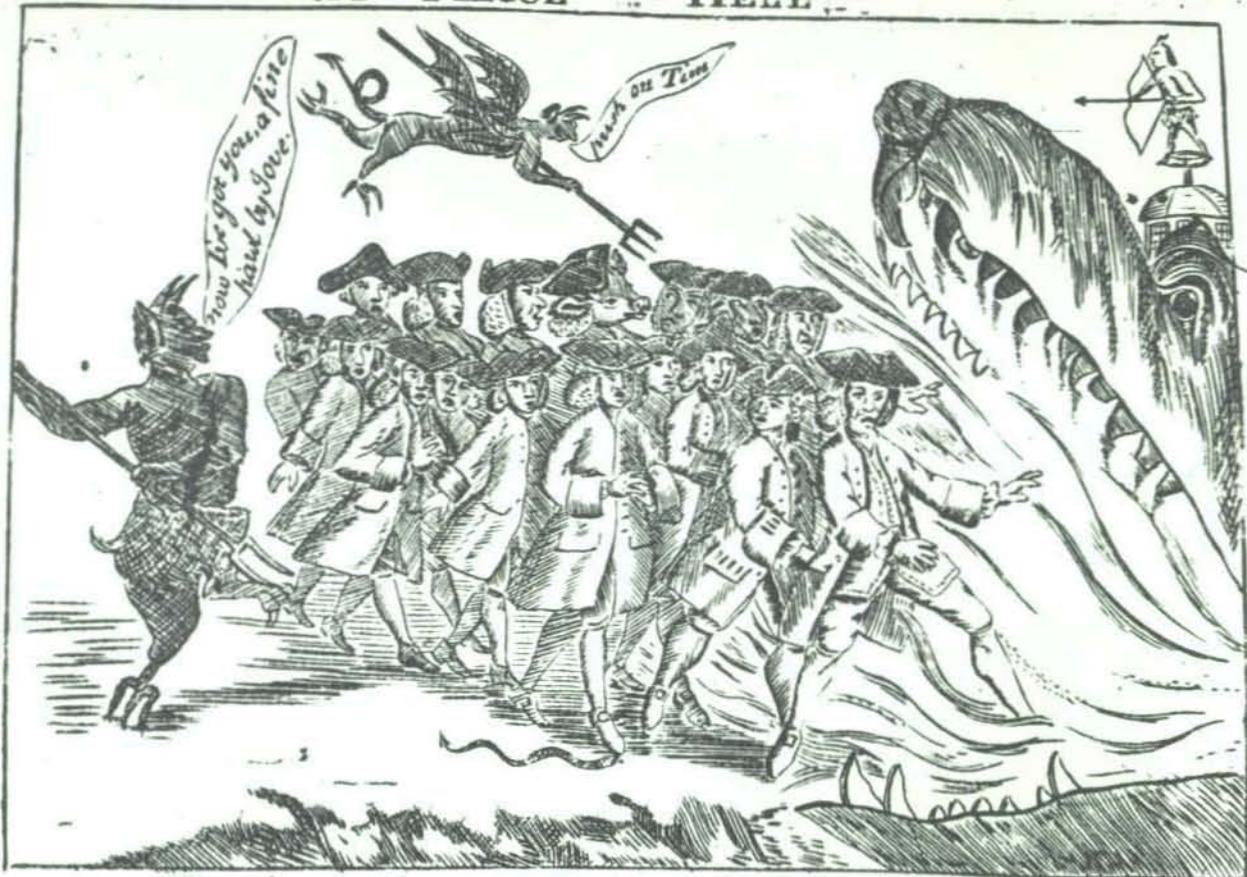


R H O D E  
I S L A N D  
H I S T O R Y

FALL 1971

A WARM PLACE — HELL.



On brave RESCINDERS! to yon yawning Cell,  
 SEVENTEEN such Miscreants, sure will startle Hell;  
 There puny Villains damn'd for petty Sin,  
 On such distinguish'd SCOUNDRELS gaze and grin:  
 The out done DEVIL will resign his sway,  
 He never curst his MILLIONS in a day.  
 Pub. by W. Ellery, 1766. D. 1766.

Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Three years after William Ellery burned a trio of Newport stamp-tax advocates in effigy (page 129) Paul Revere engraved this suggestion for disposing of royalist partisans.

Like Ellery's action, Revere's cartoon protested Britain's taxation of the colonies. The seventeen Massachusetts legislators pictured had voted to rescind a resolution authorizing circulation to the other colonies of a letter strongly objecting to additional taxes. The ninety-two members of the Massachusetts legislature who staunchly voted to resist a royal command to rescind reflected popular sentiment exemplified by Ellery.

# R H O D E I S L A N D H I S T O R Y

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Courtesy Connecticut Development Commission.

Miantonomo's death is memorialized by this monument near Norwich, Connecticut.

## Miantonomo's Death and New England Politics 1630-1645

by John A. Sainsbury\*

The conflict between the Mohegan sachem Uncas and the Narragansett sachem Miantonomo possesses such dramatic possibilities that the historical significance of the event has been obscured by the fictional quality of its subsequent accounts.<sup>1</sup> In addition, many descriptions which claim historical accuracy are vitiated by special pleading. Inevitably, perhaps, seventeenth-century chroniclers and historians of the Massachusetts colony defend Puritan policy and the justice of the united colonies' decision in authorizing Uncas to execute Miantonomo.<sup>2</sup>

Later judgment is more varied but equally predictable. J. G. Palfrey, for example, views the affair with appropriate distaste but argues that Miantonomo's death was justified because it prevented an Indian uprising.<sup>3</sup> Consistent iconoclasts of the Puritan colonial establishment, such as James Truslow Adams, oppose such a view.<sup>4</sup> They are generally supported by Rhode Island historians who, recognizing that their colony was established by purchases of land from Miantonomo and that its survival depended on his

friendship, naturally have a different perspective of the affair from seventeenth-century Massachusetts chroniclers and their filio-pietistic successors.

These Rhode Island commentators characterize Miantonomo as innocent victim of Massachusetts statecraft who, by selling land to the heretical Samuel Gorton and his followers,<sup>5</sup> inadvertently gave sanctuary to an element which threatened pretensions of Massachusetts orthodoxy and hindered the attempt of the Bay colony to secure control of wayward Rhode Island settlements.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of this essay is not primarily to reevaluate the justice of Miantonomo's execution, but rather to examine the event and circumstances that surrounded it, in light of an evolving English policy toward Indians and as the most coherent example of the influence of intercolonial politics on Indian affairs.

Of the many environmental hazards with which fledgling New England settlements were threatened, Indians were regarded as among the most dangerous.<sup>7</sup> The situation was exacerbated by the crisis over the

\*Mr. Sainsbury—doctoral candidate at McGill University, Montreal—with some reluctance, but for purpose of standardization, follows F. W. Hodge, S. E. Morison, and A. T. Vaughn in spelling Miantonomo.

1 Unabashed fictional accounts of Miantonomo include a drama and an epic poem, "Miantonomo," in Robert B. Caverly, *Battle of the Bush* (Boston, 1884) 77-124, and in S. A. Barrett, *Miantonomah and Other Poems* (New York, 1849) 9-47. Miantonomo also has frequent and enthusiastic references in J. Fenimore Cooper's "The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish." Uncas too has a highly colored eulogy: William L. Stone, *Uncas and Miantonomo* (New York, 1842), *passim*. Many other accounts of the sachems are of varying degrees of inaccuracy.

2 William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation, 1606-1646*, ed. William T. Davies (New York, 1964) 382-389. William Hubbard, *History of the Indian Wars in New England*, rev. with intro. Samuel G. Drake (Roxbury, 1865) 38-43. Edward Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence, 1628-1651*, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York, 1910) 219-222. Increase Mather, *Relation of the Troubles which have hapned in New England by Reason of the Indians there* (Boston, 1826) 227-230. Edward Winslow, *Hypocrisy Unmasked* (reprint Providence, 1916) 71-74.

Nathaniel Morton, *New England's Memorial*, ed. John Davis (Boston, 1826) 227-230. All these follow closely the official defense of English policy: John Winthrop, *Declaration of Former Passages and Proceedings betwixt the English and the Narragansetts* (Boston, 1645) *passim*.

3 John Gorham Palfrey, *History of New England* (Boston, 1860).

4 See Adams on Miantonomo and Uncas in *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-1958) 12:589-590 and 19:109-110. Adams' indignation is shared by Samuel G. Drake, *Indians of North America*, 15th ed. (New York, 1964) 122-131, 144, 163.

5 John R. Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence, 1856-1865) 1:130-131. Samuel Gorton, "Simplicities Defence against Seven-headed Policy" in Peter Force, *Historical Tracts* (Washington, 1846) 24.

6 Elisha R. Potter, "Early History of Narragansett," *Collections RIHS* (Providence, 1835) 3:33-35. Irving B. Richman, *Rhode Island, Its Making and Its Meaning* (New York and London, 1908) 184-229. Samuel G. Arnold, *History of Rhode Island*, 4th ed. (Providence, 1899) 1:115-118, 174-177. Howard M. Chapin, *Sachems of the Narragansetts* (Providence, 1931) 44-52.

7 Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness* (New York and London, 1969) 137-139.

Massachusetts charter in the middle 1630s, which severely strained relations with the English government,<sup>8</sup> and by the outbreak of English civil war in 1642; both events meant colonists had to face threat of Indian uprising without any prospect of military support from the mother country. With the massacre of white settlers by Indians in Virginia in 1622 still fresh in their memories, it is not hard to understand settlers' obsessive concern for internal security during the early period of colonization.

Despite this preoccupation, however, considerable expansion of settlement took place within the first decade of major emigration to Massachusetts in 1630. Establishment of governments in Connecticut and New Haven was the political manifestation of this expansion. Settlements of what was to become the colony of Rhode Island also developed during the period<sup>9</sup> but under considerably different circumstances.

Rhode Island became a sanctuary for heretics banished by Massachusetts and was regarded with scant respect by orthodox colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth, and New Haven. Rhode Island therefore did not share in common policy toward Indians which these colonies were painfully developing. In addition, Indians who expedited expansion of Connecticut received more sympathetic handling from orthodox colonies than Indians who aided the growth of politically isolated Rhode Island, as that colony's historians have correctly if sometimes exaggeratedly pointed out. Drive to expand, together with need to maintain security, were formative influences in development of an Indian policy and played a decisive part in moulding the nature of Puritan intervention in the dispute between Uncas and Miantonomo.

The tribe which Miantonomo ruled as co-sachem with his uncle Canonicus was the most numerically powerful in the vicinity of Puritan settlement.<sup>10</sup> Narragansetts apparently were little affected by the great plague of 1616-1617, which considerably weakened their immediate neighbors.<sup>11</sup> Although the tribe had a reputation among other Indians as peaceable

people,<sup>12</sup> they showed an early hostile reaction to English settlement: in 1621 the tribe threatened the newly established Plymouth colony<sup>13</sup> and in 1629 they were implicated in a plot to "cut off the English."<sup>14</sup> Increasing power of the Narragansetts was connected not only with their relatively large population but also with their skill in the manufacture of wampum which, in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, acquired considerable value as currency and enabled Narragansetts to purchase arms from "sundry unworthy persons . . . English, Dutch and French."<sup>15</sup>

Following the main Puritan emigration to Massachusetts, however, relations between English and Narragansetts remained cordial until after the war against Pequods in 1637. Visits by Canonicus' son to Governor Winthrop in July 1631 and by Miantonomo himself in 1632 established friendly contact, although diplomatic fruits of the second visit were jeopardized by three of Miantonomo's party who, during sermon hour, attempted to "brake into a neighbour's house."<sup>16</sup>

A more serious threat to peace between English and Narragansetts came in July 1636 when John Oldham, trader, was found savagely murdered off Block Island. As Block Island Indians were tributary to Narragansetts, a war of reprisal against the latter seemed for a time conceivable, and Sir Harry Vane (governor of Massachusetts in 1636) warned Roger Williams in Providence of just such a possibility.<sup>17</sup> An Indian implicated in Oldham's murder testified however that, although minor Narragansett sachems were "contrivers of Mr. Oldham's death," Canonicus and Miantonomo were in no way involved.<sup>18</sup> Miantonomo demonstrated good intentions by recovering Oldham's possessions and rescuing two boys who had accompanied Oldham on his fatal trip.<sup>19</sup> Canonicus further improved the standing of himself and Miantonomo in an impressive interview with agents from Massachusetts sent to investigate the affair.<sup>20</sup> The innocence of the two leading Narragansett sachems helped to avert war against the tribe, the English contenting themselves with a devastating punitive raid against Block

8 Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933) 212-219. Herbert L. Osgood, *American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1907) 3:54-70.

9 Newport and Portsmouth on Rhode Island itself, Providence and Shawomet (later called Warwick), hereafter collectively referred to as "Rhode Island."

10 John W. deForest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut* (reprint Hamden, 1964) 64.

11 Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier* (Boston, 1965) 79.

12 deForest, 64. Potter, 8.

13 Bradford, 125.

14 "Early Records of Charlestown" in Alexander Young, ed., *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston, 1846) 377.

15 Bradford, 236.

16 *Winthrop's Journal*, ed., James K. Hosmer (New York, 1908) 1:65, 89.

In this sketch re-creating the greeting of Roger Williams by Miantonomo's tribesmen, Rhode Island artist Augustus Hoppin portrayed the trust and friendship attributed to the Baptist's relations with Narragansetts.



RIHS Library.

Island Indians, followed by an assault on Pequods who had harbored several Indians involved in Oldham's murder.<sup>21</sup> The standing of Canonicus and Miantonomo appears to have been in no way diminished by the whole incident.

It is likely that maintenance of cordial relations with Narragansetts was regarded as essential policy by Massachusetts, in view of the prospect of major war with Pequods — a more aggressive tribe and a genuine threat to the survival of English settlement especially in Connecticut. In October 1636 articles of alliance were settled between Miantonomo and the Massachusetts government, which disqualified Narragansetts from making peace with Pequods without consent of

the Massachusetts government and prevented them from receiving any Pequod refugees. Because Narragansett negotiators could not "understand the articles perfectly," Massachusetts sent a copy to "Mr. Williams, who could best interpret them."<sup>22</sup> That Miantonomo clearly approved of the treaty was demonstrated in March 1637 when he sent to Boston "forty fathom of wampom and a Pequod's hand."<sup>23</sup>

Successful solicitation of Narragansett support at this juncture was in particular a diplomatic triumph, because Narragansetts had apparently been contemplating alliance with Pequods against the English. In their attempt to persuade Narragansetts to join them, Pequods demonstrated an acute awareness of potential English threat to Indian tribes as a whole and showed primitive understanding of the principles of "divide and rule." They argued

*that the English were strangers and began to overspread their countrie, and would deprive them thereof in time, if they were suffered to grow and increase; and if the Narigansetts did assist the English to subdue them, they did but make way for their owne overthrow, for if they were rooted out, the English would soone take occasion to subjugate them. . . .*<sup>24</sup>

Roger Williams later revealed himself as the successful diplomat who persuaded Narragansetts to resist overtures of "bloody Pequod ambassadors whose hands and arms . . . wreaked with the blood of [his] countrymen":

*God wondrously preserved me, and helped to break to pieces the Pequods' negotiation and design, and to make . . . the English league with the Narragansetts . . . against the Pequods.*<sup>25</sup>

The tortuous diplomacy employed to bring Narragansetts into the English camp was unnecessary in persuading Uncas to war against Pequods. He was a former Pequod of royal blood<sup>26</sup> who on several occasions had attempted unsuccessfully to rebel against the chief sachem of the tribe — Sassacus. Because of the failure of his rebellions he had lost most of his lands and his followers had been reduced to an estimated

17 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:185.

