards dragged by the hair along the wharf." The following morning, Dudley's tide surveyor went aboard the ship, "but did not rummage her." Along with his disappointment, and the defection of his subordinates, Dudley had to turn over his own duties to his assistant, Richard Beale. His "very bad state of health" put him temporarily out of commission. 75

Despite Dudley's charge that his attackers "did not come from the lowest...class of men," but were "stiled merchants nad masters of their vessels," the governor assured Lord Hillsborough that the affair was perpetrated by "drunken sailors." Hillsborough, angered over the incident, believed "further exhortation on the subject would be useless." He simply told Governor Wanton that Rhode Island officials entrusted with the enforcement of the law should "consider what must be the consequences...if, after such repeated admonitions, the laws of this kingdom are suffered to be trampled upon, and violent outrages of so reprehensible a nature are committed with impunity." 76

75 Ibid.
Despite Hillsborough's threat, Rhode Islanders had gotten away with the attacks against the St. John, the Maidstone, the Liberty, and the customs officials without experiencing any measurable retaliation by Britain. As far as the objectives of those actions, Captain Smith did relinquish the poultry and pig thieves of the St. John to Newport authorities, Captain Antrobus did let up his press and release citizens and friends of Newport, and goods and fuel did begin to flow into the harbor again, the townspeople and the crews of the two Connecticut vessels did avenge the earlier actions of the sloop Liberty and free the sloop Sally, without any retribution other than complaints. Even in the notorious Stamp Act riots, the stampmaster did resign and Newporters did rid themselves of the detested Martin Howard and Thomas Moffat. Rhode Island authorities only took action against one rioter, John Webber, and a few of his cohorts. But the action taken against Webber was not taken because he had rioted against British authority, but because he had threatened to riot against Newporters! All these riots were successful without British retaliation against any man. What had proved a successful means of achieving the cessation of impressment, damaged commerce, and what many Rhode Islanders felt was unauthorized, misused, and overbearing authority, was likely to be used again, even if as a last resort.

But, although the British government formally exercised no retribution, it is obvious that the actions against the royal navy alienated and hardened the attitudes of the British commanders who were sent to

77 Professor Maier also pointed to the success of the attacks against the St. John, Maidstone, Liberty, and Gaspee in reference to the crowd's objectives. Really these attacks were "extra-legal means" to conserve the established, traditional modes of operation in the sphere of customs and trade. See Resistance to Revolution, pp. 10-12. Although this point may be true in respect to the political leadership of the colony, some must
American waters, especially to Narragansett duty. To avenge the actions taken against them and their comrades and to return the hostility the townspeople harbored against them, British sea captains no doubt exercised their orders with a little more dispatch, zeal, and antagonism than necessary. Perhaps the best example of this overzealousness, hostility, and overbearing attitude reflected in many British captains was Lieutenant William Dudingston, commander of his majesty's sloop Gaspee.  

Dudingston and his sloop were known to Rhode Islanders prior to their arrival in the colony in March of 1772. Three years earlier, the Newport Mercury reported Dudingston's "piratical treatment" of David Bevan who, while innocently fishing in the Delaware River near Chester, Pennsylvania, was hauled on board the sloop and beaten up. Upon Dudingston's arrival in Rhode Island, the suspicions about the lieutenant were soon reinforced.  

---

be careful in attributing one set of goals for different peoples involved. Certainly the merchants in Newport, for example, expressed a sense of conservatism, restraint, and even some whig argumentation. But this does not necessarily apply to all participants. Because of this emphasis, Maier "ignores much popular activity which does not meet her criteria of respectability." For example, far from demanding a return to the status quo, as well as exemplifying restraint, seamen rioted against impressment which other colonials accepted as long as it did not interfere with commerce. The seamen fought for their very lives, maybe never to see their families and homes again, to die aboard a British frigate. The different motives and desires of the participants of these riots should not be lost in the shuffle to find the influence and involvement of the elite leadership alone. See Edward Countryman, "The Problems of the Early American Crowd," Journal of American Studies, VII, (1973): 78, 80; Lawrence H. Leder, Review of From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776, by Pauline Maier, in the Journal of Southern History, XXXIX, No. 3 (1973): 437-8; Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen From the Bottom Up," pp. 20, 24; Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets," p. 400.

78 On the activities of the British fleet in Rhode Island and its relations with the towns, see George Mason, "The British Fleet in Rhode Island."

79 Newport Mercury, July 17, 1769, quoted in Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, p. 158; Maier, From Resistance to Revolution,"p. 15.
It did not take long for him to upset the inhabitants of Providence. He refused to allow any vessel to pass, "not even packet boats or others of an inferior kind, without strict examination." If the crews displayed any reluctance, they were "compelled to submit to an armed force." He detained vessels for "several days without the least colorable pretext," then released them. All of this "enhanced the price of fuel and provisions to the great disadvantage of the town." Not content with only his trade enforcement duty, Dudingston's crew stole "sheep, hogs and poultry" from farmers around the bay, and cut down their fruit trees "to use as firewood." Dudingston also had no intention of adjudicating prizes in Rhode Island courts, for they were "sold in the same manner they have been used to, and which always falls into the old owner's hands without opposition."  

