



1914

Report of Committee on Marking Historical Sites in Rhode Island (Part 2)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://helindigitalcommons.org/lawarchive>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

"Report of Committee on Marking Historical Sites in Rhode Island (Part 2)" (1914). *Library Archive*. Paper 28.
<http://helindigitalcommons.org/lawarchive/28>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the HELIN State Law Library at HELIN Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Archive by an authorized administrator of HELIN Digital Commons. For more information, please contact anne@helininc.org.

THE MICHAEL PIERCE FIGHT

By Edwin C. Pierce

September 21, 1907

This is historic ground. It is the scene of one of the most tragic and most heroic events in early New England history. Here, in 1676, just a hundred years before the Declaration of American Independence, with a valor as distinguished as that of the Greek heroes at old Thermopylæ, although unvictorious, our ancestors, undaunted, fronted inevitable defeat and certain death in hand-to-hand conflict with an outnumbering savage foe. Here they died upon the Bed of Honor.

Here we, their descendants, come, two hundred and thirty-one years after the day of blood and battle on which they painfully laid down their lives for their countrymen and for posterity, to celebrate their brave sacrifice, to erect here a memorial of their heroic devotion, and to consider and, if we may, profitably interpret the lessons to be drawn from the history of that tragic event and that serious and strenuous time.

Let us first review the facts that happened here, the actualities of the tragedy, the fortitude and desperate valor, unsurpassed in the annals of warfare, here displayed;



PIERCE'S FIGHT, CENTRAL FALLS

and then consider somewhat the war in which Pierce's fight was a bloody day, the merits of the war, the cause for which they died.

The day of Pierce's fight was Sunday, March 26th, 1676. It was in the midst of Philip's war. That war, the bloody and decisive struggle between the English colonists and the Indians, has been raging for nearly a year. The Narragansetts, that proud and powerful tribe with whom Roger Williams and the Rhode Island and Providence colonists had long maintained unbroken peace and friendship, had at last been drawn into hostilities towards the colonists. In December, 1675, the Narragansetts had been attacked in their strong fort in South Kingstown, defeated, slaughtered by hundreds, and their power forever broken. With the courage of despair, the still formidable remnant of the Narragansett warriors took the warpath early in the spring of 1676, under their brave chief, who knew not fear, Nanunteenoo, better known as Canonchet, son of the famous Miantonomi.

The Narragansetts, while renewing, and with sincerity so far as may be judged, to Roger Williams pledges of immunity for him did not withhold their vengeance from settlers in Rhode Island. Parties of warriors penetrated into Plymouth Colony, ravaging and killing. Dwelling in continual alarm, the Plymouth Colony was aroused to action for the defense of the homes and the lives of its people. This defense could only be effectually made, the bloody invasion of the Plymouth country could only

be repelled, by waging offensive war against the Narragansetts, by pursuing the marauding bands and attacking them wherever they might be found in their forest fastnesses.

The duty of leading in the pursuit and the attack of the Narragansetts was assigned to Captain Michael Pierce, of Scituate. At the outbreak of Philip's war, Michael Pierce was about sixty years of age, having been born in England about the year 1615. He came to the Plymouth Colony about the year 1645, and settled almost immediately in Scituate, where he ever after resided. He appears to have been a brother of that John Pierce, of London, who secured a patent, or royal grant, for New England, before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, which patent he assigned to the Plymouth Company after their settlement had been effected. He was also, according to the early historians of New England, a brother of that Captain William Pierce who was the most famous master of ships that came to the New England coast; the warm friend of Winslow and Bradford, who commanded the Mayflower in New England waters, although not on her first famous voyage, the "Charity" when she brought Winslow and the first cattle, the "Lion" when she arrived with provisions in the crisis of the famine, Roger Williams being his passenger upon that memorable occasion, and who while fighting the Spaniards in the West Indies was mortally wounded and found his grave in the ocean, on which he had made his long and honorable career. Michael Pierce was with the

Plymouth forces in the bloody Narragansett fight in South Kingstown in December, 1675. Earlier in that year he made his will which is of record in the Plymouth Colony records, the preamble of which is:

“I, Michael Pierce of Scituate, in the government of New Plymouth in America, being now by the appointment of God, going out to war against the Indians doe make this my last will and testament.”

Acting under orders from the Plymouth Colony, Captain Pierce with a company comprising about fifty Englishmen and twenty friendly Cape Indians, started in pursuit of the marauding Narragansetts. The Plymouth band proceeded without encounter with the foe as far as the Rehoboth settlement which was on the extreme western boundary of the Plymouth Colony, separated from the Providence Colony by the Seekonk.

The men of Rehoboth were living in constant expectation of attack from the hostile Indians, and the arrival of Captain Pierce's company must have been most welcome.

Making his temporary headquarters at Rehoboth, Captain Pierce on Saturday, the 25th of March, sallied forth with a small party of his men in search of the hostiles. Discovering the Narragansetts in considerable force the colonists attacked and, without loss to themselves, inflicted considerable losses upon the enemy.

The colonial captain had received intelligence that a party of the enemy lay near Blackstone's house at Study Hill, in Cumberland, and appears not to have been

daunted by the apprehension reasonable to have been entertained that Canonchet with all the warriors of the Narragansett nation might be close at hand, preparing an ambuscade. The Plymouth captain, however, did not omit to summon all the force upon which he could call. Before leaving Rehoboth to march to the attack, he despatched a messenger to Captain Andrew Edmunds, of Providence, with a letter asking Edmunds to meet him at a spot above Pawtucket, on the river, and assist him in the enterprise. The messenger reached Providence on Sunday morning, but either there was delay in the delivery of the letter or the Providence men were not willing to leave Providence undefended. At any rate no reënforcement from Providence reached the Plymouth colonials.

As the ambuscade was near Quinsniket, there can be no doubt that Canonchet with perhaps seven hundred warriors of the brave and now utterly desperate Narragansett nation had made this rocky fastness his base of operations. There, under the overhanging rock of the hill-top the savage chieftain held his council fire and the plan for the ambuscade was laid. The sortie of the colonials from Rehoboth on Saturday must have been reported to Canonchet, and he must have judged that encouraged by their success, the English would continue their advance, and accordingly he prepared to ambush, overwhelm and annihilate them.

Early on Sunday morning the colonials marched from Rehoboth. Their number, recruited at Rehoboth,

amounted to a few over sixty English and about twenty friendly Wampanoags from the Cape. They doubtless proceeded across the Seekonk plains and skirted the east bank of the Blackstone until they reached a point on the river above Pawtucket Falls where the river was fordable, the territory at that point being then called the Attleborough Gore. The territory on the west bank of the river is now in Central Falls. There can be no doubt as to the spot because at no other place on the river could a large body of men approach a ford. At this point the ford was approached through a ravine having a wide level ground on either side of which rose a wood crowned hill. The hills have long since been leveled. The plan of Canonchet was to draw the colonials into this defile and then attack them from the hills and to cut off the retreat by quickly throwing a strong force in their rear. As a decoy a few Indians showed themselves rambling in a wood. They fled at the approach of the colonials, limping as they ran. The colonials supposed them to have been wounded in the fight of Saturday and gave chase.

Captain Pierce led his company into the ravine and approached the river, probably following the advance party of his men which had crossed in safety. Suddenly the silence was rent with savage cries, and springing from their concealment on the commanding hills, the Narragansetts directed their deadly and painfully wounding arrows upon the colonials who were thus entrapped. Canonchet with all his warriors was upon them. The

highest estimate of the number of the Narragansetts that attacked Captain Pierce's little force is about a thousand. Other narratives estimate six or seven hundred. If there were six hundred, the colonials must have realized that their doom was sealed, except indeed for the hope that Captain Edmunds would shortly arrive with his Providence company. Instantly the colonial captain realized that his only chance lay in getting out of the defile by crossing the river. On the west bank there was an open, or at least not heavily wooded, plain, in which his men would be out of arrow shot from the hills and where they could at least make a better defense than was possible in the ravine. Then, to, they would be on the side on which Captain Edmunds might be marching to their aid. It seems probable that in order to make the decoy successful, the warriors on the west side lay in ambush a good distance from the river, so that the colonials were able to cross the river, probably not without loss and gain the open space where they proposed to make their stand.

While the enemy was swarming down the ravine and across the river in hot pursuit, a band of at least three hundred Narragansetts rushed upon the colonials from their concealment on the west side, so that the colonials were now completely surrounded. Captain Pierce now threw his men into a circle placing his men in ranks, back to back, and facing the foe they thus fought to the death.

No banners waived, no martial music stimulated their ardor, no sounds except the reverberations of musketry

and the terrifying yells of the infuriated warriors who encompassed them about. The colonials were indeed better supplied with firearms than the enemy, but they were of the ancient, slow firing sort, while the arrows of the foe were directed against them from behind trees and rocks with unerring aim, and tomahawks hurled through the air by the powerful savage were felling them to the ground. Resolved to sell their lives at as dear a rate as possible, the colonials stood their ground with ever thinning ranks, for about two hours, keeping themselves in order and the enemy at a little distance.

The formation of the order of battle is related by a chronicle of the time in these words:

“Captain Pierce cast his sixty-three English and twenty Indians into a ring, and six fought back to back, and were double, double distance all in one ring, whilst the Indians were as thick as they could stand thirty deep.”

The effectiveness of the defense appears by the great loss suffered by the Narragansetts. Some of them taken prisoners a few days later confessed that one hundred and forty were killed before their victory was won. Drake's Indian Chronicle estimates the loss of the Narragansetts at above three hundred, but this is probably an exaggeration.

At last when, as the tradition is, scarcely twenty of the colonials maintain their footing, they give over futile resistance and break and run, each man for himself. Nine of them are seized and made captive. One of the friendly

Indians, Amos, fought until the colonials had ceased to fight and then by blacking his face with powder, as he saw the Narragansetts had done, mingled with them and escaped. A few others of Captain Pierce's Indians and fewer still of the Englishmen, perhaps three or four, by artifice and good fortune, managed to escape.

The Narragansetts proceeded with their prisoners to the spot in Cumberland now called "Nine Men's Misery." There, according to tradition, the captives were seated upon a rock, a fire lighted, and the war dance preparatory to the torture was begun. The chronicles say that, differing among themselves as to the mode of torture, the Indians dispatched their prisoners with the tomahawk. But, of what happened at Nine Men's Misery there is no real evidence. The bodies of the prisoners were found and buried by the English a little later, and a monumental pile of stones was erected in honor of the brave and unfortunate men.

We may imagine the wild and vengeful joy with which the warriors of Cononchet celebrated their victory in their fastness at Quinsniket. Encouraged by their success, the very next day after the fight the Narragansetts descended upon Rehoboth and burned forty houses, and before the end of March, Providence was attacked and fifty-four buildings burned.

Arnold's history narrates as follows:

"Two places in the town had been fortified mainly through the efforts of Roger Williams, who, although

seventy-seven years of age, accepted the commission of Captain. A tradition is preserved, that when the enemy approached the town the venerable captain went out alone to meet and remonstrate with them. 'Massachusetts,' said he, "can raise thousands of men at this moment, and if you kill them, the King of England will supply their places as fast as they fall.' 'Well, let them come,' was the reply, "we are ready for them. But as for you, brother Williams, you are a good man; you have been king to us many years; not a hair of your head shall be touched.' The savages were true to their ancient friend. He was not harmed, but the town was nearly destroyed."

The capture of Canonchet soon followed, on the 4th of April. He was executed.

Philip's war was the first conflict with the Indians in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

From his coming to Providence, Roger Williams for nearly forty years had lived in friendship with the Narragansetts. Canonicus and Miantonomi were his friends and the friends of the Providence colonists, and Canonchet took up the tradition of peace and amity. The wicked murder of Miantonomi by the procurement of Massachusetts rankled in the breasts of the Narragansetts, and young men of the nation sympathized with Philip when he attempted the confederacy of the tribes. But Canonchet remained faithful to his friendship with Roger Williams and the Narragansetts did not go upon the war path as a tribe, although a few of the young men probably joined Philip's marauding bands.

Rhode Island was not a member of the confederacy of New England colonies, her people condemned the murder of Miantonomi, the Quakers were in control in her government, she disapproved of many acts by which the other colonies had provoked the war, she remained officially neutral. Some of her people, however, aided the other colonies with provisions and volunteers. Events conspired to bring the war home to Rhode Island. Philip's Indians, defeated at Springfield, sought refuge in the Narragansett country, and were hospitably received. The Massachusetts English demanded of Canonchet the surrender of Philip's Indians, who had placed their women and children under the protection of the Narragansett Indians. "Not a Wampanoag, nor the paring of a Wampanoag's nail, shall be delivered up," was the proud answer of the son of Miantonomi. The united colonies now sent an army of over eleven hundred men to attack the Narragansetts.