18 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:184.

19 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:185.

20 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:186. The interview is described in some detail in Johnson, 161-163.

21 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:186-190. Bradford, 334. Lt. Lion Gardiner, *Relation of the Pequot Warres* (Hartford, 1901) 9. Mather, 25.

22 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:192.

23 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:212.

24 Bradford, 338.

25 Letter from Roger Williams to Major Mason, *Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (New York, 1963) 6:338-339. This was not the only occasion on which Williams aided Massachusetts over Indian matters. His assistance did not mitigate, however, the intransigence of the Bay Colony's attitude toward Rhode Island.

26 Uncas' impressive genealogy is in a document drafted by the Connecticut General Court, photostat copy in RIHS MSS 10:162.

twenty-five to thirty men.<sup>27</sup> Prior to the Pequod war some Mohegans<sup>28</sup> took up residence under Uncas on a site near what later became Hartford. The enthusiasm of Uncas to engage in war against Pequods is understandable. With the English as allies he had the opportunity to revenge himself on those who had quashed his ambitions and the means to acquire power to which he clearly aspired.

The Pequod war, although it brought Narragansetts and Mohegans into temporary alliance, was a major cause of the breach between them. It concluded with wrangles over the performance of each tribe in battle, disputes over custody of Pequod survivors and, most importantly, jealousy for friendship of the English — third party in the alliance and, as the war demonstrated, undoubtedly the most powerful. In the war, Uncas and his followers proved a more warlike and trustworthy ally than the Narragansetts. Mohegans "brought home five Pequot heads" in preliminary skirmishes near Fort Saybrook, which demonstrated their fidelity to English troops.<sup>29</sup> Narragansetts, by contrast, after initial boasting of valour, showed little inclination to fight. Many of them deserted before the main attack on the Pequod stronghold at Mystic. Concern over loyalty of the Indians prompted the following exchange between Captain Maser of Connecticut, English commander, and Uncas:

*I then enquired of ONKOS what he thought the Indians would do! Who said, The NARRAGANSETTS would all leave us, but as for HIMSELF He would never leave us: and so it proved: For which Expressions and some other Speeches of his, I shall never forget him. Indeed he was a great Friend, and did great Service.<sup>30</sup>*

This bond of soldierly affection was never to be broken, although Uncas was to place severe strain on his friendship with the English and extracted full reward for his "great Service." Uncas' assertion was, however, vindicated; his men played a significant role in the attack on Mystic fort, while Narragansetts who

had not previously fled, hovered nervously in the background and, following the battle, headed precipitately for home.<sup>31</sup>

The poor showing of Narragansetts in the war was in itself ground for conflict between Narragansetts and Mohegans. It probably also influenced the English to discontinue cautious diplomacy they had previously conducted with Miantonomo's tribe.<sup>32</sup> Sensitive to the charge of cowardice, Canonicus and Miantonomo insisted "that they stuck to the English in life or death without which they were persuaded that Uncas and the Mohegans had proved false."<sup>33</sup> Miantonomo made no secret of resentment at what he regarded as disrespectful treatment from the English after the war. He complained through Roger Williams (who acted as advocate for Narragansetts in their representations to Boston) that he was prevented forcibly from seeing a Pequod sachem taken by his brother. "Did ever friends deal so with friends?" he asked bitterly.<sup>34</sup> Miantonomo also maintained that the English were keeping in their possession spoils of war, namely some kettles and a canoe, captured by Narragansetts.<sup>35</sup>

Human prizes of war, however, were a more important source of contention. The war against the Pequods was a total one which left the tribe destroyed as an entity. Many Pequod survivors attempted to find sanctuary with their victorious Indian opponents. Narragansetts were bound by the treaty of October 1636 not to receive Pequod refugees without consent of Massachusetts. Nevertheless fear was expressed from Connecticut that Pequods were being harbored by Narragansetts, who were using them to develop military power.<sup>36</sup> The evidence of Roger Williams suggests, however, that Narragansetts were reluctant to accommodate Pequods (although on two occasions they suggested that Pequod sachems and murderers be killed and surviving refugees be made Narragansetts).<sup>37</sup>

Miantonomo is reported to have informed incoming Pequods that "he was in league with Mr. Governor"

27 Frances Manwaring Caulkins, *History of Norwich* (Hartford, 1866) 28-30. deForest, 84-85.

28 Mohegans at this time were a small tribe who inhabited lands east of the Connecticut River and west of the main body of Pequods, to whom they were tributary. They should not be confused with the powerful Mohican tribe of the Hudson. It is suggested by deForest that many of the "Mohegans" who attached themselves to Uncas were in fact members of the river tribes of the Connecticut.

29 Captain John Underhill, *News from America* (London, 1638) 24.

30 Captain John Mason, *Brief History of the Pequot War* (reprint New York, 1869) 5.

31 This limited treatment of the main battle of the Pequot War is based on the eye-witness accounts in Mather, 24-43: this also contains John Mason's history, falsely ascribed by Mather to John Allyn Gardiner, 9-22. Underhill, *passim*. Winthrop's *Journal* 1:218-227. A comprehensive account of the causes, progress and effects of the Pequot War is given in Vaughan, ch. 5.

32 In itself, however, the Narragansetts' performance does not explain later English reaction against them. Indeed the English were probably relieved that the potentially most powerful tribe in southern New England had proved such feeble fighters.

John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.



and could do nothing without his authority.<sup>38</sup> Williams himself testified: "I am certain and confident of, and can give good assurance that there is not one [Pequod] amongst all the Narragansetts."<sup>39</sup> Narragansetts appear to have been held responsible by Massachusetts for Pequods accommodated by Niantics,<sup>40</sup> a minor tribe affiliated to Narragansetts by marriage ties and with whom Narragansetts had an ambivalent relationship.<sup>41</sup> Winthrop in 1638 even threatened war against Narragansetts for depredations by Niantics against some Long Island tribes tributary to the Massachusetts government.<sup>42</sup>

Uncas, it is clear, considerably strengthened the Mohegan tribe by accommodation of Pequod refugees, with apparently little censure from Connecticut or Massachusetts. Roger Williams wrote to Winthrop that Uncas was "but a little sachem, who hath made himself

great" by reception of Pequods.<sup>43</sup> Williams also claimed that some Pequod captives who had escaped from Boston were being sheltered by Uncas, who had bound his association with the defeated tribe by personal marriage unions with Pequod squaws.<sup>44</sup> Most damning evidence against Uncas, however, came from one of his tribe who sought shelter with Williams to nurse an injured foot. This Indian claimed that Uncas' party which visited Boston in June 1638 contained six Pequods, at least one of whom was a murderer of Englishmen.<sup>45</sup>

An attempt to settle the question of Pequod refugees was made at a conference held at Hartford in September 1638, arranged under the auspices of Roger Williams and the Connecticut government. Miantonomo was insistent that he should make the journey from Narragansett, despite the fact that allies of his tribe had been attacked two days before by Pequods, and that the latter were reportedly lying "in . . . wait to stop [his] passage to Connecticut and diverse of them threatened to boil him in a kettle."<sup>46</sup> He arrived safely, however, accompanied by one hundred and fifty followers and Williams as interpreter. Uncas, understandably reluctant to come to the meeting, used lameness as an excuse for not attending but he was eventually persuaded to do so by John Haynes, one of the leaders of Connecticut colony. The leading sachems were persuaded to shake hands but Uncas testily refused an invitation from Miantonomo "to sup and dine with him . . . although the magistrates persuaded him . . . to it."<sup>47</sup> The meeting tended to confirm evidence on the whereabouts of Pequods that Williams had earlier given in letters to Winthrop. Miantonomo was found to have only ten Pequods under him, whereas Uncas eventually admitted to thirty, although he probably had considerably more. The meeting concluded a tripartite agreement which stated that surviving Pequods should be divided equitably between Mohegans and Narragansetts and that neither tribe should engage in

33 This defense is related by Roger Williams in a letter to Winthrop, dated August 1637, Williams 6:57.

34 Williams 6:57.

35 Williams 6:62-63.

36 Letter from Israel Stoughton to John Winthrop in *Winthrop Papers*, ed. Allyn B. Forbes (Boston, 1929-1947) 3:480-483. The accusation was repeated in Winthrop, *Declaration*, 1.

37 Williams 6:62, 87.

38 Williams 6:42.

39 Williams 6:67. This letter was probably written in October 1637. The few Pequods later found under Miantonomo presumably came in after that date.

40 Williams 6:96-97, 103.

41 Drake, 131. In 1642, Winthrop had difficulty in persuading Miantonomo to desert Niantics with whom Narragansetts were "allied by continual intermarriages, &c.," but earlier, in November 1637, Miantonomo had been given leave by Massachusetts to "right himself for the wrongs which Janemoh and Wequash Cook (the Niantic sachem) had done him." *Winthrop's Journal* 1:238.

42 *Winthrop's Journal* 1:272.

43 Williams 6:61.

44 Williams 6:67, 108-109, 137.

45 Williams 6:102-103.

46 Williams 6:120.

47 Williams 6:121-122.

hostilities without first appealing to the English.<sup>48</sup>

Although Miantonomo had been the more dutiful ally in months following war, if not in the war itself, devious Uncas was consolidating friendship with English authorities — especially in Connecticut but to an extent in Massachusetts also. Three months prior to the Hartford meeting he had come to Boston with John Haynes, where his sycophancy won him favor with leaders of the Bay colony. Uncas left Boston richer by a “fair, red coat” and the goodwill of Massachusetts authorities.<sup>49</sup> Miantonomo had earlier visited Boston and conceded to Massachusetts the Pequod country and Block Island as theirs by right of conquest,<sup>50</sup> but the increasing desperation of his messages to the English, transmitted inevitably through Williams, shows that he felt his much coveted alliance was turning sour. A letter from Williams to Winthrop toward the end of 1637 repeats, on Narragansett’s behalf, a vitriolic attack on the fidelity of Mohegans and claims special treatment for Narragansett as longer-standing allies.<sup>51</sup>

Miantonomo displayed almost touching solicitude for English welfare in an attempt to regain the affection of his former friends — in August 1638, following threatenings of revenge by recalcitrant Pequods, he “desired that the English would be careful on the highways.”<sup>52</sup> In May 1639 Canonicus and Miantonomo sent a present of thirty fathom of wampum to John Winthrop and pledged “that if but a single Englishman, woman, or child be found in the woods by any of theirs, they should punish them severely . . . that should not safely conduct them and succour them, &c.”<sup>53</sup> The psychology of Miantonomo’s attachment to the English and the effect of English failure to reciprocate are explained by Williams in a letter to Winthrop about the time of Uncas’ visit to Boston:

*Miantunnomu . . . his barbarous birth or greatness being much honored, confirmed and augmented (in his own conceit) by the solemnity of the league with the English and his more than ordinary entertainment, &c., now all dashed in a moment in the frowns of such in whose friendship and love lay his chief advancement.*<sup>54</sup>

Miantonomo’s anglophilia did not prove permanent after poor treatment he clearly thought he had received at English hands. In the summer of 1640 Winthrop received a letter from William Bradford at Plymouth, informing him that “good Intelligence” reported that Narragansett had bribed the powerful Mohawk tribe to aid them in war against the English.<sup>55</sup> Massachusetts government (unlike Connecticut) gave little credit to these rumors, although they did summon Miantonomo to Boston to give explanation. Miantonomo arrived in November to receive from Thomas Dudley, then governor, offensive treatment which must have completed his disenchantment. Winthrop, in mild censure of Dudley’s diplomatic technique, wrote in his journal that Miantonomo “kept back such things as he accounted secrets of state, and that he would carry home, in his breast, as an injury, the strict terms to which he was put in this.”<sup>56</sup>

Rumors of Narragansett conspiracy against the English continued to arrive in Boston. An unsigned “relation” of a prospective uprising described how Miantonomo had been persuading Indians of Long Island and “upon the maine from the Dutch to Bay and all Indian sachems from the Eastward” to unite. Miantonomo’s supposed motives for aggression were that he “saw the English did gett possession of all the best places in the countrey and did drive the Indians away.”<sup>57</sup> If the report was true, Miantonomo had come to accept Pequod appraisal of English colonial development, which had failed to draw him away from an English alliance in 1636. Evidence of a Narragansett plot received in Boston was later confirmed by Lt. Lion Gardiner in 1660:

*Waiandance toald me many years agoe (that) the Naragansets . . . would let us alone till they had destroyed uncas . . . and then they with the mowquakes and Mowhakues and the indians beyond the dutch and all the Northine and Easterne Indeans would easily destroy us. . . .*<sup>58</sup>

Miantonomo is quoted by Gardiner as making an eloquent, if abortive, appeal to pan-Indian nationalism to encourage Long Islanders to join him:

48 The 1638 conference is described in Williams 6:120-123. Mather, 39. Winthrop, *Declaration*, 1. deForest, 156-160. Richman, 184-185. Ola Winslow, *Master Roger Williams* (New York, 1957) 152-153.

49 *Winthrop’s Journal* 1:271.

50 *Winthrop’s Journal* 1:238. Pequod territory was later conceded by Indians to Connecticut [at Hartford meeting in 1638] — one example of lack of consistency in English policy toward Indians, prior to the formation of the united colonies.

51 Williams 6:63-65.

52 Williams 6:116.

53 Williams 6:134. Winthrop acknowledged receipt of the gift — *Winthrop’s Journal* 1:299.

54 Williams 6:101.

55 *Winthrop Papers* 6:258-259. *Winthrop’s Journal* 2:6.

56 *Winthrop’s Journal* 2:14-15.

57 “Relation of the Plott,” *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 3rd ser. (Cambridge, Mass., 1833) 3:161-164.