Providence merchants complained to the superior court concerning the British commander's practice of avoiding Rhode Island courts for adjudications. Concerning Dudingston "rapine and desultory management" of his duties which involved the "plundering" of the countryside, the people of Providence petitioned Deputy Governor Darius Sessions, who in turn relayed their complaints to Governor Wanton, suggesting "some proper

---

measures be taken to bring him (Dudingston) to account." Recognizing this hatred against him, the lieutenant dared not send a boat ashore with safety. "Great pains were taken to decoy him ashore," but the commander of the Gaspee knew that there were already at least two or three writs against him, just waiting for him to step ashore to be served. That would have been the least of his problems if the townspeople got their hands on him, and he knew it. 81

Governor Wanton wanted to know Lieutenant Dudingston's reply to these charges and, also why the lieutenant did not present his commission to the governor upon his first day in the colony. Dudingston quipped that the governor had not asked for it. Regarding the complaints from Providence, Dudingston claimed that he was just doing his duty. If Governor Wanton wanted verification of his orders, the lieutenant would send a subordinate with such papers. Dudingston wanted to stay off shore and away from those writs awaiting him. Governor Wanton was not satisfied with Dudingston's remarks, and still demanded to see the lieutenant's commission. The governor's message was delivered by his sheriff to the deck of the Gaspee. Lieutenant Dudingston complained of Governor Wanton's remarks and of the activities in Rhode Island to his superior, Rear-Admiral John Montagu, Commander of the North American Squadron in Boston. The upshot was a stinging exchange between Admiral Montagu and Governor Wanton. 82


The admiral told the governor that he was "ashamed" of his remarks to Lieutenant Dudingston. He also warned the governor concerning rumors about some Newporters "fitting out an armed vessel to rescue any vessel the king's schooner may take carrying on an illicit trade." Montagu threatened to "hang them as pirates" if he caught them. The admiral advised the governor not to send his sheriff on board the Gaspee "again on such ridiculous errands" as to deliver obnoxious correspondence. The admiral closed by stating that, concerning his officers, "it was not their duty to show you any part of my orders or instructions." 83

Governor Wanton's response was in the true Rhode Island tradition. He denied that Dudingston was doing his duty, and asserted that the rumor about armed vessels out of Newport was a "scandalous imposition." In reference to Montagu's plan to forward the correspondence received from Lieutenant Dudingston to the secretary of state, Wanton responded that he would do the same, and include the admiral's "unpolite expressions also." Concerning a charge made by Montagu that the governor, not Dudingston, was derelict in his duties, Wanton informed Montagu that "I do not receive instructions for the administration of my government from the king's admirals stationed in America." In reference to the admiral's advice not to send the sheriff on board any of his ships, Wanton retorted, "I will send the sheriff of this colony at anytime and to anyplace, within the body of it as I shall think fit." The whole affair vexed Wanton, who charged that Montagu "endeavored to fix a "

83"Rear-Admiral Montagu to Governor Wanton," April 8, 1772, XXIII, Davies, Documents of the American Revolution, V: 62; also in Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VII: 63; Earlier, the British vessel Canceaux had seized a vessel loaded with rum and sugar, but "four or five boats came off in a body" and rescued the vessel. See "Admiral Montagu to Philip Stephens," April 18, 1772, XXXI, in Davies, Documents of the American Revolution, V: 73-4.
The action that some British officials feared, even anticipated, occurred on the evening and morning of June 9 and 10, 1772. On the afternoon of the ninth, Thomas Lindsey and his packet, Hannah, were on their way up the bay to Providence from Newport. While journeying up the bay, the Gaspee hailed the Hannah to stop, Captain Lindsey disregarded the signal and speedily continued. Lieutenant Dudingston had the Gaspee weigh anchor and immediately gave chase. But Lindsey, "knowing the river well," ran his packet into shallow water where he knew the Gaspee would run aground if it continued to follow. Dudingston fell into the trap and ran aground about seven miles below Providence. As soon as Lindsey arrived in town he told John Brown and others about the misfortune of the Gaspee. The group estimated that it would be about three o'clock in the morning before the schooner would again be navigable. With this news, John Brown, one of the leading merchants in Providence, "immediately resolved on her destruction." 85

Around nine o'clock that evening, some men went through the streets beating drums and informing the townspeople of the Gaspee's plight. They also invited all those "who felt a disposition to go and destroy the troublesome vessel" to meet at James Sabin's tavern. Sometime after ten o'clock, the group left the tavern and embarked for the Gaspee.

84 "Governor Wanton to Admiral Montagu," May 8, 1772, XLI, "Governor Wanton to the Earl of Hillsborough," May 20, 1772, XLIII, Ibid., V: 99-102; Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VII: 63-4. Given the earlier correspondence between Governor Wanton and the Earl of Hillsborough over the attack on customs collector Charles Dudley, it is not difficult to ascertain which version Hillsborough agree with. See letter quoted earlier from "Hillsborough to the Governor of Rhode Island," July 19, 1771, in Bartlett, VII: 34-5.

85 "Robinson? to Brownell," June 16, Davies, Documents of the American
in eight or nine rowboats. About half-past midnight, the two sentinels on the deck of the schooner spotted the boats coming toward the ship and quickly called for Lieutenant Dudingston. The commander of the schooner, upon seeing the boats, hailed them and demanded that they come no further. Someone yelled out that the sheriff wanted to come on board. Dudingston repeated his warning, but to no avail. Despite the "muffled" oars and rowlocks, the lieutenant could hear the boats approaching fast. Realizing that they intended to board his vessel, he called out for all hands.

Dudingston fired the first shot. His crewmembers on deck followed suit, and soon a few volleys rang out. But the Gaspee's crew did not have a chance. The assault caught the schooner "completely by surprise," and not many crewmembers had an opportunity to get to their weapons, man the guns, or even get on deck! Lieutenant Dudingston was about to slash at an assailant with his sword when he was shot in the left arm. The bullet ricocheted off of the bone and smashed into the lieutenant's groin. Two ringleaders approached the wounded commander and exclaimed, "Now you piratical rascal, we have got you, damn you, we will hang you all by the laws of Great Britain." What angered them most was the fact that the Gaspee immediately fired on them when they asked to board. One angry man picked up a handspike and readied to "dispatch the piratical dog." But, upon seeing that he was gravely wounded, and that he

---


cooperated by ordering his men to surrender, they granted his request for quarter. While the attackers bound the crew and prepared them to be taken ashore, Lieutenant Dudingston was taken below and a doctor, who came with the boarding party, tended to his wounds. Finally, Dudingston and his crew were taken ashore in two boats while the Gaspee was burned to the water's edge. 87

