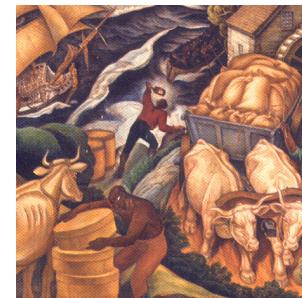
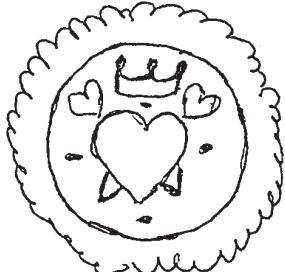


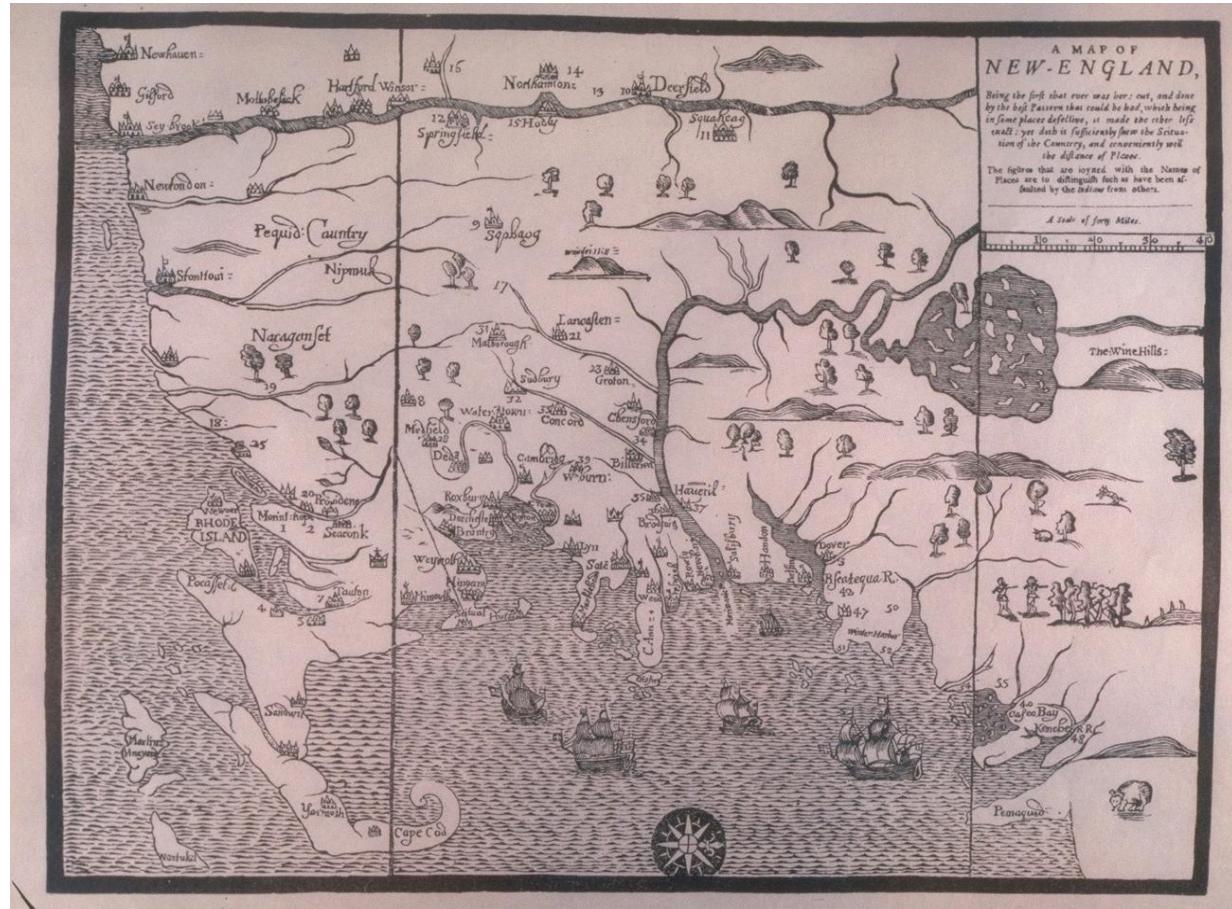
# Finding Wescott

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- *This First Part Being an Account of the 17th and 18th Century Ancestors of Westcott Smith (1793-1877), Their Exploits at Shawomet, on Prudence Island and in the Narragansett Country, with Digressions Concerning Various Cousins, In-Laws and Political Allies, and Commentary on Religious Freedom, Commercial Customs, and Anarchy in the Rhode Island Colony*



- *David Smith      August 2002, Revised June 2012*



**John Foster (1648-1681), A MAP OF NEW-ENGLAND (woodcut, 30.0 x 38.7 cm) in William Hubbard, The Present State of New-England (London, 1677).**

*Image from the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, University of Southern Maine (<http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps>)*

*John Foster made this map, the first to be printed in North America, as a geographical guide to Hubbard's history of the King Philip's War, mapping the extent of European settlement at the outbreak of the war and the locations of key events in the war. Foster equated the territorial region of "New-England" with a historical region of conflict between the English and the "Indians." English settlement in the region was thus legitimated by the victory over the "violent savages."*

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# Nana's Sigh

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## ■ *Preface to the First Part*

On a hot, muggy evening in August 1975, I called my paternal grandmother with the news of our first child. "Nana, Rosemary had the baby this afternoon!" I proudly announced.

"That's wonderful! What did you name him?"

"Well, Nana, it's a girl. We call her Marah."

Silence.

Then, "Well, that's nice, I guess."

Silence. Click.

Mary Flaherty Smith (1894-1975) – May to other adults, Nana to her 15 grandchildren – died within the year. But I think she died a little bit that night, and part of the sadness of her old age was that nobody was going to carry on the family name.

Of course, it struck me as absurd that anyone would worry about the name Smith surviving another generation or two. Throughout the world that very night there was a sufficient number of Smith families welcoming male offspring, as there were plenty of new Jones boys and freshly minted sons of Chin. But Nana knew that so far we had not done our part in carrying on the name.

William Hamilton Smith – Poppy to his 15 grandchildren – was the second son of Wescott Hamilton and Annie (Keirnan) Smith. His only brother, Frank, had no children. In addition to my father, Nana and Poppy had four daughters. You can see the chances of carrying on the name had already narrowed. That summer, I had two brothers, one a confirmed bachelor and the other with an eight year-old daughter and no other children. So, Nana looked to me to carry on the name, and well, I didn't come through on August 8, 1975.

You must allow us Smiths to be sensitive about names. At checkout counters, motel desks and even mortgage closings, we hear the same old tired jokes about the likely alias. We have learned to

respond with “My name is really Doe” or simply stare through the cranium of the humorist. If the tyranny of real-name remarks finished with me, so be it. I could care less.

That all changed four years later when the obstetrician, who showed up only seconds before our second child arrived, announced, “It’s a boy.” And in the 17 paperwork sessions that followed, I carefully spelled S-M-I-T-H, diligently pointed out that the boy’s middle name was Wescott, not Westcott like the ruler company, and proudly proclaimed that the new baby would carry on the family name. Nana Smith was not available by phone that night, but I wanted to tell her that I was finally catching on.

Twenty-five years later, I became fully caught up with the name I think Nana was talking about, and have spent not a few of my waking hours trying to figure where it came from. My search – no, my obsession, as diagnosed by my wife and children – has focused on my third great-grandfather Westcott Smith (1793-1877), the grandfather of Wescott Hamilton Smith. His story reaches back through five generations of John Smiths in Colonial and Revolutionary Rhode Island. They were Narragansett Planters on Boston Neck, operators of the shipping and slave dock at South Ferry on the West Passage of Narragansett Bay, and soldiers in the War of the Revolution. It’s the story of a lost fortune. When Westcott returns from the War of 1812, his plantation ancestors do him little good as he scratches out a living as a tenant farmer.

Finding great-grandfather Wescott Hamilton Smith was relatively easy. As one obituary notes, “Mr. Smith was one of the best known residents of Narragansett. He was a Republican and had been elected to the position of surveyor of roads year after year.” His grandfather proved a bit more difficult. For starters, he was apparently not at all touchy about the spelling of his name, variously recorded in the federal census and his War of 1812 records as Westcot, Westcott, Westgate, W\_gate, Westcote and W. But I think I have found the man and to keep the name alive I will tell the stories, some of which would make Nana Smith blush, but the telling would make her proud.

## ■ *First Families*

Our narrative starts with a list of family names and two warnings. The surnames are: Allen, Gereardy, Holliman, Stafford, Sweet, and not surprisingly, Smith and Westcott. These are Westcott's Smith immigrant ancestors (at least the ones we can identify), who arrived in New England (and New Amsterdam) during the First Great Migration (1629-1640). Within a few years of landing, they migrated to Rhode Island, where they all contributed to the development of Roger Williams' rogue colony in a variety of ways, not the least of which was population growth.

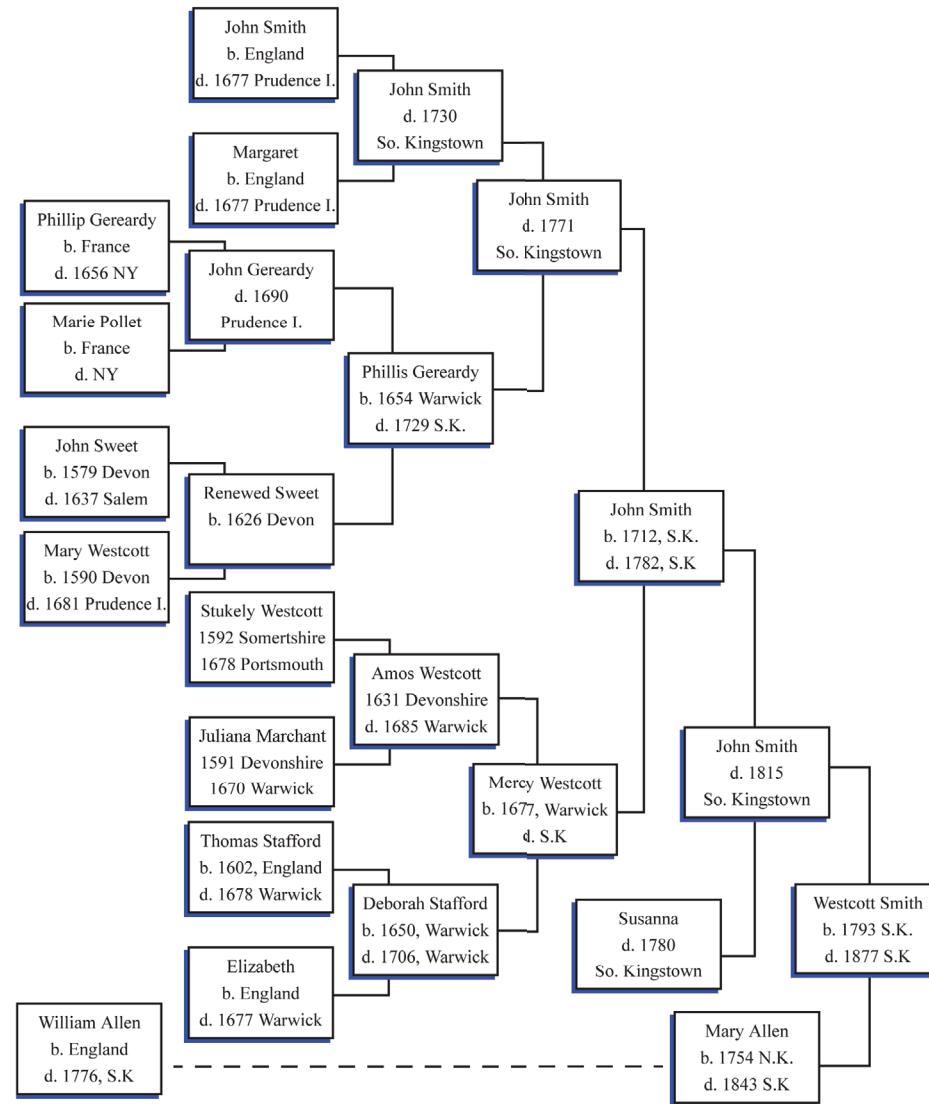
Warning 1: Some advise writers of family history to stick with one line of descent, and not confuse the reader with the noble deeds or antics of fourth cousins. But instead of the vertical descent from John Smith to Westcott Smith five generations later, I circled like a buzzard by all the descendants in each generation because the material is too good. Otherwise, I'd miss the Boston Neck pyrotechnist, an idiot named Solomon, and Benoni the natural bonesetter.

Warning 2: While I have consciously avoided filling in gaps in the records with speculation,<sup>1</sup> you may detect some bias as I assign political and personal motives to the acts and words that are recorded. It comes with the subject matter: All of Westcott's immigrant ancestors except the Gereardys where chased out of Massachusetts within a few years of their landing. (Phillipe and Marie Gereardy would not have lasted three months in Salem or Plymouth, and son John would have to leave port before sunset, so I consider them all honorary expellees.) You have a choice: You can side with the Puritan Mafia and look down on these early Rhode Islanders as heretics, anarchists and crass opportunists. Or, you can side with me, and eulogize them as exemplars of religious freedom, democracy and the virtues of privateering. There is no neutrality here.

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1 The list of immigrant ancestors includes at least one speculative assertion. Westcott's mother was Mary Allen, for whom there are no birth records. I'm sure she is a descendant of William Allen, who emigrated from Wales in 1640 and started his brood on Prudence Island. Many of them moved to North Kingstown and Exeter and could very well be Mary's kin, but I have not yet resolved the connection. If I finally find the link, the Allens offer a wealth of stories, starting with William's moving a house from Prudence Island over the ice to Barrington in 1680. "Anything for a Barrington Address," was my wife Rosemary's suggestion for the chapter title.

## Immigrant Ancestors of Westcott Smith



# Dramatis Personae

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## ■ *Westcott Smith's Immigrant Ancestors*

Westcott Smith's immigrant ancestors arrived in the New World during the First Great Migration (1629-1640), when Puritans, mostly from East Anglia, migrated to New England and away from the rule of Charles I and the Church of England.

From wills, court cases and deeds, we can piece together a lot of information about the rest of his kin, and make a few generalizations. Like most of those in the First Great Migration, Westcott's ancestors emigrated as families. John and Mary Sweet arrived with three young children. Several years later, Mary's brother Stukely Westcott sailed to the New World with his wife and six children. As best we can tell, except for the Gereardys, these families came from the West Country counties of Devonshire and Somersetshire, and Warwick and Hertsford. They were farmers (yeomen) and tradesmen (Thomas Stafford was a miller). And they were dissenters, a good reason to leave the West Country where the majority still supported the Crown and the Church of England.

Whether their quest was for political peace or religious freedom, richer soil or adventure, the gang was richly rewarded in the double exile from England and the Puritan colonies. They managed to acquire large tracts of land in relatively peaceful transactions with the Narragansetts, set up local democratic governments in Providence, Warwick and Narragansett, and establish their own churches, gatherings unfettered by government involvement and more in tune with the Six Principles of salvation announced in Hebrews:

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of [1] repentance from dead works and [2] of faith toward God with instruction about [3] ablutions, [4] the laying on of hands, [5] the resurrection of the dead, and [6] eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-2)<sup>2</sup>

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2 Biblical references are from *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Aprocyphra, Revised Standard Version*. Oxford University Press, 1965. [Numerals added]

## ■ *Paterfamilias*

When the South Kingstown, Rhode Island, town clerk recorded Westcott Smith's death, he listed the 84 year old farmer and widower's parents as John and Hannah Smith. (Actually, his parents were John and Mary, but more of that later.) As it turns out, there was a line of five John Smiths, the third of whom married a Westcott.

John Smith was a common name in 17th Century Rhode Island, but because of the small population, there is a manageable number of John Smiths in the early records. In fact, at the beginning of the colony there were five John Smiths who left some trace:

- John Smith the Miller (1596-1648) was one of the 13 original *Proprietors* of Providence. His family settled in Providence and to the north and west (as in the towns of Smithfield and North Smithfield). Some of his descendants settled in North Kingstown, but these folks loose the name John for more exotic handles such as Benoni, Fones and Benajah.
- John Smith the Mason (died 1660) was also an early settler in Providence. He purchased a Township interest in Warwick, spent some time there and then returned to Providence in 1659.
- John Smith the Merchant (died 1663) was a West India trader who acquired three Purchase rights in the original Warwick settlement (Shawomet), and was very active in the politics of Warwick and the colony. His duties included collecting *voluntary taxes* from the likes of Samuel Gorton and Stukely Westcott, and as a result, representing the town in numerous legal proceedings before the Colonial Assembly. His association with Stukely Westcott made him a prime suspect, but alas, John had no children, and his step-children maintained the name Collins.
- John Smith of Newport (died 1699) was a surveyor who worked throughout the colony. He was hired by the Shawomet Purchasers to lay out the Cowesett Farms and the Saw Mill land, for which he was paid a quarter interest in the mill. When he sold his land on Aquidneck in 1686, he moved to Bristol, not the Narragansett Country. His son Thomas moved to Bristol in 1715. There is not much known about his son John (born October 28, 1689).

- John Smith of Prudence Island (died 1677). Now this is our man. While the other John Smiths were establishing the new colony and dividing up recently acquired lands, our John Smith and wife Margaret were facing charges of obstruction of justice, perjury and uttering words of reproach against Governor Benedict Arnold. That story is told in "John of Prudence and His Mendacious Mate" on page 45.

## ■ *First Name First*

An Internet search on the name Westcott turns up essential data on the Westcott ruler, the versatile s-shaped adjustable Westcott wrench that was standard equipment with all International Harvester reapers, and the Westcott Touring Cars (as in "Westcott, the Car with a Longer Life") – three examples of innovators and entrepreneurs who descended from Stukely Westcott, who immigrated to the New World in 1635. (In the interest of full disclosure, the descendants also include Benedict Arnold, but nobody's perfect.) Stukely was something akin to a political boss in early Providence and Warwick, plus a mainstay in the Baptist churches in those two communities. There is more of his story in "Stukely Leaves His Mark" on page 23.

## ■ *The Millwright from Warwickshire*

The history of the Westcotts is marbled with the story of Thomas Stafford, who migrated from Warwickshire to Plymouth in or before 1626.<sup>3</sup> He was New England's millwright and built the first water-powered grist mill in the Plymouth Colony. He built similar mills in Providence (used by John Smith the Miller) and Warwick. Stafford was declared a Freeman in Newport on June 20, 1638

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<sup>3</sup> John O. Austin, *One Hundred and Sixty Allied Families*, 1893. Reprint edition: Baltimore: Genealogical Press, 1977, page 219. Henry Marvin Benedict, *An Account to the Genealogy of the Stafford Family in America Containing an Account of Col. Joab Stafford and a Complete Record of His Descendants in the Male Lines*. Albany: Joel Munsell, 1870. Charles Warner Stafford, *Stafford Index, The Family of Stafford of Warwickshire*. Stuart, Florida: (Self-published) Volumes 1 & 2, 1967; Volume 3, 1973.

("20th day of the 3rd month").<sup>4</sup> He moved to Providence, and then in 1652 to Warwick where he became a Freeman in 1655. Three of his six children married children of Stukely Westcott, and when you read the early records of Warwick, the importance of family soon becomes obvious as there is a Westcott or Stafford (and sometimes one of each) on almost every jury, surveying team, and special committee.

## ■ *The Sweets and the Holy Man*

And here comes the third leg in Stukely's power: John and Mary (Westcott) Sweet were loyal supporters of Roger Williams during his turbulent pastorate in Salem in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and were granted land in Providence. After John's death in 1637, Mary moved her family to Providence where she married Ezekiel Holliman, another Williams loyalist who was pushed out of Salem. The Hollimans moved to Warwick in 1644. Sons John and James Sweet were farmers and millers in Warwick and on nearby Prudence Island, and daughter Renewed married the privateer and fur trader John Gereardy from New Amsterdam, who had many successful dealings with Stukley and his sons. (See "Ancient Mary and Her Two Husbands" on page 33.)