*So are we all Indians as the English are, and Say brother to one another, So must we be one as they are, otherwise we shall be all gone shortly, for you know our fathers had plentie of deare, & Skins, our plaines were full of deare as also our woods and of Turkeies, and our Coves full of fish and foule, but these English having gotten our land, they with Sithes cut downe the grass, and their Cowes and horses eat the grass, and their hoggs spoyle our Clambanks, and we shall all be starved: therefore it is best for you to do as wee for wee are the Sachems from East to west both Moquakes & Mohawks Joyning with us, and we are all resolved to fall upon them all at one apoynted day.<sup>59</sup>*

The precise truth of Miantonomo's "plot" will never be known. It is even suggested that it was a fabrication of sachems hostile to Narragansetts,<sup>60</sup> although the variety of sources from which the reports come indicate that it is more than possible that Narragansetts were conspiring, however feebly. They were clearly disillusioned with the English as allies and their considerable wealth in wampum gave them the means to bribe neighboring tribes. What is more significant than speculation about Miantonomo's conspiratorial activity, however, is the fact that the Massachusetts government in 1642 concluded that the reports "might come out of the enmity which had been between Miantunnomoh and Onkus, who continually sought to discredit each other with the English." The reports were therefore regarded as insufficient grounds for starting a war for which the Connecticut court continued to press.<sup>61</sup> Miantonomo was summoned to Boston in September 1642 and claimed insistently that he was "Innocent of any ill intentions against the English."<sup>62</sup> Winthrop, governor at the time, conceded that "In all his answers he was very deliberate and showed good understanding in the principles of justice and equity, and ingenuity withal."<sup>63</sup>

Shortly following the reports of conspiracy, bad feelings between Mohegans and Narragansetts erupted into open hostilities. In the spring of 1643 Miantonomo was accused of hiring a Pequot to kill Uncas. The attempted assassination failed, although Uncas received

a wound in his arm. The hired assassin then claimed that Uncas had cut his own arm with a flint and then had bribed him to say that he had shot at Uncas at the request of the Narragansetts. Any plausibility that this ingenious countercharge may have had was destroyed when Miantonomo, after coming to Boston "upon another occasion" in June 1643, and promising to send the guilty Pequot to Uncas, "fearing that his owne treachery would be discovered . . . stopped the Pequot's mouth by cutting off his head."<sup>64</sup> After this Miantonomo reputedly attempted to kill Uncas by poison and sorcery.

The immediate cause of war between Mohegans and Narragansetts was a disturbance between Uncas and Sequasson, sachem of one of the river tribes of the Connecticut valley and ally of Narragansetts, who had been adversely affected by Uncas' rise to prominence in the area. In July 1643 Sequasson assaulted Uncas and a conflict followed in which seven or eight of Sequasson's men were killed. Miantonomo wrote to Connecticut in complaint and was told that the English had no hand in the affair. Miantonomo then asked Massachusetts "if we would not be offended, if we made war upon Onkus. [Winthrop] answered, if Onkus had done him or his friends wrong and would not give satisfaction, we should leave him to take his own course."<sup>65</sup> Confident of English neutrality, Miantonomo attacked Uncas in August 1643. Severely outnumbered, Uncas offered the classic expedient of single combat with his rival. Miantonomo refused.

The ensuing battle went, as Winthrop described it, "contrary to expectation."<sup>66</sup> The Narragansetts were routed and Miantonomo, weighted down with heavy armour lent by Samuel Gorton's party, was quickly captured. Uncas was precluded from executing Miantonomo immediately, by a dispatch he received from Samuel Gorton who, having heard of Miantonomo's capture, commanded that "they put him not to death, but use him kindly and returne him."<sup>67</sup> Supposing the message to have come from an authoritative source in Massachusetts, Uncas brought Miantonomo to Hartford where he sought advice of

Receipt of this document and others from Connecticut is acknowledged for September 1, 1642 — *Winthrop's Journal* 2:74.

58 Gardiner, 23.

59 Gardiner, 25-26.

60 Drake, 127.

61 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:75-76.

62 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:77.

63 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:76.

64 Winthrop, *Declaration*, 2-3.

65 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:132.

66 Winthrop, *Declaration*, 2-3.

67 Edward Winslow, 73; a possible additional reason for Uncas' delay was to allow ransom money to come in from Narragansetts.

the magistrates concerning the disposal of his prisoner. The latter recommended he abide by the judgment of the commissioners of the united colonies, then meeting at Boston. While Uncas solicited their decision, Miantonomo was kept under guard in Hartford.<sup>68</sup>

The meeting to which Uncas appealed was in itself of considerable significance. The confederation of the New England colonies had been established in May of the same year and its September gathering was the first of annual meetings of commissioners from the "united colonies" of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth, and New Haven.<sup>69</sup> This movement toward political unification represented also emergence of united English policy toward Indians. Reasons for union as outlined in the articles of confederation emphasize need for mutual protection against possible Indian attack.<sup>70</sup> More specifically, William Bradford, governor of Plymouth, gives danger from Narragansetts as the main stimulus to federation.<sup>71</sup>

The road to union was not an easy one. Its suggestion first came from Connecticut in 1637, when survival of the colony was threatened by Pequods, but federation was delayed six years by disagreements (mainly between Massachusetts and Connecticut) over military policy, separate alliances with Indians, and border issues, coupled with Connecticut's fear that Massachusetts would use federation to politically dominate numerically inferior colonies.<sup>72</sup> With unity of policy now secured, however, the English could play the role of suzerain with more efficiency. To decide the case of Miantonomo was the commissioners' first official duty. They concluded that he had in fact conspired to destroy the English, and thereby lifted the case from arbitration of an intertribal dispute into the question of English security.

As far as the Mohegan-Narragansett War was concerned, the commissioners found Miantonomo the aggressor and guilty of breaking the tripartite agreement of September 1638 by attacking Mohegans without consent of the English.<sup>73</sup> The commissioners therefore

decided that "Uncas cannot be safe while Miantonomo lives" and that "he may justly put such a false and bloodthirsty enemy to death," adding — with possibly misplaced delicacy — "in his owne Jurisdiction, not in the English plantations, And advising that in the manner of his death all mercy and moderation be shewed, contrary to the practice of the Indians who exercise tortures and cruelty." For his pains Uncas was promised future protection from any possible reprisals by Narragansetts, as befitted "a frend to the English."<sup>74</sup>

Winthrop recorded that the commissioners, of whom he was president, were at first reluctant to authorize execution, but were resolved in their eventual decision by the advice of "five of the most judicial elders."<sup>75</sup> An additional inducement clearly was that Uncas would act literally as hatchet man for the English who could thus, in the manner of the suzerain, remain aloof from the affair while dictating its outcome.

Uncas readily undertook the pleasant task allotted him. Somewhere between Hartford and Windsor, he "clave [Miantonomo's] head with an hatchet, some English being present."<sup>76</sup> A few versions of the execution relate that Uncas cut out a large piece of Miantonomo's shoulder and devoured it saying "It was the sweetest meat he ever ate, it made his heart strong."<sup>77</sup> The story is probably apocryphal.<sup>78</sup>

Circumstances surrounding the death of Miantonomo reveal in operation one of the suggested tenets of English policy toward Indians — necessity of maintaining English security. Miantonomo's death was in part a result of his threat to it as proceedings of the commissioners and official defense of their policy indicate. Some modern historians have suggested that the desire to preserve safety was pursued in a more active way, by a coherent strategy of divide and rule.<sup>79</sup> Clearly this principle was applied when the English were successfully attempting to isolate Pequods, specifically by persuading Narragansetts against alliance with that formidable tribe. In this instance however English were coping pragmatically to over-

68 Above account, up to Miantonomo's capture, is based primarily on following: Edward Winslow, 70-74. deForest, 184-192. *Winthrop's Journal* 2:131-134. Bradford, 388-389. Benjamin Trumbull, *History of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1797) 1:127-132. Mather, 56-57. Hubbard, 42-43.

69 Rhode Island was excluded from these meetings.

70 "Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England," David Pulsifer and Nathaniel B. Shurt-

leff, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth* (Boston, 1855-1861) 9:3.

71 Bradford, 382.

72 Criticism of punitive raid by Massachusetts prior to main war against Pequods (Bradford, 5) is made in Gardiner, 9. Main documents for dispute between Connecticut and Massachusetts in *Winthrop's Journal* 1:231, 287-291, and *Winthrop Papers* 4:53-54, 74, 75-84. Latter consists mainly of exchanges between Winthrop and Thomas Hooker. There were also early differences

*Felix O. C. Darley, interpreting Miantonomo's death more than two hundred years later, shows "some English being present."*



*From History of the Indians of Connecticut . . . by John W. De Forest (Hartford, 1853).*

come a potentially disastrous situation, and their actions cannot necessarily be assumed to have been part of a broader, consciously pursued policy.

Involvement in the Mohegan-Narragansett war presents a different case. One view implies that the

English were attempting to play the role of peace-keeper between tribes.<sup>80</sup> Evidence of two contemporary witnesses strongly suggests however that Puritan authorities actively sought to keep Narragansetts and Mohegans hostile to one another — specifically by

over Indian policy between Plymouth and Massachusetts — *Winthrop's Journal* 1:213-214. For full modern discussion of formation of united colonies — Harry M. Ward, *United Colonies of New England, 1643-1690* (New York, 1961) 11-136.

73 Miantonomo had earlier been given freedom of action by Massachusetts. Ward, 18-19.

74 *Plymouth Colony Records* 9:10-12.

75 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:134.

76 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:134. Mather, 57.

77 For example Trumbull 1:135.

78 Drake, *Indians of North America*, 129-130, for origins of story.

79 Ward, 119. Bradley Chapin, *Early America* (New York, 1968) 49. Douglas E. Leach, *Northern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1763* (New York, 1966) 54.

80 Vaughan, 155.

authorizing the execution of Miantonomo — to prevent them from joining in a union which would threaten English supremacy.

William Harris, member of a Rhode Island group which during the period of the dispute was allied to Massachusetts,<sup>81</sup> stated that if Uncas had not been allowed to execute Miantonomo an alliance between the two sachems would most likely have ensued.<sup>82</sup>

Edward Winslow, one of the commissioners who condemned Miantonomo, expanded this theme by claiming that a prospective marriage alliance might have united feuding tribes to the detriment of the English. His statement indicates that divide and rule had indeed become a reality of Indian policy:

*And if any think wee doe needlessly engage in the troubles betweene the Indians! 1. Let them know if wee should not here and there keepe correspondency with some of them, they would soone joyne all together against us. 2. The quarrel betweene Uncas and Nanohigganset, arose upon his cleaving to us: For the great sachem Myantinimo would have married Uncas daughter, and since Pessachus that succeeded him would have married Woosamequins<sup>83</sup> daughter, and all in policy to take them off from us; so that indeed wee are necessitated to it.<sup>84</sup>*

However one interprets English policy in preserving security from Indian tribes, it is in itself insufficient explanation of total English policy toward Indians. The excessively sympathetic treatment which Uncas received, for example, cannot be altogether explained in terms of divide and rule. He represented more than merely the arbitrarily chosen representative of English influence among Indian tribes. Roger Williams frequently expressed surprise that scheming Uncas should have been successful candidate for English favors — "our friends at Connecticut are marvellously deluded by the Mohegans," he wrote to Winthrop;<sup>85</sup> but it is clear that the alliance between Connecticut colony and

Uncas was one of mutual self-interest, not moral compatibility.

Connecticut colonists were anxious during early years of settlement to find legitimate title to lands they occupied. Until it obtained its charter in 1662, the colony had no legal recognition from England. Indeed colonists violated an earlier land grant claimed to have been made by the council of New England to the Earl of Warwick in 1632, who ceded lands thus granted to a group known as "lords and gentlemen."<sup>86</sup>

First settlers in Connecticut scrupulously purchased lands from local sachems (often several times over) to give some legal justification to their enterprise. Hartford was purchased from Sequasson and other neighboring chiefs.<sup>87</sup> Windsor was sold by one Nassecowen who was "so taken in love with the coming of the English [that] for some small matter," he gave up possession of his land to them.<sup>88</sup> Settlers of Wethersfield, it is acknowledged in colonial records, had purchased their land from the local sachem.<sup>89</sup>

Connecticut settlers felt however that, in the shifting world of tribal politics, more powerful authority was needed than that which minor sachems afforded. It was to the rising star of Uncas who, following the Pequot war was establishing hegemony over local sachems, that settlers turned. In 1639 the court of Connecticut was considering a "Treaty with Uncas concerning the land [ ] by him and other Indians between Hartford and W[indsor],"<sup>90</sup> and in 1640 a declaration was made by Uncas in which he ceded "unto the governor and magistrates of the English upon Connecticut River, all the land that doth belong, or ought of right to belong to me," reserving for himself only those lands which he himself was utilizing.<sup>91</sup>

Suspicion that the English erected Uncas following the Pequot war, that they might have a powerful sachem to protect and legitimize their land claims, was made in a memorial prompted by the controversy over

81 See below, 28.

82 *A Rhode Islander Reports on King Philip's War: The Second William Harris Letter of August, 1676*, transcribed and ed. Douglas E. Leach (Providence, 1963) 55-57. William Harris, because of temporary association with Massachusetts, is an interesting exception to the general rule that Rhode Island commentators were biased toward Miantonomo. Harris describes Miantonomo as "an extremely aspiring, unjust, cruel man." Harris' affiliations, of course, make his testimony concerning Miantonomo's execution more revealing.

83 A sachem allied to Plymouth colony.

84 Edward Winslow, 86.

85 Williams 6:98.

86 Legalities of this complex grant have never been satisfactorily unravelled. Fenwick was the only one of the "lords and gentlemen" who took up residence in Connecticut, leaving in 1648, after promising to get all the land in the Warwick deed transferred to the colony. He never did so, however, and the situation remained in limbo until after Connecticut obtained its charter. Charles M. Andrews, *Colonial Period of American History* (New Haven, 1936) 2:73-123.

87 deForest, 83. J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *Memorial History of Hartford County* (Boston, 1886) 1:13-14, 221-222.

88 deForest, 83, quoting from "Windsor Records."

the right of Uncas' son, Owaneco, to distribute land to English favorites:

*We reply that sd Uncas was not chief sachem and proprietor etc And being subordinate to the grand Pequod Sachem had no power to receive or permit the English peaceably etc. The truth and matter of fact is thus — Some years after the English planting sd Colony the grand sachem of the Pequods warred upon them Uncas then and at ye disgust of the sd Sachem put himself with some that followed him in the service of the English against the Pequods The Pequods and all their adherents and subjects whereof all the Moheags were a part were Conquered many killed most dispersed part of thos that remained was put under the management of sd Uncas who for his assistance was . . . made a . . . Sachem . . . and sd Uncas neither then nor any time since did ever claim the Lands the English first Settd upon in sd Colony of Connecticut Yet sometime after the Pequod war and yet he was thus advanced he pretended to the Propriety of . . . Mohegin which was under the government . . . of the sd pequod Sachim and some other territories But upon some motion made he surrendered up all to the Governr and Company of Connecticut in the year 1640 reserving only the land actually improved which was a part of Mohegan Viel:*

*. . . the Government saw it valuable and Convenient to . . . treat the sd Uncas as a Sachem who had been serviceable to them. . . .<sup>92</sup>*

Sensitivities of Connecticut government to accusation of chicanery in early dealings with Indians survived into the late eighteenth century: a book which criticized methods of land acquisition in the colony<sup>93</sup> was officially ordered to be burnt when first published in 1781. Whatever the absolute truth behind Uncas' rise to prominence, it is clear that it was aided if not implemented by Connecticut policy to facilitate territorial expansion into the Connecticut valley. And with the establishment of the united colonies in 1643,

Connecticut policy in this respect became general English policy.