The apprehensions of many British officials had been realized. In reference to the Gaspee's activities and the controversy that followed, Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts believed that something "tragical would follow from a set of people to whom every servant of the crown who does his duty will always be obnoxious." On June 12, Governor Wanton issued a proclamation that called for the arrest of the participants in the affair and offered a £100 reward for any assistance leading to the discovery of those concerned. But many British officials believed that proclamations to apprehend the rioters from officials elected by "a set of lawless, piratical people...whose whole business is that of smuggling and defrauding the king" were insincere. Even while Lieutenant Dudingston lay "dangerously ill" and "did not expect to live," the high sheriff arrested him on the charges brought by Jacob Green and his brothers for goods seized by the Gaspee which had been taken to Boston. 88

87 Ibid.; Bartlett, Rhode Island Records. Really, Brown and his party were extremely fortunate that their surprise was so complete. Although they boarded the bows to avoid the guns of the ship, had the entire crew been armed and on deck, the amount of casualties would have been much greater. After the attack, only Lieutenant Dudingston, and another seaman injured on the head, were wounded. Others of the crew received some minor bruises.

88 "Governor Thomas Hutchinson to Lord Hillsborough," June 12, 1772, L, "Robinson? to John Pownell," "Governor Wanton to Lord
Although Governor Wanton promised "to bring the perpetrators to exemplary and condign punishment," and directed Deputy-Governor Darius Sessions to obtain depositions from Dudington's men, the governor and the general assembly were more concerned about the "unprecedented and oppressive manner" in which His Majesty's ships were exercising their orders to regulate the acts of trade and revenue. As Governor Ward told Captain Antrobus seven years earlier, Governor Wanton charged that the "intemperate zeal and indiscreet conduct" of the British commanders of the Gaspee and the Beaver "caused the disorder." As the expectations of Admiral Montagu and other British officials seemed to be unfolding, in reference to Rhode Islanders investigating their own crimes, another factor contributed to that sentiment — the story of the affair as told by a negro named Aaron Biggs.

Aaron Biggs was an eighteen-year-old indentured servant to Samuel Tompkins of Prudence Island. Biggs was apparently on an errand in the evening of June 9, when his boat was intercepted by many others on their way to the Gaspee. From one of the boats, Simeon Potter and Samuel Faulkner of Bristol ordered Biggs to join them. Men "armed with cutlasses and some muskets" commandeered Biggs's boat, while Potter promised to pay him two dollars after the mission was completed. After the

---


-162-
destruction of the Gaspee, Biggs received his two dollars and left the scene. Whether he was returning to his master, or attempting to escape his indenture, is not definite. But the Negro soon ran into the British sloop Beaver, which assisted the Gaspee in the Narragansett area. Captain Linzee of the Beaver ordered his men to abduct Biggs as a runaway servant. The captain then ordered the servant punished by whipping.

Just before the sentence was to commence, Aaron Biggs told the captain that he had been present when the Gaspee was destroyed. Better yet, Biggs offered to tell Captain Linzee the names of the ringleaders! The captive named the Brown brothers, John and Joseph, and a Mr. Richmond of Providence. He named a Mr. Potter and Faulkner of Bristol, and a Dr. Weeks from Warwick. Biggs's story gained more credibility when the members of the destroyed schooner came aboard the Beaver. One crewmember, Paddy Alis, recognized Biggs as being with the attackers, while another crewmember, Patrick Earl, remembered hearing someone call his name. Captain Linzee forwarded this information to Admiral Montagu, who then forwarded it to Lord Hillsborough. 90

A star witness like Aaron Biggs could not be entrusted to the British officials. Since the Negro "acknowledged his own guilt" by admitting he was present at the riotous proceedings of the schooner's destruction, Governor Wanton ordered his arrest. The governor sent Robert Lillibridge, deputy-sheriff of Newport County, and James Brenton to go aboard the Beaver on June 17 and demand that Captain Linzee deliver Biggs

to their custody, a demand Linzee summarily refused. But Rhode Island officials remained undaunted. They later arrested Captain Linzee for harboring a runaway, the charge being brought by Biggs's master Samual Tompkins. Linzee spent three days in jail until Admiral Montagu bailed him out. After the magistracy of Rhode Island took Biggs and heard his story, they denied its authenticity, claiming that they had three depositions which proved that the Negro was lying.91

But Admiral Montagu, after personally hearing Biggs's story, told Lord Hillsborough that, despite the efforts to prove otherwise, Aaron Biggs "is no imposter." Montagu was convinced that "Aaron Biggs was in one of the boats" that attacked the Gaspee. Along with the statements of Alis and Earl, midshipman William Dickinson told Montagu that his assailants "appeared like men of credit and tradesmen and but few like common men." Dudingston claimed he recognized about a dozen of them as "merchants and masters of vessels." Also, despite John Brown's angry exhortations to his cohorts not to use names, some of the raiders slipped. Patrick Earl heard someone address a man by the name of "Potter." Aaron Biggs stated that this was the way he learned the identity of some of the participants, even with their blackened faces. To Montagu, it seemed certain that "no discoveries could ever be made in consequence of the governor's proclamation," and that every attempt to elicit the assistance of the local authorities would leave the inquirers "baffled and disappointed."92