## ■ *The Militiaman and the Barmaid*

John Gereardy's parents are the exceptions. Phillip Gereardy and Marie Pollet never made it to Rhode Island. They did not become Baptists. And they were never harassed by the Massachusetts authorities. They were busy running the Wooden Horse Tavern in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam.<sup>5</sup> Some genealogists confuse this Philip with Phillip Gerritsen, the keeper of the Stadt's Herberg, the

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4 Until 1752, England and her colonies used the Julian Calendar, in which the New Year started on March 25. Thus, January 1, 1715/16 indicates the first day of 1716 in the Gregorian Calendar but just another winter day in 1715 according to the Julian Calendar.

5 Charles Knowles Bolton, "Phillip Gereardy of New Amsterdam, Landlord of the City Tavern and His Rhode Island Relatives," collected in Family Tree Maker CD180 Family History, Rhode Island Genealogies #1.

first tavern in New Amsterdam. Right profession, wrong joint. Phillip Gereardy was the competition. Gerritsen's taproom was in a stone building on the road from the fort to the ferry on the East River, and it served as an inn for travellers to the Dutch colony until 1653 when it became City Hall. The Gereardys' Wooden Horse was at the corner of Marcktvelde and Brouwerstraat, Stone and Whitehall Streets in present-day New York City.

Gerritsen emigrated to the New World from Haarlem in Holland, while Phillip Gereardy and Marie Pollet were from Paris. They may have been Huguenots seeking religious freedom, and that would make a neat parallel with their in-laws' story. But judging from the public records, it is more likely that they were just a fun-loving pair seeking adventure in the New World.

According to Henri and Barbara van der Zee's history of New Amsterdam, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, Phillip and Marie's Het Houte Paerd, or Wooden Horse, shows you can never keep a good marketer down. Phillip turned the inglorious termination of his stint in the local militia into a valuable brand name:

With this name he commemorated his military career in the New World, which had ended with his being sentenced "to ride the wooden horse" – a standard punishment for soldiers who had been absent from duty without leave. He had to sit for hours on a crossbar with – significantly enough – a pitcher in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, while heavy weights hung from his feet. Not surprisingly, he resigned from service.<sup>6</sup>

Controversy and commercial success seemed to follow Phillip, who was prosecuted several times for overcharging patrons for beer and wine, not paying his wine merchants on time, serving Native Americans and operating the business during Sunday sermons. But the tavern prospered, and the business continued well after Phillip's death in 1656. In November of that year, Marie married widower Matheus de Vos, who had parlayed his tenure as barkeep at the Stadt's Herberg into a successful law career. Matheus attended to matters at the bar, while Marie tended bar.

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6 Henri and Barbara van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land: The Story of Dutch New York*, NYC: Viking, 1978.

Phillip and Marie's son John (also called Jean, Jan or Johannes depending on the market he was working at the time) was a sailor, trader, gun runner, fur peddler, debt collector, wine exporter and privateer. His territory reached from the Delaware River to Narragansett Bay. Given his many vocations, it is not surprising that John himself was frequently in trouble. According to John, in 1647 he was nabbed by Governor John Printz of the Swedish Colony near the mouth of the Delaware.

[Printz did] with force and violence seize me, Jan Gereat, with my boat the Siraen, visited the yacht, and handled the goods in an unchristianlike manner and to the great loss and damage of me Jan Gereat, turned them upside down; took my munitions of war, which consisted of about 60 lbs. of powder and six guns, but on my promising to use them only when obliged, returned me some powder, about 47 lbs. and three guns; the remainder he kept for himself.<sup>7</sup>

John's story continues in "How the Feud with a Dutch Trader Saved Warwick from the Puritans" on page 55.

## ■ *The Allen Connection and the Mystery of Susanna*

The roster of Westcott's immigrant ancestors is not complete because there is no record of his grandmother Susanna's lineage (although there are hints of some good stories) and I have not been able to resolve his mother's connection to William Allen of Prudence Island and North Kingstown.

# Dramatis Loci

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And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: A man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts of the Apostles, 16:9)

The Puritan conquest of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut was firmly grounded on the European principle of *Discovery*, giving full title to new lands to the first Christian country to discover them. Thus, Spain grabbed Florida and everything south, France took Canada, and England got everything in between. To acquire land in the New World, you secured a grant from the Crown or you bought into a London company that already had such a grant from James I or Charles I. Then you simply travelled here and fenced off your acreage. And the principle remained unquestioned even as the Puritans sought distance from the excesses of royalty and the Church of England.

But there was that tricky problem of the native population. In their new Jerusalem, the Puritans could not simply enslave the savages as the dirty Papist Spaniards had done in South America. So, they developed the clever notion that the locals were inviting the Europeans because these natives needed help and conversion.

The seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony<sup>8</sup> shows a savage, the Wampanoag Sachem Massasoit, saying "Come over and help us," recalling the Apostle Paul's dream in which he gets a similar call from the land of Alexander and Phillip. "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: A man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts of the Apostles, 16:9).

The only help that Massasoit needed was an alliance to hedge against the powerful Narragansetts who controlled the bay area to the west. And the same goes for his sons Wamsutta and Metacom, whom the Puritans called Alexander and Phillip so that if the two savages ever learned to read the Acts of the Apostles, they would figure out that they had been calling for help all along. While Alexander sometimes went along with the new regime, the younger Phillip, or



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<sup>8</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Name of War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998).

*King Phillip*, never took to the idea of conversion, scoffed at the notion of permanent land ownership (whoever granted it), and finally got pushed into a war with the helpful people from England, a war that wiped out both the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts.

The folks that settled Rhode Island had a different idea. Actually, Roger Williams, William Blackstone and that “Professor of the Mysteries of Christ,” Samuel Gorton, had to settle for Rhode Island because they had too many different ideas.<sup>9</sup> These renegade divines had a land-acquisition strategy based on the radical notion that the indigenous people were here first (kind of goes along with being indigenous) and that the natives owned the land. They are best known for espousal of religious freedom and separation of church and state. But what really sets them apart is that they purchased lands in and around Narragansett Bay with cold-hard wampum peage. During his controversial tenure in Salem from 1634 to 1636, Williams’ belief in native ownership cost him the support of the Old Planters, who had acquired their land from the Dorchester Company, and Governor Endicott whom the successor New England Company appointed to keep peace and productivity in its grant.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the natives’ limited understanding of real-estate values resulted in gross underpayment. For example, in 1637 Canonicus sold Prudence, Patience and Hope Islands to Williams for the equivalent of £5, and in the following year Williams negotiated the sale of Aquidneck Island to William Coddington and other Portsmouth settlers for £10 in wampum.<sup>11</sup> But at least Williams and the other Rhode Island settlers made a good-faith effort to acknowledge native ownership: they drew up deeds, mapped out parcels and provided consideration.

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9 I have adopted the spin of Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, Vol. I, 1636-1700 (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1859). Arnold is a Rhode Island homer who portrays Williams, Gorton and the Narragansett sachems as saints and martyrs subjected to the cruel, land-grabbing Puritans that ruled the rest of New England.

10 Richard P. Gildrie, *Salem, Massachusetts 1626-1683 A Covenant Community* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1975).

11 Carl R. Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland, The Story of Cocomscussoc, Mirror of Colonial Rhode Island*. (Wickford, R.I.: Cocomscussoc Association, 1985).

We must not think of the Narragansett sachems as being totally naive in these deals. Canonicus and Miantonomi actually wanted Williams and others as neighbors and trading partners. Socconocco and Ponham were good enough at realpolitik to play the Bay Colony Puritans against the Rhode Island settlers. And, the Narragansett leadership struck beneficial, if fleeting, deals with officials of the United Colonies for not joining the Pequots in their war against the Puritans.

## ■ *The Gorton Connection*

Two land purchases play into the story of Westcott's ancestors: the settlement of Warwick, and the Quidnessett and Namcook purchase further to the south. The first was according to the Rhode Island model: much land for not so many beads. The second was a variation on theme with muskets and threats.

The white settlement of Shawomet, or Old Warwick, Rhode Island, began in January 1642/43, when Samuel Gorton and ten other *Purchasers* acquired a tract of land south of the Pawtuxet River from the Narragansett sachem Miantonomi. The tract, which only cost 144 fathoms of wampum (£72 Sterling or £36, depending on the color of the beads), was bordered on the east by Narragansett Bay and extended 20 miles west to what is now the Connecticut-Rhode Island border, and encompassed all of current-day Coventry, West Warwick and Warwick (except Potowomut, which the Purchasers acquired in a later deal, and Pawtuxet, the southernmost part of Providence settled by the Arnolds and others).

Gorton, like almost every other early Rhode Islander, was asked to leave the Bay and Plymouth Colonies. With his frequently stated views on church and civil authority, and his large personality, he could be singularly responsible for Rhode Island's reputation as a catch basin for anarchists, heretics and scoundrels. (If there were no Samuel Gorton, the colony would have no problem supplying another paradigm.) Gorton lived for a while in Portsmouth, then Providence and finally the settlement at Pawtuxet, but had some difficulty fitting in with these established towns. So, he put together the Shawomet deal,

*A fathom of wampum consisted of 360 beads made from shells. Black wampum was made from quahog shells, while white beads were made from periwinkles. A fathom of black wampum was worth 10 shillings; white wampum, 5 shillings. Wampum was the medium of exchange among the natives and throughout the New England colonies. The value of wampum collapsed dramatically in 1649 when the price of beaver pelts fell in London. Rhode Island was the last colony to drop wampum as legal tender (1662). (All of this from Arnold, History)*

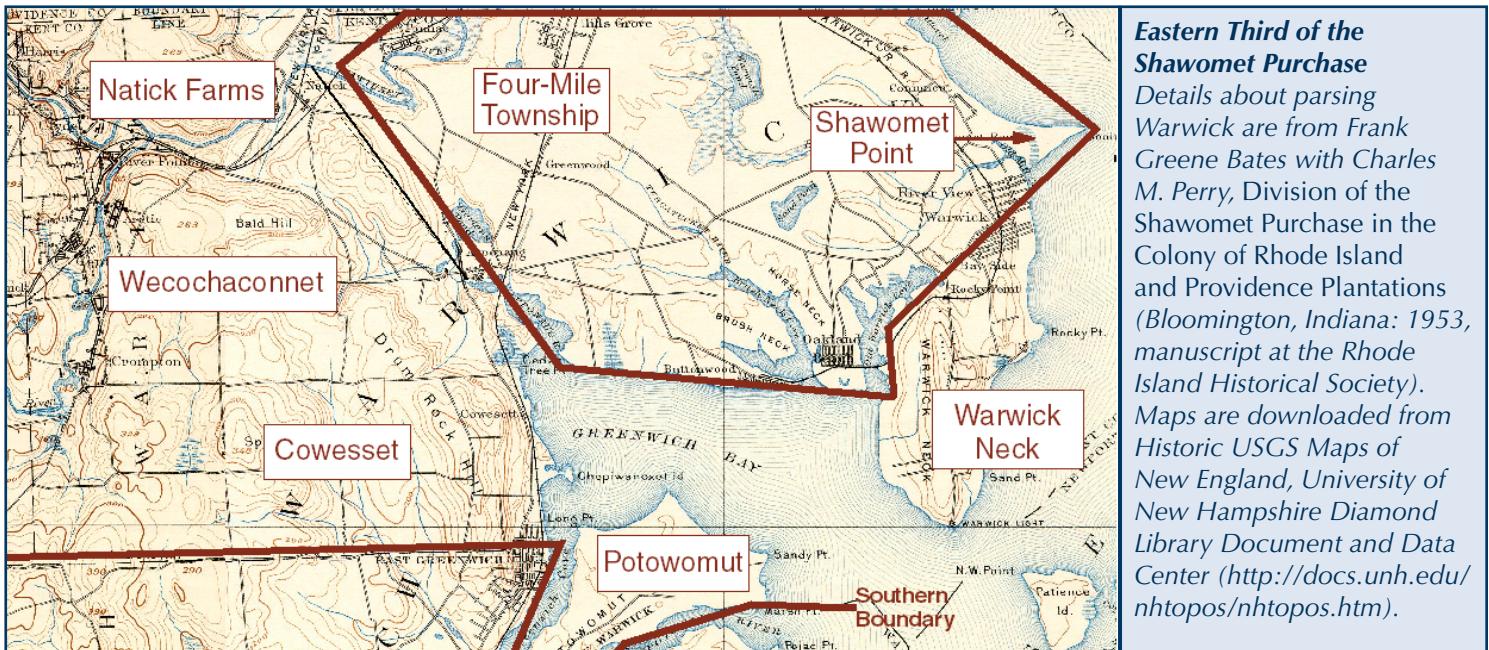
and looked to get the settlement recognized by the English Crown (he wasn't that much of an anarchist). His loving friends in Massachusetts immediately asserted a claim on the settlement, an attempt to regain some control over Narragansett Bay, having already lost Providence, Portsmouth and Newport to Williams, Anne Hutchinson and other malcontents. Militia from Boston under the leadership of Colonel George Cook and Lt. Humphrey Atherton held the town under siege for three days, imprisoned Gorton and others, and literally scared one woman, Alice Daniels Greene, to death. As part of their plot to secure the territory, the Massachusetts authorities had even recruited two Narragansett sachems, Ponham and Socconocco, to testify that Gorton had swindled them. Gorton and others were tried and convicted. A proposed sentence of execution failed by two votes, and the Gorton party was kept in prison.

When the Warwick gang was released from prison a year later, the Narragansett sachems Canonicus and Pessius were impressed with Gorton's ability to survive and were convinced that he was better allied with the ruling tribe in England. Looking to fend off interference from Massachusetts in their own affairs, the sachems declared their allegiance to King Charles and appointed Gorton to be their agent in London.

In 1646, Gorton travelled to England and received a patent from the Parliament (thanks to the Earl of Warwick) similar to the one Roger Williams had secured for Providence, Portsmouth and Newport. These grants gave the Rhode Island settlers control over all of Narragansett Bay – or at least that's how they interpreted them. But the 1646 Shawomet grant was often ignored by the acquisitive Bay Colony Puritans, and they continued to press their interests, arresting visitors to Boston and stirring up trouble with the Narragansetts.

## ■ *Dividing up Warwick*

In 1648, despite all the turmoil around them, Gorton and the other original Purchasers returned to Shawomet and got down to the serious fun of dividing up their more than 100 square miles of land. They enlarged their company with an additional six *Received Purchasers*, including Ezekiel Holli-



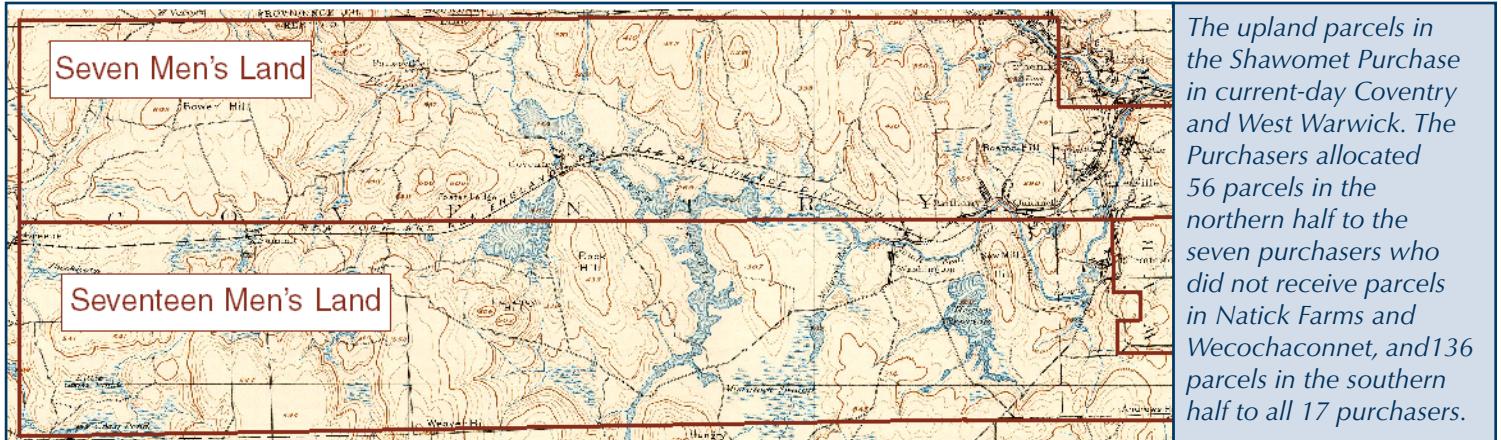
man, one of the original Proprietors of Providence (1638) and a founder of the First Baptist Church (see page 37 for more on Ezekiel).

The first step was to lay out six-acre house lots and common areas on Shawomet point, which the settlers renamed Warwick. From the settlement they laid out an area to a north-south line four miles inland to form the Four-Mile Township. They sold Township Rights to other settlers willing to plunk down £10 for a six-acre lot and an equal share of timberlands (now Norwood and Hillsgrove) and the Tuskeunke Meadow in the northwest corner of the Township. Each of these new investors, called *Proprietors*, received an equal vote with the Purchasers (each of whom had a Township Right) in governing the town. The Purchasers maintained exclusive control of Warwick Neck and all lands west of the Four-Mile Line. At £10 each, the Purchasers made back their original investment when the eighth Proprietor bought in.

Each Purchaser had rights to significant acreage distributed across the northern half of Kent County. For example, as the lands were laid out over the next 60 years, Stukely Westcott's Purchase Right yielded:

- The six-acre lot in the settlement in Warwick, along with planting, grazing and other Township rights in commons and meadows
- Six acres of meadow and six acres of "upland" on Warwick Neck
- 240 acres of Cowesett Farms, consisting of a 28-acre strip from Greenwich Bay on the east to present-day Love Lane on the west, some common areas, and a 200-acre farm further inland
- 420-acre plot in the Wecocheaconnet Farms, an area south of the Pawtuxet and north of the Cowesett Farms. These parcels were laid out to five Purchasers: Samuel Gorton, John Potter, John Smith (the India Merchant, not John Smith of Prudence Island, but the land was purchased by his son John and Phillip Sweet, but enough of that for now), Stukely Westcott, and Randall Holden. Five other Purchasers received 420-acre plots in the Natick Farms, a section north of the Pawtuxet River. And the remaining seven received multiple parcels across a much larger area consisting of the northern half of Coventry and West Warwick. The "Seven Men's Land" yielded more property, but its value was diminished by its distance from Narragansett Bay.
- An equal share of Potowomut, a three-mile peninsula south of Warwick, which the settlers purchased later
- And finally, 1,200 acres in eight different lots in the "Seventeen Men's Land," roughly the southern half of Coventry and West Warwick

And this was all before Stukely and sons started to wheel and deal for more acreage, which they did often and well.



## ■ *The Plight of Pessius*

The Narragansetts' alignment with Gorton did not buy them much more than the wrath of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth and Connecticut, sometimes acting as the United Colonies and at other times acting individually, but always trying to regain the control granted them by the Crown.

As soon as Miantonomi sold the Shawomet land to Gorton, the United Colonies began to forget their 1636 treaty with the sachem who had proved a valuable ally during the Pequot War. Within months, Connecticut's client tribe, the Mohegans, under the leadership of sachem Uncas, renewed its rivalry with the Narragansetts. In response, Miantonomi led a raid against the Mohegans, during which he was captured. The Mohegans handed him over to the United Colonies, and despite entreaties from Gorton, Williams and others, the sachem was tried and returned to Uncas for disposal.