The invasion of the Narragansett country was made without consulting the government of Rhode Island, which was a violation of the royal charter. But the people of Rhode Island, as well as the Narragansetts themselves, were divided in their counsels and volunteers joined the army of invasion as it marched through Providence and Warwick.

On a Sunday morning in December, 1675, the Narragansett fort was attacked. The greatest battle in New England colonial history ensued. It was a terrible and a

bloody conflict, and for hours the issue was uncertain. Against the entreaty of the valiant and humane Captain Church, the greatest of the Indian fighters of New England, the wigwams within the fort were set on fire. Five hundred wigwams were burned, sick, wounded, infant and aged perishing in the flames. Six hundred Indians lost their lives, half of them in the fight and half in the flames. The English loss was heavy, although less than that of the Narragansetts. A majority of the superior officers fell in the fight. Michael Pierce was in the fight, but escaped with his life only to fall in the March following.

Nothing now remained for the Narragansetts except to go upon the war path. In the spring they inflicted vengeance far and wide. The remnant of the once proud nation must have known that it was now for them a death struggle, that the expulsion of the English was a vain endeavor.

Mutual misunderstanding and distrust was perhaps inevitable between the Indians and the early colonists of New England. Still the long period of peace, and mutual services, is to be remembered; the well cemented friendship of the most powerful of all the Indian tribes, the Narragansetts, to the Rhode Island settlers, is to be considered.

I am inclined to the opinion that Philip's war might have been avoided by the practice of the precepts of Christ by his professed followers, and that if the treatment of the Indians had more generally been as just

and considerate as that practiced by Roger Williams and his associates, the white man and the red man might have dwelt together in peace. There really was room enough for both. The Indians were not nomads, they were willing to live by agriculture and to progress in civilization.

However the responsibility for Philip's war may be awarded, or divided, the fact remains that Michael Pierce and his brave companions from the Plymouth towns fought the fight and died the death as heroes. They were sent here as soldiers to drive back a vengeful and dreaded foe. They died in honorable combat with their faces to the enemy, and history has no record of a bravery in war more splendid than was here displayed by these New England ancestors of ours. They were not personally responsible for the war, nor for any of its cruelty and massacre.

Some of them, at least, like the men of Scituate, came from towns whose inhabitants were distinguished in that stern Puritan age by gentle manners and liberal views. The chivalric captain of Plymouth, the sword and buckler of the colony, was by his character and his career worthy of the monument that stands on Captain's Hill looking towards Provincetown, but surely if Standish, dying in his bed, is thus deserving, his successor sent out by Plymouth in her defense and his brave comrades, who faced certain death and suffered it after the manner of the old classic heroes, should also be thus honored.

There is a just pride and an inspiring incentive in ancestry of heroic deeds and noble lives, but the lesson for us

the descendants of the brave men who here performed the stern duty imposed upon them is not that valor and fidelity on the field of battle give higher title to honorable distinction than service to society in the ways of peace. The victories of peace should have even greater renown than those of war. The fearless and virile qualities may be developed amidst the trials, temptations, sacrifices and conflicts which in our luxurious age await those who obey the call of duty. Our conflicts are not with the untutored red men of the forest, they are with the more puissant forces of corruption and greed. They are also forced upon us, the battle field is not of our choosing, the courage demanded is both moral and physical, there is no retreat, and surrender is moral death. Duty done on such battle-fields is of the same quality and worth as that done amidst scenes of blood and carnage. Most of those who do it best may find scant regard while living and no recognition from posterity; but

“The longer on this earth we live
 And weight the various qualities of men . . .
 The more we feel the high stern-featured beauty
 Of plain devotedness to duty.
 Steadfast and still, nor paid with mortal praise,
 But finding amplest recompense,
 For life’s ungarlanded expense
 In work done squarely and unwasted days.”

EDWIN C. PIERCE

THE EXERCISES AT MASSASOIT'S SPRING, WARREN, OCTOBER 19, 1907

The dedicatory exercises of the Massasoit Memorial, according to the program, commenced at the appointed time with an address by Professor Wilfred H. Munro, as follows:

Acting for the State of Rhode Island, I have the honor, as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, of transferring to the custody of the Massasoit Monument Association this tablet. Placed beside the gushing water known for many generations as Massasoit's Spring, it commemorates the great Indian Sachem whose name it bears. May its presence steadily incite to a more intelligent patriotism! May the people of Warren, ever mindful of the prominent part their ancestors played in the early history of this nation, strive always to prove themselves worthy sons of those conscientious and valiant sires! . . . I have the pleasure of calling upon two of the descendants of Massasoit to unveil the tablet . . . and I now place it in charge of Colonel Abbot, the President of the Association.



MASSASOIT'S SPRING, WARREN

THIS TABLET
 PLACED BESIDE THE GUSHING WATER
 KNOWN FOR MANY GENERATIONS AS
 MASSASOIT'S SPRING
 COMMEMORATES THE GREAT
 INDIAN SACHEM MASSASOIT
 "FRIEND OF THE WHITE MAN"
 RULER OF THIS REGION WHEN THE
 PILGRIMS OF THE MAYFLOWER
 LANDED AT PLYMOUTH
 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1620

The tablet having been unveiled the President of the Association thus responded; "Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee for Marking Historical Sites: In behalf of the Massasoit Monument Association, and I believe I am justified in saying, all the citizens of Warren, I thank you most sincerely for this tablet of enduring bronze in honor of him, who was ruler of this region in 1620 when the white man came to it, and what is of vastly more importance, who became the friend of that white man. In accepting this tablet I am moved more deeply than I can express, because standing beside it, as our honored guests, are two in whose veins flows the blood of him for whom this memorial has been erected. Two hundred and eighty-six years ago men of our race came to this spot, and Massasoit welcomed them. We feel it to be a great honor that you, Charlotte and Alonzo Mitchell,

are here to-day, and to no other hands than yours would we have entrusted the sacred duty of unveiling this tablet.

EXERCISES IN THE TOWN HALL.

The committee and guests then adjourned to the town hall where at three o'clock the exercises were continued according to the Program. After the rendering of Eichberg's most inspiring hymn, "To thee, O Country, the President spoke as follows:

In 1620 this place was the capital of a nation, and he in whose honor we have gathered was the ruler. He was a native American, and it would have been more to our credit if we had not allowed nearly two hundred and fifty years to elapse, since his death, before erecting a memorial to him. To whom the credit for the idea should be given no one can tell. That Norman G. Burr, a former townsman, was the first to contribute for the purpose is a matter of record. Zachariah Allen, then president of the Rhode Island Historical Society, was the second donor, and the two sums lying by for many years in our savings institution formed a substantial nucleus for further funds. The Thalia Club, a local dramatic society, largely through the influence of our present secretary, Eugene A. Vaughan, gave an unique and pleasing entertainment on February 8, 1893, for the benefit of the monument fund. Governor D. Russell Brown evinced great interest, and delivered an address. Our distinguished and lamented townsman,

Hezekiah Butterworth, to whose heart the idea of a memorial was very dear, spoke of Massasoit of Sowams in Pokanoket. The poem of George Henry Coomer to be read this afternoon, was on the program, as also one from the pen of Frederick Denison. Pleasing musical numbers by local talent were interspersed, and the occasion was a great success in every way, adding a considerable sum to the fund. Other contributions followed, and the plan gained a substantial financial footing, but it seemed difficult to secure an unanimity of opinion on a site, and the interest gradually waned, not to be revived until last fall, when at the request of a few of the surviving members of the Association, the chairman and secretary of the State Committee for Marking Historical Sites, representing the entire body, visited the site of the Spring, and as a result a bronze tablet to be placed on a suitable memorial at that place was promised. Meetings of the Association were held, the membership increased from about twenty to over a hundred, a constitution adopted, new officers elected, and an executive committee chosen to conduct affairs. In the meantime Abby A. Cole, a lineal descendant of Sergeant Hugh Cole, who was the friend of Metacomet, Massasoit's younger son and ultimate successor, offered a boulder from the land formerly her ancestor's and the appropriateness of this gift was a direct appeal for action. The practical skill of Cornelius Harrington was necessary for the successful moving of the eight-ton conglomerate from its ancient to its modern bed.

The artistic taste of John DeWolf from our neighbor town on the Mount Hope lands was invoked, and the greater part of August spent in erecting the memorial. The town did its share by authorizing the improvement of the street, and the energy of our highway commissioner, James A. Seymour, has borne fruit therein. The Association has now been incorporated in order that it may legally hold property, and has admitted to membership fifteen of the wives and other female relatives of the male members, realizing full well the interest which women have in all such matters, and that their enthusiasm is a most potent factor for success. The interest of the owner of the property about the memorial, Frank W. Smith, has been of great assistance and has culminated in a most generous gift to the Association of the spring site, to have and to hold forever. It is my privilege and pleasure in behalf of the Association to tender its sincere thanks to all who have assisted in any way, by contribution of money, or work of head or hand to the successful accomplishment of the memorial, and the dedication thereof, to the first citizen of this town of whom there is any record, the great Indian Sachem, Massasoit. And especially do we greet and render thanks to you, Alonzo and Charlotte Mitchell, for returning to the home of your fathers to honor us with your presence.

But the Association does not stop its work here. Its by-laws provide that it shall promote any enterprise, the design of which is the improvement of physical and

esthetic conditions in the community. It has made a beginning of such work by the decoration of the surroundings of the railroad station, accomplished through the generosity of one of its members. It does not mean to interfere with the duty of the town council, or encroach upon the prerogatives of the Business Men's Association, or any other body. It has neither political nor sectarian affiliations. It is made up of representative citizens of this town who in accepting membership have signified their interest in something which stands for an uplifting above the ordinary conditions of life. A public park where leisure hours may be happily spent; the planting of trees to replace those which formerly arched our streets from end to end; a monument to the patriots who have borne arms in all the wars of our beloved country are some of the things which the Association hopes to accomplish in the future.

What more potent inspiration for all good works could we have than the words of our revered poet-historian, whose cup of happiness would, we believe, be full to overflowing could he have been spared to be with us to-day:

“Warren! where first beside the cradled Nation
 The old chief stood, we love thy storied past.
 Sowams is pleasant for a habitation—
 ’Twas thy first history—may it be thy last.”

The “Indian March” was spiritedly played, after which the President introduced Professor Munro in the following terms: As far back as 1880 the historian of our

neighbor town to the south was sufficiently impressed by the value of tradition to give public expression to his belief that the spot which we honor to-day was Massasoit's Spring. I feel that it does not detract from the honor due to all the members of the Committee for Marking Historical Sites to say that to the chairman more than any other, are we indebted for the tablet beside the gushing water. It is therefore with profound feelings of gratitude that I introduce Professor Wilfred Harold Munro.

Professor Munro spoke, informally, in part as follows:

Under primitive conditions of life the three principal necessities for existence are water, food and shelter. This is true whether we live in solitude or in communities. The first necessity for a settled abode would seem to be a never failing supply of water. Food can be obtained in many places: water that is not contaminated must always be sought at its source. In the earliest days of Monasticism in Egypt a spring, a palm tree and a cave were regarded as the necessary "plant" for those who wished to lead a life of solitude and of contemplation. Water was the first requisite, then came the date-palm with its food, the cave in that perfect climate was sought for only as a shelter from the wild beasts. By the end of the fourth century the region known as the Thebaid was filled with men living in this primitive way. These monks had reverted to the simple life of the savage. The natives our ancestors encountered when they landed upon the continent had never passed beyond that simple life.

They sought for living springs as prerequisites for their temporary habitations. But there were no trees or shrubs to afford them food throughout the year and the wild animals were too insignificant and too few in number to furnish a food supply. In this region therefore they pitched their rude wigwams near the shore where they could without much difficulty secure fish, wild fowl, clams and oysters. The waters of Narragansett Bay were then more plentifully stocked with fish than now. Ducks, geese and other wild fowl must also have been much more abundant. The Indian *shot* both fish and fowl.

Near the spring we have marked to-day was unquestionably an Indian village in the year of our Lord, 1620. As a historical student I wish we might always have as reasonable grounds for connecting names with physical features as we have in this case. If ever a fact was firmly established by tradition the fact of Massasoit's connection with this spring is. Jedediah Morse, "Father of American Geography," caught the story from the lips of the children of those who had lived in the days of Massasoit and transferred it to his *American Gazetteer* in 1805. For more than a hundred years the tradition has been perpetuated upon the printed page. It is seldom that a story can be so easily substantiated. Not far away, at Mount Hope, in Bristol, is a shallow well which has been known ever since the founding of the town in 1680 as "King Philip's Spring." You would be amazed to learn how infrequent in manuscripts and books is the

mention of this famous spring. I can find hardly a reference that is more than seventy-five years old, none as old as Morse's reference to Massasoit's Spring. The story has simply been passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and no man has ever been rash enough to question its truth. This is all the more remarkable because on the other side of Mount Hope is another spring which gushes forth not far from the spot where King Philip was killed.