92"Montagu to Hillsborough," September 1, 1772, LIII, "Charles
In September 1772, the king appointed a commission to "inquire into and report to the king a full and true account of all the circumstances relative to the attacking, taking, plundering and burning" of his majesty's schooner Gaspee. The commission did act with moderation and had to submit to the Rhode Island supreme court, headed by former Governor Stephen Hopkins, to attain warrants. Yet, the whole proceeding threatened Rhode Islanders who were, for the first time, face to face with British authority and a more immediate possibility of British retaliation, both legally and militarily. In December, 1772, Rear-Admiral Montagu sailed for Newport with the Boston contingent of the North American fleet. Lord Dartmouth had also given General Thomas Gage, stationed in New York, orders to "hold himself in readiness to send troops into Rhode Island" in the event they were needed "in the suppression of any riots or disturbances." The situation appeared even more ominous to Rhode Islanders when the Providence Gazette printed a series of "Bostonian Letters" warning them to "exhibit a quantum sufficit of passive resistance," or else "the same tragedy may be acted in Newport and Providence which makes the fifth of March so memorable in Boston." The letters also claimed that Admiral Montagu swore "that he would burn the town of Providence to ashes." The arrival of the slop-of-war Howe was reported with apprehension, since it was the ship designated to transport the charged parties of the Gaspee attack to England.

for trial. Even as Admiral Montagu sailed to Newport, the "Bostonian Letters" spoke of overtures to deprive the colony of its charter.  

The Gaspee Commission assembled in Newport in January 1773, and remained in session for about three weeks, reconvened in the latter part of May, and had one final session in early June. Although most of the commission members made the "strongest possible efforts" to discover the guilty parties, they met with little success. Everyone previously named as a suspect had an alibi, although it did seem somewhat strange that their witnesses in many cases were other suspects! Many of those questioned informed the commission that they were at James Sabin's house for dinner, and stayed there until early the next morning.  

Even Aaron Biggs's story began to unravel. Besides the three earlier depositions that stated he was on Prudence Island during the ...
Gaspee attack, another witness told the commission that Aaron Biggs informed him that he was in the middle of an attempt to leave his master when he was seized by the crew of the Beaver. Biggs told him that it was after Captain Linzee threatened to whip him that he decided to tell the British commander that he knew the names of many of the leaders in the riot against the Gaspee, and that he was also there himself. As a result of this testimony, the Negro's story became "suspect," even to the commissioners. This was especially so when the new allegation was reinforced by an officer on board a British man-of-war in Newport harbor, who informed the commission that Biggs told him his story was "fictional." A mariner on board the Beaver told the commission that Biggs's affidavit was part of a "forced confession." 95

After the conclusion of their investigation, in accordance with the guidelines of their commission, the Board of Inquiry submitted its evidence to the Rhode Island superior court, headed by Chief Justice

---

The man who informed the commission that Biggs admitted to him that his story was a lie was Daniel Vaughn. Nine years earlier, he was the gunner on Fort George who fired on the British schooner St. John. Frederick Smyth of New Jersey wanted the commission to look into the St. John affair, but the motion was rejected by Governor Wanton (whose brother William was the deputy-governor at the time who offered Captain Smith an "ignorant council") and Daniel Horsmanden, Chief Justice from New York. The reasoning behind their decisions were different. While Wanton did not want the inquiry involved in the incident and wanted a speedy termination to the Gaspee Commission, Horsmanden probably realized the futility of expanding the investigation while it was getting nowhere within its present limits. See "Deposition of Daniel Vaughn," and "Chief Justice Horsmanden to Lord Dartmouth," July 23, 1773, "Proceedings of the Gaspee Commission," Ibid., VII: 148, 187, 177; also #1370, in Davis, Documents of the American Revolution, IV: 354.

-167-
Stephen Hopkins, to determine whether enough evidence was available to warrant anyone's arrest and subsequent transference to England for trial. As expected, the court held that Aaron Biggs's confession was made "in consequence of an illegal threat from Captain Linzee" and, therefore, the evidence did not warrant any indictments. The commission finally concurred that Biggs's testimony was "extorted," and that the affair was, as Daniel Horsmanden stated, "committed by a number of bold, daring, rash and enterprising sailors, collected suddenly from the neighborhood."

But, who "stimulated" the attack and collected these forces remained unclear, at least officially! Justice Horsmanden wrote to Lord Dartmouth that Rhode Island was a "downright democracy," with the governor "controlled entirely by the populace." He suggested that the colony be joined with Connecticut to form a new royal province. But in spite of his adverse opinion of the colony, Rhode Island once again prevailed over an attempt by an external authority, Britain, which attempted to interfere in its internal affairs. Seeing the writing on the wall, Chief Justice Peter Oliver of Massachusetts did not even participate in the final report of the Gaspee Commission. He later wrote that "the people of that colony were so closely connected; and so disaffected to British legislation, that it was perfectly futile to make an inquiry." 96

The decision by the Rhode Island superior court was no surprise.

Even in the face of a crown directive to act, the Rhode Island court ignored British demands. During the controversy involving the "Newport Club" in the mid-1760s, a member of that junto, George Rome, was sent to Newport by a large London Mercantile firm to collect some debts. But the "political bias" of the colony's courts frustrated Rome at every turn. After a successful appeal to the Privy Council armed Rome with the king's decree demanding payment of the debts, he still "danced after their courts and assemblies...in vain." Another such attempt occurred in 1770 and involved a debtor's payment for a mortgage with depreciated currency. The creditor appealed to the Privy Council after twenty years of colonial litigation and received a favorable decision from that body. But the superior court, led by Stephen Hopkins, overruled the king's decree because it was decided in a way "contrary to law." What began twenty years ago as a paper money issue ended with the rejection of external interference by Great Britain in the internal affairs of Rhode Island.

After the Gaspee Commission, the next three years displayed continual and growing opposition to the policy of Great Britain, and a closer communication between Rhode Island and its neighboring colonies. In May of 1773, Britain passed the Tea Act to relieve the faltering East India Company from financial ruin. While the act did lower the price of tea in America, it retained the tax on tea and allowed the East India Company to monopolize its sale. This meant more than an effort to raise funds for a debt-ridden Britain. The act gave special privilege to one company backed by the crown, while it cut out middle men in the colonies.