Leadership of the Narragansetts now fell to Canonicus and Pessius, and they marched off to revenge Miantonomi's murder. The United Colonies jumped into the fray to protect Connecticut's proxy, and Pessius sued for peace. As part of the settlement, the Narragansetts agreed to pay 2,000 fathoms of wampum over the next two years, a deal they immediately regretted. Over the next several years they never made more than token payments.

The United Colonies knew they could not allow deadbeat Indians on their land, and in September 1650, sent now Captain Humphrey Atherton to collect. Atherton led a company of 20 militia from Boston to Pessius' encampment. Atherton entered the sachem's wigwam, put a pistol to Pessius' head,

dragged him by the hair out into the open and commenced final negotiations. For his efforts, Atherton was promoted to Major, recognized as a great military hero and granted a 500-acre parcel in western Massachusetts. Atherton was well on his way to becoming a made man in the Puritan Mafia. The demoralized Narragansetts quickly learned who was aligned with the ruling tribe in England, and who was running the show in New England.

## ■ *Humphrey Catches On*

In 1668 John Potter, Samuel Williams, Samuel Wilbore and Thomas Mumford, all of Portsmouth, and one investor from Boston purchased a large tract of coastal land in Southern Rhode Island from the Narragansetts.<sup>12</sup> This Pettasquamscutt Purchase included more than 120 square miles of what is today South Kingstown, parts of Exeter and North Kingstown, and the southern half of Narragansett. The investors paid £151, more per acre than the Shawomet Purchasers put down, but still a great bargain for land the natives had already proven to be highly productive.

The company added two other Rhode Islanders, Benedict Arnold and William Brenton (the first two colonial governors), laid out 1,000-acre plots for each investor, and began selling off the remainder of land, mostly to individuals living on Aquidneck Island. The purchasers gave their allegiance to Rhode Island, and the purchase bolstered the colony's claim of jurisdiction over all land on the west side of Narragansett Bay.

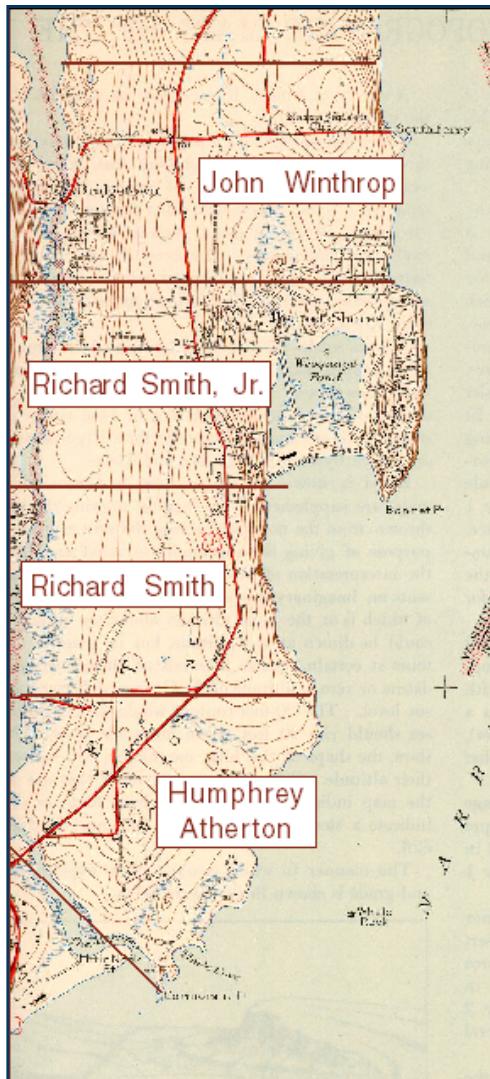
Potter, Mumford, and others "Narragansett Planters" soon established large plantations in the area, raising both produce and livestock and taking advantage of the cleared lands and fertile open fields. But they were not the first white farmers in the area. As early as 1637, Roger Williams and Richard Smith (whom Williams had known from the Plymouth Colony) established trading posts at an inlet called Cocumscussoc, which is just north of Wickford. The posts were near a native encampment and were situated along the Pequot Trail through the Narragansett Country, which later became the Boston Post Road (and much later, US-1). After his return from England (with patent in hand) in

1644, Williams spent much of his time at Cocomscussoc, developing a farm and trading with the Narragansetts.

Despite the rude treatment he had received from the Bay Colony clergy and courts, Williams remained friendly with Governor John Winthrop and his son John Jr., who became governor of the Connecticut Colony. Williams advised the younger Winthrop of planting techniques he learned at Cocomscussoc, and arranged several sales of corn from the Narragansetts and the Niantics to settlers in Connecticut.

Throughout this time, the United Colonies were still trying to exercise control over the Rhode Island settlers and the Narragansetts, who seemed to be selling all of their land to the heretics. The Pettasquamscutt Purchase caused great consternation among the Puritans. But this time Major Atherton responded not with a military solution, but with the Rhode Island strategy of buying from the natives.

Atherton formed a new land company which included Richard Smith, operator of the other post at Cocomscussoc, Richard Smith, Jr., some investors from Boston, and surprise, surprise, Governor Winthrop of Connecticut. It was a potent team with the Smiths' connections to the local tribes, Boston money, Winthrop's political and military support, and Atherton's reputation among the Narragansetts as a force not to mess with. In 1659, the



*The Atherton Purchasers divided Boston Neck in current day Narragansett into four parcels, Atherton himself taking the largest and southern most lot for himself.*

company purchased from Sachem Coginiquaint the two remaining tracts of lands along the west side of Narragansett Bay:

- Quidnessett, which ran from Potowomut Neck (which the Warwick men had just secured) south to Smith's trading post
- Namcook which went from the trading post to the southern tip of Boston Neck in current day Narragansett.

Winthrop and Smith forgot their old buddy Roger Williams and his charter, and claimed Quidnessett and Namcook – in fact, the entire southern half of Rhode Island – for Connecticut.

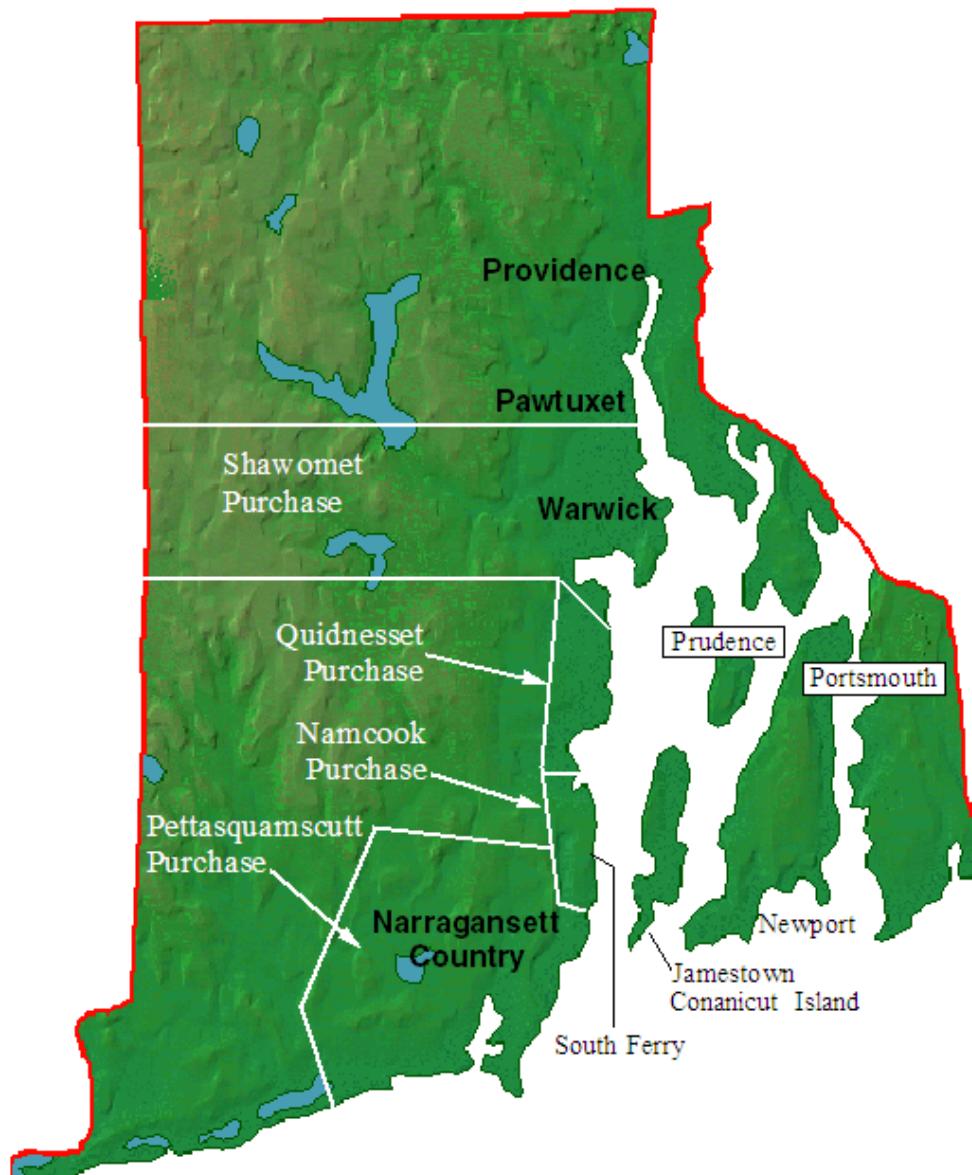
The territory was disputed by the two colonies for decades, despite the renewal of the Rhode Island patent in 1663 with an honest-to-goodness Royal Charter from the recently restored Charles II. The Charter clearly grants the Rhode Islanders control over the land and autonomy in their “lively experiment” in democracy and religious toleration. Unfortunately, similar charters granted Connecticut control east to the “Narragansett River,” Plymouth jurisdiction due west to include all settled lands, and the Bay Colony anything it could get its hands on. There was even a claret-sustained claim by the Duke of Hamilton, who referred to the Narragansett Country as his New Canterbury and who thought the land extended along the coast from the Connecticut River to Narragansett Bay, north to Providence and then northwest to the head of the Connecticut.

Atherton made one more acquisition in Rhode Island before his untimely death. In 1660 the United Colonies fined the Narragansetts for another infraction against the Mohegans (Arnold implies that it was a setup), and enforced the fine at gunpoint. The sachems mortgaged the rest of their lands to Atherton, who paid the fine and foreclosed on the property six months later when the payment was due. But a higher authority foreclosed on Atherton in September 1661. General, yes General, Atherton was returning in the darkness from a review of the troops on Boston Common when his horse struck a stray cow and threw Atherton to his death.

The Namcook Purchase was divided into eight parcels, four in current-day North Kingstown and four in Narragansett. The Narragansett parcels included three 663-acre tracts that ran from Narragansett Bay on the east to the Pettaquamscutt River on the west and one 700-acre tract at the southern

end of Boston Neck. The northern-most band went to Governor Winthrop. Richard Smith, Jr. took the tract south of Winthrop, which includes Wesquage Pond and Bonnet Point. The elder Richard Smith had the next 663 acres, an area that includes Anawam Cliffs. The 700-acre plot was laid out to Humphrey Atherton. (More than 300 years later, Atherton's land includes the home of Terrence Murray, whose Fleet Bank evened the score with the Bay by gobbling up the venerable Bank of Boston.)

The battle over jurisdiction waged on through the second half of the century and into the next. When there was a brief accommodation between the two colonies in 1693, some of the Narragansett Planters petitioned to join the Bay Colony. Weary of the dispute, the Winthrops sold their tract in the Namcook Purchase to John and Jeremiah Smith of Prudence Island.



# Stukely Leaves His Mark

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## ■ *Stukely Westcott (About 1592 to 1678) and Juliana Marchant (1591 to about 1670)*

The map of Kent County, Rhode Island, is stamped with the names of the early Shawomet settlers.

There is Gorton Pond. There are the Holliman, Greene, and Holden Schools, and Warner's Brook.

There is the Greenwood section, which could very well be a descriptive term or a recognition of later patriots in the family of John Greene the Surgeon. But only one of the Purchasers – Stukely Westcott – has a village named after him. Westcott, Rhode Island, is set along the south fork of the Pawtuxet River between Natick to the northeast and Artic to the southwest, by no means a Fodor's destination site, but a real by-God village nonetheless. The village is the northwest corner of the Farm #4 in Weco-chaconnet, which was laid out to Stukely Westcott in 1673.

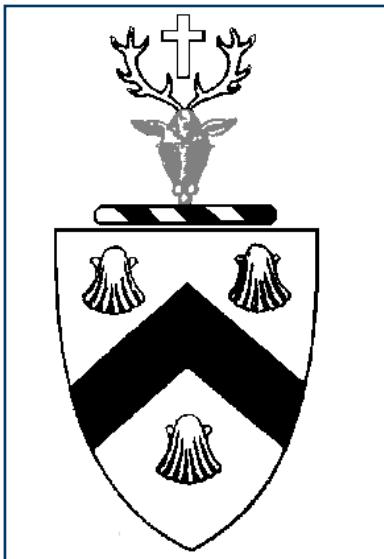
The place names may or may not provide an accurate scorecard. Stukely could not boast of out-front political leadership like Samuel Gorton. Nor did he have the diplomatic and PR skills of Randall Holden. And he made fewer civic contributions than John Smith the Merchant and Deputy, who has no etymological hold on Kent County. But Stukely and his sons Robert, Jeremiah and Amos had a knack for being there at the right time. A relative latecomer to Providence, he is listed first among the 12 Proprietors who joined Roger Williams in 1638, ahead of Olney, Waterman, and John Smith the Miller. Had Westcott stuck around for another couple of years, there would probably be a Stukelyville on the west side of Providence, and the feature to the north of it would be named Mt. Westcott.

## ■ *The Westcotts of Wescote*

Stukely Westcott was born about 1592 in Somersetshire, England, the son of Guy Westcott and Mary Stukely. There is not much known about the young Stukely in England but his ancestors left many footprints in the Devon, Somerset and Dorset all the way back to the Saxon Kings. The Westcotes were well established in the West Country prior to the Norman conquest. Stukely was also a descendant of

the Norman saint Bishop Leger of Autun (martyred in 678), but I'm sure the non-conformist Stukely would be slow to brag about this papist connection.

The name Westcott is probably derived from Wes, as in Wessex or West Saxony, and cot or cote, which means a protected place, such as a cottage, field or pound. The Wes could also be derived from wast, the term for an uncultivated open land. In the 7th and 8th Centuries, Saxons settling in a protected field near Barnstaple in Devon called themselves Wescotes.



Thomas de Wescote's  
Coat of Arms

Much of what is known about the Westcott family comes from Stukely's well-healed cousin Thomas Westcott (b. 1567), who spent many of his leisure hours writing *A View of Devonshire in MDCXXX With a Pedigree of Most of Its Gentry*. The writer was a direct descendant of Thomas de Wescote (born 1422), whose coat of arms is one of three different emblems used by Westcotts. According to one genealogist, the symbol consists of: Argent, a chevron between three escallops, sable, with motto: Sic fidem tenee, meaning "In this manner we keep faith." The Greek cross or patriarch, indicates the head of the family who rules by paternal right; argent or shield in silver or white, is emblematic of purity, innocence, etc.; chevron, divided as a shield into several parts, is representative of several families... It may be presumed that the Arms were registered to Thomas de Wescote in the third generation after heraldry became fixed by compulsory terms (end of 13th century).<sup>13</sup>

There is no indication that Stukely used this or either of the other shields, or had any truck with the trappings of nobility, but the motto is fitting, and the faithful Westcott certainly exercised patriarchal leadership in the new Colony of Rhode Island.

## ■ Coming to America

Stukely married Juliana Marchant on October 5, 1619, in Yoevill, Somersetshire. They had at least six children:

- Demaris (1621 to 1678) married Benedict Arnold (1611 to 1678). No, not that Benedict

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13 Roscoe L. Whitman, *History and Genealogy of the Ancestors and Some of the Descendants of Stukely Westcott*, (Oneonta, N.Y.: Ostego Publishing Company, 1932).

Arnold, but the other one who was the first Governor of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

- ❑ Samuel (1622 to 1637). Samuel died in Salem, Massachusetts.
- ❑ Robert (1625 to 1675) and wife Katherine settled in Quidnessett. During the King Phillip War, Robert was a lieutenant in the militia, and was killed in the Battle of the Great Swamp.
- ❑ Amos (1631 to 1686) married Sarah Stafford in 1667 and after her death, married her sister Deborah.
- ❑ Mercy (1632 to 1700) married Samuel Stafford, brother of Sarah and Deborah.
- ❑ Jeremiah (1633 to 1686) married Eleanor England of Portsmouth.

Stukely and his family sailed from England in 1635 aboard the same ship as William Arnold and his family. An account of the journey is found in the Arnold family papers,<sup>14</sup> in which Benedict Arnold recalls:

my father and his family Sett Sayle ffrom Dartmouth in Old England, the first of May,  
friday & Arrived in New England, June 24 Ano 1635

He then goes on to note that Stukely and his wife were also on board, and counts five Westcott children including the 16 year-old Demaris.

The Arnolds lived in Hingham, Massachusetts for a while, but within the year, the family moved to Providence, where young Benedict would renew his acquaintance with Demaris and marry her on December 17, 1640. Benedict would later become the first Rhode Island Governor under the Royal Charter of 1663.

## ■ *Keeping the Faith*

Why Stukely left for the New World is anyone's speculation. Perhaps he had heard from his sister, Mary Sweet (see "Ancient Mary and Her Two Husbands" on page 33), that there was land to be had

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<sup>14</sup> Edwin Hubbard, "Early Records of the Arnold Family," *The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Volume 33 (1879), page 427.

in Salem just for showing up, or perhaps it was to find religious freedom, as the Hon. J. Russell Bull-ock opined in his hagiographical address before the R.I. Citizens' Historical Association in Providence on April 5, 1886:

Religious, and not worldly considerations, undoubtedly led Westcote to leave England and come to America. But like William Blackstone, the first white man whose feet first trod the banks of that river which for more than two centuries has borne his name, Stukely Westcote soon found that he had fled "the lord bishops" only to fall into the hands of "the lord brethren."<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the motivation, Stukely made straight way to Salem, where he was accepted as a Free-man in 1636. A listing of Freemen in the Salem town records includes the name Stukly Wesket, but does not show the size of the grant.<sup>16</sup>

A loose page tucked into the Salem town records contains a list of inhabitants and the shares they had received in the division of marsh and meadow land made in 1637. Each entry gives the number in the household, names the head of household and notes the size of the allotment. Stukely is listed as follows: "8. Stukly Wesket 1", showing that as a household of eight, the Westcotts were granted a full acre.

Records of a meeting of the town council (the Seven Men) in 1643 indicate that he still held property in Salem although he had long ago left town.

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15 Whitman and other genealogists held that Juliana was the first of two Stukely mates and mother of his first three children, and that some time after Juliana's death in 1625, Stukely married Rosanna Hill, who was mother of the next three children. But the Edna Lewis, the official genealogist for the Society of the Stukely Westcott Descendants of North America, says there is no evidence of Juliana's early death or the second marriage. See Edna Jay Lewis, *The Westcott Family Tree, Westcott Descendants from Stukely and Juliana* (Rutland, Vermont, 1999).

16 "Salem Town Records to 1659," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 9. (Salem, Mass: Essex Institute. 1868).

At the meeting of 7 men on the 8th of the 11th mo 1643... Granted to John Simonds all the Waste land betweene the Lots of Hugh Lakine & Stukly Wesket & the Watter side excepting the High way.<sup>17</sup>

But more important than the location of his land is where Stukely landed on the great issue that divided Salem in 1636, the pastorate of Roger Williams.