May I in the short time at my disposal endeavor to set forth the life the Indians and our ancestors lived in our earliest Colonial days! Of what kind of structures did the villages of the Indian consist? They were very rough and uncomfortable places of abode, not entirely unlike those you may see to-day in the "Indian Country" of our western states and territories, and yet much ruder than are the wigwams, of to-day. The Indian we know has profited somewhat from his nearness to civilization.

When the Plymouth representatives paid their first visit to Massasoit they found the Chief occupying a wigwam a little larger than those of his subjects. But when night came Massasoit and his wife occupied as a bed a platform of boards raised a little from the ground and covered with a thin mat. On this bed the Indian Sachem also placed his visitors with himself and his wife, "they at one end and the Englishmen at the other, and two more of Massasoit's men pressed by and upon them, so that they were worse weary of the lodging than of the

journey." The accommodation could hardly be called luxurious.

The Indians were "lusty" men. The word "lusty" was then used as we use the word "husky" to-day in speaking of our football players. All our players are "husky" men though many of their fellow students are not. They are so because they are physically the best men that can be picked out from hundreds of undergraduates. The Indians were all "lusty" men from a different reason. As with the Zulus of South Africa it was with them, a case of the survival of the fittest. It was because all the weakly children died that our ancestors had such a race of athletes for their antagonists.

The weapons they used were not of much account as compared with those the colonists carried, but they were so skilled in the use of them that they proved to be most formidable foes. The white men were rarely as "lusty" men as their opponents though their weakest died quickly in the terrible early years of the Plymouth Colony. But in weapons and equipment they far surpassed the savages. Our ancestors whom Massasoit saw were armed with muskets and swords. They wore helmets and corselets of metal. When metal was lacking they wore quilted corselets stiff enough to protect from Indian arrows. The Indian sachem and his men soon learned the superiority of the English equipment and governed their conduct accordingly.

The earliest habitations of the Colonists were hardly more comfortable than were the wigwams of the Aborigines.

Study the accounts given of the first houses in Plymouth and you will be convinced of the fact. Those log huts were built in a very rude way. Shelter only was sought for, luxury was not dreamed of. The chimneys were on the outside. No bricks were used in their construction because no bricks were made in the country. The very wide fireplaces were lined with stone, but the flues above were ordinarily built with what we might call light cordwood set in clay and plastered with the same material. Under such conditions it is hardly necessary to say that constant vigilance was necessary to prevent these primitive structures from taking fire. Dwellings like those our ancestors used may be seen to-day as you pass through the State of South Carolina on the railway trains. As far as comfort goes the negroes who inhabit them are much better off than the Plymouth colonists were.

* * * * *

THE HISTORICAL ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
COLONEL HIGGINSON.

Colonel Higginson read as follows:

MASSASOIT.

The newspaper correspondents tell us that when an inquiry was one day made among visitors, returning from the recent Jamestown Exposition, as to the things seen by each of them which he or she would remember longest, one

man replied, "That life size group in the Smithsonian building which shows John Smith in his old cock-boat trading with the Indians. He is giving them beads or something and getting baskets of corn in exchange" (Outlook, October, 1907). This seemed to the man who said it and quite reasonably, the very first contact with civilization on the part of the American Indians. Precisely parallel to which is the memorial which we meet to dedicate and which records the first interview in 1620 between the little group of Plymouth Pilgrims and Massasoit, known as the "greatest commander of the country" and sachem of the whole region north of Narragansett Bay (Bancroft's United States, i, 247).

"Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate" says the poet Pope and nothing is more remarkable in human history than the way in which great events sometimes reach their climax at once, instead of gradually working up to it. Never was this better illustrated than when the Plymouth Pilgrims first met the one man of this region who could guarantee them peace for fifty years and did so. The circumstances seem the simplest of the simple.

The first hasty glance between the Plymouth Puritans and the Indians did not take place, as you will recall, until the new comers had been four days on shore, when, in the words of the old chronicler "they espied five or six people with a Dogge coming toward them, who were savages; who when they saw them ran into the Wood and whistled

the Dogge after them." (This quadruped, whether large or small, had always a capital letter in his name, while people and savages had none, in these early narratives.) When the English pursued the Indians "they ran away might and main." (E. W. Peirce's *Indian History*.) The next interview was a stormier one; four days later, when those same Pilgrims were asleep on board the "shallop" on the morning of December 8, 1620 (now December 19), when they heard "a great and strange cry" and arrow shots came flying amongst them which they returned and one Indian "gave an extraordinary cry" and away they went. After all was quiet, the Pilgrims picked eighteen arrows, some headed with brass, some with hart's horn (deer's horn), and others with eagles' claws" (*Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, 158), the brass heads at least showing that those Indians had met Englishmen before.

Three days after this encounter at Namskeket—namely on December 22d, 1620 (a date now computed as December 23)—the English landed at Patuxet, now Plymouth. Three months passed before the sight of any more Indians, when Samoset came, all alone with his delightful salutation "Welcome Englishmen," and a few days later (March 22, 1621), the great chief of all that region, Massasoit, appeared on the scene.

When he first made himself visible with sixty men, on that day, upon what is still known as Strawberry Hill, he asked that somebody be sent to hold a parley with him. Edmund Winslow was appointed to this office, and went

forward protected only by his sword and armor and carrying presents to the sachem. Winslow also made a speech of some length bringing messages (quite imaginary, perhaps, and probably not at all comprehended) from King James, whose representative, the Governor, wished particularly to see Massasoit. It appears from the record written apparently by Winslow, himself, that Massasoit made no particular reply to this harangue, but paid very particular attention to Winslow's sword and armor and proposed at once to begin business by buying them. This, however, was refused, but Winslow induced Massasoit to cross a brook between the English and himself, taking with him twenty of his Indians who were bidden to leave their bows and arrows behind them. Beyond the brook, he was met by Captain Standish, with an escort of six armed men, who exchanged salutations and attended him to one of the best but unfinished houses in the village. Here a green rug was spread on the floor and three or four cushions. The governor, Bradford, then entered the house, followed by three or four soldiers and preceded by a flourish from a drum and trumpet which quite delighted and astonished the Indians. It was a deference paid to their sachem. He and the governor then kissed each other, as it is recorded (we have no information as to whether the governor enjoyed it) sat down together and regaled themselves with an entertainment. The feast is recorded by the early narrator as consisting chiefly of strong waters, a "thing the savages love very well" it is said "and the

sachem took such a large draught of it at once as made him sweat all the time he staid." (Thatcher's Lives of Indians, i., 119.)

A substantial treaty of peace was made on this occasion, one immortalized by the fact that it was the first made with the Indians of New England. It is the unquestioned testimony of history that the negotiation was remembered and followed by both sides for half a century; nor was Massasoit nor any of the Wampanoags during his lifetime convicted of having violated or attempted to violate any of its provisions. This was a great achievement! Do you ask what price bought all this? The price practically paid for all the vast domain and power granted to the white man consisted of the following items: a pair of knives and a copper chain with a jewel in it, for the grand sachem; and for his brother, Quadequina, a knife, a jewel to hang in his ear, a pot of strong waters, a good quantity of biscuit and a piece of butter." (Thatcher's Lives of Indians, i., 120.)

Fair words, the proverb says, butter no parsnips, but the fair words of the white men had provided the opportunity for performing that process. The description preserved of the Indian chief by an eye witness was as follows: "In his person he is a very lusty man, in his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare speech; in his attire little or nothing differing from the rest of his followers, only in a great chain of white bone beads about his neck; and at it, behind his neck, hangs a

little bag of tobacco, which he drank, and gave us to drink—(this being the phrase for that indulgence in those days, as is found in Ben Johnson and other authors). His face was painted with a sad red like murrey (so called from being the color of the Moors) and oiled both head and face that he looked greasily. All his followers likewise were in their faces, in part or in whole, painted, some black, some red, some yellow, and some white, some with crosses, and other antic works; some had skins on them, and some naked; all strong all men in appearance.” (Young’s *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, 194.) All this Dr. Young tells us would have been a good description of an Indian party under Black Hawk which was presented to the President at Washington as late as 1837 and also, I can say the same of one seen by myself coming from a prairie in Kansas, yet unexplored in 1856.

Lane tells us that in oriental countries smoking is called drinking and the aim of all is bring the smoke into the lungs. (Young’s *Chronicles of Plymouth*, 188.)

The interchange of eatables was evidently at that period a pledge of good feeling, as it is to-day. On a later occasion Captain Standish, with Isaac Alderton, went to visit the Indians, who gave them three or four ground nuts and some tobacco. The writer afterwards says, “Our governor bid them send the king’s kettle and filled it full of pease which pleased them well, and so they went their way.” It strikes the modern reader as if this were pease and peace practically equivalent, and as if the parties needed

only a pun to make friends. It is doubtful whether the arrival of a conquering race was ever in the history of the world marked by a treaty so simple and therefore noble.

“This treaty with Massasoit” says Belknap, “was the work of one day,” and being honestly intended on both sides, was kept with fidelity as long as Massasoit lived. (Belknap’s *American Biography*, ii, 214.) In September, 1639, Massasoit and his oldest son, Mooanam, afterwards called Wamsutta, came into the court at Plymouth and desired that this ancient league should remain inviolable, which was accordingly ratified and confirmed by the government, (Young’s *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, 194 note), and lasted until it was broken by Philip, the successor of Wamsutta, in 1675. It is not my affair to discuss the later career of Philip, whose insurrection is now viewed more leniently than in its own day, but the spirit of it was surely quite mercilessly characterized by a Puritan minister, Increase Mather, who when describing a battle in which old Indian men and women, the wounded and the helpless were burned alive said proudly, “This day we brought five hundred Indian souls to hell.” (Pierce’s *Indian Biography*, 22.)

But the end of all was approaching. In 1623, Massasoit sent a messenger to Plymouth to say that he was ill, and Governor Bradford sent Mr. Winslow to him with medicines and cordials. When they reached a certain ferry, upon Winslow’s discharging his gun, Indians came to him from a house not far off, who told him that Massasoit

was dead and that day buried. As they came nearer, at about half an hour before the setting of the sun, another messenger came and told them that he was not dead, though there was no hope that they would find him living. Hastening on, they arrived late at night. "When we came thither" Winslow writes, "we found the house so full of men as we could scarce get in, though they used their best diligence to make way for us. There were they in the midst of their charms for him, making such a hellish noise as it distempered us that were well, and therefore unlike to ease him that was sick. About him were six or eight women who chafed his arms, legs and thighs to keep heat in him. When they had made an end of their charming, one told him that his friends the English were come to see him. Having understanding left, but his sight was wholly gone, he asked who had come. They told him Winsnow, for they cannot pronounce the letter l, but ordinarily n in place thereof. He desired to speak with me. When I came to him and they told him of it, he put forth his hand to me which I took. When he said twice though very inwardly, Keen Winsnow? which is to say, Art thou Winslow? I answered Ahhe, that is Yes. Then he doubled these words, Matta neen wonckanet nanem, Winsnow: that is to say, O Winslow, I shall never see thee again! Then I called Hobbamock and desired him to tell Massasoit that the governor hearing of his sickness, was sorry for the same; and though by many businesses he could not come himself, yet he sent me with such things for him as he thought most likely to do good in this extrem-

ity; and whereof if he be pleased to take, I would presently give him; which he desired, and having a confection of many comfortable conserves on the point of my knife, I gave him some which I could scarce get through his teeth. When it was dissolved in his mouth, he swallowed the juice of it; whereat those that were about him much rejoiced, saying that he had not swallowed anything in two days before." (E. W. Peirce's *Indian History*, 25, 26.)

Then Winslow tells how he nursed the sick chief, sending messengers back to the governor for a bottle of drink and some chickens from which to make a broth for his patient. Meanwhile he dissolved some of the confection water and gave it to Massasoit to drink; within half an hour the Indian improved. Before the messengers could return with the chickens, Winslow made a broth of meal and strawberry leaves and sassafras root which he strained through his handkerchief and gave the chief who drank at least a pint of it. After this his sight mended more and more, and all rejoiced that the Englishman had been the means of preserving the life of Massasoit. At length the messengers returned with the chicken but Massasoit "finding his stomach come to him he would not have the chickens killed, but kept them for breed."

From far and near his followers came to see their restored chief who feelingly said "Now I see the English are my friends and love me: and whilst I live I will never forget this kindness they have showed me."

It would be interesting were I to take the time to look into the relations of Massasoit with others, especially

with Roger Williams, but this has been done by others, particularly in the somewhat imaginative chapter of my old friend, Mr. Butterworth, and I have already said enough. Nor can I paint the background of that strange early society of Rhode Island, its reaction from the stern Massachusetts rigor and its quaint and varied materials. In that new state as Bancroft keenly said, there were settlements "filled with the strangest and most incongruous elements . . . so that if a man had lost his religious opinions, he might have been sure to find them again in some village in Rhode Island."