Also, by this time the "paranoid nature of American politics" had evolved to a point where many colonists saw much more in the Tea Act. To them it was another test case. As the Declaratory Act kept the foot of tyranny in the door after the repeal of the Stamp Act, the Tea Act kept the threat to colonial liberties alive after the repeal of the Townsend Acts. Rhode Islanders joined Bostonians in the refusal to drink from "that noxious weed." But while Rhode Islanders threatened to have the tea "reshipped on board the Liberty, and sent to Gaspe," the Bostonians had a "tea party" and actually ridded the town of the tea by throwing it from the British ships into the harbor.  

In retaliation, parliament passed the Boston Port Act and other acts which came to be known to the colonists as "the Intolerable Acts." These laws closed Boston harbor until restitution was made for the tea, altered the Massachusetts constitution by having the king appoint the governor's council instead of the general assembly, reinforced the resurrected law of Henry VIII to send people to Britain for trials, and expanded the previous Quartering Act so that British troops would have to be supported, supplied and quartered within the very towns themselves!

In June 1774, the Rhode Island general assembly acted upon the recommendations of the towns to endorse a plan for a colonial congress and proposed that it be held as soon as possible. They also moved that such an assembly be a "regular, annual" event. They chose two representatives...

before a meeting was slated by Massachusetts leaders for Philadelphia the following September. The assembly pledged money to Massachusetts and the townspeople of Providence and Newport offered shelter to those suffering hardship in Boston. With the actual retaliation by Britain in closing Boston harbor, returning British troops with reinforcements under the new Quartering Act and talk of colonial reorganization by British officials, the long time apprehensions of the colonists concerning the tyranny of "standing armies" were revived.99

Nonimportation agreements were again drawn up among the seaport towns of the colonies and within Rhode Island. This time, Rhode Islanders were more cooperative than they were in 1768 or 1770. The November session of the general assembly distributed "Articles of Association" to the towns which stressed the necessity of unifying in the nonimportation effort. The towns also appointed local "Committees of Inspection" to assist in the enforcement of the pledges. While other colonies still drew the distinction between parliament and the king, many Rhode Islanders now rejected the king's authority as well as that of parliament, and

99"General Assembly," June 1774, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VII: 246-7, 250, 257. The two representative chosen by the assembly could not have better represented the domestic and parochial advantages of Rhode Island's self-government. The two men were the political adversaries Samuel Ward and Stephen Hopkins. Concerning the American apprehension regarding "standing armies," its origins, and influence on the character of American politics, see Bailyn's comments on Trenchard's "History of Standing Armies," in Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, pp. 112-16, also in Bailyn's The Origins of American Politics (N. Y., 1970), pp. 25, 43, 47; This apprehension continued after the successful struggle with Great Britain. Again it was a factor in the debate over the ratification of the Federal Constitution. Part of the reasoning of many opponents of the Constitution stemmed from their apprehensions of "standing armies." See quotations from "Centinal, the Pennsylvania Minority, Agrippa, Luther Martin, Debates in the South Carolina Legislature and Convention, Richard Henry Lee, George Clinton, and the Albany Manifesto," all in Cecelia M. Kenyon, ed., The Antifederalists (N. Y., 1960), pp. 22-3, 57-9, 156, 168, 188, 227-9, 310, 361-2.
attributed the same tyranny to both. There was now a "martial spirit running through the country." The general assembly appointed Simeon Potter of Bristol (a participant in the destruction of the Gaspee) as the colony's major-general and authorized him to give assistance to any neighboring government in case of attack.100

Those who assisted or supported the British and their policies began to find themselves increasingly under verbal, if not physical attack. Shopkeepers in Providence who expressed sympathies with parliament's actions were threatened until they left town. Cries were heard at the town meetings against allowing the colony to become a refuge for Tory emmigres from Boston. A mob in East Greenwich in September 1774 demanded that a Samuel Hunt and a Sylvester Sweet, Esq., recant their Tory sentiments. Later, Deputy-Governor Darius Sessions had to dispatch the Providence militia to the area to ease the tension between the townspeople of East Greenwich and some from Warwick over charges that Judge Stephen Arnold of Warwick was "expousing Tory principles." Any pro-British sentiment was viewed as treason, and the words Tory and Loyalist became tantamount to traitor.101

100 "General Assembly," November 1774, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VII: 263, 269-70.

101 Arnold, History of Rhode Island, II: 339-44; McPartland, History of East Greenwich, Rhode Island: 1677-1960, with a Related Genealogy (East Greenwich, 1960), pp. 65-8; Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 172-3; Newport Mercury, November 7, 1774, quoted in "supra." For more information on the Loyalists, the individuals, their plight and the activities against them, see Lorenzo Sabine, Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution with an Historical Essay, 2 vols. (Boston, 1864); Claude Halstead Van Tyne, Loyalists in the American Revolution (N. Y., 1929); Donald Barr Chidsey, The Loyalists: The Story of Those Americans Who Fought Against Independence (N. Y., 1973); Paul H. Smith, Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy (Chapel Hill, 1964); Mary Beth Norton, The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789.
Three days after the news of the battles of Lexington and Concord arrived, the general assembly met in Providence and passed a resolution to raise fifteen hundred men to "repel" any forces that might invade the colony. Governor Wanton opposed the measure and refused to sign the officers' commissions. Ironically, Governor Wanton, who had been up until that time a staunch defender of the colony's chartered rights, was painted as one of the "principal and active Tories" in Newport. Wanton was ousted from the governor's chair by the general assembly and replaced by a Ward man, Nicholas Cooke. On May 4, 1776, Rhode Islanders renounced their allegiance to the king, and about six weeks later, ratified the Continental Congress's resolution for a "Declaration of Independence" amid celebrations throughout the towns, especially Newport and Providence. Rhode Island's opposition and final Declaration of Independence was consistent with the early history of that colony, which entailed a struggle for religious, territorial and political independence, and fostered a fluid political atmosphere that made the movement toward independence for "Little Rhody" less difficult.  