## ■ *Disrupting Salem*

Salem, Massachusetts was settled in 1626 when the members of the Dorchester Company abandoned their settlement on Cape Ann. Half the company returned to the West Country in England, and the remainder, under the leadership of Roger Conant, moved to the relative safety of Salem Harbor. To make a go of it, Conant needed the continued loyalty of the “Old Planters” and their acceptance of new recruits sent over from the West Country by Conant’s brother John and the Rev. John Hill. Conant could not allow the religious strife that was tearing apart the homeland to drive away even one settler from the struggling plantation.

Things became more complicated in Salem when the Dorchester Company collapsed and the successor New England Company began recruiting from the London area and from East Anglia, where Puritan separatism was more prevalent. Conant’s replacement, John Endicott, also had to deal with cultural differences, such as the West Country practice of enclosed farming versus the more communal practices of East Anglia. On the religious front, Endicott satisfied the New England Company mandate that there be only one church by fostering a communion that tolerated “small differences” and not emphasizing the connection to the Church of England. This big-tent strategy worked for several years even when John Winthrop replaced Endicott as Governor and the locus of power shifted to Boston.

By the time Stukely Westcott arrived in Salem in 1635, the big tent had collapsed thanks to the radical divine Roger Williams, who served as Teacher in 1633. For Williams, there was no such thing

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17 “Salem Town Records,” *Essex Institute*.

as a “small difference.” Only the regenerate (or converted) could be accepted into communion, and the ranks of the unregenerate included, among others, the entire hierarchy of the Church of England. After Williams’ banishment in January 1635/36, his followers continued meeting in private homes, separating themselves from the established, but not yet regenerate, church. The schism continued for more than two years despite the Rev. Hugh Peter’s efforts to restore harmony to Salem and to bring the church into communion with other Bay Colony churches. Many of Williams’ followers rejoined the Salem church, but the hard-core separatists like Ezekiel Holliman and the Sweet family joined the divine in Providence. In 1638, the last of them left town:

Four of [Williams’ followers], Francis Weston, Richard Waterman, Thomas Olney and Stukely Westcott, obtained license of the General Court, March 12, 1637/38, to remove themselves and their families out of the jurisdiction of Massachusetts Bay Colony, “for that information hath bene given to the Court they yor intent is onelty to withdrawe yor selves for a season, that you may avoyde the censure of the Court in some things wch may bee obiected against you.”<sup>18</sup>

## ■ Main Street

Williams welcomed all of the families that followed him from Salem, and on October 8, 1638, admitted “twelve loving friends and neighbors” into equal partnership in owning all of the land he had acquired from the Narragansetts in 1636. Stukely was the first to sign up. The 13 Proprietors then began admitting others to the settlement, selling them township lots and access to certain meadows and other common areas. But the Proprietors maintained ownership of the remaining area between the Blackstone and Pawtuxet Rivers, extending inland from Fox Point 20 miles to the Connecticut line. Each had a 1/13 interest in almost all of present day Providence County.

The original settlement consisted of five-acre home lots along the river, extending from the Indian Path (now North and South Main Streets) up the hill to what is now Hope Street. Stukely’s lot was smack in the middle, running between Waterman Street to the north and College Street to the south,

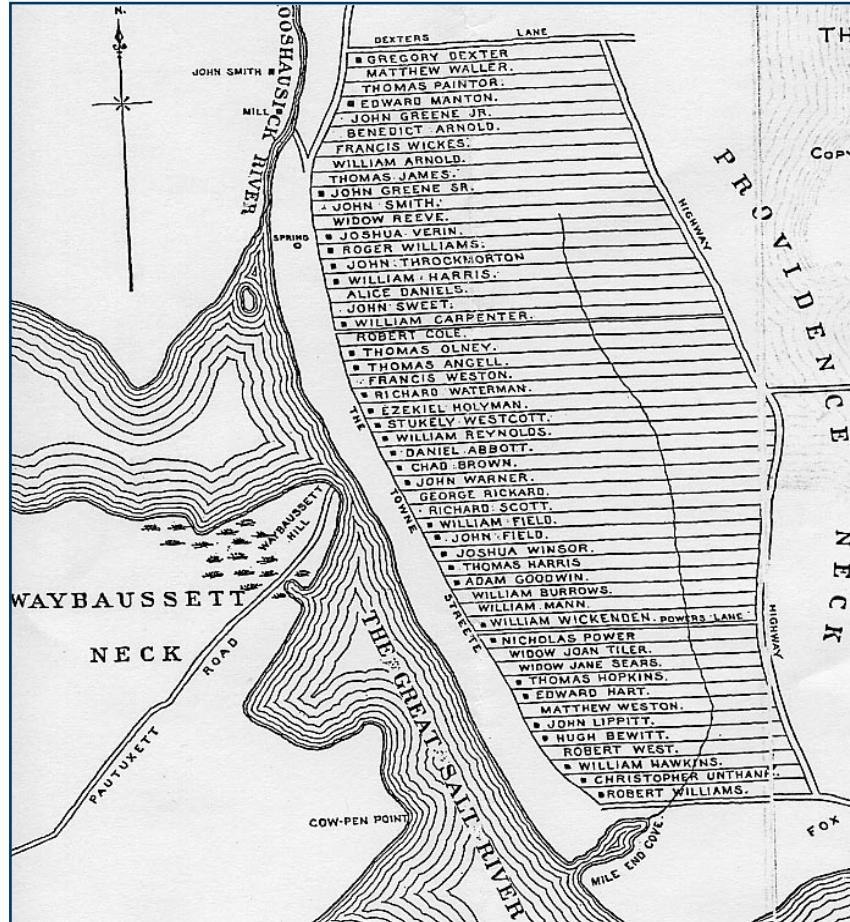
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18 Sidney Perley, *The History of Salem, Massachusetts*, Volume 1, 1629-1637 (Salem, Mass.: 1924), page 271.

a footprint that includes the Providence County Courthouse and parts of the Rhode Island School of Design and Brown University campuses. His neighbor to the north was Ezekiel Holliman, who married Stukely's sister Mary in 1638 (see "Ancient Mary and Her Two Husbands" on page 33).

In the fall of 1638, the settlers formed the First Baptist Church, when Ezekiel Holliman baptized Williams and Williams in turn baptized Stukely Westcott, Holliman, and ten others, almost all of whom had followed Williams from Salem. News of these re-baptisms made the spiritual and political leaders in the Bay and Plymouth Colonies gag, but they resisted rounding up the heretics, in part, because Williams was so helpful in keeping the Narragansetts out of the Pequot War.

But the Massachusetts leaders were less reluctant to prosecute heretics and anarchists when Samuel Gorton and his gang purchased the land south of the Pawtuxet and began building a village on the Shawomet lands (see "Dramatis Loci" on page 11). Stukely was not among the original Shawomet Purchasers, but he seems to have some early involvement with the new settlement. (Perhaps he did not sign on early because of his friendship with William Arnold who had locked horns with Gorton in Pawtuxet.) Some historians include Westcott among the prisoners carried off to trial in



*House lots of the original Providence settlers as illustrated by Charles Wyman Hopkins in his Early Settlers of the Providence Plantations (Providence, 1886).*

Boston in 1643, but there is no mention of him in court records. Perley says that Westcott was taken prisoner at Warwick, but that:

Nothing is known of Stukely Westcott's punishment. The record of the session of the court at which his companions were sentenced read: "If souldiers did kill Stewkley Wasket a lamb, the Treasurer is to allow for it."<sup>19</sup>

After the prisoners were released, Stukely Westcott on March 30, 1644, bore witness under oath to "the outrage upon the property and persons of the first settlers of Warwick because they refused to subject themselves to the pretended jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Bay Colony."<sup>20</sup> His eloquence was rewarded in 1648, when he and Ezekiel Holliman were admitted as Receaved Purchasers in the new settlement of Warwick. Stukely sold his Providence home lot to Samuel Bennett, and moved to Warwick, and brought with him sons Jeremiah and Amos.

While they continued their association with the church in Providence, Stukely and others established a new church in Warwick.

During the Summer of 1648 at Warwick, Stukely Westcott, with John Greene, William Arnold and nine others united in church relations and "agreed to support with faith and practice of the principle of Christ's doctrine."<sup>21</sup>

For more than a century, the Providence and Warwick churches were committed to the Six Principles of Christianity articulated in Hebrews 6:1-2, including adult baptism and the laying on of hands. It is said that Stukely's wife Juliana remained a strict enforcer of the faith until her death in 1670, making adherence to the Six Principles a condition of continued membership in the extended family.

When Stukely arrived in Warwick, he already had alliances with important settlers with his sister's marriage to Ezekiel Holliman and daughter Demaris' marriage to Benedict Arnold. And then there was the family of Thomas Stafford which settled in Warwick in 1652. Daughter Mercy married Samuel

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19 Perley, *The History of Salem*, page 274.

20 Whitman, *Genealogy and History*, Volume I, page 20-23.

21 Whitman, *Genealogy and History*

Stafford and son Amos married first Sarah and then Deborah Stafford. Anytime Stukely went before the court, he was likely to have three or four in-laws on the jury, and he could easily assemble a powerful voting block in town politics. He seems to have put the power to good use, serving as Assistant Governor in 1653 and representing the town in Colonial Assembly for several terms. And he played many roles in the local government, settling boundaries with the Narragansetts, laying out parcels and hosting the King's Commissioners, who visited Warwick in 1664 in a vain attempt to settle the conflicting claims of Rhode Island and the United Colonies. All the while, he continued to acquire real estate, as outlands were laid out in Providence and Warwick, and opportunities arose when settlers left the colony for less anarchic jurisdictions.



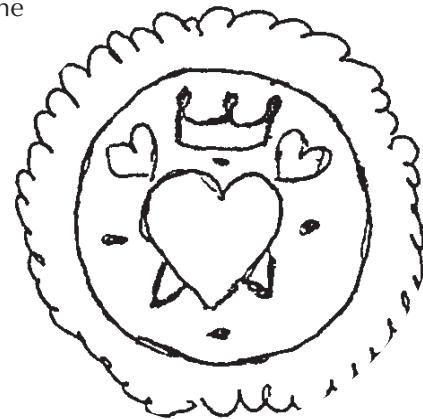
# Ancient Mary and Her Two Husbands

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- *Mary Westcott (about 1590 to 1681), widow of John Sweet (1579-1637), and Ezekiel Holliman (1586/87-1659), widower of Susanna Oxston (died about 1638)*

In 1668 Mary Westcott, then Mary Sweet Holliman, sealed a quit claim deed by inking a heart pierced by two arrows, surrounded by four dots and resting below a coronet.<sup>22</sup> It's rough speculating on the meaning of the four dots and the crown, but it's safe to say that the two arrows are John Sweet (1579 to 1637), immigrant ancestor of the Bonesetter Sweets of South Kingstown, R.I., and Ezekiel Holliman (1587 to 1659), spiritual great uncle of all Six-Principle Baptists.

Mary was born about 1590 in Devonshire, the daughter of Guy Westcott and Mary Stukely, and brother of Stukely. In 1620, she married the first arrow in Modbury, Devonshire. The Sweets had three children – John (about 1620 to 1677), James (about 1622 to 1695/96) and Meribah (about 1626 to 1681) – before emigrating to the Massachusetts Bay. When John died in 1637, Mary and the children moved from Salem to Providence where she married widower Ezekiel Holliman. The family moved to Portsmouth in 1640 and then to the new settlement in Warwick in 1644. Mary was widowed again in 1659, and lived on to become what son John called "my ancient mother" in his 1671 will. For most of her 90 plus years Mary was in the background, while her famous husbands and



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22 Unless noted otherwise, information about Mary Westcott comes from manuscript notes made by Howard M. Chapin in Providence, R.I., in 1915, and included in an unpublished genealogy compiled by William E. Sweet at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The image of the seal is Chapin's rendition from the original document.

warring sons-in-law commanded the attention. But there are indications that she was a strong player indeed, and shaped the family history as much as did the Bonesetters and the Soul Mender.

## ■ *Mending Joints and Shooting Governor Endicott's Dog*

John Sweet was born in Traine, Modbury, Devonshire, in 1579, the son of Robert Sweet and Johanna Rainham. It's not known whether he himself was a bonesetter, but the family tradition is that the Sweets were practitioners of the mysterious art in England and Wales. The first record of John in the New World is a reference in the minutes of the July 3, 1632, session of the General Court of Massachusetts, when his property is described as being across the South River from a lot owned by one Samuel Shelton. The lots were separated by Sweet's Cove, presumably named after John.

Our man Roger Williams showed up in Salem for the second time in 1633, and it appears that the Sweets were among those who supported the radical preacher in his criticism of the established church in England and of the Massachusetts Bay authorities for attempting to establish a Puritan theocracy in the New World. Mary's brother Stukely arrived in Salem in 1635 and he too became a Williams supporter, and followed Williams to Providence in 1638.

John Sweet was granted land in Providence in the spring of 1637, including a house lot between North and South Court Streets along North Main Street, site of the old State House. But he probably never lived there, as his health was failing, and he died some time between May 15 and June 6, 1637.<sup>23</sup>

A loose page tucked into the Salem town records contains a list of inhabitants and the shares they had received in the division of marsh and meadow land made in 1637. Each entry gives the number in the household, names the head of household and notes the size of the allotment. Mary Sweet is

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23 Chapin bases the death date on four entries in the Salem Town Records: April 10, 1637 John's pledges £2 for construction of a meeting house; June 6, 1637 young John (but not called Junior) pays a fine; Mary is referred to as the "widdo Sweet" in December, and the John Sweet who was fined in June 1637 had his "fine remitted to him" on September 6, 1638.

listed as follows: "4. widdo Sweet 3", showing that as a household of four, the Sweets were granted three quarters of an acre.<sup>24</sup>

It's unclear whether she was still in Salem at the time, but by 1638 the family had built a home on the Sweet lot in Providence. One factor that may have prompted the family's departure from Salem was son John's apparent disdain for canines, as noted in a June 6, 1637, entry in the Massachusetts Colonial Records:

John Sweete, being presented by the grand jury for shooting a woolfe dog of Colonel Endecots, in Colonell Endecots owne yard, was fined 5£ & to bee imprisoned during the pleasure of the Courte.<sup>25</sup>

And then two months later: "6th 4th mo [September 6], John Sweete being fined 5£, it is remited." This was not the last time the boys were to be in trouble with the law, as John and brother James were charged in 1648 with disrupting the peace in Providence by putting in a false alarm of an Indian raid on the town. Their bond was put up by Roger Williams' brother Robert.

Mary sold the Salem property to Isaac Allerton and Thomas Read, whom Ezekiel Holliman, arrow number two, sued in 1641 to recover the payment due Mary.

Mary married Ezekiel Holliman probably in 1638 in Providence. There are indications that the Sweet boys did not get along with their stepfather and that they lived for a time with Stukely Westcott. One child that did stick around was Meribah, whom Holliman named Renewed (perhaps to mark her baptism).

If the Sweet family tradition is correct, John Sweet passed on the bonesetting art to son James. James married Mary Greene, lived on Prudence Island and then settled in Kings Town. The Sweets had nine children, including a Mary (number 3) and a Renewed (number 8), who is often confused with her aunt, who was originally Meribah, but was Renewed by Ezekiel.

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24 "Salem Town Records to 1659," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 9. (Salem, Mass: Essex Institute. 1868).

25 "Salem Town Records to 1659"

Their oldest son Phillip lived on Prudence Island and joined with John Smith (son of John and Margaret and husband of Phillis Gereardy) in buying one of the 17 Warwick Purchase rights.

James trained his fourth child Benoni (1663-1751), who is described in Updike's *History of the Narragansett Church* as a "natural bone-setter and the progenitor of the race in Rhode Island. He was styled Doctor Sweet but he practiced in restoring dislocations only." Benoni, who was also styled Captain Sweet, left two acres of his Shermantown Road land, called the Platform, for the Narragansett Church and cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

The legend really took off with Benoni's son Job, whose reputation was firmly in place by the time of the Revolution. He was called over to Newport in 1779 to treat French officers whose injuries had been made worse by state-of-the-art military medicine.

After the war, Colonel Aaron Burr arranged to have Job travel to New York City to tend to the Colonel's daughter. It seems that none of the local talent could right poor Theodosia's dislocated hip. Job arrived on a Friday evening, and after spending some time with the Burrs, asked if he could put his hands on the young woman. The Colonel consented and Job reset the joint quickly and painlessly (at least for him). Job left town early the next morning to avoid a scheduled show-and-tell with the local physicians.<sup>27</sup>

The Bonesetter Sweets are the clear favorites of all Southern Rhode Island chroniclers and essayists, especially the scribes in the Hazard family. The Sweets combined an ability to envision skeletal structure, a knowledge of herbal remedies, and a bed-side manner that calmed the injured and helped ensure the success of the treatment. Shepherd Tom Hazard describes their near-magical ability in one of his South County rambles:

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26 Carl R. Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland*. Wickford, R.I.: Cocomscussoc Association, 1971, p 66.

27 Thomas R. Hazard ("Shepherd Tom" in His Eighty-first and Eighty-second Years), *Recollections of Olden Times: Rowland Robinson of Narragansett and His Unfortunate Daughter. With Genealogies of the Robinson, Hazard, and Sweet Families of Rhode Island*. (Newport, R.I.: John P. Sanborn, 1879; reprint Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1998).

Thence leaving Sugar Loaf Hill a quarter of a mile to the right, where old Jonathan Sweet, son of Job, the natural bonesetter, used to live, and his sons Job and William and grandsons and great-grandsons without number, any of whom has set and mended more bones scientifically and without pain, during the last century, sheerly by gift of nature, than has been done by all surgeons and doctors in the United States – and hence the bitter enmity of those legalized torturers and murderers of mankind...<sup>28</sup>

The local historians were always amazed at how little the Sweets charged for their cures, and how they remained just good ordinary folks. Shepherd Tom quotes from a letter from brother Joseph Hazard:

"I consider the Sweets a most remarkable family not only as natural bone-setters, but as an innocent, inoffensive, easy-going, happy people, with no particular calling or occupation; yet never victims of poverty, or even rich enough to excite avarice, excepting in one instance and he a farmer."<sup>29</sup>

## ■ *Ezekiel the Baptist, a Voice Clearing Trees in the Wilderness*

Ezekiel Holliman is a step-ancestor – the second husband of Mary Westcott – a Proprietor of Providence, a Received Purchaser in Warwick, and a founder of the Baptist Church in America.

Ezekiel Holliman's first baptism was on January 1, 1586/87. He was the son of William Holliman, the church warden at Tring in Hertford, and apparently had some training in religion. He, his wife Susanna (Oxston) and their daughter Priscilla showed up in Dedham, Massachusetts, sometime around 1634. Ezekiel arrived in time to be one of the signers of the Dedham Covenant, the founding document, and as such was granted a prime chunk of real estate in the new settlement:

twelve Acres more or lesse as lyeth betweene the way leading from the keye to the Pond towards the East, & Nicholas Phillips towards ye west & butts upon ye said way wynding

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28 Thomas R. Hazard, *The Jonny-Cake Papers of "Shepherd Tom" Together with Reminiscences of Narragansett Schools of Former Days*. (Boston: Published by subscription, 1915), p. 230.

29 Hazard, *Jonny-Cake Papers*, p. 334.

towards ye North & waye leading to ye burying place toward the South, the high street through the same.<sup>30</sup>

A choice parcel both then and now, the lot is across Court Street from the Dedham District Court, and runs between Court and Bullard Streets from the cemetery on Village Street north to the Charles River. The acreage implies that Susanna was still living in 1636, as married men were granted 12-acre lots, unmarried eight acres.