Meanwhile "the old benevolent sachem, Massasoit," says Drake's Book of the Indians, "having died in the winter of 1661-2," so died a few months after his oldest son Alexander. Then came by regular succession, Philip, the next brother, of whom the historian Hubbard says that for his "ambitious and haughty spirit he was nicknamed 'King Philip.'" From this time followed warlike dismay in the colonies ending in Philip's piteous death. To-day as a long deferred memorial to Philip's father, Massasoit, with his simple and modest virtues, this memorial tablet has been dedicated. It may be said of Massasoit's career in the noble words of Young's "Night Thoughts,"—

"Each man makes his own stature; builds himself.

Virtue alone outbuilds the Pyramids:

Her monuments shall last when Egypt's fall."

PRESCOTT'S HEADQUARTERS

The Address of William Paine Sheffield, September 10, 1908

Here occurred one of the most picturesque, daring and successful achievements of the American Revolution. When the details of many a carefully planned campaign have passed from popular notice, the American people will remember, and recount with pride the simple story of the capture of General Prescott by Colonel Barton.

The possibility of the carrying off of its commander while surrounded by its army and protected by a friendly fleet, through the bold act of a mere handful of countrymen, never entered the minds of the British forces on Rhode Island. It could never have been planned except by a bold and courageous man, and never have been executed, except by a well informed and sagacious leader, seconded by prudent and daring companions.

While it was not one of the great events which were turning points in the struggle for independence, it came at a time when the American arms had few successes and it did much to encourage the people to persevere in the conflict. It showed what a daring man with a few resolute companions may accomplish, and it is almost impossible to estimate its effect in arousing the people to exertion and



GENERAL PRESCOTT'S HEADQUARTERS, PORTSMOUTH

in bringing about the final result. As showing what individual effort, intelligently directed, may accomplish, it should be kept fresh in the memory of our country by spoken word and enduring bronze. The story has so much of the courage and the personality of the gallant Barton that when once the story is heard it is not easily forgotten.

The colony of Rhode Island in its attitude and conduct in the great conflict for liberty and independence had a part which time can only make clearer and more resplendent. Before Concord and Lexington, here, on the waters of Narragansett bay, occurred the preliminary struggles which led up to the great conflict. Here, whatever of truth or fallacy lay in the cry "that taxation without representation was unjust and intolerable," a commercial and enterprising race of merchants, privateersmen and sailors, accustomed to the freedom of the seas, felt especially the heavy iron hand of the British navigation acts press upon their commerce and their liberties and they were early ready to resist.

Here was the most magnificent bay upon the Atlantic coast, with its miles of seashore, its numerous outlets to the sea, open on every wind to sailing vessels for speedy entrance and exit. Harbors and centres of commerce developed in spite of the navigation laws, at Newport, near the Stone Bridge, at Bristol, Warren, Providence, East Greenwich bay, Wickford and elsewhere. There were no more hardy and experienced mariners than came

from the Rhode Island colony. Its bold privateersmen had not hesitated in the past to meet the enemies of England in ships and on the Spanish Main, and elsewhere. With the other colonies, Rhode Island resisted the enforcement of the stamp act and the sale of stamps, but alone of all the colonies, Rhode Island met the armed vessels of the king and opposed the enforcement of regulations unjust to her commerce and in violation of her liberties. When she found the rights she believed she was entitled to violated, she resisted, and, educated through all her colonial history to act independently, she did not wait for any other colony to act with her. The story of the "Squirrel," the "Liberty" and the "Gaspee" were prior in time and displayed a courage, a purpose and an independence in resistance to Great Britain that no other colony equalled. Later, first of the colonies, Rhode Island declared her Independence.

The Gaspee commission, by which it was sought to carry colonial offenders to England, to be tried there, instead of by their peers, in the vicinage, involved so great a violation of the principles of Anglo-Saxon liberty and the rights claimed by all the colonists that it awoke a responsive chord in the Virginia House of Burgesses. Virginia, the richest of the colonies, with little direct grievance against the crown, threw its great influence in union with other colonies, and George Washington, following the action of his colony, made a successful revolution possible.

Recognizing the strategic importance of Narragansett bay, near to the centres of population, the British early

attacked its inhabitants and Wallace ravaged its shores. In December, 1776, Sir Peter Parker, with eleven ships of war and seventy transports, sailed through Long Island sound around the north end of Conanicut, and two English and two Hessian brigades under the command of Sir Henry Clinton with Earl Percy and Brigadier General Richard Prescott under him, landed on the island of Rhode Island, and in the succeeding years the people of this vicinity endured the hardships of war. This force, as compared with the American forces in the state, was overwhelming and the Americans could only withdraw and watch the enemy from the neighboring mainland.

War at its best is hard, and in the latter part of the eighteenth century, with hired mercenaries, the treatment of the non-combatants was most severe. Officers, who might have been more courteous to a foreign foe, against colonists and rebels seemed to go at times to the extremes of cruelty toward the weak and helpless. On Jamestown, while Wallace was directing the driving off of the cattle of the inhabitants, Martin was shot down in cold blood at his own door. During the British occupation of Rhode Island, especially after Clinton and Percy in succession had left, and the command fell to Prescott, every day brought tales of tyranny and oppression of innocent and defenseless people (their relatives, friends and countrymen) to the American forces stationed at Tiverton.

To the small boy in Newport, even to this day, the word "tyrant" conjures up the picture of General Prescott,

an irascible man, somewhat advanced in years, walking on the east side of Spring street, along the only stone sidewalk in the neighborhood of his headquarters at the Bannister house, on the corner of Pelham street, and striking off with his cane the hats of the careless youth who too slowly saluted the resplendent general, heedless if with his cane he missed the hat and struck the head of the young rebel. Next to George III himself, in July, 1777, Prescott represented to the people of Rhode Island that ideal tyrant so eloquently portrayed in the Declaration of Independence. One can well imagine how the sympathetic heart of the Rhode Island commander at Tiverton, facing a superior force, yearned to do some act that would show that tyrant, and all likely to imitate him that he could not oppress with impunity women and children.

William Barton was born at Warren, May 26, 1748, says his biographer, Mrs. Williams, in her interesting account gathered from his own lips and from those of this contemporaries; he was brought up in the manner of the times, for boys along the sea shore. He had a common school education, was bound out to a trade, married at twenty-two and carried on in his own shop at Providence the trade of a hatter. A lover of his country, listening with deep resentment to the wrongs of his fellow-citizens, he heard in Providence the distant guns of Bunker Hill. The next day he left his shop and joined the Americans at Cambridge, and continued through the siege of Boston. Then returning to Warren, enflamed by the cruel acts of Wallace, he remained to defend his native state.

While in charge on Rhode Island, Barton made his headquarters at the Bailey place, near the One Mile Corner. On the 13th of August, 1776, that staunch old patriot pastor, Ezra Stiles, records in his diary "at Newport, viewed the brigade of 1,500 men; part of them drawn up on the Parade and exercised by Major Barton."

It was during this period that he thoroughly familiarized himself with the different parts of the island, which was so useful to him later. With the advent of Sir Henry Clinton and the fleet, Barton withdrew his men to the mainland and remained in command, under Colonel Stanton, of the American force at Tiverton, guarding Howland's ferry and the east passage.

This force, recruited from New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, consisted of Colonel John Topham's and Colonel Archibald Crary's regiments and Colonel Robert Elliott's artillery. Here Barton did what he could to alleviate the sufferings of those who escaped from Prescott's tyranny, and listened to the stories of the oppression of old men and women by the British and Hessian regiments quartered among them.

About this time, the American forces were greatly annoyed by the capture of General Lee, who was held by the British and exchange refused because the American had no captive officer of equal rank to offer. They keenly felt it as a disgrace that an American officer of high rank should remain a prisoner unexchanged.

Colonel Barton, doomed to inactivity in the face of a superior foe, pondered over the situation of General Lee

and grieved at the oppression of his countrymen in Rhode Island. In June, a Mr. Coffin escaped from the island and brought to Barton an accurate and detailed description of the location of General Prescott here in the Overing house. A man, a negro servant from Mr. Overing's kitchen had later confirmed Mr. Coffin and it is probable that Colonel Barton himself had secretly, with his own eyes, viewed the disposition of the forces and the general situation about the Prescott headquarters.

Having obtained permission of Colonel Joseph Stanton, Jr., his superior, he determined to carry out the apparently desperate scheme he had conceived wholly by himself of by one bold act avenging the wrongs of his countrymen upon their oppressor and furnishing to the American a captive general of equal rank to General Lee and suitable for his exchange.

Besides himself, he selected five officers and about forty men from the regiments at Tiverton. They were all volunteers for an unknown peril, picked for their courage, skill and prudence; many of them residents of this island and vicinity, familiar with the location they were to visit. The names of many of these men are still borne on this island and in the neighboring towns—Samuel Potter, John Wilcox, John Hunt, Nathan Smith, Isaac Brown, Oliver Simmons, Jack Sherman, Joel Briggs, Samuel Cory, James Weaver, Joseph Dennis, Pardon Cory, Thomas Wilcox, Jeremiah Thomas, Thomas Austin and others.

On the first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Barton, under cover of darkness, with his volunteers in five whale-boats, set forth and, scattered by a severe storm, were delayed at Warren. At Hog island they viewed the British fleet, gathered off the Rhode Island shore at the end of Prudence and not far from Hope island, and the men learned for the first time the desperate undertaking in which they were engaged. But no man faltered. Thence they pushed on to Warwick neck, where there was an American battery, and here they were again detained by the weather. On the evening of July 9, 1777, Barton, his officers and men embarked in their five boats on their perilous expedition, with those last wise instructions—to preserve the strictest order, to have no thought of plunder, to observe profound silence, and to take with them no spirituous liquors.

Barton, with a handkerchief on a ten-foot pole in the first boat, so that the others might follow, led the way. They rowed between Patience and Prudence and hugged the shore of Prudence as they passed around the south end of the island, close to the hostile fleet, hearing distinctly the sentinels calling, "all's well." Then they pushed directly for the Rhode Island shore, landing at the mouth of the creek under the shelter of a sand bluff. They left one man with each boat and pushed forward towards the Overing house, passing to the south of the Peleg Coggeshall place and up the ravine to the road.

All about lay the British forces. A little way off to the north, at the Redwood place, was General Smith, second in

command, and part of his force was stationed near; and just to the south of his house, in a building, were quartered a body of light horse. Twenty-five yards from the gate stood a sentry, alert but secure in the protection of a disciplined army and a formidable fleet against a discouraged and undisciplined foe.

General Prescott had returned late from a feast given by the Tory Bannister, supplied in part by the cargo of a rich prize brought into Newport that day, and was sleeping soundly on the first floor of the house. Major Barrington, Prescott's aide, Mr. Overing and his son comprised the remaining male occupants of the house.

Barton pushed boldly across the road from the ravine, directly towards the sentry. To his demand for the countersign, they asked if he had seen any deserters that night, all the time advancing, until John Hunt, the stalwart artilleryman from Portsmouth, seized and silenced the sentry and they entered the house. Of the five boat parties, one stayed on guard at the road, one each guarded the three doors of the house, on east, south and west sides. Barton and the other party entered the house, first arousing Overing and his son in the second story. Major Barrington was taken as he jumped from the window in the second story. The negro forced the locked door to the room in which Prescott was in bed, and Hunt seized the astonished general. Scantily dressed, without his shoes, Prescott and his aide were dragged, supported upon the shoulders of his captors, through the fields.

They started in a straight line for the shore, across a rye field. They pushed off from the shore, with their prisoners, soon followed by rockets and the alarm in the army and the fleet. No wonder Prescott exclaimed to Colonel Barton: "You have made a damned bold push tonight." As the boat passed in the darkness through the midst of the British fleet he must have felt that he did not deserve well at the hands of the Americans, as he said "he hoped they would not hurt him." Thomas Austin, who had been whipped by Prescott's orders with 300 lashes, because he refused to yoke his oxen with which to draw British cannon, until the physician protested he could not survive, was probably only one of others among Barton's men who either in person or their relatives had suffered ill treatment at Prescott's hands. Still Colonel Barton put his coat about him and Prescott was well cared for, and on the following Saturday, the flag of truce brought him his wardrobe, his purse, his hair powder and a plentiful supply of perfumery.

Thus was successfully accomplished one of the most daring feats of courage in the war. Professor Diman in his interesting discourse on the centennial anniversary of the event says: "Let us estimate at its true value the enterprise which we have come to commemorate to-day. An enterprise leading to no important military or political results, yet deserving to be kept forever in remembrance as showing what manner of men they were who dared hurl defiance in the face of a powerful empire and who

waged a successful war with resolute and highly disciplined foes. What they did, a hundred years of a united and independent nation remains to show; what they were, can best be learned from such exhibitions of individual daring and resolution as have made this a memorable spot not only in Rhode Island, but in American history.