102 "General Assembly," May 1775, Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VII: 310-11; Stiles, Diary, I: 550, II: 134; For a better understanding of the situation in Newport due to the presence of the British fleet, and the factional politics involved in the removal of Governor Wanton and charges against him of Tory sympathies, see Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, pp. 174-94. Ironically, Samuel Ward of Newport, a town now labeled a Tory stronghold because of the presence of the British fleet, grew in stature as a Patriot during the years 1774-1776, while Stephen Hopkins of Providence, the port now the stronghold of Patriot sentiment and separation from England, also the author of the Rights of the
Colonies Examined and well known throughout the colonies before the 1770s as being in the vanguard of staunch opposition to British policies, fell behind Ward in the zeal for independence. Hopkins was also somewhat embarrassed by the removal of Joseph Wanton, an old party associate. For actions of the general assembly in its repudiation of the king and its endorsement of the "Declaration of Independence," see Bartlett, Rhode Island Records, VII: 522-3, 581-2.
"Far more striking than the differences with Great Britain were the differences between the sections. Sectionalism was deeply rooted, product of rock and soil, race and religion. When the Revolution came, it took a different form in each section—indeed, in each colony. There were in a sense thirteen revolutions rather than a single 'national' movement."

Esmond Wright in his Fabric of Freedom, 1763-1800.

The unique historical background of Rhode Island did result in a singular response to Great Britain's efforts to enforce the acts of trade and revenue. The colony had always been suspicious of external power. The Puritans of Massachusetts interpreted the settlement of Rhode Island as part of the "Devil's plan to divide and conquer" their holy attempt to establish a Biblical Commonwealth in the New World. So fearful of its example and suspicious of its relationship with the Narragansett Indians was Massachusetts that it laid siege to Samuel Gorton and his followers at Shawomet, ready to "put them to the sword" for their religious beliefs.¹

In light of the whole intrigue which involved the treatment of the Gortonists, the execution of Rhode Island's friend Maintonomi, and efforts by Massachusetts and Plymouth to secure a "Narragansett Patent"

and the island of Aquidneck, many Rhode Islanders surmounted their
differences in religion and their excessive individualism in politics
to unite for their mutual defense.

The conflicting colonial charters and vague Indian purchases
augmented attempts by Rhode Island's neighbors to lay claims to its
territory. The recourse to royal resolution failed to provide a
decisive, final solution, and the territorial troubles continued.
Despite the procurement of the Williams Patent in 1644, its confirmation
in 1647, and the Charter of 1663, Rhode Islanders still bickered among
themselves. Internal factionalism, fueled by the most democratic
government and fostered by the most liberal charter in the colonies,
reached proportions unequaled in the early history of the other colonies.
The early quarrels between Williams, Arnold, and Gorton, the scheme
of William Coddington to detach Aquidneck from the Williams Patent in
1651, the dissatisfaction of the pro-Connecticut settlers in the
Narragansett territory, the pacific Quaker sentiment in the general
assembly, and the proprietary party intrigue led by William Harris all
accentuated Rhode Island's susceptibility to its more powerful neighbors.

The legacy of Rhode Island's external conflict and internal discord
continued into the eighteenth century. The colony had earlier been
refused admission into the Confederation of the United Colonies, and
its neighbors still considered the tiny colony a "licentious republic."
Rhode Island was really almost "A republic in fact" due to its Charter
of 1663, which allowed all governmental functions to lie directly in
the hands of the people. Rhode Islanders had local judges, elected
by their deputies once a year, totally controlled by the factions of
the colony. The ambiguous 1696 statute that provided for admiralty
courts in America did not stop Rhode Islanders from circumventing those courts through their own courts of common law. This they did primarily because admiralty jurisdiction rested in Boston, out of the hands of local judges, until 1758 when Rhode Island acquired an admiralty court of its own. Along with this resentment of Boston's admiralty jurisdiction, Rhode Islanders proved uncooperative in efforts to assist its neighbors during the many Indian and intercolonial wars. The militia from the towns of Rhode Island refused to have their own general assembly appoint officers not from their respective towns, let alone acquiesce in the appointment of officers from outside the colony.2

The view of Rhode Island by British officials was not much better than that of its neighbors. Rhode Islanders traded with the enemies of the crown, harbored pirates, refused to have laws approved in England prior to enactment, refused to send copies of laws for evaluation, overturned decisions of the Privy Council in its Superior Court, paid off customs officials to neglect the acts of trade, stymied admiralty adjudications by the interference of its common law courts, and passed trade acts and regulations concerning the payment of customs officials "repugnant" to the laws of Britain. Rhode Islanders were defending their political and economic way of life. Their well being depended immeasurably upon the triangular trade, since the colony lacked any staple crops to trade. This almost total dependence on the sea made Rhode Islanders contest the acts of trade with more vigor and, given the

Charter of 1663, they had the tools to work with. Although complaints were lodged, no real efforts to enforce the regulations were made until the policy of Lord Grenville. By that time, Rhode Islanders were accustomed to their control of customs officials and court actions. When British vessels or customs officials were attacked in their efforts to enforce the threatening British policies, Rhode Island magistrates issued proclamations, but did nothing to punish the offenders.