Sales of land by Miantonomo, by contrast, did not find him favour with colonial governments other than Rhode Island and explain many inconsistencies in his treatment, which English desire for security alone does not fully cover. In 1638 he sold the lands of Providence plantation to Roger Williams and Aquidneck to William Coddington and others of the Antinomian faction earlier expelled from Massachusetts.<sup>94</sup> Miantonomo was thus in a sense one of the founders of Rhode Island, colony of heretical refugees, which orthodox colonies were for long loath to recognise and Massachusetts in particular connived to overthrow. The policy of Massachusetts was demonstrated in September 1642 when a Rhode Island group living in Pawtuxet, led by William Arnold, placed themselves and their lands under protection of Massachusetts — which eagerly complied with their request, as Winthrop states, to gain a foothold on Narragansett Bay and to "draw in the rest in those parts, either under ourselves or Plymouth, who, now lived under no government, but grew very offensive."<sup>95</sup>

Shortly following that, Miantonomo — inadvertently, one supposes — made a further intrusion into intercolonial disputes which was to prove, literally perhaps, fatal. In January 1643 he sold Shawomet (now Warwick) to Samuel Gorton and his followers who had left Pawtuxet after the submission of the Arnold coterie. Gorton — arch heretic of his time and persistent critic of Massachusetts policy — had been hounded from Massachusetts, Plymouth, and even Rhode Island settlements of Portsmouth and Providence. His reception by Miantonomo meant that he had temporarily withdrawn from the jurisdiction of Massachusetts recently established in Pawtuxet. As late as 1642 Massachusetts had been prepared to accept Miantonomo as a nominal ally but after January 1643

89 J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1850-1890) 1:5.

90 See above, 28.

91 Reprinted in deForest, 495.

92 Willys Papers MSS, Connecticut 1667-1714 (Indian Relations) 474. Annmary Brown Memorial, Providence.

93 Samuel Peters, *General History of Connecticut* (New York, 1811) 16-33.

94 Bartlett 1:18, 44-45.

95 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:81. There is a predictably scathing reference to the event in Gorton, 19. Whether

Winthrop's reference is specifically to Gortonists or to Rhode Island heretics in general is difficult to ascertain. Massachusetts also conducted a campaign in England to overthrow Rhode Island. In 1641 Hugh Peters and Thomas Welde, sent to England to secure Massachusetts control of the colony, were apparently successful when they obtained the "Narragansett Patent" which granted lands of Narragansett Bay (i. e., Rhode Island Colony) to Massachusetts, but in 1644 Williams — who had gone to England in 1643 — obtained a charter for Rhode Island which constituted its settlements as a corporate entity and helped to guarantee their survival. Richman, 165-184. Ola Winslow, 176-188.

they turned against him, and rumors of his conspiracy became more acceptable, although there was no further evidence to substantiate them prior to the wholehearted acquiescence of Massachusetts in his execution. In a letter to Massachusetts, Randall Holden, member of Gorton's party, claimed that "Benedick [Arnold] hath reported that Miantonomi, one of the Sachims, of whom we bought [Shawomet] should lose his head for selling his right thereof to us."<sup>96</sup>

Miantonomo became inextricably involved in the Gorton affair when in June 1643 the local sachems of Shawomet, Pumham and Sacononoco, were received by Massachusetts under its governance. Pumham, one of the co-signers of the Shawomet deed, claimed he had been coerced into selling by Miantonomo. It is likely that the sachems saw Massachusetts as a more desirable overlord than Miantonomo, but it is clear also that Massachusetts actively encouraged their submission in order to further extend its authority on Narragansett Bay. At a meeting of the general court in May 1643, representatives had been sent to the Gorton faction "to understand how things [were]" and a committee was appointed to treat with Pumham and Sacononoco about their submission.<sup>97</sup>

Prior to the "acceptance" of the two sachems, Miantonomo was summoned to Boston where according to Winthrop, "being demanded in open court . . . whether he had any interest in the two sachems he could prove none,"<sup>98</sup> although Roger Williams, best qualified judge of intertribal affairs in the Narragansett area, was later to testify, with specific reference to Shawomet, "that the inferior sachems and subjects shall plant and remove at the pleasure of the highest and supreme Sachems."<sup>99</sup>

Miantonomo, one assumes, was left bewildered by his unwitting involvement in colonial politics (especially in the absence of his "counsellor" Roger Williams) but, as Winslow confirms, it was his alliance

with Gorton that partly contributed to his fall from grace so far as the English (other than those of Rhode Island) were concerned.<sup>100</sup> When Miantonomo's fate was placed in English hands, they were clearly prejudiced against him in a way which the official record of proceedings does not overtly indicate.<sup>101</sup>

Miantonomo's death climaxed incipient trends in the evolution of English policy toward Indians, but it did not resolve any problems. Narragansetts were not chastened by the loss of their chief but merely confirmed in hostility to Mohegans and in resentment to the English. They were particularly aggrieved because they claimed to have paid wampum to Uncas for Miantonomo's ransom. Their aggression prompted mobilization of an English army in 1645, for which expense the English demanded Narragansetts should compensate. Puritan insistence that this be paid in full further embittered relations. Narragansetts resumed their alliance with Gorton, after the latter had been imprisoned for a year in Massachusetts; at Gorton's instigation they also placed themselves under jurisdiction of the English home government<sup>102</sup> — a gesture which merely provoked the wrath of Massachusetts.

Climactic finale of Narragansett alienation from Puritan authority was their participation in King Philip's War in 1675-6, which left the tribe decimated and no longer a force in Indian-English relations.<sup>103</sup>

As for Uncas, he prospered in the protection and support of his English friends and continued a career of extortion and petty crime which drew only moderate condemnation from his Puritan associates.<sup>104</sup> He stands as one of the first and most successful real-estate agents on the North American frontier.

Signature of Uncas.

96 Quoted in Edward Winslow, 30.

97 Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England* (Boston, 1853, 54) 2:35. *Winthrop's Journal* 2:123-126.

98 *Winthrop's Journal* 2:123. This visit of Miantonomo to Boston, his last, was lightly discarded by Winthrop as being "upon another occasion" in terms of events leading to Miantonomo's death [see above, 18]. Winthrop was cautious not to relate Miantonomo's execution to his land sales. Mercifully for later historians, other contemporaries were not so discreet.

99 Williams 6:300-301.

100 Edward Winslow, 74.

101 Several modern historians recognize that Miantonomo's

involvement with Gorton was a major cause of English reaction against him. Kenneth W. Porter, "Samuel Gorton, New England Firebrand," *New England Quarterly* 7 (1934) 422. Samuel Brockunier, *Irrepressible Democrat*, Roger Williams (New York, 1940) 154. Ward, 120-121. Rhode Island historians almost invariably share this view. By contrast the most modern work exclusively on Indian-white relations in New England avoids discussion of Miantonomo's alliance with Gorton as a factor leading to his death. Vaughan is reluctant, generally, to associate the development of Indian policy with land acquisition and intercolonial politics, except to argue (wrongly) that Massachusetts on the whole favored development of Rhode Island as a "buffer" colony against the Indians. Vaughan, 158.

Know all men: that I, Myantonomy, Cheefe Sachem of the Nanhegansett, have sould vnto the persons here named, one parsell of lands with all the rights and privileges thereof whatsoever, lying upon the west syde of that part of the sea called Sowhomes Bay, from Copassanatumett, over against a little lland in the sayd Bay, being the North bounds, and the outmost point of that neck of land called Showhomett; beinge the South bounds ffrom the sea shoare of each boundary upon a straight lyne westward twentie miles. I say I have truly sould this parsell of lande above sayde, the proportion whereof is according to the mapp under written or drawne, being the forme of it vnto Randall Houlden, John Greene, John Wickes, ffrancis Weston, Samuell Gorton, Richard Waterman, John Warner, Richard Carder, Sampson Shotten, Robert Potter, William Wuddall, ffor one hundreth and fortie foure ffathom of wampumpeage. I say I have sould it, and possession of it given unto the men above sayed, with the ffree and joynt consent of the present inhabitants, being natives, as it appears by their hands hereunto annexed.

Dated y<sup>e</sup> twelfth day of January, 1642. Beinge enacted vpon the above sayed parsell of land in the presence off

Sachem of Shawomett,

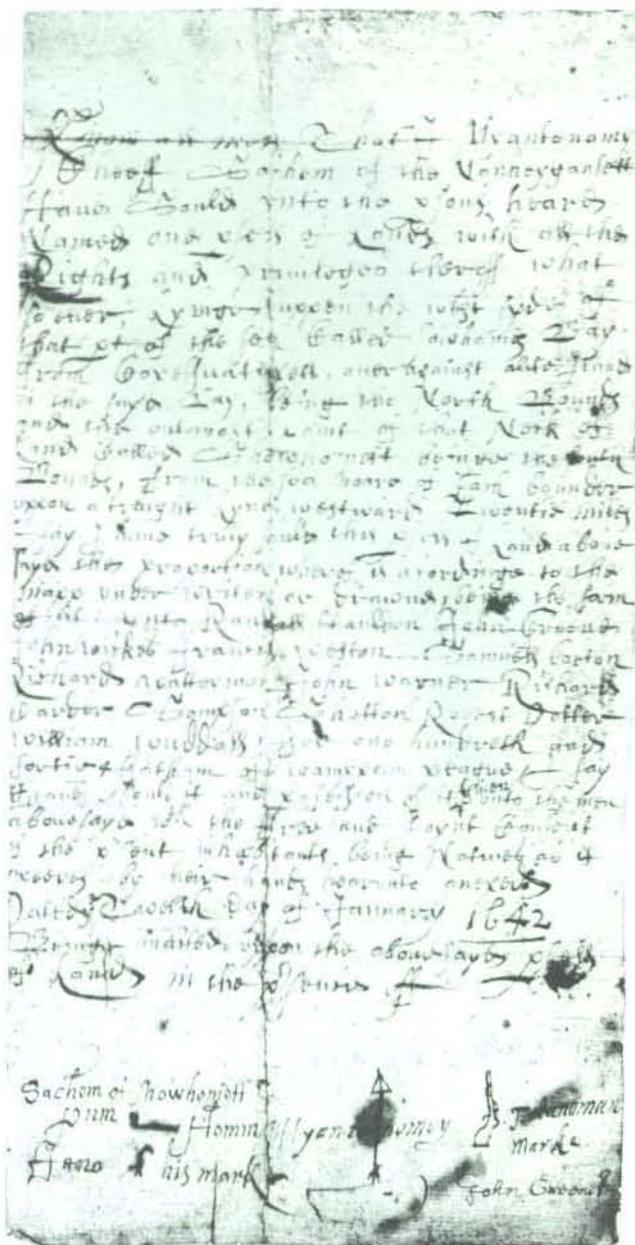
MYANTONOMY

Pum Homm  
Jano his marke

TOTANOMAN  
MARKE  
John Greene, Jun'r

Transcription from Records of the Colony of Rhode Island...  
ed. John Russell Bartlett, v. 1 (Providence, 1856).

DEED OF WARWICK TO GORTON AND HIS FOLLOWERS



Courtesy The John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.

102 Massachusetts Archives, 30, Letter 2, May 24, 1644.

103 The turbulent relationship between English and Narragansetts in years following Miantonomo's death is documented in *Plymouth Colony Records* 9:17-18, 28-29, 32-43, 56-68, 71-74, 85-89, 106-107, 111, 117-118, 168-169. *Winthrop's Journal* 2:168-169, 172, 176, 204, 254, 272. *Winthrop Papers* 4:418-420, 427-428, 506-508, 431-433. Hubbard, 42-43.

104 The record of Uncas' frequent misdemeanors is given in *Colonial Records of Connecticut* 2:511, 593-594. *Plymouth Colony Records* 9:97-103. *Winthrop Papers* 5:82, 287. "Trumbull Papers," M.H.S. Colls. 5th ser. [Boston, 1835] 9:5-7. *Willis Papers MSS, Connecticut* 1667-1714 [Indian Relations] 454.



*Portrait of William Ellery by Samuel Bell Waugh after Trumbull.*

*Courtesy Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia.*

## William Ellery: Making of a Rhode Island Politician

by William M. Fowler, Jr.\*

As the bicentennial of the American Revolution approaches more and more will be heard of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and other great leaders of the period. Yet behind them were countless more who faithfully served in the ranks and whose courage, dedication, and determination made victory possible.

One such man was William Ellery of Rhode Island, who for more than forty years served his country as congressman, judge, loan officer, and collector of customs. Before emerging on the national scene, however, Ellery had to serve his apprenticeship and earn his place as Rhode Island politician.

His grandfather Benjamin Ellery had the unenviable birthright of second son of a seventeenth-century farmer in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Not until the next century would that Cape Ann community send her sleek schooners along the Grand Banks to return with scuppers nearly awash and holds crammed with cod and haddock.<sup>1</sup> Seventeenth-century Gloucester was a farming community in an area where land was niggardly and yielded little. So when Benjamin reached maturity he decided to leave and strike out on his own.<sup>2</sup>

After traveling to Bristol, Rhode Island, Benjamin settled permanently in Newport about 1700.<sup>3</sup> Ambitious, intelligent, and alert to his opportunities he rose

rapidly in Newport society, becoming a successful merchant, judge, and assistant of the colony.<sup>4</sup>

Following in his father's footsteps, Benjamin's son William likewise became a merchant and successful politician.<sup>5</sup> He was the first Ellery to attend college, graduating from Harvard in the class of 1722.<sup>6</sup> After graduation he returned to Newport and entered the usual mercantile pursuits including slaving.<sup>7</sup> With his marriage to Elizabeth Almy, daughter of prominent Newporter Colonel Job Almy, he further secured his own position within the community so that by the time their son William was born in 1727, Ellerys were among the first families of Newport.<sup>8</sup>

The Newport in which young William grew up was a unique community called by some "The Paradise of New England."<sup>9</sup> George Berkeley, famous English philosopher and Newport visitor, described its inhabitants as a "mixed kind" who despite many religious differences, rarely quarreled and showed a remarkable degree of toleration toward one another.<sup>10</sup> In this cosmopolitan urbane setting William senior took charge of his son's early education and shared with him those values which he had learned to hold dear: liberal theology, love of learning, and a merchant's attitude toward politics.<sup>11</sup> As a member of the Congregational

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- 1 James R. Pringle, *History of... Gloucester* (Gloucester, 1892) 32-33.
- 2 Benjamin was apparently the only son who left. Other children remained in Gloucester where their descendants live today. *Vital Records of Gloucester... to... 1849* (Salem, 1917-24) 1:234-35. Susan B. Franklin, "William Ellery, Signer of the Declaration of Independence," *Rhode Island History* 12:4 (October 1953) 110.
- 3 Franklin, 110.
- 4 Franklin, 111. John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England* (Providence, 1856-65) 5:19. Benjamin's business career can be followed in his Daybook, Newport Historical Society.

5 Clifford K. Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates* (Boston, 1945) 7:67.

6 *Sibley* 7:67.

7 William Ellery Account Book, Newport Historical Society.

8 *Sibley* 7:67. Clinton Rossiter, *First American Revolution* (New York, 1953) 141, includes Ellery family among R.I. aristocracy that "reigned and slaved."

9 "Newport Historical and Social," *Harper's New Monthly* 9 (1854) 289-317. William B. Weeden, "Ideal Newport in the 18th Century," *Proceedings American Antiquarian Society* 18 (1906) 106-117. Weeden, *Early Rhode Island* (New York, 1910) 270-72.