Holliman wasted no time in building his family a proper house complete with clapboards he cut from local trees. Unfortunately the trees were not on his 12 acres, and the Dedham town meeting levied several fines for breaking local ordinances:

Dec. 31, 1636... And for yt Ezechiell Holliman hath felled one greate Timber tree for clapboard wthout his owne Lott contrary to an order made in that behalfe, therfore he is fined to pay vunto the Collector for ye vse of ye Towne the sume of Ten shillings. And the sayd Ezechiell is to paye in like manner for every lefser tree soe felled contrary unto sayd order the sume of sixe pence for a fyne aforesayd.

The sayd Ezechiell Holliman is moreover ffyned the sum of ffifteene shillings to be payd vnto the Collector ffor that he hath covered his house with clapboard contrary vnto an order mad in that behalfe.<sup>31</sup>

The incident may have prompted Holliman to move on, or maybe he had differences with the local church, as Holliman had strong views about state-sanctioned religion and the practice of infant baptism. His last recorded appearance in Dedham was at a town meeting the following March. He sold the lot to Joseph Kingsbury, who in 1638 conveyed one acre of the property south of “the high

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30 Dedham Book of Grants, as quoted in “Ezekiel Holliman,” *Dedham Historical Register*, Volume III (January, 1893) 1, Page 43-44.

31 Dedham town records, as quoted in Martha Abby Smith, “Early Times in Dedham, Orders Concerning Cutting Timber, etc.,” *Dedham Historical Register*, Volume III (January, 1893) 1, Page 19.

street running through it" to the town "for a seat for a publique Meeting house." The grant is now the site of the First Church and Parish, Unitarian, in Dedham.<sup>32</sup>

The Hollimans moved to Salem, where they fell in with Roger Williams. After Williams' hasty departure in January 1635/36, Ezekiel became the leader of the Williams supporters in Salem.<sup>33</sup> The group held religious services in private homes because the Salem Church admitted unregenerate people in their communion. This was contrary to the unified society that the New England Company was trying to establish in Salem and Boston. In March of 1636/37, Ezekiel was in trouble with the Massachusetts authorities. He was summoned to appear before the General Court "because he did not frequent the public assemblies and for the seducing of many"<sup>34</sup> and "he was referred by the Court to the ministers for conviction." Later that year, he joined up with Roger Williams in Providence.

It is not known how or when Ezekiel's first wife died. The page listing inhabitants and the shares they had received in the division of marsh and meadow land made includes the entry, "goodman Holliman 2", not giving the number in the household, but showing that they received a half acre, as did other households with three or fewer.<sup>35</sup>

Whenever Susanna died, Ezekiel did not suffer widowerhood for long, as he married Mary Sweet, probably in 1638 in Providence. In July 1639, the Rev. Hugh Peters of Salem wrote to the brethren in the church at Dorchester that Mary Holliman and others had the "great censure passed upon them in this our church." Be forewarned, Dorchester!

Peters was referring to the strange goings-on in the new settlement of Providence where Roger Williams, Mary Holliman and eight others "wholly refused to hear the church, denying it, and all churches in the Bay, to be true churches, and (except two) are all rebaptized."

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32 "High Street Dedham," *Dedham Historical Register*, Volume III (July, 1893) 3, Page 139.

33 Perley, *The History of Salem*.

34 John O. Austin, *One Hundred and Sixty Allied Families*, 1893. Reprint edition: Baltimore: Genealogical Press, 1977. page 135.

35 "Salem Town Records" Essex Institute.

Ezekiel Holliman can be either the Apostle or the Apostate, depending on your point of view. Baptist preachers and historians hold him in great esteem as “a man of gifts and piety” and a defender of religious freedom, while the Bay Colony Puritans linked him to that great heretic, Anne Hutchinson. In March 1638/39 John Winthrop took note of a new church in Providence:

At Providence things grew still worse; for a sister of Mrs. Hutchinson, the wife of one Scott, being infected with Ana-baptistry, and going last year to live at Providence. Mr. Williams was taken (or rather emboldened) by her to make open profession thereof, and accordingly was rebaptized by one Holyman, a poor man late of Salem. Then Mr. Williams rebaptized him and some ten more.<sup>36</sup>

Holliman’s baptism of Williams was the start of the Baptist Church in America, and Holliman served as a leader in the First Baptist Church for several years. Among the “ten others” baptized that day was Stukely Westcott, Mary’s brother.

Despite Winthrop’s assessment, Ezekiel Holliman was far from poor, owning a 1/13 share of the new settlement. The northwest corner of his six-acre “Home Lot” is now the corner of South Main and Waterman Streets. The lot extended up the hill to current-day Prospect Street. The west entrance to the Providence Bus Tunnel was the site of the Holliman house.

We don’t know whether the new Holliman household (which consisted of Ezekiel and daughter Priscilla, Mary and the three Sweet children, and a servant named George) lived in the Sweet house or in the Holliman house. By 1640, the clan moved to Portsmouth where Ezekiel ran a mill, a line of work step-son John would take up later in Warwick and Potowomut. He sold the original Holliman house to the lawyer Hugh Bewitt, who sold the house to the town of Providence. The Sweet home was passed on to step-son James.

Ezekiel and Susanna’s daughter Priscilla had married John Warner, who was among the second round of settlers in Providence, sometime before 1645. Warner joined Samuel Gorton in 1646, when Gorton purchased the Shawomet lands from sachem Miantonomi, and was among those sentenced

to death in Boston. In 1648, Gorton, Warner and the other original Purchasers accepted seven new equal partners in the venture as Received Purchasers, among them Ezekiel Holliman.

As a Received Purchaser, Holliman had rights to significant acreage distributed across the northern half of Kent County. As the lands were laid out over the next 60 years, Ezekiel's rights included:

- A six-acre lot in the settlement in Shawomet, along with planting, grazing and other Township rights in commons, meadows and timberland (clapboards, anyone!)
- Six acres of meadow and six acres of "upland" on Warwick Neck
- 240 acres of Cowesett Farms, including a 28-acre strip from Greenwich Bay on the east to present day Love Lane on the west
- 420 acres in the Natick Farms, a section north of the Pawtuxet River
- 1,200 acres in eight different lots in the Seventeen Men's Land, roughly the southern half of Coventry and West Warwick

Ezekiel was very active in the life of the town and colony, serving on the Town Council, the Court of Trials, and a committee with John Green to revise the laws of the colony. In 1654, he and Randall Holden negotiated the purchase of Potowomut on behalf of the 17 Purchasers. For this three-mile peninsula in Greenwich Bay, they paid Sachem Tacommanan £15 and a "value of one coat of such cloth as the Indians do now commonly use to wear to be given annually as a gratuity."<sup>37</sup>

Shortly after the Hollimans settled in Warwick, step-daughter Renewed Sweet married John Gereardy, an enterprising sailor (and, yes, perhaps a privateer) from New Amsterdam. Gereardy and John Warner soon locked horns in a battle that would last for several generations, and some say, alter the history of early Warwick. But all that is for another chapter ("How the Feud with a Dutch Trader Saved Warwick from the Puritans" on page 55), except to mention Warner's suspicion that Mary Holliman was conspiring behind the scenes in favor of her son-in-law and her own business interests:

Now in the meane time before this discharg was made John Gereardy tould his company wt or reconing was, so mother Holiman & (that fierbrand of contention) Bewit, the one (trying) to make a breach as she had often indvored wn her end was accomplished

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37 Austin, *One Hundred and Sixty Allied Families.*

feare(ing) I should git into trades through Familiarity wch I preceaved shee onely desired to hirself, the other to git oportunity to usher himselfe in by contention to prcure imploy-  
ment to Live upon other mens estates as all bareters doe.<sup>38</sup>

Translation: Mary Holliman was trying to get a lock on the trading opportunities with the Dutch and others, and the ambulance-chaser Hugh Bewitt was stirring up trouble to generate legal fees. Don't mess with Mary, as the Gereardy side won support from, among others, the Westcotts, the Greens, and Samuel Gorton. John Warner was soon packing for England, and the Warner interests were left in Ezekiel Holliman's good hands.

Ezekiel died on September 17, 1659, and just to keep things messy, he left no will. The Warwick Town Council went to work divining the mind of the Reverend and settled the estate with a series of proclamations. They made Holliman's grandson, John Warner, Jr., heir to his house and lands in Warwick, and appointed Walter Todd and John Green trustees of the estate for Warner, who was still a minor. They made granddaughter Rachel heir to the Holliman property in Providence, and appointed Thomas Olney as trustee of that estate. And, they instructed other trustees to sell certain livestock and personal property for the benefit of the other Warner children.

The remainder of the personal property, including a "man servant" valued at nine shillings, and Ezekiel's "stock in trade" went to Mary Holliman, along with the right to live in the Warner home and use various orchards and meadows. The servant's value was low because he was either near death or the end of his term of service. In 1660, Mary indentured George Cese (perhaps Case) for a three-year, eleven-month term. The agreement stipulates a strict code of behavior for George, who is not even to think about drink, dice, and pleasures of the flesh during his stint. Rev. Holliman would have been proud.

[Warwick Records, 413] This Indenture bindeth me Goerge Cese with my free Consent  
aprentis unto Marey Holyman of warwick her heieres or Executors or assigns with her  
to dwell from ye day of ye date herof unto ye end of and terme thre yeares and eleven  
month the next enshuueing and holey to bee Complete and ended by all which sayd  
terme ye sayd george Cesse aprentis to ye sayd Marey holeyman his mistris well and  
faithfulley shall serve, her secrets shall keep her Commandes Lawful and onest eavry

where hee shall doe noe fornication in ye hous of his Mistris, he shall not doe nor Consent to be done of others, but hee to his power shall his Mistris warne therof, Tavernes and Alehouses he shall not hante or frequent but if it bee about his mistris bisness ther to bee done, at dise Cardes or aney other unlawfull games he shall not play ye goodes of his mistris inordinately hee shall not wast nor them to lend without his mistris licenc matrimony with any woman within ye sayd terme he shall not Contracte nor espouse himself, nor his mistris servis by day or night absent or prolonge himself, but as a true and fayethfull servant ort to beehave himself as well in words as in deeds : And I sayd Marey Holeymen unto ye sayd gorg aprentis in ye mater of husbandry which is Commonly used for sarventes in New england shall set him to ye worcke accordinge unto ye Costome of ye Contrey and in {illegible} manner to {illegible} him finding unto him meate drinke and aparell duering ye sayd terme : and at ye end of ye sayd terme shall give unto her prentis such nessaries as ye Contrey alowes, in witness wherof ye parties above sayd to thes Indentures enterchnagably ther severall seals sett ye 27 daye of November Anno domini 1660

sealed and delivered in presens of us

Christopher Onthank

John Gereirsey

ye marke of James Sweet<sup>39</sup>

It appears that Mary continued the Holliman trading business while George tended to the farm.

In 1668, she yielded the Warner homestead to John Warner, Jr., with the provision that she could be buried next to her husband on the lot. Mary went to live in the homestead which Ezekiel had sold to son-in-law John Gereardy, and which Gereardy had deeded to Mary in 1663. Complicated enough? Mary lived in the home until 1681, and then deeded the property back to John and Renewed Gereardy, all the while with John Warner, Jr., trying to get his mitts on that place also (but that's part of the story that had to wait for that other chapter that starts on page 55).

The 1681 deed is the last we hear of Ancient Mary, who was in her 80s or 90s. She probably moved in with the Gereardys on Prudence Island. Mary's will reads as follows:

To all Persons to whom these Presents shall come that I Mary Hollyman of the Town of Warwack, In the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, In New England Widow sendeth Greeting: Know ye that I Mary Hollyman have and doe by these presents

for and In Consideration of the Great Love & Affection I doe bear unto my Son in law, John Garady and my Daughter Renewed Garady his wife both formerly of Warwick but now of Prudence in the Colony aforesaid, Do gove Grant Assign & set over unto my said Son in Law John Garady & my Daughter Renewed Garady his wife all my right and title & Interest that I have in the House Lot Orchard Meadows and Upland with said Commange that belongeth to the same in Warwick aforesaid which Lott house Orchard etc. was formerly upon Consideration assigned and made over by my said Son in Law John Garady unto me my heirs and assigns for ever, which now I do and have by these presents from me my Heirs Executors, Administrators and Assigns upon Consideartion above written, have Given granted and Absolutely assigned and set over unto my said son in Law for Ever, but not for the future to be disposedof, or Imbaselled away by my sd Son in Law John Garady without the free consent of my Daughter Renewed Garady the sd house within the said Lot contained I have hereunto set my hand and Seal this last day of July in the year 1681, and in the 33rd year of His majtys Reign Charles the Second of Great Britain France and Ireland, King etc.

In the Presence of us - the marke of

Robert R. Burlingame

Mary Hollyman

Mary Burlingame<sup>40</sup>



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40 "Will of Mary (Sweet) Hollyman," transcribed by Trella M. Hall (May 27, 1968) included in a genealogy compiled by William E. Sweet, original at the Rhode Island Historical Society.

# John of Prudence and His Mendacious Mate

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## ■ *John Smith (died 1677) and Margaret*

Westcott Smith's three-times great grandfather John Smith may be one of two Smith boys admitted to the "towne of Nieu-Port" on May 20, 1638,<sup>41</sup> or he may have emigrated from England much later. The first definitive record comes in 1662, when John and his wife Margaret were living on Conanicut Island, where the Newport settlers had additional farming and grazing, and which later became the Town of Jamestown.

## ■ *Getting Along On Conanicut*

When William Coddington, John Clarke and the other Portsmouth and Newport founders purchased Aquidneck Island from Canonicus and Miantonomi in 1637, the Narragansett sachems also granted them rights to "the marsh or grasse" on Conanicut and several other islands in the Narragansett Bay.<sup>42</sup> After several years, they looked to create a more permanent and profitable settlement on the island. So, Coddington and Benedict Arnold organized a group of 100 investors to purchase the island from Sachem Cashasaquont in 1656. Coddington was one of the founders of Portsmouth, and leader in the new settlement at Newport. Arnold, who was married to Stukely Westcott's daughter Demaris, was the first Colonial Governor of Rhode Island, and was a very successful investor in plantation land all over the colony.

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41 *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, John Russell Bartlett, Editor (Providence: Knowles, Anthony & Company, State Printers, 1856-1862; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1960), Volume 1.

42 *Historic and Architectural Resources of Jamestown, Rhode Island*, (Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, (Providence: 1995).

Conanicut Island was surveyed by Joshua Fisher in 1657, and a town plan divided the 6,000-acre island as follows:

- 4,800 acres were allocated to the proprietors according to their investment, with Arnold getting the largest share (1,144 acres including Beaver Tail and Beaver Head).
- 260 acres were designated for a town plat with one-acre house lots.
- 20 acres were set aside for an artillery ground, a place of burial, and a prison house.
- A 4-rod-wide road was drawn across the island.

When the town plat failed to materialize, one quarter of the proposed village land was also acquired by Arnold.

### ■ *Thou Shall Not Disparage the Governor*

John Smith is not listed among the 100 Jamestown investors, nor was he accepted as a Freeman until the 1670s, so he must have been a tenant of one of the large land owners such as Arnold, Coddington, William Brenton or Richard Smith. What places him on the island at this time is an indictment read at the October 14, 1662 session of the Rhode Island Court of Trials in Warwick.

Ther being a bill presented by the attorn y gennerall against John Smith living at Cononicott for specking words of reproch aganist Mr Binidick Arnold presedent which words did absolutly tend to his disparegdment in the Excicution of his office the sayd Smith being bound to this Court and being Called Confeseth himselfe guilty and Referes himselfe to the beench.<sup>43</sup>

It must be quickly noted that there were many of these cases of the good Governor being disparaged, with defendants paying fines of £5 to £10 if they fessed up and asked the court for mercy, which John did. The windup to John's sentence gives some additional details of the crime, which seems to

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43 The trial records of John and Margaret are from *Rhode Island Court Records: Records of the Court of Trials of the Colony Providence Plantations*, Volume II, 1662-1670, (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1922), starting with entries for the October 14, 1662, court at Warwick [#116].

have involved the arrest of the wife of fellow islander William Ayers. She had apparently escaped from prison, and John got in the way of her recapture:

Whereas John Smyth Inhabiting within this Collony Dwilling at presant upon Quononicott Iland being bound to this Court and heare Indicted by the Atorny gennerall for useing words of reproch aginst the presedent Mr. Benedict Arnold in the Excicution of his office: and the Bill of Indictment found by the Grand Jury: the Sayd John Smyth being Called to answer to the Charge: Confeseth himselfe Guilty of the Sayd Charge and Sayth hee hath malisously Rashly and without growndes Reproched the presedent in saying that hee gave out warrant to apprehend the wife of william Ayres who was sent after from Quoneticott for breacking prison: and that having given out his warrant Did send private notice to the Sayd Smiths howse that the woman might be Convayed away soe to Escape the sayd warrant: as also in useing many other speeches of Contempt touching the presedent and government in A Reprochful maner and the Sayd John Smith Doth Submitt himself to the Court desiering ther favour: not to Inflict upon him the Extremity of Rigour for his Sayd offense.<sup>44</sup>

From the court records, it is unclear whether John was thwarting her arrest or that he had falsely accused Arnold of protecting the fugitive, but for this direct or indirect obstruction of justice, John received the equivalent of a suspended sentence (the Rhode Island Court of Trials was apparently a little easier on offenders than those in neighboring colonies, “Reforming of such as are in Legall sort Reformable”):

Whereupon the Court Respectinge the peace and safty of the Kings Subiects : and In order thereto the honour of the government Excercised under his maiestye in this Colony and not the Destroying but the Reforming of such as are in Legall sort Reformable doe therfore bind the Sayd John Smith unto his good behaviour untill the next gennerall Court of trialls in a bond twentye pound and In Case hee accordingly behave himselfe peacably and submisively to his maiestyes Subiects : and government in this Collony and alsoe provided, the Sayd John Smith doe sett up with his one hand A Coppie of this his acknowledgment written and fasten it upon the post of the Doore at the Entrance of the prison porch at nuport at the Command and In the presance of the generall Sargant and whome he Shall apoynt to see it Done: and upon the performance of the whole Ingagement his bonds to be voyd : otherwise to stand in full force and vertue.<sup>45</sup>

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44 *Rhode Island Court Records.*

45 *Rhode Island Court Records.*

## ■ Margaret's Verdict

No sooner had the court finished with John Smith, then it took up the case of his wife Margaret, who apparently was involved in the original incident. But because she had a knack for missing court appearances, Margaret was not as quickly rehabilitated as John, and she was tagged with a perjury rap that would be with her for another three decades.