Astonished at the audacity of the act, even the British had little sympathy with Prescott. The London Chronicle of that period even held him up to ridicule.

“What various lures there are to ruin man,
Women, the first and foremost, all bewitches.
A nymph thus spoiled a general’s mighty plan,
And gave him to the foe without his breeches.”

His capture brought joy to the American people, as well as in Rhode Island, as relief from a coarse and oppressive tyrant, who had cursed Ethan Allen when his prisoner and had him bound hand and foot, and whose harsh and arbitrary rule at Newport had been most obnoxious to the patriots.

To the army of the north, the exploit occasioned great joy and exultation. It lifted for an instant the anxious cloud from Washington’s face as he announced to Congress the “bold enterprise.” Even across the sea, Louis, King of France, was pleased and sent to Colonel Barton for a personal detailed account of the affair, for his pleasure and information.

Barton was made a brevet colonel in the continental line and subsequently received a sword voted by Congress.

The Rhode Island legislature expressed by resolution its appreciation of the brave act of its gallant citizen, and it is fitting that to-day the committee of the Historical Society, with means furnished by the General Assembly of the state, should mark in permanent form by lasting bronze this spot.

We like to think that this act of Barton's was one especially characteristic of those born and reared within the territory of this little state, among a people inured to a hardy life on the borders of the ocean, and independent in colors and education. Other states and neighboring Massachusetts, with their citizens trained to united action in the rigid school of religious uniformity, have accomplished much in the history of the nation, but it has especially belonged to those from Rhode Island in every stage of its history to act with courage and independence. Roger Williams, alone among the Indians with his idea of religious freedom; Barton, not weighing odds of numbers or discipline when he thought his country demanded the capture of a tyrannical enemy; Perry on Lake Erie, saving the northwest to the Union, are but examples.

We can take new courage to-day, as we rehearse the incidents which here occurred. It must have seemed to Barton, as with his meagre, undisciplined force he faced the numerous forces, fully trained and equipped, of the British army in Rhode Island, protected by the fleet, that individual effort and courage could accomplish nothing; yet with great care, through knowledge

of the situation and a courageous execution of the plan he had conceived, he was able to seize the commander of that army, bringing consternation for a time to the enemy; keeping that enemy busy in Rhode Island while the American army in the north, inspired by his act, persevered in that campaign which led to the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga.

To-day, in the larger field of our expanded nation, with the rush of pressing events and the vastly more complex forces at work, it seems that individual effort can accomplish nothing in the great problems of civil life and constitutional government. Still, we believe, as of old, the intelligent work and daring courage of the individual alone, make possible ultimate success.

WILLIAM PAINE SHEFFIELD, JR.



THE INDIAN SOAPSTONE QUARRY, JOHNSTON

THE ADDRESS OF MR. DAVID W. HOYT

At the Indian Quarry, October 17, 1908

In expending the money appropriated by the State of Rhode Island, the Committee on marking historical sites have made selections relating to different periods, extending from prehistoric times down to the civil war. Some relate to the white settlers who founded the State; some to the colonial wars, the war of the revolution, or the civil war; others to individuals who have been eminent in the pursuits of peace, as well as of war. Of the thirteen tablets already placed, three pertain to the red race who occupied the land long before the white man came here. One, on the east side of the bay, marks the spring called by the name of Massasoit; another, on the west side of the bay, marks the "Drum Rock, a Trysting signal and meeting place of the Coweset Indians and their kindred Narragansetts." To-day we mark another notable Indian locality, north of the bay, one suggestive of the arts of peace, with which we do not so frequently associate our aboriginal predecessors.

Here is found a ledge of steatite, or soapstone, much of it containing imbedded crystals of siderite, or carbonate of iron. On weathering, the siderite absorbs oxygen and

moisture from the air, and disintegrates, yielding limonite, or iron rust, which gives its characteristic color to portions of the ledge long exposed to the air, and eventually disappears, leaving small pits, or holes, in the stone. In this respect it differs from many other specimens of soapstone; and articles made from it may often be thus identified. The stone of a pot now in the museum of Brown University, found at Potowomut, beneath ten feet of soil, is filled with such pits, showing unmistakably its origin. This ledge is reported to be about 25 feet in thickness, having a dip to the east, and lying between walls of harder rock. It has, at times, been uncovered for about 90 feet.

The quarry was first opened, in recent times, in 1878, by Mr. Horatio N. Angell, on whose land it was located. In 1878 and 1879 it attracted much attention. A committee of the R. I. Historical Society, consisting of Rev. Frederic Denison, Zachariah Allen and Wm. G. R. Mowry, examined the locality and made a report to the society, which has been preserved. It was also visited by F. W. Putnam, who published an account of it in the eleventh annual report of the Peabody Museum, in 1878. Professor Jenks, of Brown University, took four photographs, which have been preserved. It should be remembered that since the photographs were taken, and the earliest accounts were written, much stone has been taken from the ledge and put to various practical uses, some of it having been ground to powder. Moreover, the best specimens of the handiwork of the Indians have been

carried away, and are now to be found in the museums of Brown University, Roger Williams Park, Peabody, and the Smithsonian Institution; and in private collections.

Ledges of soapstone are quite common in New England, and the rock of these ledges is so soft and has such valuable properties that it has been worked in our own time for a variety of purposes; but the distinguishing peculiarity of this location is, that when the ledge was first uncovered the fullest evidence was found that it was the workshop of the Indians, who carved from this ledge of soft stone "pots, pans, dishes and pipes." It is stated, in the report to which we have referred, that "from the excavations and their surroundings have been removed about three hundred horse cart loads of the stone chips left by the Indian workmen." The largest excavation was found partly filled with dirt, debris ^{of} and Indian art, some whole stone pots, some partly finished pots, some only blocked out, numerous stone hammers," etc. It was stated that "the sides and bottom of this excavation contain about sixty distinct pits and knobs of places where pots and dishes were cut from the rock, while all parts bore marks and scars made by the stone implements of the swarthy quarrymen."

Professor Putnam estimated that three or four hundred pots were made from one part of the ledge alone, and that "several thousand must have been taken from the whole ledge." He also estimated that at least two thousand rude stone chisels or picks "had been found on the ledge,

or in the immediate vicinity." These were made of serpentine or from the hard stone of the adjoining ledge, averaging about seven inches in length, "rudely chipped to a blunt point at one end, and roughly rounded to fit the hand at the other." With these chisels were found seventy-five to one hundred rounded stones "weighing from twenty-five to one hundred pounds each, which might have been used as hammers for the purpose of breaking off large masses of the soapstone."

Those who carefully studied the ledge when first uncovered decided that the Indians first worked the outside of the pot, the top still being in contact with the ledge. The stone of the ledge was chipped off around, and to some extent under the mass, or "pot-bowlder," which was then broken from the ledge, turned over, and the hollow worked out.

This ledge is far from being uniform in character in its different parts. The soapstone is penetrated with harder rock in various places, so that only portions were found to be workable. There were, therefore, excavations of varying size, separated by harder rock. The soapstone itself was softer in some parts of the ledge than in others. The quarrymen seem to have worked the vein five or six feet in width, to a depth of ten or twelve feet, till harder rock was struck on the sides and on the bottom.

It seems probable that the upper portions, first worked, might have been composed of purer steatite, without the iron compound which made it less durable and less

desirable. A small soapstone pot, finely finished, now in the museum of Brown University, is almost wholly composed of pure steatite; but a portion of the top contains small pit holes which may indicate that in working it out the Indians may have struck a little of the lower stratum of this ledge, containing crystals of the iron compound.

It is worthy of note that in the same report of the Peabody Museum which contains the account of this Johnston quarry is found an account of a soapstone ledge in California, there called "potstone," near a spring, like this one, from which the Indians quarried pots and other utensils, with scrapers or chisels of quartz or slate. The method of working out the pots was identical with that employed here; but the utensils were of better finish and of later date.

Soon after this Johnston quarry was uncovered, one at Fed Hill, Bristol, Conn., was explored, and many dishes were found there, in various stages of manufacture. The methods of work were in general like those employed here. The outside of the pot was fashioned first, while the top was attached to a block detached from the ledge, instead of being attached to the ledge itself. It is suggested that this variation was because the "soapstone-like" material was poorer for the purpose, being a variety of fibrous hornblende, with talc.

Somewhat similar ledges and quarries, or "crockery-shops," have been reported in New Hartford and Litchfield, Conn., in Massachusetts; and, outside of New

England, in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and other states. The one which we now mark, however, seems to be superior in value to any other New England pot-quarry, in processes of manufacture which it has preserved. The historian Hutchison states that "the Narragansetts were distinguished for mechanical arts and trade, and furnished earthen vessels and pots for cooking to the adjacent tribes."

The Indians made the most suitable choice of location and material for their purposes. Located at the head of Narragansett bay, there was easy communication with both east and west sides of the bay, and with the north. In this respect, this ledge is typical of the manufactures of our own day which have grown up in the same vicinity. Soapstone is soft and was easily worked with the tools which they possessed. It would stand any amount of heat which they required for cooking, and retain the heat for a long time, without cracking to pieces like a quartz rock, or turning to powder like limestone.

The report of the committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, to which we have referred, contained a recommendation that the "large excavation" be preserved by taking "a section of the ledge, to measure about twelve feet in length and nine feet in width, and seven feet in depth, or of such size as may seem to be most suitable," and removing it to some spot in Roger Williams Park," on a slope within sight, at least, of the statue of the founder of the State." In December, 1870, "the

citizens of Providence and of the State" were asked to contribute the sum of six hundred dollars for the purpose of carrying this plan into effect. Probably the plan was not carried out on account of the lack of funds, for at least a portion of the "large excavation" is still here. Let us hope that whatever now remains, that is plainly the work of the Indian race, may be allowed to remain here, undisturbed, just where the work was done.

DAVID W. HOYT

STEPHEN HOPKINS

Address by William E. Foster, May 5, 1909

We are met to-day to commemorate a name richly deserving of grateful remembrance, and yet strangely destitute, through all these years, of any adequate commemoration. Until now, no statue nor bust, nor portrait nor tablet, have been set in place, to the memory of Stephen Hopkins, within the limits of Rhode Island.

It is true that the memory of a great man may endure notwithstanding the absence of these memorials; and to this fact the wide fame of Stephen Hopkins to-day is itself a notable testimony. And yet a community honors itself in honoring those whose efforts have laid the foundation of its own greatness; and Stephen Hopkins is emphatically entitled to the high distinction of founder, whether we regard his career in its relation to the City of Providence, the State of Rhode Island, or the United States of America.

For us, moreover, the tablet is the most fitting variety of commemoration, rather than any form of pictorial representation, for unfortunately Stephen Hopkins left behind him no portrait; and the representation of him familiar to us through Trumbull's great group picture of the "Signers" was sketched from his son's face.



THE STEPHEN HOPKINS HOUSE, HOPKINS STREET, PROVIDENCE

It is fitting also that the memorial tablet should be placed on the walls of this plain and unassuming building which Hopkins occupied for so many years; for by its very simplicity it cannot fail to remind us of the homely virtues of one of the greatest of our public men.

As citizens of Providence, we are interested not only in this building, in which the last forty-three years of Stephen Hopkins's long and useful life were passed, and in which, moreover, he died, in 1785, but we are interested also in his birth, which occurred in 1707, but on the other side of the river. Contrary to a curiously persistent tradition, to the effect that Stephen Hopkins was born on the hills of Scituate, he was born within the limits of what is now (in 1909) the City of Providence, not far from the corner of Broad and Sackett streets, as was clearly established through some extended researches* from twenty-five to thirty years ago. This locality is included in a strip of land which was from 1754 to 1868 a portion of the town of Cranston,† and was re-united to Providence in 1868.

In or about 1742, after a boyhood and early manhood passed on the Scituate hills, where his younger brothers were actually born (Scituate having become a separate town in 1731), Stephen Hopkins removed to the parent community of Providence, to occupy this house. At that time Providence was still a small and uninfluential community. The first century of its settlement had closed only six years before, in 1736, and its influence was still

*See W. E. Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," V. 1, p. 9-10; V. 2, p. 209, 215-17.

†Ibid., V. 1, p. 9.

of minor importance, as compared with that of Newport, in the affairs of the Colony. To quote from what has been written elsewhere,—“It had no custom-house (and no great development of commerce, as yet); no post-office; no town-house; no school-houses; no college; no library; no public market-house; no state-house; no bank nor insurance office; no printing press and no newspaper.”* The first bank, the first insurance office, and the first custom-house came into existence after Hopkins’s death† (though his own labors were largely responsible for bringing them into existence), but with most of the other activities just enumerated the historian of Providence finds that Stephen Hopkins was closely connected, as an active founder. After this length of time, in the year 1909, concerned as we are with the multiform activities of this city of more than 200,000 people, while we recognize in Roger Williams the planter of the infant community, we may also recognize in Stephen Hopkins the man who laid the foundation of its greatness.