10 George Berkeley to Thomas Prior, April 24, 1779 — A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessup, eds., *Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (London, 1964) 1:196. This toleration did not continue through the younger Ellery's lifetime. See below, 10.

11 John Sanderson, *Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence* (Phila., 1865) 206.

Church William Ellery contributed generously to its support, at the same time subscribing to *Seasonable Thoughts* of Charles Chauncey and collected sermons of liberal Boston divine Jonathan Mayhew.<sup>12</sup> Unlike many other college graduates he did not discontinue intellectual pursuits at commencement nor did he confine himself strictly to theology, for he played an important role in establishment of Redwood Library as well as Rhode-Island College [later Brown University].<sup>13</sup> Politically Ellery shared wholeheartedly the views of his fellow merchants — unshakeable faith in sound money and distaste for English navigation laws and customs regulations.<sup>14</sup>

Young William, future "Signer," spent his early years with brothers Benjamin and Christopher studying ways of a Newport merchant. Not all his time was spent in the world of trade, however, for his father took special care to prepare him for college.<sup>15</sup> Amidst polished Newport society under his father's tutelage William acquired sufficient academic proficiency to be admitted to Harvard with his older brother Benjamin in 1743.<sup>16</sup>

Ellery's arrival in Cambridge began one of the most pleasant associations of his life. He loved Cambridge and Harvard. Every year until he was more than eighty years old he returned to visit the scene of these joyful memories.<sup>17</sup>

In those days social position dictated a student's place within his class and Ellery was ranked fifth in a class of thirty.<sup>18</sup> For the first two years Ellery "chummed" with Nathaniel Dummer of Newbury who [worked as a Monitor and a Scholar of the House]. This unfortunate early friend, on an ocean voyage, was swept overboard and lost.<sup>19</sup>

As a student Ellery had a somewhat undistinguished career. His favorite subjects were Latin and Greek, but neither was pursued to the exclusion of other less serious matters.<sup>20</sup> On one occasion at least he was reprimanded for having cut class, and on another he was cited for "giving Disturbance to certain Persons

Harvard Hall as William Ellery, Class of 1747, knew it.



Engraving from *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* . . . by Everett A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, v. 1 (New York, 1856).

met for a Private Worship At the house of Mr. William Morse."<sup>21</sup> He evidently earned his reputation as an individual "overflowing with fun and humor."<sup>22</sup> Despite his reputation and occasional frolics Ellery remained, as he described himself to his grandson, a person fond of fun, but "not a rebel."<sup>23</sup>

During his college years, Ellery met and fell in love with lovely Ann Remington, daughter of eminent Judge Jonathan Remington, a descendant of Governors Bradstreet and Dudley.<sup>24</sup> Ellery took his meals at the Remingtons and there met Ann. Her father was a stern, taciturn man who did not always approve of young Ellery's loquacity and one time reproached him in a manner the young student never forgot:<sup>25</sup>

*He [Judge Remington] commonly took a seat at the dining table. Eat a little and talked less, and sometimes*

12 Ezra Stiles, "Memo of Gratuities Oct. 1759-Oct. 1763," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, 2nd ser., 7 (1891-92) 344-345. Sibley 7:68.

13 Bartlett 6:385-91. When William senior died, young William took his place as trustee of the college and fought untiringly to have it built in Newport. David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution* (Providence, 1958) 147-50. See below.

14 Bartlett 4:457. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt* (New York, 1955) 66. Irving B. Richman, *Rhode Island, Study in Separatism* (Boston, 1905) 71.

15 Sanderson, 206.

16 "William Ellery" and "Benjamin Ellery"—Quinquennial

File, Archives Harvard University. William was fifteen and a half at admission, his brother two years older.

17 E. T. Channing, "Life of William Ellery," *Library of American Biography* (New York, 1902) 9:136. Channing's anecdotal biography, not always accurate, is substantiated on this point by numerous letters between Ellery, his children, and his grandchildren who lived in Cambridge. Many letters to Ellery's famous grandson — Reverend William Ellery Channing — with whom he had a particularly close relationship, are now in Dana Papers, MHS, and Stedman Papers, RIHS Library. For Ellery's relationship with his grandson, see Arthur W. Brown, *Always Young for Liberty* (Syracuse, 1956) 7.

18 Sibley 12:102.

*seemed to be in a stupor: I shall never forget the check he gave me once, when supposing he was in that state, and inattentive to what was passing, I was letting out a stream of my fluent nonsense, he suddenly turned towards me, and with a piercing eye looking at and into me he said — young man bridle your tongue, or you will get the name of a humorist.*

The judge died in autumn 1745 and his family was forced to break up their home. His daughters Ann and Mary went to live with their brother-in-law, noted lawyer (and hypochondriac) Edmund Trowbridge.<sup>26</sup> Ellery too, much to his delight, was invited to board at Trowbridge's. Here the young Newporter began seriously to court his future wife:<sup>27</sup>

*[At Trowbridge's] I courted the woman who came to be my first wife, and I have not yet forgotten with what pleasure I have seen the moon beams twinkling through the agitated leaves of the Button wood trees, in irregular lines by turns shade and illumine her blooming countenance. — In this house as there were no children, and Mr. Trowbridge was frequently absent attending at courts, the young of both sexes used to assemble, and Cupid had a fine opportunity to shoot his darts which could not fail to pierce some hearts where there was so large a covey.*

While the hearts of the two lovers in Cambridge might be pierced with Cupid's darts, Ellery's father wore the armor of a disapproving parent who believed that his son, at age twenty-three, was too young to marry.<sup>28</sup> Ignoring his father's advice Ellery married Ann on October 11, 1750.<sup>29</sup> Happily, arrival of a granddaughter the following August softened the elder Ellery's heart and brought his blessing on his son's marriage.<sup>30</sup>

Returning to Newport with his bride, Ellery unenthusiastically established himself as merchant. He had little inclination or desire to be a man of business but with wife and family to support he could hardly afford to spend time and money embarking

on a new profession.<sup>31</sup> Nearly fifty years later Ellery reminisced with his grandson about "The Road Not Taken":<sup>32</sup>

*If the year before I graduated I had determined upon law or physic, especially the latter, I am persuaded that I should have led a more profitable and useful life than I have done; and I had a fine opportunity for either study. I could have studied the law under Judge Trowbridge, with whom I sometime boarded, or, if I had chosen the study of physic, my father would have placed me with a physician; but no one advised me, and I made no choice. I entered into small commerce without a spirit of enterprise or skill in trade; that would not do; I had married a wife, and could not submit to be an understrapper to a physician.*

Little is known about Ellery's next decade as he plied his trade with little enthusiasm and no great success. While devoted to wife and family he rarely spent evenings with them, preferring instead the company of other young men of Newport who gathered at a local tavern. This habit ceased abruptly when he read in his wife's diary how pleased she had been when her husband, quite out of the ordinary, spent an evening at home with her and the children.<sup>33</sup>

As Ellery's bachelor habits faded under Ann's careful eye, other signs of domestication began to appear. One of these was his new hobby gardening. Always eager to take advantage of any new agricultural discoveries, as to outshine his neighbors, Ellery showed keen interest in new gardening techniques introduced into Newport "by some European gardeners."<sup>34</sup> He applied their innovations to his efforts and to his delight (with some obvious exaggeration) he was able to raise "upon the same quantity of ground annually . . . ten times as great a quantity of vegetables . . . as had ever been raised before."<sup>35</sup>

For Ellery gardening provided a much needed diversion from business. He enjoyed other less manual, more intellectual diversions as well. One of his closest

19 "Nathaniel Dummer," Quinquennial File.

20 Sanderson, 207.

21 Faculty Records 1:228, Archives Harvard University.

22 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "William Ellery," MS., Etting Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

23 William Ellery to Richard Henry Dana, Sept. 21, 1813, Dana Papers.

24 Henry R. Palmer, "William Ellery," Robert P. Brown, ed., *Rhode Island Signers of the Declaration of Independence* (Providence, 1913). *Sibley* 12:134.

25 William Ellery to Richard Henry Dana, March 10, 1819.

26 *ibid.* *Sibley* 8:509.

27 William Ellery to Richard Henry Dana, July 19, 1815, Dana Papers.

28 E. T. Channing, 138.

29 Ellery Family Bible, Redwood Library, Newport.

30 E. T. Channing, 138.

31 William Ellery to William Ellery Channing, January 1796, quoted in William Ellery Channing, *Memoir* (Boston, 1874) 1:8.

32 W. E. Channing, 1:8.

33 E. T. Channing, 138-139.

34 William Ellery to [?] 1818, quoted in E. T. Channing, 141.

35 E. T. Channing, 141.

friends was Ezra Stiles, recently arrived pastor of Second Congregational Church in Newport and librarian of Redwood Library.<sup>36</sup> While Ellery respected and admired Stiles he, unlike his father, never actually joined the congregation.<sup>37</sup> This reluctance to join can perhaps be attributed to his general distaste for organized religion and theological questions.<sup>38</sup> Frequent bitter, acrimonious disputes between competing sects in Newport annoyed him, particularly on one occasion when in his presence an Episcopalian minister proclaimed "that the breath of a Dissenter was infectious."<sup>39</sup>

Despite their theological differences, Stiles and Ellery valued each other's opinions. The pastor especially esteemed Ellery's critical eye for grammar and composition. In spring 1761 he asked his friend to read a manuscript and "note some of the principal improper constructions."<sup>40</sup> A few days later Ellery replied that it would be presumptuous of him to correct a manuscript coming from such "an exact pen."<sup>41</sup> Then he went on to provide the good pastor with a three-page detailed critique.<sup>42</sup>

Ellery might have remained an obscure and insignificant Newport merchant had it not been for a series of events in 1764 — some taking place in his own household, others three thousand miles away in London.

On Thursday morning, March 15, 1764, William Ellery senior died.<sup>43</sup> After a long, prosperous career he had amassed a considerable amount of property.<sup>44</sup> Much of it was left to his widow but portions were divided among his four surviving children: Benjamin, William, Ann, and Christopher, with Benjamin and William acting as co-executors of the estate.<sup>45</sup> This inheritance meant that William was no longer totally dependent upon his business and it was perhaps at this juncture that he seriously began to consider beginning a new profession.

Six months after his father passed away, death again struck at Ellery, but this time the shock was so great that he never quite recovered. His wife Ann, to whom he was so devoted, had been ill in Cambridge for some time.<sup>46</sup> Ellery stayed with her and watched by her bedside as her life slowly ebbed away. He did all he could to comfort her. He ardently wished that his good friend Stiles, for whom his wife felt deepest affection, could come and provide some solace in her last hours. Only four days before she died Ellery wrote to Stiles:<sup>47</sup>

*She enjoys more Composure of Mind than when I first came here; and I hope as She makes gradual Approaches to Death, the sublunary Objects of Affection will recede and disappear, and the glories of the heavenly World open upon her Mind — She grows weaker daily — is done riding and walks but a few steps in a Day, and those not without Assistance. A few Days will land her I don't doubt upon the blissful shore above — As for my part I thank God I bear up under this dreadfull scene with more calmness and fortitude than I should imagin; and hope I shall be enabled when that black period shall arrive which will separate Me from my best Friend, to preserve a proper decency and Resignation.*

Soon after her death Ellery, heartbroken, returned to Newport.

By this time Newport, like all other commercial towns in the colonies, was stirring to new political awareness as a result of recent acts of Parliament. For the first time Parliament was passing acts intended to raise a substantial revenue in America.<sup>48</sup> Worse still, this time they were to be enforced. The resulting outcry from American merchants was predictable, especially in Rhode Island, whose citizens had been accustomed to virtual autonomy in almost all matters.<sup>49</sup> In July 1764, before he left for Cambridge, Ellery had added his voice to these protests and signed a petition directed to

36 Weeden, *Early Rhode Island*, 278.

37 Sibley 12:135. Stiles, "Memo..."

38 This distaste did not follow him into later life. Correspondence between Ellery and his grandson William Ellery Channing deals at times almost exclusively with theological problems. Dana Papers.

39 Sibley 12:149.

40 Stiles to William Ellery, April 1761, Ezra Stiles Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

41 William Ellery to Stiles, April 1761, Ezra Stiles Papers.

42 *ibid.*

43 *Newport Mercury* March 19, 1764.

44 William Ellery's will, Newport Historical Society.

45 *ibid.* Ellery Family Bible. *Newport Mercury* April 9, 1764.

46 William Ellery to Stiles, Sept. 3, 1764. Ezra Stiles Papers.

47 *ibid.*

48 Edward Channing, *History of the United States* (New York, 1920) 3:29. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York, 1968) 51.

49 John R. Alden, *History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1969) 33. Channing, *History*, 41. Edward Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century. A History* (Boston, 1902) 1:215-16. Bernhard Knollenberg, ed., *Correspondence of Governor Samuel Ward* (Providence, 1952) 14.

50 Petition to R.I. General Assembly, July 1764, Petitions 11:144, State Archives, Providence.

51 Bartlett, *History of the Destruction of His Britannic Majesty's Schooner Gaspee in Narragansett Bay on the 10th June, 1772* (Providence, 1861) 139.

the General Assembly calling attention to:<sup>50</sup>  
*the grievous Exactions of His Majesty's Custom House  
 Officers who without any Pretence of Law or Equity  
 have burthened our Trade with the most unreasonable  
 and extravagant Impositions: . . .*

Customs officials and naval officers sent to enforce new measures were as welcome as the locusts in Egypt, and one Rhode Island wag was moved to write:<sup>51</sup>  
*'Twas in the reign of George the Third,  
 Our public peace was much disturbed  
 By ships of war, that came and laid  
 Within our ports, to stop our trade.*

During this period of agitation and political unrest Ellery caught political fever. It was a disease to which he had evidently been immune despite his father's and grandfather's involvement in politics. In April 1765 he was admitted as freeman of the colony.<sup>52</sup>

In rough and tumble politics of eighteenth-century Rhode Island, no one coming from a family as prominent as Ellery's could avoid choosing sides between the two political chiefs, Samuel Ward and Stephen Hopkins.<sup>53</sup> It wasn't long before Ellery was approached, probably by Henry Ward, Samuel's brother, to join the Ward faction. More than fifty years later that day was still vivid in Ellery's mind as he described it to his son-in-law William Stedman, soon after Stedman's election to Congress:<sup>54</sup>

*When I was a young man I was invited by a thorough going partyman to go a parliamenteering with him into the Country towns in our state. — I told him that I doubted whether I were possessed of proper qualifications. He asked me whether I could kiss a pretty girl: I answered yes without hesitation. The second question was whether I could drink drams. I told him I could occasionally. — The third and last was all important — can you lie? At this I stuck. He then told me that if I were not ready and bold at a lie I should never be fit*

*for a partyman. — A thorough paced partyman will lie like the Devil, but happily for political or party lying, there is no more harm in it than in the lies of Horse Jockies or in the violation of Custom House oaths.*

Ellery accepted the invitation and became a Ward stalwart and a "thorough going partyman."