Whereas Margrett the wife of John Smyth of Quononicott is bound to apeare at this Court and hath petitioned the Court for weightty Resones declared therin to Excuse her not apearing now, but to acquit her or to order her to apeare at next gennerall Court & : the Court doe declare that John Smith aforesayd doe Ingage to the Court in A bond of twentye pound for his wife her appearance at the Sayd Court accordingly which Court is alsoe in his maiesties name to be holden at providence the Second Tueday in march next: that Shee then and there answer to what She hath bene Engaged to Concerning her<sup>46</sup>

And later in the session, this indictment was read: A bill of Indictment presented (by Mr. John Sanford gennerall Atorn) against margrett Smith the wife of John Smith of Quonon-nycott for being A pariured parson which Misbehaviour of heares is Contrary to the honor of his maiestyes Crowne and Dignyty<sup>47</sup>

When the court met at Portsmouth the following October, Margaret was again a no-show ("she was gone to boston before the mandamus came to her howse"), but she finally faced the music at the session held in Newport on March 8, 1663/64:

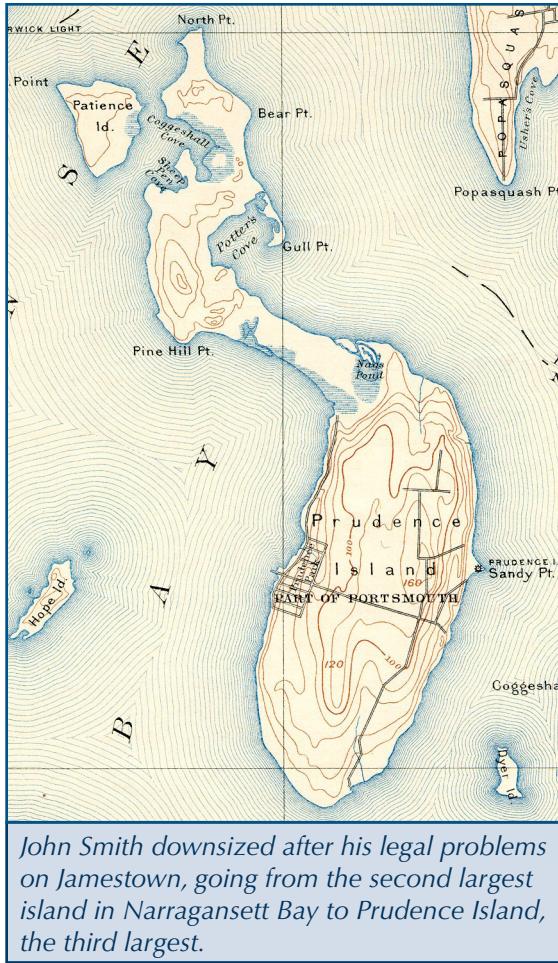
Margeratt smith being Indicted for periury and being Called before the Court and her Indictmen[t] Read before her and she being asked what shee sayd to the bill whether guilt ye or not guilty to which Question her answer is guilty and Desier favor of the Court The sentance of the Court is that John Smith for his wives offence shall pay a fine of five pound to the publick Tresury within Three months time for which sum the sayd John Smith hath and doth Ingage in open Court) and shee to Remayne in an Incapasety to give Testimony in any Case untill shee be sett at liberty by the gennerall asembly<sup>48</sup>

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46 *Rhode Island Court Records*.

47 *Rhode Island Court Records*.

48 *Rhode Island Court Records*.



On May 5, 1664, Margaret petitioned the Colonial Assembly to show her mercy and lift the fine, which they did. However, it was not until June 12, 1678, that the Assembly overturned the lower court finding that she was a perjurer.<sup>49</sup>

Margaret probably made the appearance at the May 1664 session because John was facing charges from the other major landlord on Conanicut:

An action of Trespas upon the Case Entereed by Mr William Coddington of nuport against John Smith of Cononicott Damedge Thirtye pounds Starling The Juries verdict We find for the playntiffe five pound Damedge and Cost of Court<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps it was time for the Smiths to move on, maybe to a nice secluded island somewhere.

## ■ *The Island of Refuge*

John next shows up on Prudence Island, a colonial pig farm and political refuge situated at the top of Narragansett Bay between Warwick Neck and Portsmouth. The Narragansetts called the island Chibacuwese, and they saw it as a good place to install a European with trading connections. Here, on

the third largest island in the bay, they could provide the trader with a good port, keep a watchful eye on him and protect him from other tribes. They first offered the island to John Oldham, an offer Oldham should have taken. Several months later, on the way back from an expedition to the Connecticut

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49 Rhode Island Court Records.

50 Rhode Island Court Records.

River, Oldham landed on Block Island where he was murdered, allegedly by Pequot warriors. The incident touched off the Pequot War.

On November 11, 1637, Sachem Canonicus sold the island to Roger Williams and Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay for 20 fathoms of wampum (about £5) and two coats.<sup>51</sup> Williams said the deed was a gift, the payment was a gratuity, and his friend Canonicus would be embarrassed to profit from the sale of land. It's interesting that Williams and Winthrop would enter into a partnership little more than a year after Williams was expelled from Winthrop's colony. But the two worked together through several decades, starting with Williams' negotiations with Canonicus that resulted in the Narragansetts siding with Massachusetts in the Pequot War.

Williams renamed the island Prudence, calling neighboring islands Patience and Hope. He could have named the islands Refuge, Peace and Quiet. When Samuel Gorton was kicking up dust in Providence in 1640, Williams wrote Winthrop that he might be forced to escape to the islands from the self-proclaimed Professor of the Mysteries of Christ:

Master Gorton having abused high and low at Aquidnick, is now bewitching and bemadding poor Providence... Yet the tide is too strong against us, and I feare (if the framer of hearts helpe not) will force me to little Patience, a little isle next to your Prudence. Jehovah himself be pleased to be a sanctuary to all whose hearts are perfect with him<sup>52</sup>

During the King Phillip War 35 years later, the islands were indeed a valuable refuge for Gorton and others when the Narragansetts burned Warwick in retaliation for the Great Swamp Massacre.

Stukely Westcott's sons Amos and Jeremiah fled to Prudence, while Stukely himself, then 84, went to Portsmouth where he stayed with Caleb Arnold, son of Gov. Benedict Arnold and Demaris Westcott.

The partners' first use of Prudence was as a 3,000-acre hog farm, with Williams the active partner and the Governor collecting profits in Boston. But Williams was soon forced to sell his interest to Wil-

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51 Carl R. Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland, The Story of Cocomscussoc, Mirror of Colonial Rhode Island*. (Wickford, R.I.: Cocomscussoc Association, 1985).

52 From Winslow's *Hyocrisie Unmasked*, as quoted in Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, Vol. I, 1636-1700 (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1859).

liam Throckmorton to fund his mission to England in search of a charter in 1643. By 1663, the northern half of the island was owned by John Paine, a Boston merchant. Winthrop later sold his interest to nephew Stephen, and by 1672, the southern, or Winthrop, half of the island was owned by William Browne.

## ■ *The Sovereign Island of Prudence*

For almost all of its history, Prudence Island has been part of Portsmouth, which is located on the northern end of Aquidneck Island to the east. Portsmouth claims to be the home of the first democratic government in the New World. The local government was formed in 1637 by the followers of Anne Hutchinson, who had all been run out of Boston. As one Prudence Island wag put it, the town has been in committee ever since. But Prudence became a separate British colony for a brief moment in 1672 thanks to "a most unexpected invasion of the rights of Rhode Island."<sup>53</sup>

As told by Samuel Greene Arnold in his 1859 history of the Rhode Island, the story begins with the Duke of York acquiring a Council of Plymouth grant to lands all over New England, including a large part of Maine, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and Long Island (New York).

Prudence Island, purchased by Roger Williams and Gov. Winthrop, had long since passed out of their hands, and was the property of John Paine, a merchant of Boston. He had contributed liberally to rebuild Fort James, at York, and now received from Gov. Lovelace, as the Duke of York, a grant of Prudence island, to be held as a free manor, by the name of Sophy Manor, for an annual quit-rent of two barrels of cider and six pairs of capons. The following week the grant was confirmed, and Paine was made Governor for life, with a Council to be chosen from the inhabitants of the island, of whom there were now a considerable number, and Courts for the trial of small causes were established, larger ones to be tried at the New York assizes...

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53 Samuel Greene Arnold, *History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, Volume. I, 1636-1700. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1859.

On account of further payments made by Paine towards Fort James he was relieved from quit-rent, and the island was released from all taxes. The estate was held by him in fee simple, and was now an absolutely independent government, the smallest in America...<sup>54</sup>

By accepting the grant, Paine violated a 1658 Rhode Island law against recognizing competing jurisdictions, and says Arnold, "This act of intrusion aroused the spirit of the colony." Paine was tried in Newport in October:

Upon an Indictment by the Genrl Solicetor against Mr John Paine for procureing a pattent from the Govermt of New York for Prudence Island being part of this Collony: The said Mr John Paine being bound to this Court and in Court Calld appeard, the Indictment and Charge to him Read, and he demanded of whether Guilty or not guilty, pleads not Guilty and Referrs himself for Tryall to God and the Cuntry.

[in margin:] jurriors on Mr John Paines Indictment: Mr Stephen Arnold foreman. Weston Clarke, John Greene, Thomas Dungin. John Easton junr, William Clarke, Thom. Nicolls. Lawra. Turner. John Holme. John Rathbone, Latham Clarke, Adam Wooly

The Jurries Verdict (Guilty) The Court doe pass their Judgment that in this Case the said Mr John Paine hath Trancegressed the law of this Collony and doe centance him accordingly. only doe suspend the Execution untill the Genrl Court of Tryalls in May next at Newport.<sup>55</sup>

Paine's sentence was never carried out, as the matter was settled before the May court session, and says Arnold, "Prudence Island quietly relapsed from the condition of independent sovereignty to its early dependence on the town of Portsmouth." With the governance of Prudence safely returned to the Portsmouth committee, Paine began selling off his holdings on the island.

## ■ *Citizen John*

After shutting down Sophy Manor, the next action of the court involved a certain John Smith:

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54 Arnold, *History*.

55 *Rhode Island General Court of Trials*, 1671-1704.

John Smith of Prudence this 29th of October tooke the Engadgement to his Majesty and this Collony.<sup>56</sup>

It was important for John to demonstrate that he had no allegiance to the competing government, because throughout this episode, he was one of John Paine's tenants, working a 300-acre farm near the northern end of the island.

At the very northern end of the island Paine leased out a 300-acre farm to John Snook. Smith's farm was just to the south bounded on the east by Potter's Cove, and on the west by Sheep Pen Swamp and Pine Hill Point.

In August 1673, John Smith, William Allen and John Snook were witnesses to a deed by John Paine conveying the two farms to trustees for his children.<sup>57</sup> The southern boundary of the property was marked by the fence between John Smith's farm and William Allen's.

At the October 10, 1673, Portsmouth Town Council Meeting "John Smith and John Snooke are propounded to be admitted ffreemen."<sup>58</sup> Assuming that one had to own real estate to be a freeman, it seems likely that Smith and Snook purchased their farms from the Paine trustees.

## ■ *John Paine's Tenants on Prudence Island*

Other residents of Prudence at this time included James Sweet, whose cousins, Phillis and Mary Gereardy, would marry two of John Smith's sons, and who would team up with one of the boys to buy land in Warwick (see "Ancient Mary and Her Two Husbands" on page 33).

John died on the island in 1677, but Margaret fought on. On October 24, 1677, as executrix of John's will, she won a suit against the estate of John Paine:

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56 *Rhode Island General Court of Trials, 1671-1704*.

57 *Earliest Land Evidence on Prudence Island in Narragansett Bay, R. I.*, Edited by Charles G. Maytum (Providence: Bound manuscript at the R.I. Historical Society, 1964).

58 *The Early Town Records of Portsmouth*, Edited by Clarence S. Brigham (Providence: 1901), [160].

Upon an action of Debt com[m]enced by Margrirt Smith, Widow and Executrix to the deceased John Smith of Prudance Island, plaintiff against the Estate of the deceased Mr John Paine of said Prudance Defendant. A Nihill dicett in open Court. The Jurrys Verdict. Wee finde for the plaintiff debt and damage twenry five pound in mony, and thirry seven pounds tenn shillings cuntry pay and cost of Court. Judgment Granted by the Court. Execution given forth.<sup>59</sup>

Good work for someone not yet cleared of being a “perjured person.” Margaret was not always at odds with her neighbors, as she married John Snook the following year.

John Smith and Margaret had five children:

- John (d. 1730), who married Phillis Gereardy. His story is continued in “The Smith Brothers (and Gereardy Sisters) Come to Boston Neck” on page 57.
- Jeremiah (d. 1720), who married Phillis’s sister Mary. In addition to managing a very successful plantation on Prudence Island, Jeremiah was active in Portsmouth politics, as told in “Jeremiah Walks the Line” on page 65.
- Mercy, who married Benjamin Clarke, of Kings Town. Their son Emanuel (born April 4, 1697) married Margaret Smith, the widow of Jeremiah’s son Ephraim (died 1722). Emanuel would make a name for himself with his conflict resolution through pyrotechnics (page 73).
- Hannah (d. 1712), who married Joseph Case (1654-1741), also of Kings Town, and had seven children; Joseph (b. 1678), William (b. 1681), Mary (b. 1682), Hannah (b. 1687), Margaret (b. 1690), John (b. 1692), and Emanuel (b. 1699).
- Daniel (died July 15, 1707), sailor, bachelor and principal inheritor of his mother’s estate, whether it was by an explicit will or John Snook dutifully following Margaret’s instructions. In his own will, Daniel left half of the land bequeathed by John Snook to his sister Mercy. He left the remainder, plus his interest in the “Mashantatck Lands” to sister Hannah.

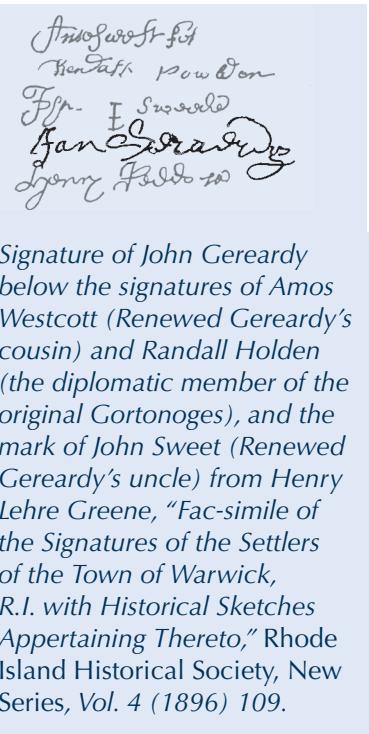
# How the Feud with a Dutch Trader Saved Warwick from the Puritans

■ *John Gereardy (died about 1690) and Renewed Sweet (1626 to 1681)*

Phillis and Mary Gereardy, who married John Smith's sons John and Jeremiah, were baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam, New York, on October 11, 1654, as Philippe and Marritie respectively, in honor of their grandparents Philip Gereardy and Marie Pollet, keepers of the Wooden Horse Tavern (as told in "The Militiaman and the Barmaid" on page 4).

Philip and Marie's son John was trading in Narragansett Bay, possibly at Richard Smith's settlement at Wickford, when he ventured further north to the new settlement in Warwick.<sup>60</sup> In the Warwick Records, "John Gereard" is listed among "Inhabitants received in order as they cam first." He is listed 27th, after "Amos Wascot" (Warwick Records, 79), and he is a signatory to a decree "Confirmed this 23d January 1648" along with many of the Purchasers and Proprietors (Warwick Records, 73-4). The signatures are on a torn leaf and the actual decree is obscured.

The same town records are filled with evidence of John's wrangling, trading and relieving others of their property. Sometimes, he was successful, as when he took on brother-in-law John Warner, and sometimes he was not, as when he riled up the Narragansetts in 1652. Members of his crew had pilfered the grave of Pessius' sister, and the irate sachem showed up in War-



*Signature of John Gereardy below the signatures of Amos Westcott (Renewed Gereardy's cousin) and Randall Holden (the diplomatic member of the original Gortonoses), and the mark of John Sweet (Renewed Gereardy's uncle) from Henry Lehre Greene, "Fac-simile of the Signatures of the Settlers of the Town of Warwick, R.I. with Historical Sketches Appertaining Thereto," Rhode Island Historical Society, New Series, Vol. 4 (1896) 109.*

60 *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*, Edited by Howard M. Chapin, (Providence: RIHS, 1926). Numbers in brackets refer to the original leafs as annotated by Chapin.

wick with 80 warriors demanding satisfaction. The matter was resolved peacefully by Roger Williams who wrote:

We fear that John Garriard was drawn in by them {the crew}, at least to consent to share with such booty. So, it pleased the Lord to pacify all with our attaching of the Dutchman's goods and debts, until he have made satisfaction to the sachem's charge against him.<sup>61</sup>

Despite this commotion, John Gereardy was accepted as a Freeman in Warwick in 1655. What makes his acceptance surprising is not John's scuffs with the law, which were offset by his liquor, furs, guns and charming personality, but the distrust the Warwick Purchasers had for individuals from other colonies.

We can't blame Gorton and the other settlers for being a tad suspicious when John Gereardy showed up in town sometime in 1646. Trouble was brewing from all sides. Thanks to the parliamentary charter secured by Roger Williams and John Clarke, Warwick and the other three towns had standing as the newly patented Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. But the grant was often ignored by the acquisitive Puritans, and they continued to press their interests, arresting visitors to Boston and stirring up trouble with the Narragansetts.

Connecticut was vying for all of the land south of Providence. Not to be outdone by their Puritan brothers in the Bay Colony, Plymouth made claims on Warwick and was getting ready to enforce them. And Ponham, emboldened by protection he was to receive from the Massachusetts Bay leaders, was continuing to disturb the peace with raids on livestock.

The Warwick men would also have reason to suspect the intentions of Newport a few years later, when William Coddington secured a charter naming him Governor of Rhode Island for life, thus splitting Portsmouth and Newport from the new colony.

Gereardy was not only an outsider, he was a Dutch agent to boot. Tensions were mounting between England and Holland, and four years later, when the two were at war, the Colony banned all

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61 As quoted in Charles Knowles Bolton, "Phillip Gereardy of New Amsterdam, Landlord of the City Tavern and His Rhode Island Relatives," collected in Family Tree Maker CD180 Family History, Rhode Island Genealogies #1.

trade with New Amsterdam. In addition to the multiple spellings of Gereardy (often mixed in the same document), John is frequently referred to as the Dutchman or the Dutch, despite his Parisian ancestry. You can hear both suspicion that John was involved in illegal trade with the Dutch and John's commercial success in the testimony of Giles Glover before the Warwick council in 1654:

vpon oath in the assemblie sayth, that he hath been twice at the Dutch, and that for the last time he was theare John Garioud did trade something there, and ferdere sayth that he saw an order vnder the hand of Mr. Holiman and John Greene, Junior, for there going thither, and sayth we brought howes, gunnes and powder, but traded with [them]. He tarred but ten dayes, and [said] that he traded with some that weare not his Father and Mother, and that we brought eighteen ankers of liquers the first voyage, and six the last. Robert Westkote went along about to buy bever and liquers; but doth not know that bought any [thing] but one hundred howes upon John Gariad account, and that John Gariad brought some deare skinnes but some he had from his mother.<sup>62</sup>

There's an offense in there somewhere but there is also lot of wheeling and dealing with the Warwick settlers. It appears that John settled in Warwick, acting as the local guy for Dutch traders, but also kept a house in New Amsterdam and worked his interests along the coast. He had his daughters baptized there in 1654 (probably to the dismay of the father-in-law Ezekiel and the other Baptists who did not believe in child baptism), and a November 15, 1658 entry in the Register of the Provincial Secretary, New Amsterdam, grants "Power of Attorney Michiel Jansen to Johannes Gereardy to collect a certain debt from Reynier Dominicus, at the South river [Delaware River]."<sup>63</sup>

It is not known how John met Renewed Sweet. Perhaps it was through her Uncle Stukely Westcott and his trading sons, Robert and Jeremiah. John's relationship with the Westcotts was mutually rewarding, as Stukely acquired additional land in the Shawomet Purchase thanks to John, and the outsider achieved some standing in the community. Or maybe it was commerce of a different kind, as the venerable Rhode Island historian Samuel Green Arnold unknowingly alludes to in his tome:

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62 As quoted in Bolton.

63 As cited by Ray Greene Huling, "Rhode Islanders at Manhattan," *The Narragansett Historical Register*, Volume 8 (July 1890) No. 3, p 246.

Between Rhode Island and the Dutch at Manhattan, there existed quiet {sic} an active trade, and occasional intermarriages resulted from the intercourse thus maintained.<sup>64</sup>

John and Renewed were married some time before 1648 and their maintained intercourse resulted in at least three children: Phillis and Mary, who married the Smith brothers, and John. Their birth order is indicated by the names if the Gereardys followed the Christening custom in the Dutch Reformed Church of naming the first child after the paternal grandfather (Phillip), the second after the paternal grandmother (Marie), the third after the maternal grandfather (John, as in Sweet or Holliman).