One of his contemporaries, Asher Robbins, who had carefully studied his influence, wrote of him, after his death, that he was one of those “men who might say, as Themistocles said: ‘True, I do not understand the art of music, and cannot play upon the flute; but I understand the art of raising a small village into a great city.’ ” ‡

*Foster’s “Stephen Hopkins,” V. 1, p. 86, 87.

†Ibid., v. 1, p. 87.

‡Ibid., v. 2, p. 114. (In Providence Journal, August 8, 1836.)

Most fittingly, therefore, do we to-day, as citizens of Providence, set up this tablet in grateful commemoration of the services of Stephen Hopkins.

But we are also citizens of the State of Rhode Island, as well as of the City of Providence; and this suggests another aspect of Hopkins's career. To each branch of the government of the colony,—legislative, judicial and executive,—he gave many years of service, and in each one of these he rose to the head. As early as 1741, while in the General Assembly, he was elected Speaker. As early as 1751, he became Chief Justice of the Superior Court. As early as 1755, he was elected Governor and he was, as stated on the tablet which is now set up, “ten times Governor of Rhode Island.” In nine of these instances he was elected in the usual way, the other instance being due to the need of filling a vacancy. On the 13th of March, 1758, the General Assembly chose Stephen Hopkins as Governor, to fill the unexpired term (about two months) of the late Governor William Greene, who had died in February, 1758. In the internecine warfare of the Ward and Hopkins contests, there is much on which we of the present day cannot dwell with pleasure, but in the approaching contest with Great Britain, his words have an inspiring ring. It was in 1773, during the proceedings in connection with the burning of the Gaspee, that he made the determined announcement, as Chief Justice: I will “neither apprehend by my own order, nor suffer any executive officer to do it,”*—thus effectually blocking

*Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 95. (From letter of Ezra Stiles, February 16, 1773.)

the transportation to England of any citizens of Rhode Island. Moreover, while he was thus conserving the right of the individual citizen of the colony of Rhode Island, he was also ensuring the continued existence of this colony, in its separate form, at the time when one of the Royal Commissioners was recommending that it should be "consolidated with Connecticut."

As citizens of Rhode Island, then, do we set up this tablet in grateful commemoration of the services of Stephen Hopkins.

And yet after all, Hopkins's chief distinction rests upon the wider service which he rendered, in the formation of the republic of the United States.

It is one of the "commonplaces of history," so far as we in Rhode Island are concerned, that "Stephen Hopkins signed the Declaration of Independence." But so did fifty-four other Americans, of varying degrees of eminence. But while Hopkins was performing a great public service in the seventies (i. e., in the Eighteenth Century), so he was also in the fifties and in the sixties. Parenthetically, it may be said that Stephen Hopkins, born in the earliest decade of the Eighteenth Century (in 1707), was, in 1776, in his seventieth year, with the active portion of his life already behind him, rather than in front of him as was the case with Thomas Jefferson, and various other members of the Continental Congress. In so brief and condensed an inscription as this (and an inscription ought always to be brief and condensed) there is not, of course, room to

record his participation in the Albany Congress of 1754.* This was the conference in which seven of the American colonies participated; and among the delegates were Benjamin Franklin and Stephen Hopkins,—two patriotic and public spirited Americans, who were not only closely contemporary with each other, so far as the dates of their birth and death are concerned, but between whom there is an astonishing degree of resemblance, so far as their habit of mind, point of view, and participation in public movements are concerned. The “plan of union” proposed by this congress, was brought forward by Franklin, and was approved by Hopkins, both by tongue and pen. This plan, says Judge Prince, was “in advance of the Articles” (of Confederation) “in its national spirit, and served as the prototype of the Constitution itself.”† The very noteworthy pamphlet published by Stephen Hopkins, here in Providence, in 1755, after his return from congress (“a true representation of the plan formed at Albany”),‡ is the only instance of a printed exposition of this kind on the part of any member of the congress. The “national” principle in it, as distinguished from the individualistic principle, was one which plainly appealed to Hopkins’s type of mind.

Ten years later, when the stamp act was under discussion, throughout the length and breadth of the American colonies, Stephen Hopkins put into print his carefully

*Foster’s “Stephen Hopkins,” v. 1, chapter 6.

†L. B. Prince’s “The article of Confederation vs. the Constitution,” p. 19.

‡Foster’s “Stephen Hopkins,” v. 2, p. 199-200.

reasoned argument on "The rights of colonies examined."* As is well known, these few years, from 1764 to 1767, were prolific in pamphlets of this kind dealing with colonial conditions. But when so intelligent (and at the same time, unfriendly), an observer as Governor Thomas Hutchison, of the Massachusetts Bay Province, the eminent loyalist, remarked of Hopkins's pamphlet, that this was "conceived in a higher strain than any (memorials) that were sent out by the other colonies,"† he expressed an accurate judgment. "It rose higher," to quote from language published elsewhere,‡ "and at the same time struck deeper, because it was a carefully considered expression of the extreme ground occupied by one of the two charter colonies." The phraseology of this pamphlet's title is worthy of careful attention. It is not (as it is sometimes quoted), "Rights of the colonies examined," but "The rights of colonies examined." Hopkins does not confine his consideration of the subject to the existing conditions, but going back to the beginning, he examines the conditions of colonies in general, and is thus enabled to make a telling and impressive argument. It should not be overlooked, moreover, that this was an argument proceeding from a colony which had still retained its charter. The charter colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island, says the late Alexander Johnston, "held for more than a century the extreme advanced ground, to which all

*Ibid., v. 2, p. 200.

†Hutchinson's "Massachusetts Bay," v. 2, p. 115.

‡Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 68.

the other commonwealths came up in 1775." The position of such a colony, he adds, "kept alive the general sense of the inherent colonial rights which only waited for assertion, upon the inevitable growth of colonial power."* At least two editions were published here in Providence, but so great was the demand for it, that it was soon after reprinted elsewhere. William Goddard, the Providence printer of that day, stated, in the Providence Gazette, that it was "reprinted from the Providence edition in almost every colony in North America."† And wherever it was printed, says Mr. Frothingham, the historian of this period, it "met with large commendation."‡ In 1776, after it had about two years of careful reading from the colonial leaders, it was reprinted in England, by John Almon, the London printer. The London reprint appeared with an altered title, namely, "The grievances of the American colonies candidly examined;"§ and the late Moses Coit Tyler, in his "Literary history of the American Revolution," remarks that "This English alteration in the title was in itself a tribute to the author."**

There is one sentence in the letter of a New York merchant of the time, written in commendation of Hopkins's pamphlet, which is worth noticing, for the

*Johnston's "The genesis of a New England State," p. 29.

†Providence Gazette, May 11, 1765.

‡Frothingham's "The rise of the republic," p. 172.

§Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 201.

**Tyler's "Literary history of the American Revolution," v. 1, p. 65.

significant use which it makes of the term, "this country."*
"Even thus early the people in whose minds Franklin and Hopkins were dropping the seeds of union and nationality were learning to talk of a common country."

Rhode Island herself had learned the lesson well,—at least, so far as the tendencies towards union and independence were concerned. To quote once more from the published "Life" of Hopkins, "She was the first colony to instruct her delegates against the stamp act, the only one whose governor refused to take the oath to enforce it; the only colony from which came any printed defense of the Albany plan of union in 1754; the colony from which came the first official call for a congress in 1765; the first colony to call for a Continental Congress in 1774, and the earliest to elect her delegates to the first Continental Congress; the colony in which the first overt act of resistance to Great Britain had occurred; the state which had anticipated by two months the passage of the Declaration of Independence by the Congress (the event whose anniversary was celebrated in this city yesterday); the state, moreover, which had anticipated the general government, in adopting a general postal system, and in raising and equipping a naval armament for national defense; and finally, the state through whose direct motion these latter functions, unquestionably national as they were, had been assumed by the general government.'†

*Printed in Boston Evening Post, March 25, 1765.

†Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2. p. 148-49.

On two accounts the historical student finds occasion for keen regret that Stephen Hopkins's active days (and in particular his original physical vigor) had passed, before the critical period extending from the Declaration of Independence to the adoption of the Constitution in 1787. (Indeed, when the latter event came on, Stephen Hopkins had already been in his grave for two years.)

The first of these occasions for regret is in connection with his career in congress, where his efforts were largely paralyzed by almost continuous ill health. And yet, even as it is, the record of his services in congress is a long and crowded one,* and it is especially noteworthy in connection with the movement made to assume national functions, in the matter of a navy† and of a postal service.

The second of these occasions for regret is in connection with the attitude of Rhode Island towards the adoption of the Federal Constitution. "Speculation," in historical matters, is usually fruitless; and the present instance is no exception to the general rule. And yet, when we recall how Hopkins's successful leadership of public opinion was at all times a distinguishing feature of his public career, and when we also remember how closely he had been identified, from the beginning, with the national, as distinguished from the particularistic view of government, we need not hesitate to conclude that Rhode Island's attitude, in the years 1785 to 1790, would have been

*It occupied four pages, even in the condensed form in which it appears, in Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 237-41.

†Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 2, p. 234-36.

materially modified if he had been alive and in vigor of his early career.

But, without giving further consideration to regrets,—unavailing and fruitless as they are,—there is enough in this phase of Stephen Hopkins's career, the national phase, to confer on him no common distinction.

Not only, therefore, as citizens of Providence, and of Rhode Island, but as citizens of the United States, do we set up this tablet in grateful commemoration of the services of Stephen Hopkins.

The house itself, to which the tablet is affixed, although not of the greatest antiquity, is of considerable interest. As indicated on the tablet, the site on which it now stands is not its original location; and yet we have good ground for thankfulness that its removal in 1804 transferred it to a position only a few feet away from its former site at the foot of the hill, where it occupied what, at the end of the Eighteenth Century, was the corner of the Town street and Bank Lane.* Here, not far from the wharves and the shipping, with which so large a part of Stephen Hopkins's activities were concerned, and in the development of which he and his family played so important a part,† stood this plain, dignified and comfortable house of the olden time.

If its aged walls could speak, they would tell us of many a distinguished guest entertained here, including George

*Foster's "Stephen Hopkins," v. 1, p. 81.

†Ibid., v. 1, p. 99-100.

Washington, the greatest of them all, in April, 1776.* They would speak of the conferences, formal and informal, held here, which led to the founding of a college, which led to the founding of the Providence Library in or about 1754, or which led to the improvement of the town's business facilities.

Within its walls Stephen Hopkins himself carried on his own studies and pursued his own wide range of reading. Few men have ever digested so perfectly the results of their reading, and except for the sage and meditative mood in which this reading was pursued, with ample time for reflection on what he read, he would not have extorted from John Adams, late in life, his admiring comments on the results of this Rhode Islander's reading and studies.†

We place then this tablet on the walls of no ordinary house, with the hope and expectations that it may transmit to generations yet to come the memory of one of the greatest of Rhode Islanders.

WILLIAM E. FOSTER.

*Ibid., v. 2, p. 113-14.

†"Works" of John Adams, v. 3, p. 11-12.

GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE HOUSE,
CUMBERLAND

C o v e n t r y

The Address of William MacDonald

June 24, 1909

Professor William MacDonald, speaking informally of the life and work of General Greene, quoted the remark of Jared Sparks, the American historian, that Greene was "the most extraordinary man in the army of the Revolution," and sketched briefly the story of Greene's life from the time when, as a private soldier, he joined the army at Cambridge.

Greene came of distinguished parentage, having the inestimable advantage of being well born. His love of a military life forced him out of the Quaker sect in which he was bred, and led him to read widely and to good purpose in such military literature as he could get hold of; and he was noted as the best read officer in the army on military history and military science, as well as in the law of nations. He was an organizer of the Kentish Guards at East Greenwich, a man of sound judgment in business matters, a member of the colonial assembly, and a member of the commission to revise the military laws of the colony.



THE GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE HOUSE, COVENTRY

It was Greene's misfortune never to win an important battle, but he bore the disappointment without complaining, and his reputation as a commander rose rather than fell with every engagement that he fought. He early formed a profound admiration for Washington, which was returned in full measure; and none of the generals of the revolution stood on such intimate terms with Washington. Washington's opinion of his worth was well illustrated in his selection of Greene to take command in the south when, as he said, he was unable to give detailed instructions because of lack of information regarding conditions, but must leave Greene to follow his own judgment. The large number of officers of high rank who desired to accompany him to the south was another proof of the worth in which he was held by his military associates. Historians of the revolution have agreed in praising the brilliancy of Greene's campaigns in the south, and to him must be ascribed the principal credit for driving the British from that region and thus preparing the way for Yorktown; but he must be accorded almost equal credit for the skill with which he managed the leaders of the partisan bands, Marion, Sumter, Pickens, and others.