In August 1765 Ellery, still a political neophyte, received his baptism of fire as the crisis over the Stamp Act rocked Rhode Island and the rest of the colonies.<sup>55</sup>

Tensions were high in Newport. Between July 1764 and July 1765, several incidents of violence occurred between Newporters and royal officers including firing on one royal naval vessel and burning of a boat from another.<sup>56</sup> In this explosive atmosphere it would take little to ignite the mob, and on August 27 Ellery, by now a leading Newport Whig, provided the spark that kindled the blaze. On the morning of August 26 Ellery, Samuel Vernon, and Robert Crook, all prominent Whigs, brought three dummies to a gallows erected in front of the courthouse where town meeting was being conducted.<sup>57</sup> There, they hung the three effigies:<sup>58</sup>

*one . . . was a Distributor of Stamps, which was placed in the center. The other two were suspected of countenancing and abetting the Stamp Act.*

Ellery attached various signs "denoting the Cause of these indignant Representations . . ." while below he and his associates "walked under and before it in muffled big coats flapped hats and bludgeons."<sup>59</sup> After swinging from the gallows for five hours the figures were cut down, "a Fire was made, and the Effigies consumed amidst the Acclamation of the People."<sup>60</sup> Ellery had conducted the obviously well-planned demonstration in sober, temperate manner pleasing to the Whig editor of the *Mercury* who noted that "The whole was conducted with Moderation and no Violence offered to the Persons or Property of any Man."<sup>61</sup> Confident that they had succeeded in demon-

52 "Deputies and Freemen, Newport," State Archives. The franchise in R. I. was extremely liberal and Ellery could have qualified long before had he chosen.

53 Full discussion of political battles between Ward and Hopkins is given in Lovejoy and Mack E. Thompson, "Ward-Hopkins Controversy and the American Revolution: An Interpretation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 16 [1959] 363-75.

54 "William Stedman," *Biographical Directory American Congress, 1774-1949* (Washington, 1950) 1856. William Ellery to William Stedman, June 10, 1806, Ellery-Stedman Papers, RIHS Library.

55 Channing, *History*, 3:54-63. Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1953) 119-204. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: Newspaper War on Britain,*

1774-1776 (New York, 1965) 68 and *Colonial Merchants*, 65-83.

56 Field, 1:216. Knollenberg, 15-17.

57 Richard Mather Bayles, ed., *History of Newport County, Rhode Island* (New York, 1888) 293. Lovejoy, 104. *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 2, 1765.

58 The fact that the distributor, Augustus Johnston, was a former Hopkins man gave Ellery an additional motive to hold him up to public ridicule. Lovejoy, 100. The other two gentlemen were Thomas Moffat, a Scotch physician and Martin Howard, a lawyer. Bayles, 293.

59 *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 2, 1765. Lovejoy, 104. Bayles, 293.

60 *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 2, 1765.

61 *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 2, 1765.

strating their grievances in a manner no mere petition could equal, while striking terror into the hearts of local Tories, Ellery and his friends returned home pleased with their work.

The mob, once aroused, was not so easily satiated, and next day a crowd as unruly as the one which had destroyed Governor Hutchinson's home two days earlier in Boston attacked the home of stamp distributor Augustus Johnston and those of Thomas Moffat and Martin Howard, the other two Ellery had hung in effigy.<sup>62</sup> Ellery, not yet ready to countenance violence, was appalled at this action. He first tried to bribe ringleader John Webber to halt the mob, but when this failed he and the other original leaders seized the surprised Webber and delivered him to the British aboard a man-of-war in the harbor.<sup>63</sup> Learning of this betrayal, the mob threatened to destroy the homes of Ellery and the others unless they obtained Webber's release.

Fearing for their own safety, those who only a short time before had delivered him up now returned and asked that he be set free.<sup>64</sup> The British obliged; Webber was released and Ellery returned home having learned that mobs while "a necessary ingredient of the Whig program" were nevertheless unpredictable and dangerous.<sup>65</sup> By summer 1765 neither Ellery nor his Whiggish friends were yet ready to stand in unequivocal defiance against the crown.

For Ellery as for many others the Stamp Act crisis marked the beginning of a fight against Parliamentary encroachment of what they considered to be their rights as free Englishmen. One organization in particular which sprang into being during this crisis

and dedicated itself to defending these liberties was the Sons of Liberty.<sup>66</sup> In Newport, Ellery was a leading member and on April 6, 1766, he and John Collins, Robert Crook, and Samuel Fowler, other important Whigs, were deeded "a large Button Wood tree,"<sup>67</sup> Newport's Liberty Tree. Ellery served on the general committee of Sons of Liberty, and as a gesture in recognition of his leadership in the fight against the Stamp Act he was appointed treasurer of the committee to plan a celebration after its repeal.<sup>68</sup>

In the next few years Ellery drew further away from the world of business as he became more deeply involved in politics. In December of the year he celebrated repeal of the Stamp Act, 1766, his name appears for the first time as member of a committee of the General Assembly.<sup>69</sup> The committee's job was to edit the laws of Rhode Island for publication.<sup>70</sup> Since their work was obviously legal, it's significant that Ellery, not legally trained, was appointed. This appointment is the first indication of Ellery's growing desire to end his career as merchant and begin the practice of law. At forty years of age, when many men begin to anticipate the joys of retirement, William Ellery was preparing to embark on a new career.

Activity in his professional life was paralleled in his personal and intellectual life. Raising six children amidst all his other cares had not been an easy task, and on June 28, 1767, after living three years as a widower, Ellery married Abigail Carey of Bristol, Rhode Island (a distant cousin).<sup>71</sup> She bore him ten children.<sup>72</sup>

Neither his growing family nor his widening political involvement could deter Ellery from his love of learning

62 *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 2, 1765. Hutchinson's home had been attacked on August 26 — Justin Winsor, ed., *Memorial History of Boston* (Boston, 1881) 2:526.

63 Lovejoy, 109. *Sibley* 12:137.

64 *ibid.*

65 Schlesinger, *Prelude*, 21. Ironically, seven years later when the General Assembly got around to the damage claims filed by Johnston, Moffat, and Howard, Ellery was assigned to the committee to examine their case. Needless to say their claims were much reduced. Bartlett, *Records* 7:196, 200-202, 218-19.

66 According to John C. Miller, *Sam Adams, Pioneer in Propaganda* (New York, 1936) 51, Sons of Liberty "... assumed many different names, but whether they called themselves committees of correspondence, committees of safety, or 'true-born Whigs'... [they were] the radicals who led the colonies into revolution against the mother country."

67 *Historical Magazine*, 2nd ser., 4 (1868) 91.

68 Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill, 1941) 70. On May 24, 1766 Ellery had the pleasure to write to the commander of the fort in Newport harbor:

*You are desired by the committee appointed to conduct the Rejoicing on Account of the Repeal of the Stamp Act to fire one of the large Cannon of the Fort at the hoisting of the Flag at Sun rise next Tuesday. Twenty one at 12 o'clock and one at Sunset; and if the General Assembly insist upon the Powder being replaced I will see it replaced.*

William Ellery to Captain Carr, May 24, 1766, Peck MSS., RIHS Library.

69 Joseph J. Smith, *Civil and Military List of Rhode Island 1647-1800* (Providence, 1900) 265. Ellery never became a member of the Assembly, but it was not necessary to be a member to serve on its committees.

and fondness for scientific inquiry. When it came to the establishment of a college in Rhode Island, however, Ellery's love of learning took on a political cast. The charter for such a college had been granted in 1764 (when it was opened in Warren temporarily) but no location had been specified in the charter.<sup>73</sup> The question of where the college should be built became, as most controversial issues in Rhode Island did, a political battle, with the Ward faction supporting Newport as a choice and the Hopkinsites boosting Providence.<sup>74</sup> Henry and Samuel Ward, with Ellery, fought untiringly for Newport but eventually lost and Providence was chosen.<sup>75</sup>

Dismayed at Newport's loss, Ellery then conceived the idea of Newport establishing its own college.<sup>76</sup> Less than three weeks after Providence's triumph, Ellery was enthusiastically enlisting aid of supporters. He visited with his friend Stiles and described to him how he envisioned the charter of the new school. According to Ellery it would be "on the plan of equal Liberty to Congregationalists, Baptists, Episcopalians, [and] Quakers."<sup>77</sup> But to accomplish this they first would have to capture control of the Assembly in the coming election. This they failed to do and nothing more is heard of Ellery's plan.<sup>78</sup>

Ellery was a participant in another important venture in learning. Passage of a comet in late spring 1769 aroused great interest among Newporters. Ellery and Stiles carefully observed the passage and noted all aspects of the transit.<sup>79</sup> A short time later when his old friend Andrew Oliver wrote his *Essay on Comets*, Ellery solicited subscriptions for him and was pleased to report that he had obtained fifty subscribers.<sup>80</sup>

Observing comets and soliciting subscriptions were activities secondary to Ellery's growing interest in politics. It was this expanding interest that led him into further involvement when, after repeal of the Stamp Act, whatever degree of tranquility had returned to Newport was shattered by the passage of even more odious revenue measures known collectively as "Townshend Duties."<sup>81</sup>

As a weapon to force repeal of these acts, the colonists resorted to economic pressure in the form of non-importation agreements. Soon almost all the colonies had officially adopted, in some form or another, agreements to boycott British goods, that is, all except Rhode Island.<sup>82</sup> Because of a strong Tory faction in Newport and a general desire on the part of other merchants to make money at the expense of their neighbors, Rhode Island, particularly Newport, became a haven where merchants knew they could always land their cargoes with relative immunity.<sup>83</sup> Ellery, disgusted at the conduct of his fellow townsmen, joined in trying to organize a non-importation agreement in Newport.<sup>84</sup> The agreement, finally reached on October 30, 1769, was quite limited and was quickly thrust aside when news of partial repeal of the duties came in spring 1770.<sup>85</sup> This latter action brought quick condemnation from the people of Boston and Philadelphia who resolved to break off commerce with the perfidious Newporters.<sup>86</sup> In the meantime Ellery had tried to maintain the agreement, believing that if they could hold out only six months longer Parliament would remove the remaining tax on tea as well.<sup>87</sup>

As matters grew more strained between the colonies and Great Britain, it was natural that the question of

70 Bartlett, *Records* 6:517.

71 Ellery Family Bible. Harrison Ellery, *Pedigree of Ellery* (Boston, 1881), broadside.

72 *ibid.*

73 Bartlett, *Records* 6:385-91.

74 Lovejoy, 148.

75 Reuben Guild, *History of Brown University* (Providence, 1867) 13.

76 Lovejoy, 149.

77 Franklin B. Dexter, *Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* (New York, 1901) 1:39.

78 Lovejoy, 149-151.

79 Dexter, 1:13.

80 William Ellery to Andrew Oliver, 1771, quoted in E. T. Channing, 137.

81 Detailed discussion of these acts and their effect in Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants*, 93-217.

82 Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants*, 156.

83 Lovejoy, 143. Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants*, 153, 195. Dexter, 1:53.

84 "Newport Non-Importation Agreement, May 2, 1768," E. Price Papers, MHS.

85 *Newport Mercury*, Nov. 17, 1769. Field, 1:221. Duty on tea was not repealed. Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America* (Boston, 1887) 6:52.

86 Dexter, 1:53.

87 Lovejoy, 147. Newport did re-establish their agreement "but their resolution to store rather than re-ship the goods recently arrived inclined the other provinces to believe that the action of Newport was merely a screen for clandestine importations." Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants*, 215. Dexter, 1:53.

one's loyalties, Tory or Whig, should inject itself into local politics and become an additional point of controversy in that continuing struggle between Ward and Hopkins factions. To Ellery must go credit for first seeing the value of this issue as a political weapon. In the elections of 1769 the astute Newporter saw an opportunity to point an accusing finger at a Hopkins man suspected of Tory sympathies. Ellery, chosen as clerk of the lower house of the Assembly in the previous election, had more than a passing interest in the outcome of this election since victory for the Hopkins party would mean loss of his job.<sup>88</sup>

Ellery's target was Walter Chaloner, former sheriff of Newport County and a current candidate for that office.<sup>89</sup> Ellery wrote to his political chief Samuel Ward about the upcoming election:<sup>90</sup>

*If our enemies should have a Majority in the Lower House at the Next Election the consequences will be that your humble servant with your other friends will be turned out of office. Wherefore give me Leave Sir to desire you for their Sake as well as my own to use your influence with our Friends in this Regard. — You are well acquainted perhps no man so well with these particular different Humours; and know what string to touch. What arguments are best adapted to rouse and engage them. However permit me Sir to intimate to you that it may be of service to inform some of our Friends that the Late High Sheriff for this county [Walter Chaloner] is the Reason for whom our enemies in this Town are principally concerned. And that they will strain every nerve to get him into office. And that at the same time to give them his proper Character. He is as great a Bigot to the Established Church as ever existed. A Red hot Tory and of Consequence an enemy to Civil and Religious Liberty — I have heard [him] speak of this Government with the utmost contempt and at the time of the Stamp Act he did not hesitate to call all America Rebels. Indeed at that Period he was a professed advocate for the Arbitrary measures of Grenville — He holds that Liberty without which life*

*Samuel Ward, political leader.*



RIHS Library.

*would lose its relish not worth contending for & had the Impudence in a Dispute with me some time ago before a large Company to assert that a stupid enslaved Spaniard was as happy as an Englishman in the full enjoyment of his Boasted Liberty. — This is the man for whose sake chiefly the Government in all probability will in the Spring be thrown into Confusion and besides this, Despiser of our Commonwealth, and Enemy to our Liberties — this man who pushes so vigorously for an office in this Government is a half Pay Officer of the Crown.*

Ellery's tactic failed and Chaloner was elected.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, Ellery, apparently by some political arrangement, was able to keep his position as clerk.<sup>92</sup> The next year he was re-elected despite his party's defeat.<sup>93</sup> In fact, the Ward faction was defeated so badly

88 Bartlett, *Records* 6:582.

89 Smith, 272. Lovejoy, 141.

90 William Ellery to Samuel Ward, Feb. 4, 1769, Ward Papers, RIHS Library.

91 Bartlett, *Records* 6:582.

92 Bartlett, *Records* 6:582.

93 Bartlett, *Records* 7:5. Lovejoy, 151-153.

94 *ibid.*

95 Brown, 3.

96 Bartlett, *Records* 6:582 and 7:5. Smith, 272. First definite correspondence concerning Ellery's legal practice is dated Oct. 18, 1769 — William Ellery to William Rodman, Ellery-Channing Papers, RIHS Library. Ellery closed his books as a merchant on Dec. 11, 1769 — William Ellery Account Book.

97 Ellery's legal papers are scattered throughout Ellery Family Papers, Newport Historical Society, and Ellery Channing Papers, RIHS Library.

98 *ibid.*

that year that until outbreak of the Revolution the Hopkins faction went practically unchallenged.<sup>94</sup>

In these declining years of his party, Ellery was preparing to make his final break with the world of business and begin his practice of law. Difficulty of conducting business amidst the non-importation agreements undoubtedly was another factor encouraging him to abandon his mercantile pursuits.<sup>95</sup> His election as clerk of the lower house and clerk of court had provided him with practical experience so that by late 1769 he felt qualified to begin practicing.<sup>96</sup>

Ellery seems to have prospered as a lawyer. Those litigious Rhode Islanders provided him with a considerable number of suits mainly concerning land titles and collection of debts.<sup>97</sup> Among his clients Ellery could count several important Rhode Island figures including William Rodman, Abraham and William Redwood, Aaron Lopez, and of course Samuel Ward.<sup>98</sup> Not all of his business was confined to these mundane activities, for as a "High Son of Liberty" his reputation extended beyond the confines of Rhode Island.