Arnold goes onto describe an incident that was to provide John Gereardy his 15 minutes of fame and may have altered the course of the history of Warwick.

A serious disturbance occurred at this time in Warwick. The crew of a small Dutch vessel which arrived there in January {1652}, on a trading voyage, boarded for some two months with John Warner, who was this year the Assistant, or second magistrate of the town, and had stored their goods in his house for sale. One of these men, named Geraerd, was a brother-in-law of Warner, both having married into the family of Ezekiel Holliman. Upon settling their accounts a dispute arose, which it was vainly attempted to adjust by arbitration, and the Dutchmen appealed to the Court. At their request a special session was held. Warner refused to answer to the case, and judgement was entered against him by default, and execution granted for the damages assessed by a jury. Warner's wife was also indicted upon suspicion of felony, and the case carried up to the General Court of Trials for the colony. The conduct of Warner before and after this trial was so bad that he was degraded from his office as Assistant and disenfranchised.<sup>65</sup>

The Dutchmen were represented by their man John Gereardy, who managed to keep his cool, take some property from Warner on behalf of a Herman Hartoch of New Amsterdam, and sell it to Uncle Stukely:

[Warwick Records, 309] It is ordered and agreed by Mr Randall Houlden and my self namely John Greene Ju beinge Towne officers upon the request of Hurmanus Hartoch Jan Gereard &c that there bee court of Trialls held on wednesday next followinge the date hereof which concluded to bee the 17 day of March this present moneth 1651

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64 Arnold, *History*.

65 Arnold, *History*.

The action of John Gareard being an action of the case agst John Warner defendant is entered

The answer of Mr John Warner in the action of John Garuard in the action of the case is nihil dicit the Petty Jury hanvinge brought in their verdict it is this

Wee all agree to give the plaintive ten pounds for the damadges the cost of the court together with damadges and the servinge the Execution being sumed up amouentes to 28 poun 9 shilling The goods levied by the Genll Sarieant for the discharge herof is one younge mare with the starr in her forehead prized by John Townsend & Richard Carder at twenty pound Item

[Warwick Records, 340-341] Dated in Warwicke the 1 of March 52 Ane agreement and bargane made and confirmed betwixt Stuckly Westkote and John Geraerdy both of Warwicke in the Collony of providence Platations in New England, that is to say the said John Geraerdy being authorized by Hurmanas Hartoch of the Menadoes in the New Netherlands to sel or dispose of certin landes being of John Warners of Warwick lying in the neck called Mishawomett being his great Lott contayning thirtie Acres more or lesse one six acre Lott more or lesse his medow share being six acres more or lesse as those parcells are now layd out, and were in possession and use of said John Warner,<sup>66</sup> but now taken by execution by suite of law for certain arreadges and dues belonging unto Hermanus Hartoch aforsaid, the said John Geraerdy being thus authorized as aforesaid doth sell and set over unto Stuckly Westkote all that rite and Interest belonging to Hermanus Hartoch and doth in his name authorize the said Stuckly Westkote to make use of the said execution in the Generall Recorders office and to record this bargaine and sale to have and Injoy the said parcells of land with the priviledg [341] belonging thereunto to him and his heirs forever without the hinderance or disturbance of the said Hermanus Hartoch or any by or under him in witnesse whereof I have hereunto set my hand the day and yeare abovesaid

Syned Sealed & delivereed  
in the presence of us  
John Greene Junior  
John [mark is vertical line with three horizontal hashes ] Cooke<sup>67</sup>

Jan Geraerdy

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66 This real estate does not unclude the six-acre house lot. The 30-acre lot is meadow land in the northwest corner of the Four-Mile Township, and the two six-acre lots are probably the upland and meadow on Warwick Neck.

67 Chapin, *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*.

John Warner was one of the original “Gortonoges,” figuring prominently in the early settlement. He did time in a Bay Colony prison for the settlement and held office in both the town and the colony. In addition to his Purchase rights, he had acquired lands within the Township from owners who had returned to Providence and stood to inherit the Purchase rights of his father-in-law Ezekiel Holliman. But when the dispute arose with Gereardy and the Dutch crew, Warner had a total meltdown and quickly lost his standing in the settlement. On April 24, 1652, the town met to “degrade” him from office. Among the charges listed were:

[Warwick Records, 106]

Item for calling the officers of the town rogues and thieves with respect to their office.

Item for callinge the whole Towne rogues & theevess

Item for threateninge the lives of men

Item for threateninge to kill all the mares in Town.....

Item for threateninge an officer of the Collonie in open Court that if hee had him other-  
where he would beate out his braynes as also calling him a rogue<sup>68</sup>

To save the mares and the brains of the court officers, the town voted to attach Warner’s property (his six-acre house lot and Purchase rights in land beyond the Four Mile Township that had not yet been laid out) and to bar him from selling it. The property was released in July (over the objections of Gorton and four others).

It may seem a bit harsh to take someone’s property for a little name-calling, but at this time Warner was circulating a prospectus offering the entire Shawomet Purchase for sale.<sup>69</sup> He had gathered signatures from roughly half of the Original and Received Purchasers when the incident with the Dutchmen interrupted his project. Before the incident, many seemed ready to cash out as things were quite bleak in Warwick. Ponham continued to vandalize their homesteads and refused to vacate Warwick Neck. The existence of the entire Colony was threatened by Coddington’s commission. And

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68 Chapin, *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*.

69 Ray Greene Huling, “An Offer of Sale by the Proprietors of Warwick in 1652,” *The Narragansett Historical Register*, Volume 2 (January 1884) No. 3, p 233ff.

Massachusetts and Plymouth kept up their harassment of the town. But Warner's behavior forced them to rethink the proposition, which they now saw as seditious. In the final item, Warner is charged:

[Warwick Records, 106]

Item for his employing an agent in his behalfe to write to Massachusetts thereby goinge about to intrale the liberties of the Towne contrary to the priviledges of ye Towne & to the great indignitie of the honorable Stat of England who granted the sayd priviledges to us<sup>70</sup>

The Warwick men renewed their faith in the original purchase, and in September word came from England that Coddington's commission had been rescinded. In the meantime, Warner and his family returned to England, where he died before 1668. Warner's significant holdings (about 1,850 acres after the 42 acres and meadow rights were sold to Uncle Stukely) were held in trust by Ezekiel Holliman for the benefit of the four Warner children, John, Susanna and Mary, who moved back to England with the parents, and Rachel, who stayed in Providence with the Thomas Olney family. In 1665, Ezekiel moved across the Buckeye Brook to live in the Warner House, and sold the Holliman House Lot to John Gereardy, along with his share in Potowomut and the Towskeounke meadow.

When Ezekiel died intestate in 1659, the Warwick Council followed its custom of interpreting the deceased's wishes and granted most of Holliman's property to grandson John Warner, Jr., who was still in England at the time. The council appointed Walter Todd and John Green trustees of the Warwick property and instructed them to tidy up some matters before Junior reached his majority. One such issue was to affirm the sale of the Holliman homestead to Gereardy, which they did on April 6, 1663, "ye 15th year of ye raigne of our soveraigne Lord King Charles King of England scotland france & Irland etcetera" [Warwick Records, 445-446]. Immediately after receiving the deed, John transferred the property to Mary Holliman, who would later leave it to John and Renewed in her will (Mary's will is on page 34). The two transactions were probably prompted by Junior's return to Warwick in 1663 to reclaim the Warner legacy, inherit all things Holliman and continue the feud with the Gereardy family.

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70 Chapin, *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*.

John Gereardy stayed active in the town and in the courts. He served on a Coroner's Inquest into "The Carkas of a dead Indian beinge found dead in the limits of this Towne of Warwicke" (Warwick Records 314), sued and was sued by the Westcotts (all in the family), and transported two Indian prisoners to court in Newport. All of the land that John bought and sold was within the Four-mile Town-ship, and he never got his mitts on the large tracts to the west that went to the Purchasers.

The last, and sometimes only, item included about John Gereardy by genealogists and historians is that he made a rather ungraceful exit in 1666 and lived the rest of his life in Providence:

[Warwick Records, 242]

July ye 20 1666

Ordered That John Garryardy who hath Confessed himselfe to be a Thiefe & stands Convict in a Court of record for stealing be not for ye future Admitted to have any thing to doe in ye towne meetings but is by this order Expunged ye Socyedy of honest men which order did pase upon a bill presnted by Edmund Calverley Towne Clerke<sup>71</sup>

Well, I'm here to rehabilitate John, or at least raise some doubt. The order may have been overturned, as John shows up again the following January:

[Warwick Records, 263-264]

Saterday ye 11th of January 1667 At A towne meeting

Captaine John Green chosen moderator

The Towne doe Order that A raite of fifteen pounds be maid towards killing two wolves lately presented by John Geryardy As also that ye charge of making ye said raite be considered Captaine John Green Randall houlden Richard Carder & Elyza Collins or ye maior part of them Ar chosen by<sup>72</sup>

The confessed thief or the bounty hunter may have been his son John. Before moving to Providence Island (not Providence), John was in and around Warwick often enough over the next couple of decades enough to catch grief from John Warner, Jr. Despite the trustees' deed, Junior insisted that he should get the Holliman house lot, as described by this affidavit in 1724:

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71 Chapin, *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*.

72 Chapin, *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*.

High Stone, age 76 or thereabouts, and engaged according to law testify and saith that to his certain knowledge John Warner and John Geready, both of Warwick in the colony of Rhode Island, now both deceased; did in their lifetime often confer very much concerning the land on where John Geready [son of John and Renewed] lives in Warwick which land this deponent understood to lie in the right of Ezekiel Holliman and this deponent further saith that he hath often heard the aforesaid Warner claiming the aforesaid land and said it was his own Estate as he was heir to his Grandfather Holliman, and that he did so claim it until near the time of his death and also that this deponent saith that he hath seen John Geready so angry with said Warner for claiming the land as afore said that he hath been almost ready to fly in his face; and also that this deponent hath heard John Warner say that if he had not aforesaid land whilst he lived yet his children would have it after his death, and named his son John Warner, now living.

Taken upon Solemn Engagement the 18th day of April, Anno Domini, 1724, before me:  
ANDREW HARRIS, Affident.<sup>73</sup>

John Warner, Jr. died in 1712, and his son took up the cause and brought an action against John Geready, a weaver and grandson of John and Renewed, for trespass and illegally occupying the Holliman place. Jane Fiske made the following abstract of the case folder:

John Warner of Warwick, Esq., vs. John Geready of Warwick, weaver, in an action of trespass, for possession of a dwelling house and ten acres in Warwick, partly orchard and the rest arable, pasture, and meadow land, formerly the house lot of Ezekiel Hollyman late of Warwick, yeoman, deceased great-grandfather of the plaintiff. The property was bounded northwesterly by the main street that leads through the town, southwesterly by the highway that leads into the neck, southeasterly by a highway and northeasterly partly by the river, partly by land in possession of the plaintiff. Ezekiel Hollyman died in the year 1659 intestate and the Town Council of Warwick did on 27 September 1659 did approve John Warner one of the grandchildren and father of the plaintiff, to be heir of all the housing and lands belonging to said Hollyman at his death in the town of Warwick. Said John Warner died in or about April 1712 intestate and right to property descended to the plaintiff his eldest son and heir. Writ date 2 February 1726[7]; Nathaniel Newdigate attorney. Defendant answered that the Town Council's action [in making a will] was absurd and contrary to law.

The file contains copies of several depositions made years earlier. On 24 April 1695 James Sweet, Sr., aged about 73 or 74, of Kingstown, signed his mark to a statement

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73 This translated version of the testimony is from genealogical Web pages maintained by B.T. Stone ([www.qtm.net/~btstone/1724.html](http://www.qtm.net/~btstone/1724.html)).

about the town lot which John Gereardy of Warwick bought of Ezekiel Holliman. John Rice also deposed. On 30 August 1708 Samuel Gorton of Warwick, aged 88 or thereabouts, and Lt. Amos Stafford, aged 52 or thereabouts, made deposition, and on 18 April 1724 Hugh Stone 76 or thereabouts.<sup>74</sup>

Unfortunately, the verdicts were recorded on slips that have been separated from these records in the Court Book A, and may have been destroyed by the British when they exited Newport in 1778. The roster of witnesses includes Renewed's uncle James Sweet, nephew Amos Stafford and Samuel Gorton, who refused to rescind the original taking of Warner's property. I don't think the verdict went young Warner's way. Warwick vital records show that John and Sarah Gereardy continued to reside in Warwick at least until 1737. Whether or not they stayed in the Holliman house, I'm sure the feud continued.

# The Smith Brothers (and Gereardy Sisters) Come to Boston Neck

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## ■ *John Smith (died 1730) and Phillis Gereardy (1654-1729)*

*The Providence Journal* obituary (February 20, 1914) of Stephen Dracus Smith, Sr., Westcott's sixth child, tells us that Stephen's "parents were Westcott and Mary Holland Smith. What is now Boston Neck was once owned by two Smith brothers who came from England, and Mr. Smith's grandfather fell heir to much property from them."

The two Smith brothers who came from England were not Mark and Trade, but John and Jeremiah, the eldest sons of John Smith of Prudence Island. And if they were born in England, they did not emigrate directly to Boston Neck, but came by way of Jamestown, Warwick and Prudence. They started a ferry service to Jamestown from Boston Neck and ran two 330-acre plantations on either side of the ferry road.

When the Smith brothers arrived, they brought with them the Gereardy sisters: Mary, who married Jeremiah in 1672, and Phillis, who married John in 1674.

John and Phillis had four children:

- John (died 1771), who inherited half of the ferry and all of the Narragansett farm. He married Mercy Westcott in 1708.
- Daniel, who lived in Warwick, and who had a son named Daniel.
- A son who died before 1729 and had a son Ebenezer.
- Hopestill, who married Joseph Northrup and lived in Warwick.

## ■ *The Farms at South Ferry*

Boston Neck is a ten-mile by one-mile stretch of fertile land that includes the villages of Hamilton and Saunderstown in North Kingstown and the north end of Narragansett, Rhode Island. Originally

called the Namcook Purchase, the area is bounded on the east by Narragansett Bay and on the west by Narrow River, which in Colonial times was called the Pettasquamscutt River. At the north end of the neck, the east and west banks rise to the center to form a north-south ridge that gradually tapers down at the southern end to the Narrows, the point where Narrow River takes a quick turn to the east and empties into Narragansett Bay.

While the Smith Brothers did not own all of the neck as the obituary implies, they did own more than a square mile of the north end of the Narragansett portion. The obit writer or his informant may have had Westcott's ancestors mixed up with Richard Smith who arranged the Atherton Purchase of Boston Neck from Cojonoquat, chief sachem of the Narragansetts, in 1659. Other investors included Governor Winthrop of Connecticut (son of Governor Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony), Smith's son Richard and Major Humphrey Atherton (see "Humphrey Catches On" on page 14).

In 1692, Winthrop sold 663 acres to John and Jeremiah Smith who divided the tract in two, with John taking the northern half and Jeremiah the southern parcel. Four years later, the Smiths signed an agreement to run a ferry service between Boston Neck and Jamestown, which began operation sometime before the end of the century. The ferry landing was on Jeremiah's land just south of the line dividing the two properties.<sup>75</sup> In a 1709 act setting up ferries throughout the colony, the Colonial Assembly gave the Smiths an exclusive right to carry passengers (human and bovine) to Jamestown for seven years in consideration of £4 per year and free passage for jurors and others doing business of the Colony. Josiah Arnold got a similar franchise to operate "the west ferry from Jamestown, to Kings-town." This was before the Frequent Crossers plan.<sup>76</sup>

In 1703, the Smiths laid out a road on the border between their lands from the ferry landing to the crossing on the Pettasquamscutt River. In 1716, recognizing this "proper road four rods wide" as "very

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75 For a history of the Boston Neck Ferry, check out: Charles V. and Anna A. Chapin, *History of Rhode Island Ferries* (Providence: Oxford Press, 1925), pages 262-275.

76 *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, John Russell Bartlett, Editor (Providence: Knowles, Anthony & Company, State Printers, 1856-1862; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1960), Volume 1, No. 210.



*This mural painted by Ernest Hamlin Baker as a WPA project and installed in the Wakefield, R.I., Post Office in 1939 depicts the plantation economy of the Narragansett Country, which depended on slave labor as much as on the Smiths' ferry and shipping dock. Image from Christopher P. Bickford, Picturing History: Wakefield's Post Office Mural of 1939 (Kingston, R.I.: Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, 2003).*

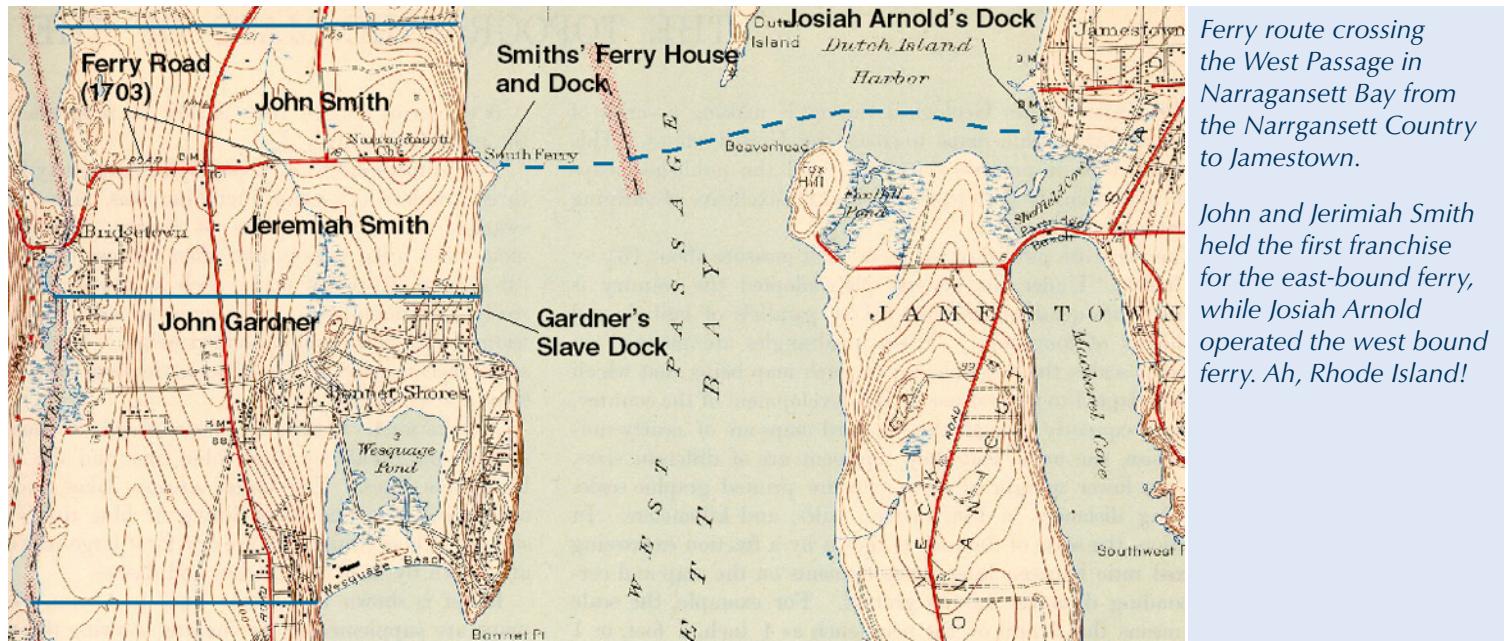
commodious and convenient for travellers passing from ferry to ferry," the Rhode Island Assembly accepted the road as a public way. It continues today as Bridgetown Road and South Ferry Road.<sup>77</sup>

## ■ *Ferry Road and Kings Town to Jamestown Ferry*

The first three decades of the 18th century saw the rise of the numerous plantations in Narragansett Country, which raised livestock, exported cheeses and produce, and bred riding horses known as the Narragansett Pacers. The Smith ferry enabled the planters to move goods to Newport where they were exported to Europe and shipped to other colonies. The ferry landing also served as a port for direct shipment to New York and the Caribbean.