Greene had a hasty temper, and a habit of criticising his associates and superiors which more than once got him into trouble, and often caused his motives to be misunderstood. What distinguished him above his fellows, however, was his studiousness, his willingness to serve the

American cause in any capacity, however humble, his careful attention to the details of command, his unbroken loyalty to Washington, and his confidence in the final success of the patriot cause. The deliberate judgment of historians has unhesitatingly placed him next to Washington among the revolutionary leaders; while among the public men of Rhode Island, he is easily the most distinguished.

WILLIAM MACDONALD.



THE ESEK HOPKINS HOUSE, PROVIDENCE

ESEK HOPKINS

The Address of Nathan W. Littlefield, Esq., October 27, 1909

We have assembled to-day to dedicate a memorial tablet in honor of Esek Hopkins, first commander-in-chief of the American navy.

The tablet states that Esek Hopkins, 1718-1802, first commander-in-chief of the American navy lived in this house.

It commemorates a historic fact well deserving public attention. For, however men may differ in their estimation of the ability and energy of the man thus honored, there can be no question that the American navy had its inception in idea and fact in Rhode Island, and that Esek Hopkins was one of its leading advocates and promoters and its first commander-in-chief.

It is the fortune of some men to be extravagantly praised and extravagantly blamed and criticised during their lifetime and after. Esek Hopkins has thus suffered by the partiality of well meaning friends and the hostility of enemies and unfriendly critics.

Somewhere between these extremes of praise and criticism lies the proper and just estimate of his character and achievements.

If he was not a great military or naval hero like Perry, Farragut and Dewey, neither was he the pusillanimous selfseeker which some have labored to prove him.

Amid a mass of conflicting evidence, it is my task and will be my endeavor to find and portray the real Esek Hopkins.

First of all he was well born. The Hopkins family of Rhode Island is as ancient as the colony itself. Thomas Hopkins was the associate of Roger Williams at its planting. The family was distinguished for learning, ability and public spirit.

Stephen Hopkins, governor of the colony, chief justice of the Supreme Court, member of the Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence, was one of America's greatest statesmen, a man who shone at the bar and upon the bench, in the counsels of the colony, and of the nation and in the company of wits and learned men.

John Adams, who was one of those who were delighted with Stephen Hopkins's wit, wisdom and erudition, has drawn a charming picture of him among his friends. In the maternal line Esek Hopkins was a member of the Wilkinson and Wickenden families, both conspicuous in the annals of the colony and state for learning and ability. Family traditions and example, therefore,—most powerful influences in the formation of character,—favored and stimulated his intellectual and moral development. He became well educated, judged by the standards of his time, especially in mathematics.

In person he appears to have been large and commanding, having a strong, expressive and agreeable countenance.

He was fond of society and his genial disposition and ready wit made him a leader in the social life of his time.

He was fortunate in having been born and reared upon a farm on the healthgiving highlands, now a part of Scituate, yet near enough to the sea to hear its persuasive call to strong, ambitious, enterprising men.

At the age of twenty, he shipped as a raw hand on a vessel bound from Providence to Surinam. Very soon he was in command of a vessel and rapidly acquired reputation as a skillful captain and merchant. Three of his brothers, William, John and Samuel, were famous sea captains, but Esek surpassed them all in enterprise and business sagacity.

Before he was forty years of age he was in command of a fleet of seventeen merchantmen controlled and mostly owned by the Hopkins family.

On November 28, 1741, being then twenty-three years of age he married Desire Burroughs, daughter of Ezekiel Burroughs, a leading merchant and one of the most influential citizens of Newport. He made Newport his home thereafter until 1752 or 1755. Newport at that time was a place of some seven thousand inhabitants and the most important seaport in the country. Its commerce extended to Africa, China and India.

To the profits of regular commerce her merchants added great fortunes from privateering, especially during the

French and Spanish wars. It is certain that some of the captains of privateers were not given to making nice distinctions regarding the nationality of their captures.

Esek Hopkins engaged in privateering with courage, skill and success, but with a strict regard for the rights of neutrals. There is no stain of freebooting upon his record.

Several times he acquired fortunes and had them swept away by the vicissitudes of business and war, yet he finally accumulated a large estate to comfort his declining years and enrich his children. He suffered, also in his later life greater misfortunes than losses of wealth,—the ruin of a fine reputation. Yet even this he endured with singular equanimity and cheerful fortitude.

If adversity be a test of character, it must be admitted that Ezek Hopkins when tried as by fire showed no base metal in his composition.

Soon after his return to Providence he acquired by several purchases a farm of about 200 acres in the northern part of the town where he resided during the remainder of his life. The sea and the farm appear to have equally shared his affection. He had also the capacity for friendship, and his home was the seat of a generous hospitality where his many friends delighted to gather.

This love of the sea and the farm and the society of his friends reveals a broad and noble nature. It is difficult to believe that a man of such affection could have been petty, mean, or ignoble.

Having acquired the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens by his business ability and integrity and his large

experience in important affairs closely related to the public welfare he almost necessarily became prominent in public life.

Ambitious he probably was. But ambition has never been deemed a grievous fault in this country. Was his ambition honorable or base, was it selfish or patriotic,—that is the question, the answer to which must be sought in his attitude on public questions, his written and spoken words and his aim and purpose,—not his success in office.

It is significant that the first office which he held was as a member of a committee chosen to have the care of the “townes schole and of appointing a schole master” and the last was that of trustee of Rhode Island College, which he held during the last twenty years of his life.

The abiding interest in the case of education thus displayed indicates a mind and purpose of high order.

As a member of the general assembly of the colony from May, 1762, to October, 1764, when he resigned the office to again follow the sea, he received the support of the leading citizens of the colony and maintained an honorable standing in that body.

From 1764 to 1768 he was mostly engaged in long voyages to the far east. On his return he was elected a member of the general assembly for North Providence, which had been set off from Providence during his absence.

Again in 1771, he represented the town in the general assembly, and for three years thereafter was returned as the first deputy from that town. He was then fifty-three

years of age, about thirty-five of which he had passed upon the sea. He had gained an ample fortune and probably intended to retire from active business pursuits and pass his remaining years upon his farm with his family and among his friends.

Thus far his life had been unusually fortunate and happy.

His renown as an experienced and successful merchant and commander of ships extended throughout the commercial world. He was respected, trusted, honored. Therefore, when hostilities broke out between the colonies and England, it was natural that Rhode Island first and then all the colonies should turn to him as a leader and commander. He was first elected commander-in-chief of the forces of the colony and rendered valuable and efficient service in fortifying the approaches to Providence, and in preventing the destruction of Newport by wise negotiations with the commander of the British fleet.

On August 26, 1775, the General Assembly of Rhode Island instructed their delegates "to use their whole influence, at the ensuing Congress, for building at the continental expense, a fleet of sufficient force for the protection of these colonies." To Rhode Island is due the credit and distinction of originating a plan for constructing a navy for the defense of the colonies. The "Rhode Island plan" as it was called met, however, with great opposition in the debates which followed the presentation of the resolutions of the General Assembly to Congress.

The delegates from Massachusetts and Connecticut warmly supported the measure, those from Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina opposed it.

It is significant that the alignment was practically the same when afterwards the commander-in-chief of the navy was censured by Congress.

In October, 1775, Congress appointed a marine committee of seven members to consider the building of a navy. Stephen Hopkins was chairman of the committee and John Adams, Richard Henry Lee, Christopher Gadsen and Silas Deane were among its members.

John Adams in his memoirs says, "The pleasantest part of the labors for the four years I spent in Congress was in the committee on naval affairs." It was a strong committee. Its members were deeply interested in the success of the new navy.

When, therefore, on November 5, 1775, they unanimously chose Esek Hopkins commander-in-chief of the fleet which by direction of Congress they were fitting out, it is certain that they made the best selection possible in their judgment.

Though Stephen Hopkins was the chairman of that committee and undoubtedly interested in the welfare of his brother, it is incredible that his judgment should have been warped by favoritism or that the other strong men of the committee would have unanimously concurred in making an appointment which they did not believe to be for the best interest of the country.

Is it probable that a man who in a letter to his brother regarding his appointment used this language, "I suppose you may be more serviceable to your country in this very dangerous crisis of its affairs by taking upon you this command than in any other way" was capable of imperilling the safety of his country in his desire for his brother's promotion?

The charge of favoritism assumed that there were other men of greater experience and reputation in naval affairs. Who were they?

It is a matter of history that Rhode Island led all the colonies in commerce and in privateering. She had several able captains engaged in these occupations, but Esek Hopkins in his service of about thirty-five years upon the sea had acquired a reputation for skill, sagacity and courage superior to all others.

The appointment was well received by those best qualified to judge of its fitness, the captains and other officers of the fleet.

Great things were expected of Esek Hopkins and the little fleet of eight vessels when at Philadelphia, on a clear frosty morning of January, 1776, he stepped on board his flag ship, the Alfred, and first lieutenant John Paul Jones at a signal from Captain Salstonstall hoisted the first flag of the American navy, a yellow silk flag displaying a lively representation of a rattlesnake about to strike and the motto "Don't tread on me."

That these expectations were only partly fulfilled must be admitted. That the fleet under the command of

Admiral Hopkins accomplished much is also true. The failure to meet the anticipations of Congress and the people may have been due to their overestimate of the strength of the fleet, or a lack of knowledge of the difficulties and obstacles which it had to meet, or the incompetence of its commander, or a combination of some or all of these conditions.

The friends of Hopkins attributed his lack of complete success to the existence of difficulties and obstacles which no skill or daring could overcome. His enemies declared that it was due to incompetence and disobedience of the orders of the marine committee. What are the facts?

When the fleet sailed out on the 17th of February, 1776, Hopkins had orders from the marine committee to seek out and attack the enemies' ships in Chesapeake bay and on the coast of North and South Carolina and then to proceed to Rhode Island and destroy the British fleet there. But his orders dated January 5, 1776, also contained this sentence. "Notwithstanding these particular orders which it is hoped you will be able to execute if bad winds or stormy weather or any other unforeseen accident or disaster disable you so to do then you are to follow such courses as your best judgment shall suggest to you as most useful to the American cause and to distress the enemy by all means in your power."

Soon after the sailing severe sickness broke out among the officers and men of the fleet. Fierce northeasterly storms were encountered. The enemies' ships had sought

refuge in the harbors. To approach the coast and sail into harbors occupied by hostile fleets in such storms, was to offer the enemy an advantage which the commander did not deem it prudent to give. His orders left much to his discretion and covered just such an emergency. There was the greatest need of powder for the use of the army. It was known to the marine committee and to Hopkins before he sailed that there were large stores of powder and other munitions of war at New Providence in the Bahamas. It is probable, to say the least, that it was expected by the marine committee that an attempt would be made to capture these stores, if the main object of the expedition could not be accomplished. Hopkins used the discretion permitted him by his orders, sailed to New Providence and seized such an amount of cannon, small arms, ammunition and other articles that it required two weeks to transfer them to his ships and to a hired transport, all which were deeply loaded with the spoils. On his return north he captured near the east end of Long Island two small armed vessels one of which contained a large amount of ammunition, arms and stores. About one o'clock the next morning while the deeply laden fleet was slowly working its way eastward in a light wind they encountered the British frigate Glasgow. The Cabot, commanded by Captain John B. Hopkins, began the engagement as soon as it got within range of the enemy. A fierce battle followed in which one after another of the American ships were engaged. The flagship Alfred after

three hours of fighting was disabled by a shot which crippled her steering gear and put her out of the conflict. About half past six in the morning the Glasgow crowded on sail, eluded her pursuers and bore away for Newport. The captain of the Glasgow undoubtedly handled his ship bravely and skillfully, but he was greatly favored by the light winds which prevailed during the conflict by which the deeply laden ships of his opponents were badly handicapped in their movements.

Would it have been prudent for Hopkins to have continued the pursuit with his heavily laden ships, with crews diminished by sickness and the manning of his prizes, with the certainty of meeting the British fleet coming out from Newport able to outsail and outmaneuve him by reason of their lighter loading?

The answer to this question will determine whether Hopkins was blameworthy in this action.

John Paul Jones, in his entry for the day in the log book of the Alfred, says that the Glasgow at third glass "by crowding on all sail bore away and at length got a considerable way ahead, made signals for the rest of the English fleet, at Rhode Island, to come to her assistance and steered directly for the harbor. The commander then thought it imprudent to risk the prizes by pursuing further; therefore, to prevent our being decoyed into their hands, at half past six made signal to leave off the chase." He also says that "an unlucky shot carried away the wheel block and ropes," and that "the ship became

unmanageable, and leaking, the main mast shot through and the upper works and rigging badly damaged."