Thanks to his increasing reputation as an ardent Whig in 1771 he was called upon to act as defense counsel in a controversial case involving a group of New York City merchants. The case began when one David Hills, merchant from Wrentham, Massachusetts, ignored the non-importation agreements and landed some merchandise at New York.<sup>99</sup> When the New York committee of inspection, a body of prominent citizens appointed to insure that non-importation agreements were adhered to, heard these goods had been landed, they approached Hills and "urged" him to entrust his goods to the care of James Pratt, another merchant, until they could decide if Hills' goods constituted a violation of the agreement.<sup>100</sup> Hills reluctantly consented to this arrangement and that same night June 27, 1771, a mysterious fire broke out at Pratt's, destroying Hills' property.<sup>101</sup> Finding that his goods had been ruined, Hills blamed the committee of inspection and filed a suit against those gentlemen in the Providence court

for damages in the amount of £600.<sup>102</sup> As defense counsel Ellery planned to base his case on the fact that the defendants were not liable since they had not ordered Hills to send his property to Pratt's but had merely suggested that he do so.<sup>103</sup> He also relied heavily upon the sentiments of the populace which he trusted would be favorably disposed toward his clients:<sup>104</sup>

*Hills carried goods into New York (knowing that, at that very time, there subsisted such an agreement among the merchants of your city) with mercenary views and attempted to violate resolves entered into for the common benefit; considering these and many other things which might be offered, he deserved, in my opinion, to lose his goods and I believe a jury will think so; however illegal it may be to force a man's goods from him by means whereof they might be burned.*

The Royal authorities too were aware of local sympathies and to encourage the jury to greater objectivity the sloop of war *Beaver* and the tender *Gaspee* were ordered into Narragansett Bay to show a proper display of force.<sup>105</sup>

Ellery miscalculated and the jury found for Hills but awarded him only £285 rather than the £600 he had sought.<sup>106</sup> Ellery appealed the verdict and won a slight reduction but not enough to please his clients, who apparently paid the Newport lawyer much less than he felt he deserved. He wrote to his clients sardonically:<sup>107</sup>

*That you should think I was to expect only this sum from you and charge liberty with my extra trouble, was more than surprising to me; it was really shocking.*

While Ellery was building his reputation as patriot, Newport continued to be known as a Tory haven.<sup>108</sup> Ellery and his friends were in a minority, but a vociferous one that included the editor of the *Mercury*, who continually cried out against activities of British vessels patrolling Narragansett Bay which he accused of "robbing" the people.<sup>109</sup>

One particular brand of "robbery" that Ellery and other Americans found especially annoying was the remaining tax on tea. It was continuance of this tax

99 Deposition of Pelathia Haws, Jr., Feb. 19, 1772, Providence Superior Court Appeals, Bills in Equity: Rules Complaints for Confirmation of Judgment March-Sept. 1772, State Records Center, Providence.

100 *ibid.*

101 *ibid.*

102 Suit filed by David Hills, Providence Superior Court Appeals... March-Sept. 1772, State Records Center.

103 William Ellery to Defendants, Sept. 27, 1771, quoted in E. T. Channing, 143.

104 E. T. Channing, 143.

105 Mrs. John K. Van Rensselaer, *Newport Our Social Capital* (Phila., 1895) 147. The *Gaspee* later boarded and destroyed by a Providence mob, June 9, 1772. Bartlett, *History*.

106 Judgment Providence Superior Court..., Sept. 1772, State Records Center.

107 William Ellery to Defendants, n. d., quoted in E. T. Channing, 145.

108 Samuel G. Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (New York, 1859-60) 2:303.

109 *Newport Mercury*, Feb. 24, 1772.

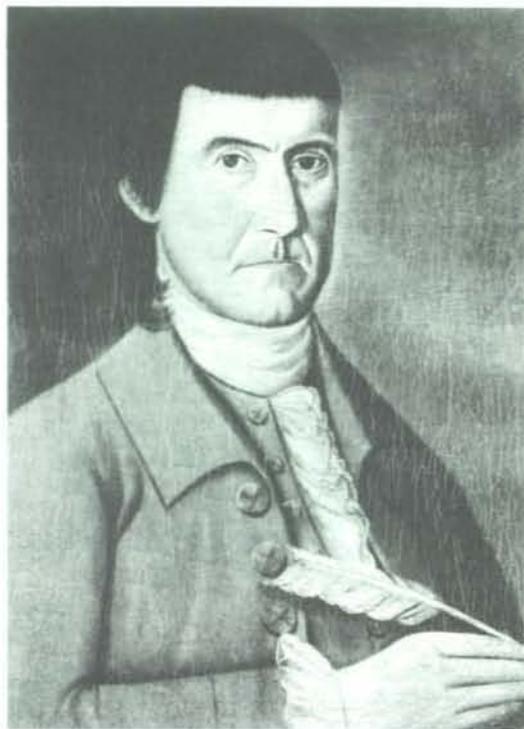
and the scheme to allow the East India Company to land tea directly in America that incited the famous Boston Tea Party.<sup>110</sup>

Owing perhaps to Loyalist sympathies, reaction in Newport to news of the Tea Party was subdued.<sup>111</sup> Yet even Newport was finally engulfed in the new spirit of colonial unity that swept the continent following the activity in Boston.<sup>112</sup> After considerable agitation a town meeting was held on January 12, 1774.<sup>113</sup> Ellery and his friends urged the meeting to close ranks with Boston, and they succeeded in passing a resolution declaring that anyone who handles dutied tea must be considered "an enemy to his country."<sup>114</sup> To insure that no one did land any tea, Ellery and four other Newporters were appointed a committee of inspection.<sup>115</sup> Should this committee discover anyone importing tea, it was given the extraordinary power to call a special town meeting that would then take appropriate action against offenders.<sup>116</sup> This same committee was also instructed to correspond with other towns "on all . . . matters as shall be thought to affect the liberties of America."<sup>117</sup>

Appearance of more British warships in Narragansett Bay, passage of the coercive acts, and the meeting of the First Continental Congress all served to heighten the crisis atmosphere in Rhode Island.<sup>118</sup> In Newport, Ellery, after a five-year hiatus, again saw a chance to inject the charge of Loyalism into local politics, and for the first time in five years a strong opposition faced Hopkins and his ally Governor Wanton.<sup>119</sup> While leading the opposition in Newport, Ellery took pains to see that other areas of potential support were tapped. He wrote to his old friend and Newport associate, Henry Marchant, then in Providence, suggesting a line of attack:<sup>120</sup>

*To be ruled by Tories, when we may be ruled by sons of Liberty — how debasing! . . . You must rouse up all that is Roman in Providence. There is liberty and fire enough; it only requires the application of the bellows.*

*Nicholas Cooke, a Ward ally, governor of Rhode Island from November 1775 to May 1778.*



Courtesy Brown University Archives.

*Blow, then a blast that will shake the country. Talk of peace! — there shall be no peace saith my soul to the wicked. Talk of union! — do the Tories want to see us united? I had rather see the ship in a hurricane, and hazard an escape than to have her any longer piloted by an enemy to liberty. Throw everything into the press to convince the people where you are of the danger we are in from a Tory administration, and don't be afraid of seasoning it highly. People who have weak appetites must be warmed . . . There is no doubt that Mr. Hopkins drank it [i.e. tea] when he was at Newport. You*

110 Benjamin Woods Labaree, *Boston Tea Party* (New York, 1964) 104-105.

111 Knollenberg, 24.

112 Labaree, 168.

113 Knollenberg, 24. Bartlett, *Records* 7:274.

114 *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 17, 1774.

115 *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 17, 1774.

116 *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 17, 1774.

117 Bartlett, *Records* 7:274.

118 William G. Roelker and Clarkson A. Collins 3rd, "Patrol of Narragansett Bay (1774-76) by HMS *Rose*, Captain James Wallace," *Rhode Island History* 7:1 (Jan. 1948) 13.

119 Lovejoy, 180.

120 William Ellery to Henry Marchant, March 27, 1775, *MHS Proceedings* 4 (1858-60) 381-82.

121 Hopkins and Ward had been elected to represent R. I. in the Continental Congress — Bartlett, *Records* 7:451.

remember what was said in the Committee. Since that, George Gibbs said before me and several others, that James Clark (naval officer), told him that Mr. Hopkins drank tea at the Governor's when he was last at Newport. Such examples are pernicious. If a delegate of the Congress, who associated, under ties of honor, virtue and love of his country, not to use that poisonous plant after the first of March, doth drink it, what will not others do!<sup>121</sup> This imprudent conduct, to say no worse of it, gives me great concern. Let others do as they may: let us, my good friend, preserve a consistency of character: let us act uniformly, and for our country. 'Tis not in mortals to command success, but we can do more; we can deserve it.

Meanwhile in Newport Ellery continued his own propaganda campaign and published a broadside accusing Governor Wanton of being a Tory.<sup>122</sup> Two days later while farmers of Rhode Island were voting in this hotly contested election, their neighbors to the north were engaged in another type of contest around Lexington Green and North Bridge. Before news of that battle reached Rhode Island, Wanton was re-elected. Ellery had lost this political battle but he was about to win the war.

The Rhode Island Assembly reacted to news of Lexington and Concord by ordering that an army of observation be raised in the colony.<sup>123</sup> Governor Wanton, true to Ellery's prediction, opposed this move

and shortly thereafter fled to a British man-of-war in Newport harbor.<sup>124</sup> Ellery could rightly feel triumphant: Wanton had proven himself a traitor; the Hopkins faction was disgraced; and to replace the governor, Nicholas Cooke, an old Ward ally, was chosen.<sup>125</sup>

In the next few months Ellery took a leading part in helping Rhode Island prepare to defend herself against expected British attack. From December 1775 to the following May he served on no less than sixteen committees, as well as playing a part in building Continental frigates in Rhode Island.<sup>126</sup>

Certainly Ellery had come a long way from his days as an obscure Newport merchant. War and the crises leading to it had thrust him into a position of importance. He dreaded this fratricidal conflict that seemed so certain to engulf the colonies, yet at the same time he recognized it as the price of liberty. Shortly after hearing the news of Bunker Hill and the death of General Warren he wrote to a friend:<sup>127</sup>

*What a sacrifice we pay to liberty when we give our houses to the flames and our bodies to the bayonets!*

On March 27, 1776, Samuel Ward died of smallpox in Philadelphia.<sup>128</sup> To succeed him as delegate to Congress the Assembly chose his faithful lieutenant, William Ellery.<sup>129</sup> Having mastered Rhode Island politics, this Newport gentleman was now about to try his hand on the national level.

*William Ellery*

122 "William Ellery to the Freemen of Rhode Island, April 17, 1775," broadside files, RIHS Library.

123 Bartlett, *Records* 7:310.

124 Lovejoy, 182-83.

125 Lovejoy, 182-83.

126 Bartlett, *Records* 7 *passim*. "Journal of Committee Appointed to Build Two Continental Frigates in Rhode Island," RIHS Library.

127 William Ellery to Judge Potter, June 20, 1775, *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 26, 1856.

128 Knollenberg, 35.

129 Bartlett, *Records* 8:220. Only opposition to Ellery was a ludicrous attempt by Col. Henry Babcock to get the appointment. An insane drunkard, Babcock was shortly thereafter removed from his command. Babcock to Nicholas Cooke, April 1776, Matt B. Jones, ed., "Revolutionary Correspondence of Governor Nicholas Cooke, 1775-1781," *Proceedings American Antiquarian Society* 36 (1926) 318. Rhode Island Session Laws, May 1776, 44.

## Mutiny at Camp Hubbard

by Claude M. Morgan\*

On Monday, August 24, 1863, Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, commanding the Department of the Gulf with headquarters at New Orleans, issued Special Orders No. 209, paragraph 8:

*The enlisted men of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry are transferred to the First Louisiana Cavalry, and will be assigned to companies by the commanding officer of the latter regiment.*

*The officers of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry are hereby mustered out of service. Such of them as desire to remain in the service may, upon proving themselves fitted for and deserving of commissions in the First Louisiana Cavalry before a board to be appointed by its regimental commander, be appointed to fill vacancies. Lieutenant Colonel Robinson, First Louisiana Cavalry, is charged with the execution of this order.*

When the order was received by Colonel Harai Robinson at Camp Hubbard located at Thibodeaux, Louisiana, he commanded the First Louisiana Cavalry to assemble for dress parade. The officers of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry were instructed to form their line forty yards in front of and facing the First Louisiana.

As the First Louisiana was at ordered arms, the adjutant read the orders to the assembled men. At once there arose a babble of voices from the ranks of the Second Rhode Island, and shouts of "No, no," were heard from one end of the line to the other. Colonel Robinson then assumed command of the Second Rhode Island and ordered sabers to be presented. After some hesitation and wavering, the order was obeyed.

Then the men were ordered to dismount and form ranks as preparatory to fighting on foot. A detachment

of the First Louisiana was sent to relieve the horse-holders and take the animals to the rear. The Second Rhode Island was divided into five squads, five noncommissioned officers from each company being placed at intervals of ten paces on a line at right angles with right company guides. First sergeants called the roll; men were placed as directed left of noncommissioned officers, marched off and formed on the left of the different companies of the First Louisiana. Colonel Robinson gave orders to each officer of the First Louisiana that after parade was dismissed the men should not leave camp of companies to which they had been assigned.

On the next morning, August 30, Lieutenant Thomas Maher, regimental commissary and acting regimental quartermaster, who had been charged with reception of property from the Second Rhode Island, informed Colonel Robinson that it was impossible for him to proceed with the work, as horses, after he had received them, were being untied from the picket rope by enlisted men of the late Second Rhode Island, who were also carrying off other public property.

The colonel immediately proceeded to the camp of the old Second Rhode Island where he found enlisted men who had been assigned to the First Louisiana the evening before assembled in groups sitting on the ground in the center of camp. When he ordered them to take up their packs and join their respective companies, no one obeyed. But two men arose and looking directly at the officer, said in words or to this effect: "Colonel, we have made up our minds that, as we enlisted in the Second Rhode Island Cavalry,

\*Mr. Morgan — attorney in Huntington, West Virginia — directs his readers to *War of the Rebellion... official records of the Union and Confederate armies... 70v. in 128* [Washington, GPO, 1880-1901] ser. 1, v. 26, part 1, 262-273.

*Baggage train of the division with which the Second Rhode Island Cavalry first served. This sketch of the march toward Port Hudson shows the unfamiliar Louisiana terrain encountered by the Rhode Islanders.*



*Detail of engraving from Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, v. 3 (New York, 1888).*

we will, by God, serve in no other. We will not go. Do as you like; but, by God, we won't serve."