The issue of opposition to Britain was not a partisan one. The high degree of factionalism in Rhode Island did not include the same degree of imperial-local divisions and antagonisms found in the royal or proprietary colonies. All of the officers in Rhode Island were either directly elected by the freemen of the colony, or through their deputies. There was no real "mixed government"; in fact, no king, lords and commons, no analogous conflict between the different segments of government existed in the colony. The governor and the assistants were elected each year, while the deputies were elected twice each year. There was no intrigue which endeavored to secure imperial influence in the legislature. Everyone involved focused on Rhode Island, not Britain. Government was viewed as a practical tool and people concerned themselves with how its function could "serve as a business agent of the people" who controlled its power. The factions fought over the use of the government to best serve their own parochial needs. Ward and Hopkins supporters fought over such things as shifting the tax burden away from their towns, the location of a second university in the colony, and the spoils of office, which included many appointments
through control of the house of deputies.\(^3\)

Both factions in Rhode Island's politics realized that British policies, and the sentiments expounded by Martin Howard, Jr., and others of the "Newport Junto," threatened the political atmosphere that allowed them to flourish. This is the basic reason for the "continuity" of the anti-British leadership in Rhode Island. "The same people who successfully organized the opposition to the Stamp Act and the Townsend Acts led the resistance to the Tea Act and the Intolerable Acts and declared Rhode Island's independence." Even when the Revolution came, despite the colony's high turnover rate among officeholders because of its factionalism, its rate was lower than all of the other colonies with the exception of Connecticut and Delaware.\(^4\)

Rhode Island was definitely a "haven for the otherwise minded," as Professor McDonald has stated. Rhode Islanders fought to preserve their self-government and were just as suspicious of the external authority of the Confederation and Constitution as they had been of external authority throughout their history. During the closing years of the Revolution, when the Confederation attempted to secure a revenue

\(^3\)James Kirby Martin, Men In Rebellion (New Brunswick, 1973), pp. 47-8; Forrest McDonald, E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790 (Boston, 1965), p. 121. Professor McDonald points to one example of the "closeness" of the Rhode Island government to its citizens. Officials who were to register the tonnage of colony vessels falsified the weight to allow Rhode Island vessels to enter foreign ports under the duties.

by enacting a five percent impost duty on foreign imports, Rhode Island was the only state which flatly refused, killing the chance to secure a unanimous vote necessary under the Articles of Confederation. Rhode Island refused to send representatives to the Constitutional Convention and did not elect a ratifying convention after the Constitution was submitted to the states. The Rhode Island general assembly decided instead to submit it as a referendum to the people, who defeated the document by a ten to one margin! As paper money had been an issue throughout the history of the colony, it was again a factor in the ratification process. The general assembly, controlled by a "soft money group," of mainly debtors and farmers, felt that they could benefit from inflation and a weak central government. That Rhode Island "should be one of the recalcitrants" in the ratification process "served to confirm the somewhat slanderous phrases that had been uttered about her at Philadelphia." Only with the "immediate prospect of coercion" through tariff discriminations by the other states, and a few "shenanigans" by some indebted Providence merchants with continental currencies, did Rhode Island finally join the union on May 29, 1790. Even then, the margin of victory was a mere thirty-four votes to thirty-two.5

In the writing of new constitutions that followed the movement toward independence, another factor reinforced the assertion that Rhode Islanders were satisfied with their political atmosphere, thus more united in their

---

movement against Britain. The revolutionary movement did not reflect a democratization of its government or a popular fight against the control of government by a power elite. Rhode Islanders just crossed out the name of the king and used its charter as a constitution until 1842. Although there was a need for reapportionment, three quarters of the adult males of the colony could meet property requirements to vote. James Kirby in his study of the colonial officeholders previous to and during the Revolution, has demonstrated that in Rhode Island there was not a struggle between "popular" groups and ruling elites over "who shall rule at home." He has shown that Rhode Island displayed the "greatest amount of citizen control over executive appointments" with little emphasis on family wealth or social class origins.

Finally, the study of the early history of Rhode Island and its relationship to a "unique pattern of characteristics" displayed by the colony into the Revolutionary period has prompted some thoughts concerning the coming of the American Revolution in general. First, although historians are rarely supposed to adhere to the sentiment, one acquires a feeling of inevitability in the movement toward the American Revolution. Certainly some change in the formal relationship between the colonies and Great Britain had to take place in recognition of the economic and political changes that had occurred. Fifty years ago, Charles McLean Andrews emphasized the changing character of the colonies within the empire and stated that the colonies "would have gone ahead with their

Wood, Creation of the American Republic, p. 133; Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, in Martin, Men In Rebellion, pp. 184-6.
revolt, regardless of the conclusions of the intellectuals, for the impulse behind the movement did not originate in the question of Parliamentary rights." Historians have since emphasized the economic considerations of the colonists to protect their "Self-interests." More recently, Jack P. Greene has elaborated on the "pre-condition," of the American Revolution in the colonies, noting the growth of the professions, commerce, and the maturing of the political institutions. Lawrence H. Gipson conveyed the growing divergence between the colonies and Britain and the magnification of the change by the close of the Great War for The Empire in America. Both sides suddenly stumbled on the need for a new definition of the empire and the role of its participants.7

All of this provides a more meaningful perspective when combined with the work of Bernard Bailyn and others who have shown the importance of the Whig theory of politics. The conclusions of the intellectuals did matter. It is at this point where "idealism and behaviorism meet"; the availability of a common medium of thought which entailed a constant vigilance against the encroachment of power on its natural prey, liberty; and a theory of politics which detected conspiracies afoot everywhere to subvert that liberty. The more concerted the British effort became, the more conspiratorial its appearance.8


Second, the miscalculation by British officials that Americans would not unite against them is more appreciated. In spite of the lack of stability in the British cabinet, any British official could easily make a judgement precluding concerted colonial action. The example of colonial cooperation during the French and Indian War was disgraceful. As soldiers, General Wolfe believed the colonial militias were "the worst in the universe." The bickering between the colonies seemed endless. Animosities were aroused by northern Anglicans asking for an American bishop, Pennsylvania and Connecticut were almost at war over the Wyoming Valley in northeastern Pennsylvania, Virginia was also at odds with Pennsylvania over the Ohio valley, the long history of suspicion and antagonism between the New England colonies over religion and boundaries had left its mark, and the proposals at the Albany Congress seemed to fall on deaf ears. The early history of Rhode Island reaffirmed the view that the "pride and jealousies" in the colonies were "notorious." Even more striking was the lack of uniformity within the colonies themselves! Western towns in Massachusetts were rebellious, North Carolina experienced the rise of the "Regulators," and Pennsylvania witnessed the march of the "Paxton Boys." While Massachusetts was contemptuous of Rhode Island, "Newport and Providence were contemptuous of each other." In light of all the evidence of inter-colonial disputes, it seems natural that the British would come to the conclusion that they did. 9