Neither at that time nor at any later time did John Paul Jones question the ability or the courage of Commander Hopkins. In a letter to Joseph Hewes of the Committee of Naval Affairs the same brave and outspoken officer says, "I have the pleasure of assuring you that the commander-in-chief is respected through the fleet, and I verily believe that the officers and men would go any length to execute his orders." It is evident that John Paul Jones attached no blame to the commander and his opinion ought to satisfy any reasonable man on this point. The exploit of Commander Hopkins at New Providence was hailed with rejoicing throughout the country. John Hancock, its president, in the name of Congress, congratulated him on the success of his expedition and added "Though it is to be regretted that the Glasgow made her escape, yet as it was not due to any misconduct, the praise due you and the other officers is undoubtedly the same." Unfortunately, however, dissensions arose among the captains and officers of the fleet by reason of the Glasgow escape. Captain Abraham Whipple of the Columbus demanded an investigation by court martial of charges of cowardice which were made against him by some of his fellow officers and was acquitted. Captain Hazard of the Providence was found guilty by court martial of misconduct in the engagement and was relieved of his command in which he was succeeded by John Paul Jones. These

proceedings gave prominence to an incident which otherwise would probably have received little attention from the country. When the fleet put into New London after the engagement upwards of two hundred sick men from the various ships were sent ashore. Hopkins landed some of the captured guns there and sent some to Dartmouth, Mass., and to Newport. Subsequent events showed that it would have been wiser for Hopkins to have returned to Philadelphia instead of proceeding to New London with his fleet. Less independence on his part and greater subservience to the authorities at Philadelphia would have won favor which afterwards he sorely needed.

Having secured one hundred and seventy recruits from the army he sailed for Providence on April 24, 1776, where he was making preparations for another cruise when the recruits were withdrawn. Sickness still prevailed in the fleet and one hundred more men unfit for duty were landed. Troubles accumulated. The wages of the sailors and marines were unpaid. They became dissatisfied and disheartened. The commander could not obtain money from the authorities to pay them. Discipline in the fleet also was lax from lack of sufficient authority in the commander. At this time he wrote to Congress, "I am ready to follow any instructions that you may give at all times, but am very much in doubt whether it will be in my power to keep the fleet together with any credit to myself or to the officers that belong to it without power to dismiss such officers as I find slack in their duty." But he was not given this power.

Another cause which operated powerfully against Hopkins's success in manning his fleet was privateering. Many of the merchants of Rhode Island were engaged in this profitable business. The rewards of this service were much greater than those of the navy. It was found impossible to enlist men for the navy against the superior inducement of private service.

Hopkins appealed to the General Assembly to lay an embargo on privateering. He labored at one time among the members to secure the passage of an act of that kind, but some of them were interested in the business and selfish interests prevailed and the measure was defeated by two votes. He had also still further antagonized certain powerful men by exposing and fiercely denouncing their improper conduct in building two frigates for the government. Under such circumstances Hopkins was summoned before Congress to answer charges of disobedience of orders on his southern cruise. His answer to the charges is marked by good temper and sound reason. In passing judgment on this matter it should not be forgotten that envy and jealousy and sectional feeling were prevalent; that Washington himself was bitterly assailed and accused of inaction and incompetence and nearly ruined by the same causes which were operating against Hopkins.

John Adams earnestly defended Hopkins when the charges were considered by Congress. Admitting that the commander-in-chief might have committed some

error through inexperience in handling a fleet, he stoutly denied that there was anything in Hopkins's conduct which indicated corruption or want of integrity. Adams says in a letter written shortly after, "On this occasion I had a very laborious task against all the prejudices of the gentlemen from the southern and middle states and of many from New England. I thought, however, that Hopkins had done great service and made an important beginning of naval operations.

It appeared to me that the Commodore was pursued and persecuted by that anti-New England spirit which haunted Congress in many of their other proceedings as well as in this case and that of General Wooster.

Experience and skill might have been deficient in several particulars, but where could we find greater experience or skill. I knew of none to be found. The other captains had not so much and it was afterward found that they had not so much."

This is the most important evidence given by a member of the Marine Committee who was greatly interested in the success of the navy. Congress passed a vote of censure upon Hopkins, not because he had displayed lack of skill or experience or courage, but specifically because he "did not pay due regard to the terms of his instructions" upon his southern cruise, in which instructions they had expressly allowed him much latitude of discretion. It has been argued that in defending Hopkins, John Adams was defending himself, because Adams was a member of the

committee which made Hopkins commander-in-chief of the navy. This assumes that Adams had greater regard for Hopkins's reputation than for the welfare of the navy and the country. Is it not more likely that Adams would be tempted to make a scapegoat of Hopkins in order to shield himself and the Marine Committee and Congress from criticisms which had been made upon them on account of the failure of the fleet to accomplish what had been expected of it?

Adams afterward wrote:—"this resolution of censure was not in my opinion demanded by justice and consequently was inconsistent with good policy, as it tended to discourage an officer, and diminish his authority by tarnishing his reputation." In another letter Adams says that he "could never discover any reason for the bitterness against Hopkins, but that he had done too much."

John Paul Jones in a letter dated September 4th, 1776, written at sea to Admiral Hopkins, when he was misinformed, as it seems, regarding the censure of Hopkins, says: "I know you will not suspect me of flattery when I affirm that I have not experienced a more sincere pleasure for a long time past than the account of your having gained your cause at Philadelphia in spite of party. Your late trouble will tend to your future advantage by pointing out your friends and enemies. You will thereby be enabled to retain the one part while you guard against the other. You will be thrice welcome to your native land and to your nearest concerns. After your late shock they will

see you as gold from the fire, of more worth and value, and slander will learn to keep silence when Admiral Hopkins is mentioned.”

Brave and able men do not write such letters to men whose courage and ability are in doubt.

Why did not Admiral Hopkins upon the passing of the resolution at once resign his commission?

In the light of subsequent events that would appear to have been the best course for him to have pursued. He may have been urged by friends to retain his command. He may have hoped to retrieve his reputation by greater success and improved fortune. Moreover, he had good reason to believe that Congress did not attach much consequence to its censure. For within one week after the passage of the resolution the Marine Committee ordered him to dispatch four vessels on a cruise to Newfoundland and authorized him to purchase and fit out the *Hawk* which he had captured on his former cruise and to rename it the *Hopkins*. Judge Staples justly remarks:—“Such a compliment is seldom paid to an inefficient or unfaithful officer.” The expedition to Newfoundland failed as did the one to North Carolina which the Marine Committee ordered. Hopkins exerted himself to the utmost to man his ships and again failed from the same causes and influences which had before defeated his plans.

In a letter to the Marine Committee he says, “I thought I had some influence in the state I have lived in so long, but find now that private interest bears more sway than I wish it

did. I am at a loss how we shall get the ships manned as I think near one-third of the men which have been shipped and received their monthly pay have been carried away in the privateers. I wish I had your orders whenever I found any man on board the privateers giving me leave to not only take him out but all the rest of the men; that might make them more careful of taking men out of the service of the state."

But this authority was not given him. Yet by withdrawing all the well men from some of the vessels he was able to man and send out from time to time the *Andrea Doria*, the *Cabot*, the *Columbus* and the *Providence* on various cruises, and they did effective work in destroying the enemies' commerce, capturing about fifty prizes in a few months. Matters went from bad to worse. The Marine Committee became exasperated with Hopkins's delays by reason of which it was severely criticised and Hopkins was much discouraged. While affairs were in this state, in December, 1776, a powerful British fleet sailed into Newport harbor and effectually bottled up the American fleet, which never again emerged as a fleet from Narragansett bay, though it rendered valuable service in protecting Providence from the enemy.

Nothing demoralizes an army or navy like inaction. Pent up at the head of the bay, discontent and insubordination bred among the officers and men. A few of the inferior officers of the fleet became actively hostile to the commander. They would probably have been powerless

to injure him except for the countenance and support of influential men upon shore whom he had deeply offended by his uncompromising attitude toward privateering when it conflicted with the interests of the navy.

A small cabal of these men secretly prepared and sent a petition to Congress against their commander. Some of the charges are so frivolous and absurd as at once to excite suspicion of the motives which inspired them. Three of the signers of the petition, including the chaplain of the fleet, admitted that they were induced to sign it by some gentlemen of the town and afterward over their own signatures confessed that the charges which they had made were not true.

Admiral Hopkins in his reply to these charges exposed the conspiracy against him and the motives of his assailants.

Lieutenant Richard Marvin, the prime mover in this affair, was brought before a court martial, consisting of six captains and seven lieutenants, who appear to have been all the officers of the fleet. The findings of the court martial were that Marvin had "treated the Commander-in-Chief of the American Navy with the greatest indignity and defamed his character in the highest manner by signing and sending to the Honorable Continental Congress several unjust and false complaints against the Commander-in-Chief in a private and secret manner," "that he was unworthy of holding a commission in the American Navy" and that "he deliver up his commission to the

Commander-in-Chief." This finding is of the greatest value in determining the merits of the controversy not only because it exonerates Admiral Hopkins, but because it is the testimony of men who had known the Commander for years and who had the best opportunity for obtaining knowledge of his true character. No amount of criticism can break the force of these findings. They are the findings of the proper court for trying such questions,—the court by which the charges against Admiral Hopkins should have been examined.

A careful examination of the proceedings before the Marine Committee upon the complaints of his subordinates shows that whether by his own fault, or otherwise, Admiral Hopkins did not have a full, fair and impartial trial.

It could not be impartial; because his judges were the very persons whose orders he had been accused of disobeying and of whom it was charged that he had spoken disrespectfully,—and this was one of the most serious charges made against him.

It was not a full trial; for an officer of his rank should not have been condemned without an examination of all the officers of the fleet.

It was not a fair and impartial trial; because his judges were his accusers and were greatly prejudiced against him, and interested in making him a scapegoat for their own failure to properly support him as the commander-in-chief of the fleet.

As there was in his day, so there probably will always continue to be a wide difference of opinion regarding Admiral Hopkins's success as a naval commander, and the justice of the action of Congress in dismissing him.

That he was a sincere patriot who served his country with ardent devotion to the best of his ability and that he was untainted by corruption of any kind few will doubt.

In the day of his adversity the people of Rhode Island stood by him. They did not accept the action of Congress as just or well founded. The opinions also of men like John Adams, William Ellery, delegates to Congress, James Manning, President of Rhode Island College, and John Paul Jones are entitled to great weight. They all expressed high esteem and respect for Mr. Hopkins after he had been censured by Congress and remained his life long friends.

In a letter to William Ellery he expressed a noble intention regarding his future course in these words:— "I am determined to continue a friend of my country, neither do I intend to remain inactive."

At the next election after his dismissal from the naval service he was sent as a deputy to the general assembly from North Providence and represented that town from 1777 to 1786. He was also during that time a member of the council of war appointed by that body and served on several committees which had charge of military affairs and aided in raising and drilling troops. In 1782 he was elected a trustee of Rhode Island College and served in that

capacity until his decease. In these and in other ways he served the state in the spirit of his letter to William Ellery for many years.

Amid the increasing infirmities of age and disease which for several years disabled him for active pursuits he maintained a cheerful disposition and deep interest in public affairs and in his friends, until on February 26, 1802, he fell asleep and was gathered to his fathers.

A careful consideration of the evidence touching upon the career of Esek Hopkins, without partiality and without bias, leads, I think, to these conclusions; that he was the ablest, most enterprising and successful sea captain of his time; that he was a true patriot and served his country with unselfish devotion; that as commander-in-chief of the first naval fleet of the country, in a new and untried position; without sufficient rules for his guidance and for the discipline of the fleet and without sufficient authority to enforce such discipline; without adequate support by Congress and by the colony in manning his ships, and against the antagonism of many selfish interests, he encountered great difficulties and obstacles with energy, courage and wisdom; that amid the greatest discouragements he displayed fortitude, patience and unfaltering faith in the ultimate triumph of the cause for which he labored; that his censure by Congress was unjust and undeserved; that his dismissal from the navy was upon insufficient evidence and upon grounds which were not proven; that the real ground of his dismissal was his lack

of success which Congress and the colony had rendered unattainable by him by neglecting to supply him with men and by refusing to enact such measures as would have enabled him to secure a sufficient number of men; that with the means at his command he rendered efficient service in protecting northern Rhode Island and in destroying the enemies' commerce by single ships which he sent forth for that purpose; that he deserved greater success than he attained; that while he was not a great naval genius, he was a commander of marked ability who with better fortunes and better support would have accomplished great things for his country; that he was an incorruptible man, and a good citizen who labored long and well for the people of Rhode Island and who well deserved the monument which was this day dedicated to his memory.

NATHAN W. LITTLEFIELD.