Robinson then told them that if they did not get up and form line he would order them to be fired on. They then arose, but believing that some decisive action was necessary in the face of such conduct and to prevent similar action in future, the colonel selected two men he considered ringleaders. Then he ordered two companies of the First Louisiana on foot to form line on the wings and at right angles with the line of the rebels. While sitting in the saddle, he wrote and signed the

following penciled order:

*First Lieutenant Hall, adjutant of the First Louisiana Cavalry, is hereby appointed provost-marshal of the day, and charged as such with the execution of Private Richard Murphy, Boston, alias Richard Smith, and of Private Frederick Freeman, alias William Davis, mutineers — a military necessity.*

In accordance with the order and within half an hour of the calling out of the First Louisiana Cavalry to suppress what the colonel considered a mutiny, the two men were shot to death in front of the whole command.

Questions soon arose as to the wisdom or advisability of the order transferring the Second Rhode Island Cavalry. Under date of September 4, Assistant Adjutant General Thomas M. Vincent addressed a communication to General Banks stating that as directed by the Secretary of War he requested an early report as to the authority upon which Special Orders No. 209 had been issued.

On the same date, James Y. Smith, governor of Rhode Island, wrote to Secretary of War E. M. Stanton saying that he had learned of the special orders of General Banks in which enlisted men of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry were transferred to the First Louisiana Cavalry, and officers of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry mustered out of service. He continued:

*These officers so summarily mustered out were commissioned by the governor of Rhode Island, and, even should they be re-appointed they would lose rank by date of commission, while the men who enlisted in a Rhode Island regiment lose all their identity with their native State, and are coolly thrust into a new organization, and "assigned to companies by its commanding officer."*

*I do, therefore, in justice to the Rhode Island men enlisted in that regiment, and to the regiments raised here, most respectfully but urgently request that the order in question be revoked by your Department, and the Second Rhode Island Cavalry be allowed to maintain its name and organization.*

Two days later the assistant adjutant general acknowledged receipt of the governor's letter. He noted that he had been directed by the Secretary of War to inform him that the matter had already been called to

the attention of the department, and to enclose a copy of a letter to General Banks on the subject.

By General Orders, No. 46, issued from Headquarters, Defenses of New Orleans, Louisiana, September 4, a military commission consisting of five officers was appointed by command of Colonel E. G. Beckwith to meet at Camp Hubbard to inquire into the cause of the mutiny in the Second Rhode Island Cavalry, the investigation to be prompt and sit without regard to day or hour.

On the following day the commission assembled and began its investigation. Lieutenant Colonel Harai Robinson was the first witness who testified concerning the trouble and measures taken to suppress it. He was asked numerous questions by the judge advocate and in answering them he justified his actions. He was expressly requested to state more definitely in regard to the execution how the men were shot, by whom and to relate the details. He answered:

*The mutineers and two companies of the First Louisiana Cavalry, on foot, formed three sides of a square, the mutineers forming the base. On a line perpendicular with the center of the base, and some 20 feet beyond the wings, Company F, First Louisiana Cavalry, at the time composed of about 20 men, was divided into two platoons, one commanded by Lieutenant Masicot, the other by the orderly sergeant. The men to be executed were severally placed at 10 paces in front of the center of each platoon. The adjutant of the regiment charged with their execution had them blindfolded, took their two names and last requests, and offered them time to pray; after all of which, at a signal from him, each platoon fired successively.*

He was followed by Captain Francis M. Ives, First Louisiana Cavalry; Lieutenant Edward B. Hall, adjutant First Louisiana Cavalry; Second Lieutenant Jules A. Masicot, Company F, First Louisiana Cavalry; Charles Walton, private, First Louisiana Cavalry; and Sergeant major Sidney E. Irving, First Louisiana Cavalry. Sergeant major Irving stated specifically:

*A majority, nearly all of the Rhode Island men, were in their camp, sitting on the ground. The*

*lieutenant colonel of the First Louisiana Cavalry sent a cavalry guard of his regiment and surrounded them. He then marched the balance of his men on foot, forming line fronting the Rhode Island men. He rode up to the Rhode Island men, and told them in three different languages that all those who wished to obey orders and do their duty as soldiers must fall in line. A majority of the men fell in line. I was ordered away by Colonel Robinson to look up some men. I was absent some three minutes. When I returned they had all fallen in with the exception of 3 men, one of whom he ordered to fall in, which order was obeyed. Both regiments were then formed in three sides of a square. The two men were placed in the square under guard, their arms tied behind them, a handkerchief was tied over their eyes; they were placed a short distance in front of the guard. The adjutant then spoke with each man some little time. He then motioned, and the guard fired, and the men were shot successively.*

After two days of testimony the court, having heard and examined the evidence, after mature deliberation found:

1. The origin of the mutiny in the Second Rhode Island Cavalry was the reading of the order of consolidation with the First Louisiana Cavalry, on the 29th day of August, 1863.
2. The course of said mutiny was from the reading of Special Orders, No. 209, Paragraph 3, Headquarters Department of the Gulf, consolidating the Second Rhode Island Cavalry with the First Louisiana Cavalry, on the 29th day of August, 1863, to the time of the arrest and execution of the two men of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry on the 30th day of August, 1863.
3. The suppression of the mutiny was in the prompt and efficient manner in which the ringleaders were executed by order of Lieut. Col. H. Robinson, First Louisiana Cavalry.

On October 16, Major General Banks replied to the letter of September 4 from Assistant Adjutant General Thomas M. Vincent:

*I had no authority for this act whatever, except as the necessity of my situation gave me. The Rhode Island Cavalry was enlisted from New York chiefly, and had*



Engraving from *History of the Seventh Squadron Rhode Island Cavalry* by a member, [A. W. Corliss] (Yarmouth, Me. 1879).

very good officers and some good men; but the organization was mostly composed of men entirely beyond control. Their depredations and robberies were frightful. One or two men on the march to Alexandria were shot for offenses of this character. They were wholly worthless as soldiers. When we reached Port Hudson, and they were deprived of the power of depredation by the circumscribed limits occupied, they gave us still greater trouble by the erroneous reports made in regard to the movements of the enemy. Our camp was continually in a disturbed and disordered condition from the false representations made by these men. We submitted to it as long as it could be endured, and changed it only when the safety of my command required it. The officers of the regiment, who are Rhode Island men, acknowledged their inability to control their men, and resigned their commissions on that account. Some correspondence had taken place with the Governor of Rhode Island in regard to their consolidation, which had been talked of long before, but it was not effected until it was represented by the officers from Rhode Island that it would not be objected to by the Governor of that State. Upon the resignation

Lieutenant-Colonel Augustus W. Corliss had command of the Second Regiment Rhode Island Cavalry from the beginning. In his account of that regiment's activities in the Rhode Island Adjutant General's report for 1865 as "corrected, revised, and republished" in 1893, he described the incident at Camp Hubbard.

"... The men saw that resistance would be useless, and with military law against them, slowly fell into line. Their tardy movements excited the ire of the Louisiana commander, and a file of men was ordered to lead Richard Smith and William Davis, the two last to follow, to a field in front of the camp, where with their hands tied behind them, their eyes blinded, and without semblance of law, or form of trial, they were shot by two squads of men detailed from the Louisiana regiment. Davis fell killed. Smith was shot through the legs, and was afterwards despatched by the revolvers of the Adjutant and Sergeant in charge..."

of the officers, with this representation, and under the exigency which I have described, the remnant of the regiment, consisting of only 100 or 200 men, was consolidated with a New York regiment for the purpose of bringing it into some discipline and protecting us against, first, their depredations, and secondly, against the panics that their reports occasioned.

Assistant Adjutant General E. D. Townsend submitted General Banks' letter to the General-in-Chief. By way of endorsement he said it was recommended that no further action be taken until a copy of General Banks' order was forwarded to the governor of Rhode Island.

On October 23, the military commission's action was reviewed by General Banks. Though he seemed somewhat reluctant to do so, he apparently felt impelled to give his approval in these words:

It is probable that order could have been maintained in the regiment without the application of capital punishment to the two men executed; but the conduct of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry was such that it is impossible to say how soon the mutiny would have been repeated.

*Severe measures were required with them. The commanding general regrets the necessity for the execution, but is unable, with his knowledge of the facts, to say that it was not justifiable in consideration of all the circumstances of the case.*

On November 7, Governor James Y. Smith got off another indignant letter to the Honorable E. M. Stanton. He reminded the secretary of his request for immediate disapproval of the order of Major General Banks by which the Second Rhode Island Cavalry was consolidated with the First Louisiana Cavalry and the officers mustered out of service. He said that the secretary's reply was a copy of a letter requesting General Banks to state by whose authority he issued the order in question — and that was the last heard of it. The governor then dipped his pen in vitriol and continued:

*Now this is a matter, sir, which cannot be lightly dropped and thought no more of. The order was an act of injustice to the men and an injustice to Rhode Island, and should be immediately revoked, or your Department should take the matter in hand, and have the men of the Second Cavalry transferred by special order to our First Cavalry, which is in need of those very men that are now disgraced by being torn from their own organization and placed in one which is in every way distasteful to them. Yet these men are volunteers. I will ask your own judgment; should they be treated so? Do not drafted men even receive better treatment?*

*I have understood, officially, that two men of the Second Cavalry were shot by order of Colonel Robinson, of the Louisiana cavalry, for simply remonstrating against the order of consolidation.*

*I feel it my duty to inform you, sir, that our people consider the order in question of much injury to the service, and an outrage to Rhode Island.*

*What assurances can we give officers or recruits from this State that they will be protected in their rights if they are to be summarily dealt with, without even a show of justice.*

*In conclusion, allow me to say that the order issued by Major General Banks was in direct opposition to a protest from this department, to which he paid no attention otherwise than by sending a copy of the said order.*

*An early reply will be considered a favor.*

On November 16 General-in-Chief H. W. Halleck forwarded the letter to the assistant adjutant general enclosing General Banks' report with the endorsement that the report showed the necessity of his order which should be allowed to stand, at least for the present.

The next day Thomas M. Vincent wrote the governor:

*Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, in relation to the consolidation of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry by Maj. Gen. N. P. Banks, commanding Department of the Gulf.*

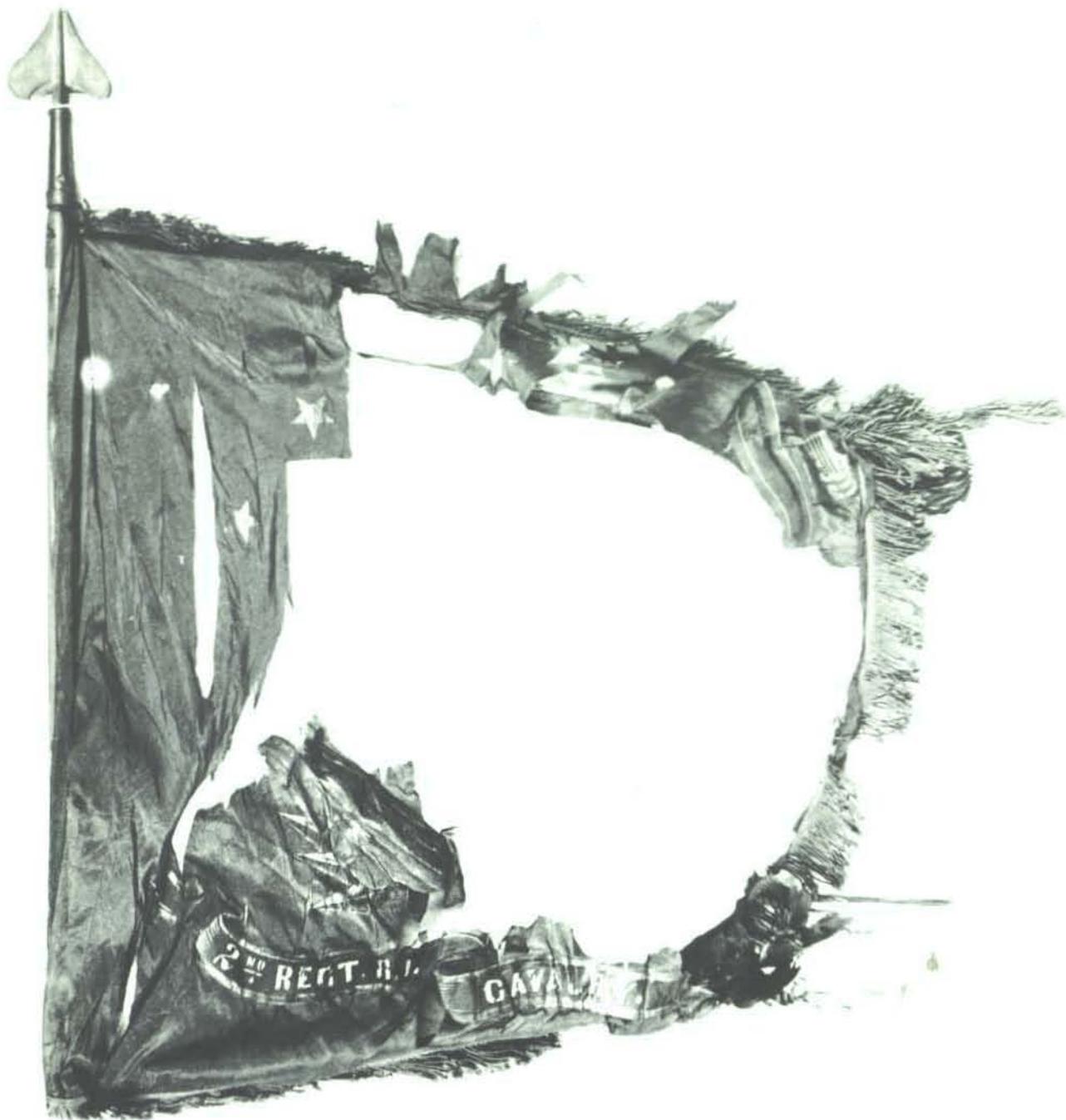
*In reply, I am directed to inclose herewith a copy of the report of the general, made in answer to the orders of this Department, and to invite the attention of Your Excellency to the remarks of the General-in-Chief indorsed thereon.*

On December 5, the assistant adjutant general wrote to Major General Banks that his transfer of enlisted men of the Second Rhode Island Cavalry to another organization had been approved by the General-in-Chief and that a copy of his report giving reasons for the transfer had been forwarded with the General-in-Chief's endorsement to Governor Smith of Rhode Island.

He also told the general that since receipt of this message, the governor had requested that enlisted men of the Second might be transferred to the Third Cavalry on its arrival in the general's department. The writer requested that the change be made by special order to be issued from headquarters adding that the governor had been notified of the action.

Though this apparently closed the matter, it is certainly one of the few instances, if not the only one, on record in which a lieutenant colonel took upon himself the responsibility of so speedily and summarily executing two men without even the semblance of a hearing or trial. They were guilty of disobeying orders and this may have amounted to mutinous conduct. Since the incident occurred in camp and not in the presence of the enemy however, there would seem to be no reason why they could not have been brought before a court-martial where the charges against them could have been heard and disposed of.

*Battle-torn guidon of the Second Regiment Rhode Island Cavalry, now in the State House.*



*Designed by Malcolm Gear Designers, Inc.  
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