Third, the study of Rhode Island's early history and pre-Revolutionary

protests demonstrates the importance of viewing the American Revolution from the vantage point of each of the thirteen colonies. Due to unique characteristics, there were regional variations in the response to British authority and the development of revolution, variations often lost in some broad histories of the period. It is also in the face of this uniqueness that the Whig theory of politics derived its importance. These political ideas offered some common ground to the colonies; they were what Carl Becker would term part of the "Climate of Opinion." But it must be understood how it was applied in each colony.  

Finally, this paper has caused me to view the forthcoming bicentennial celebration with some misgivings regarding future historiography. In this era of rapid change and continual mind-boggling discoveries, man's need for the static, stable and traditional has become more pronounced as Alvin Toffler demonstrated in his book *Future Shock*. In the realm of historiography, there may be a tendency to "celebrate" the American Revolution rather than to explain or understand it; a return to what Samuel Eliot Morison has called "Nostalgic History."  

Rhode Island's display of a "unique combination of characteristics" helps us to move closer to the realization that the Revolution "took a different form in each section, indeed each colony." With this realization, the tendency to oversimplify it a "national movement" or return to an "Heroic" interpretation of the event may be averted.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AIDS


Barber, John W. *Historical Collections of Every Town in Massachusetts*. Worcester, Mass., 1939.


GENERAL SECONDARY SOURCES (Books)


Morrison, Samuel E. *The Maritime History of Massachusetts.* Boston, 1921.


GENERAL SECONDARY SOURCES (Articles)


SECONDARY SOURCES (Rhode Island History and other Related Works)


Bayles, Richard M. History of Newport County, Rhode Island, from the Year 1638 to the Year 1887.... N. Y., 1888.

-. History of Providence County. N. Y., 1831.

Best, Mary Agnes. The Town that Saved a State: Westerly. Westerly, 1943.


Coleman, Peter J. "The Insolvent Debtors in Rhode Island, 1745-1828." William and Mary Quarterly, XXII (1965), 413-34.

DeForest, John W. History of the Indians of Connecticut. Hartford, 1851.

Denison, Reverend Frederic. Westerly and its Witnesses, for Two Hundred and Fifty Years, 1626-1876. Providence, 1878.


Durfee, T. "Gleanings from the Judicial History of Rhode Island." Rhode Island Historical Tracts, VIII. Providence, 1883.


Greene, D. H. History of the Town of East Greenwich, Rhode Island and Adjacent Territory from 1677 to 1877. Providence, 1877.


Mason, George C. "The British Fleet in Rhode Island." *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, VII.* Providence, 1885. 299-327.


New and Old Representative Families of Rhode Island. 3 Vols. Chicago, 1908.


Rider, Sydney S. "The Forgeries Connected with the Deed Given by the Sachems Canonicus and Maintonomi to Roger Williams." Rhode Island Historical Tracts, 2nd ser. no. 4. Providence, 1896.

Smith, Helen E. Colonial Days and Ways as Gathered from Family Papers. N. Y., 1905.


Thatcher, B. B. Indian Biography; Or, An Historical Account of those Indians Who have been Distinguished Among the North American Natives as Orators, Warriors, Statesmen, and other Remarkable Characters. 2 Vols. N. Y., 1840.


_________. "William Coddington in Rhode Island Colonial Affairs: An Historical Inquiry." Rhode Island Historical Tracts, 1st ser., no. 4. Providence, 1878.


Wilday, Ann Chesebrough. Genealogy of the Descendants of William Chesebrough of Boston, Rehoboth, Massachusetts, the Founder and First White Settler of Stonington. N. Y., 1903.

-194-
PRIMARY SOURCES (Contemporary Accounts)


---------------. "Narrative of Rhode Island History," Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, IX. Boston, 1804.

---------------. "The Rights of the American Colonies Examined." Providence, 1765.


Underhill, Captain. History of the Pequot War. London, 1638. in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XXVI. Boston, 1837.


"Winthrop Papers." Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, XXIX-XXX. Boston, 1846, 1849.

PRIMARY SOURCES (Public Documents)


Brigham, Charles S. Early Records of the Town of Portsmouth. Providence, 1901.


Copies of Letters Sent to Great Britain by His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson ... and Several Other Persons. Boston, 1773.

Davies, K. G., ed. Documents of the American Revolution. 5 vols. Shannon, Ireland, 1972-.


-198-


**PRIMARY SOURCES (Manuscripts)**

Chalmers Papers. N. Y. Public Library


Massachusetts Manuscripts; Documents, Letters Pertaining to Rhode Island, Trans. from the General Court of Massachusetts, by Joshua Coffin. 3 vols. Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence.


Superior Court Records. Newport Court House, Newport.


PRIMARY SOURCES (Newspapers)

Boston Gazette
Newport Mercury
Providence Gazette

PRIMARY SOURCES (Historical Collections)


Rhode Island Historical Society Collections. 34 vols.

Rhode Island Historical Tracts.
Rhode Island History Quarterly.
James Vincent Gialanella, Jr., was born in Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania on May 2, 1950. His parents are Mr. and Mrs. James Vincent Gialanella, Sr. who now reside in Kingston, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Gialanella was educated at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania where he received his B. A. in history in 1972. He is presently a member of the faculty at West Side Area Vocational-Technical High School in Kingston, Pennsylvania where he has been teaching for the past two years.

He now lives in Dallas, Pennsylvania with his wife and two children.