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77 *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, Volume IV, page 210.



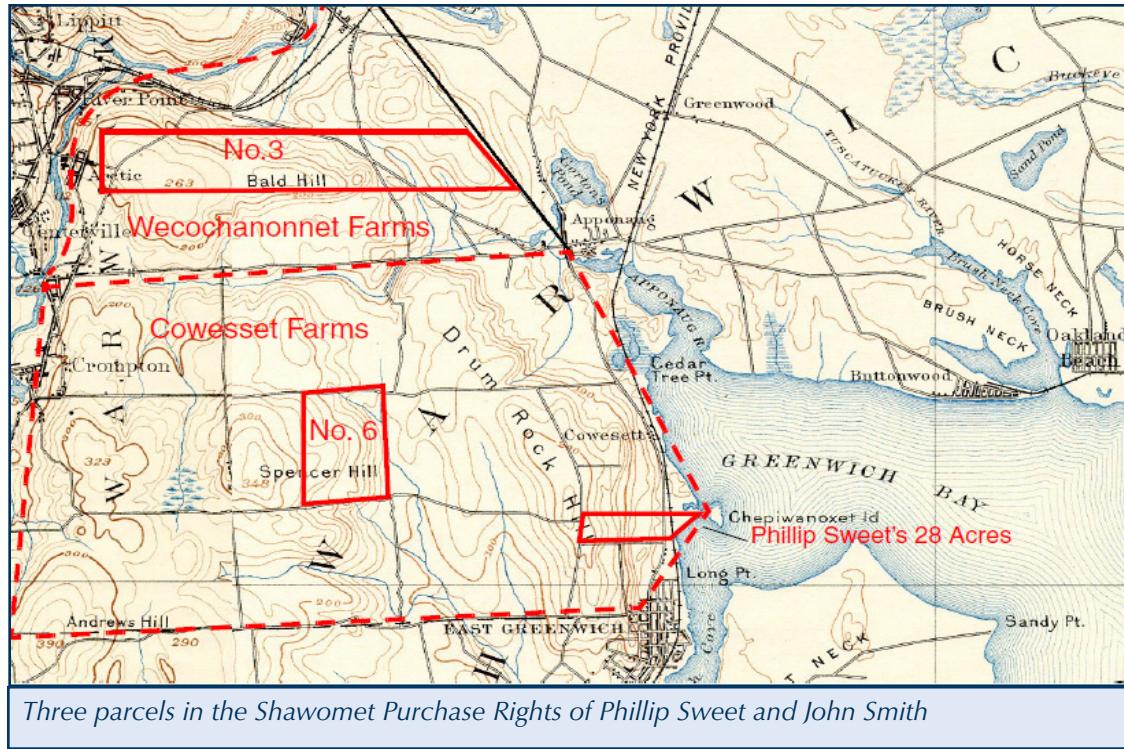
*Ferry route crossing the West Passage in Narragansett Bay from the Narragansett Country to Jamestown.*

*John and Jerimiah Smith held the first franchise for the east-bound ferry, while Josiah Arnold operated the west bound ferry. Ah, Rhode Island!*

The importance of the ferry is evidenced by the controversy that surrounded its operation throughout the century. The complaints became loud enough in 1712 that the Assembly granted neighbor John Gardner the right to operate a competing ferry service while a commission reviewed ferry operations. But two years later the commission determined that the Smiths were serving well and Gardner's charter was revoked. In 1734 Jeffrey Watson bought an interest in the ferry from Jeremiah's son Ebenezer, and took an active role in the business. Within the year, he suddenly sold his share to Joshua Bill, when criticism from John Willet and other planters got the best of Watson.

Along with the landing, the Smiths built a Ferry house where passengers and locals would gather for food and entertainment. This watering hole may have been the downfall of some of John and Jeremiah's descendants.

The ferry brought Africans purchased at the Newport slave market to Narragansett. The plantation economy relied heavily on slaves, which also included captured Indians and a few indentured servants from England. John Gardner, whose father purchased Richard Smith Jr.'s tract to the south of



Jeremiah's, owned some 40 Negroes in 1730 valued at £630, and even operated his own slave dock just south of the ferry on what is now the Side Beach at Bonnet Shores.<sup>78</sup>

In his 1729 will, John Smith distributed his eleven slaves to his sons and grandchildren. By 1782, grandson John owns only one adult slave, Cuff, whom he instructs to be set free upon his death.

There is no inventory of John's property recorded with his will, so it is difficult to judge how successful he was at farming, but we can assume (based on the number of slaves he owned) that his farm holdings were similar to Jeremiah's, whose inventory included cattle, horses, hogs and more than 750 sheep.

<sup>78</sup> Carl R. Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland, The Story of Cocumscussoc, Mirror of Colonial Rhode Island* (Wickford, R.I.: Cocumscussoc Association, 1985).

## ■ *John's Warwick Lands*

In addition to the Narragansett farm and his share in the ferry operation, which he left to John, Jr., John also owned several large parcels in Warwick, which he divvied among John, Daniel, Hopestill, and grandson Ebenezer. He wasn't the first John Smith to lay claim to the acreage.

John Smith the Merchant and Warwick political boss (third in the list of John Smiths on page 2) acquired two Purchase Rights in the original Shawomet agreement in 1646. He later acquired a third Purchase Right from Nicholas Hart, who apparently bailed out after a couple of years.<sup>79</sup> John had no children, but his wife Ann had a son from a previous marriage, Eleazar Collins, also called Eliza. When John died in 1663, the three Purchase Rights went to Eliza. On March 27, 1677 (a year after the Narragansetts destroyed Warwick), Eliza sold one Purchase Right to Phillip Sweet and John Smith for £50. Phillip was the oldest son of James, Renewed Gereardy's brother, and John was the son of John Smith of Prudence Island (fifth in the list of John Smiths on page 2). In the same year, Collins sold the second share to two Newport investors, and half of the third to John Greene, Jr. (The records for each of these sales note that Eliza sold with his mother's and his wife's consent.) Ann Smith died in 1678, and Eliza committed suicide in 1682, leaving five children, the oldest of which, Eliza Jr., was killed by a falling tree in 1687.

The share that Phillip Sweet and John Smith purchased came to include a 28-acre lot on Greenwich Bay just below Chepiwanoxet Island, parcel number 6 in Cowessel Farms, number 3 in Weco-chaconnet Farms, and two 300-plus acre lots in the Seventeen Men's Land.

In 1664, Smith sold 13 1/2 acres of the Cowessel Purchase to his partner, giving Phillip Sweet a 28-acre farm at Chepiwanoxet.<sup>80</sup> Sweet divided up his portions of the lots in the two farms, but Smith kept his shares in tact for his children.

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79 Frank Greene Bates with Charles M. Perry, *Division of the Shawomet Purchase in the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*. (Bloomington, Indiana, 1953, manuscript at the Rhode Island Historical Society).

80 John O. Austin, *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*, (Albany, 1887) (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969).

In the meantime, the heirs to the Collins land (an unsold half of one Purchase Right) were trying to recover from more bad luck. Grandson Michael, for example, was killed at sea. In 1725, several of the heirs sued tenants on the Wecochanonnet Farm No. 3 for trespass, and a lengthy court case ensued (luckily providing some additional detail in the court records about the Smiths and the Sweets). Eliza's heirs lost, as the original sale to John Smith and Phillip Sweet was affirmed, but they won some relief on appeal.<sup>81</sup>

In his will, John Smith gives 120 acres in the Cowesett Farms to son Daniel, 200 more acres to daughter Hopestill, and another parcel to grandson Ebenezer. The three bequests sum to at least three times the Cowesett acreage bought with Phillip Sweet, but Cowesett may also include parcels further west in the Seventeen Men's Land. He divided the Wecochanonnet Parcel (about 200 acres) between John Jr. and Daniel.

But don't think the patriarch bequeathed any of this property outright. He stipulates that John Jr. was to leave the Boston Neck farm to grandsons John and William, and even specifies how the property was to be divided. At the end of the will, he states that if Daniel, who is to leave the Warwick property to son Daniel, moves back to Narragansett to live with his mother, all his interest in the Warwick property will revert to John.

An indication of why papa wanted the boys separated comes in 1735, when Daniel brought an action against Richard Ireson, a Newport butcher, for non-payment on goods he had supplied Ireson over previous two years. Brother John was deposed in the case and testified that Daniel certainly had access to the livestock in question and was capable of delivering the goods.

[Daniel] had for these twenteyears past ales taken and killed what sheep he had a mine to and carved them out of my flock.<sup>82</sup>

Daniel won the dispute, no doubt because of the excellent character reference from his brother.

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81 Jane Fletcher Fiske, *Gleanings from Newport Court Files, 1659-1783*). Boxford, Massachusetts, 1998, #232.

82 Fiske, *Gleanings*, #668.

There is no indication of John's religious preference, although he exhibits a bit of piety in thanking the Maker in the will's preamble and in granting bibles to six of his granddaughters (sorry, girls, I ran out of slaves). His neighbors Rowland Robinson and John Gardner were strong supporters of the Church of England missionary Dr. James MacSparran, and by this time, the Quakers were a dominant force in the Narragansett country. But given the Westcott influence, my guess is that John was a Baptist.

John gives very explicit instructions in his will that Phillis was to be supported with ferry revenue, the milk of one cow, an apple tree, an annual cord of wood, and other reverential treatment from son John all in lieu of her claim to a third of his estate. But the executor was spared all these details as Phillis died in 1729 several months before John went on to his plantation in the sky.

# Jeremiah Walks the Line

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## ■ *Jeremiah Smith (died after 1720) and Mary Gereardy (1654-1730)*

Since Colonial times Prudence Island has been a part of the town of Portsmouth on Aquidneck Island to the east, but many of the islanders had stronger commercial and social ties with the settlement in Warwick. For starters, it was a shorter sail from the west side of the island to Warwick, less than three nautical miles from John Smith's farm to Shawomet Point, and not much more from James Sweet's orchard to Potowamut. The early Warwick records evidenced brisk trade between Prudence and Warwick, and numerous land deals in which the Purchasers sold grazing rights on their Warwick Neck and Potowamut parcels to Prudence farmers. It should be no surprise that before the elder John Smith's death in 1677, his sons would purchase lands in Warwick as Jeremiah did in 1672 and John did in 1675, when he teamed up with Phillip Sweet, son of James, to buy one of the three Purchase Rights held by Eliza Collins.

Jeremiah purchased a Township interest in Warwick in 1672 and later that year married Mary Gereardy. Jeremiah and Mary Smith had six children:

- John (died about 1736) and wife Hannah inherited a 300-acre farm in the Pettasquamscutt Purchase from Jeremiah.
- Ephraim (1674 to 1722) married Margaret Pearce (1686 to 1731), and they settled on the north part of the Boston Neck farm where there was a farmhouse. Margaret was the daughter of the Daniel Pearce who represented the southern side in the 1714 redrawing of the Prudence Island dividing line described in this chapter. After Margaret's death, her father and her brother Nathaniel in North Kingstown were made guardians of her children.
- Ebenezer (before 1678 to 1743). Ebenezer lived on Boston Neck for a while, returned to Prudence Island after his father's death. Ebenezer apparently left his parcel in the care of

his sons Ebenezer and Ephraim, who to repeat a South County phrase, “weren’t no good for nuthin’.” A 1730 census of the Town of Portsmouth lists Ebenezer Smith as the head of a household of ten white people and four blacks.<sup>83</sup>

- Sarah (1678 to 1765) married Jeremiah Hazard of Portsmouth (1675 to 1765). Jeremiah’s grandfather Thomas Hazard is the immigrant ancestor of the large and prosperous Hazard clan, one of the most influential families in southern Rhode Island and Newport during the 18th and 19th Centuries. Thomas, a widower, arrived in Rhode Island in 1639 with three children, and quickly became involved in the new settlement of Newport at the southern end of Aquidneck Island. He was a signer to the founding document, and with Robert Jefferies and Nicholas Eaton, was appointed to lay out the property lines.

In 1671, his only son Robert bought 500 acres (bounded today by Mooresfield and Stony Fort Roads just east of Kingston) from the Pettasquamscutt Purchasers. Jeremiah, Robert’s fifth and youngest son bought 300 acres in Pettasquamscutt and moved there in 1680.

- Mary married John Congdon of Shermantown Road in Kings Town.
- Deliverance married Robert Reynolds (1676 -1715) of Kings Town. They had four children: Robert, Mary (who married John Teft of Westerly), Deborah, and John.

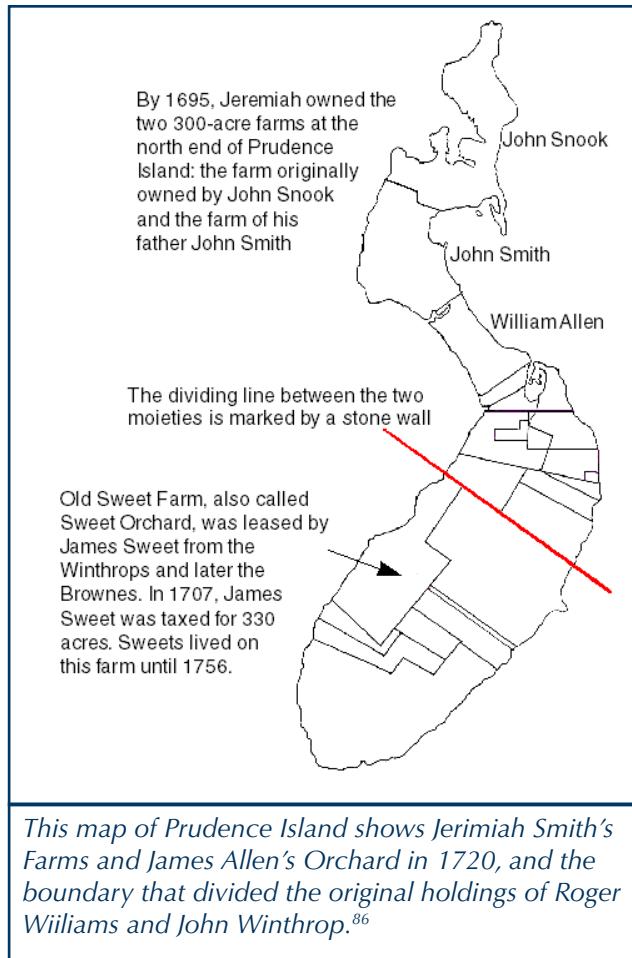
Jerimiah was designated a Freeman at the Warwick town meeting on April 21, 1675:

Voated And Ordered that ye towne Clarke doe Returne to ye next generall asemblys William Greene John Wickes Junior John Risse, John Low, Thomas stafford Junior And Jeremya smith they being inhabitants of ye towne of warwicke, in order to be made free-men of ye Collony that therby they may be Qualifyed to doe servis both for ye towne & collony without Exeption Acording to Law<sup>84</sup>

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83 Ruth W. Sherman, “1730 Census of Portsmouth, Rhode Island,” *Rhode Island Roots*, Volume VII (June 1981), page 16.

84 *More Early Records of the Town of Warwick, Rhode Island*, Cherry Fletcher Bramberg and Jane Fletcher Fiske, Editors (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2001); Book with Clasps, #140.



But Jerimiah soon moved back to Prudence, probably right before the Narragansetts destroyed Warwick in 1676. With the death of his father in 1677 and John Snook several years later, Jeremiah came into control of two 300-acre farms at the northern end of Prudence Island, while brother John went to live on Boston Neck.

Jeremiah was active in Portsmouth politics starting with his appointment with Thomas Brigs to be "Surveyors of cattell at Prudence Island" in 1686. He was also chosen Selectman in 1687, Constable for Prudence Island in 1690 and 1692, and one of three deputies "to attend the nex Generall assembly (1696) to be held at Providence."<sup>85</sup>

Indicative of Jeremiah's standing on Prudence was his role in a resolution of disputed property lines in 1714, which

involved redrawing the island's version of the Mason-Dixon Line. When Roger Williams was forced to sell his share in Prudence to raise money for his charter-seeking trek to England in 1643, Williams and John Winthrop divided the island equally with Williams taking and selling the northern half, and Winthrop getting the southern moiety. By 1676, ownership of the two parcels had passed through various

<sup>85</sup> Early Town Records of Portsmouth, Clarence Brigham, Editor (Providence, 1901), sheets 191, 193, 198, 202 and 297. Austin, *Genealogical Dictionary*, says Jeremiah was a Justice of the Peace in 1709.

investors and farmers, and the then owners hired a surveyor to clearly establish the boundary. On May 2, 1678, surveyor Nathaniel Colson gave this testimony:

Nathaniell Colson aged thirty years or thereabouts beinge engaged according to law testefyeth that about eighteen months since, I, beinge appointed by Joshua Coggeshall Col. Growne and William Allin of the one side and Benjamin Browne of the other side to survay Prudance Island, and now beinge desired to divide the sd island in equall halves between them, have begun the line at a rock now near halfe a rodd on the south side a dwelling house on the west side of sd island in which john davis now dwelleth, and from thence east twenty three degrees south to the water on the east side of said island to the best of my judgement Da. April 27th. 1678.<sup>86</sup>

The owner of the southern part was William Browne, a Salem investor who had bought the land from a Winthrop in February 1672. His site manager, son Benjamin, was apparently trying to end encroachment on land by other owners and tenants. In 1677, the Brownes brought suit against James Sweet for trespass.<sup>87</sup> They lost the case, but when Colson laid out the line son Benjamin was able to establish clear boundary and move the trespassers northward:

Nathaniell Colson aged thirty years or thereabouts and Stephen Cooke aged twenty three years, beinge engaged according to law testefieth that they beinge at Prudance island heard benjamin browne speak to the inhabitants of the south end of sd island to remove to the north side of the island that he might take possession of the south moyety of the island in the behalf of his father William Browne Senr. of Salem, which accordingly they did, and we did see sd Benjamin Browne take possession of the south moiety of sd island both by turf and twig William Allin then beinge present did consent unto his peccable possession the twenty seventh day of april one thousand six hundred seventy and eight. William Allin of Prudance Island aged (44) years beinge engaged according to law doth testify to the truth of what is above testified by Nathaniell Colson and Stephen Cooke beinge then present with them, the three persons mentioned above gave in their testimony upon this engagment.

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86 The transcript of surveyor Nathaniel Colson's testimony, the later testimony of Thomas Mumford and the map are from Charles G. Maytum, *Earliest Land Evidence on Prudence Island in Narragansett Bay, R.I.* (Providence, 1964), manuscript at the RIHS.

87 *Rhode Island General Court of Trials, 1671-1704*, transcribed by Jane Fletcher Fiske, (Boxford, Mass., 1998), p. 57.

Twenty-five years later, the islanders had to go through the same drill, and Jeremiah Smith, William Allen and Daniel Pierce hired Thomas Mumford to survey the line again. Mumford testified:

I began s'd line on ye west side of s'd island att a **sartin rock** n'th a spring of water by ye side of it near to the ruins of an old house wich was allays called & deameed to be ye bounds on ye west side & from s'd rock steared east & 23 degrees south on a streat line a cross s'd island to the east side & there sett a stake with a heap of stones about w'ch line being thus run & bounded was dun to the full satisfaction of ye partys employed on both sides & is to remain ye bounds forever according to mr. Nathaniel Colton's return divides the island into equall parts. This line was run this five day of Ffeb ury in ye year of Our Lord 1713/4.

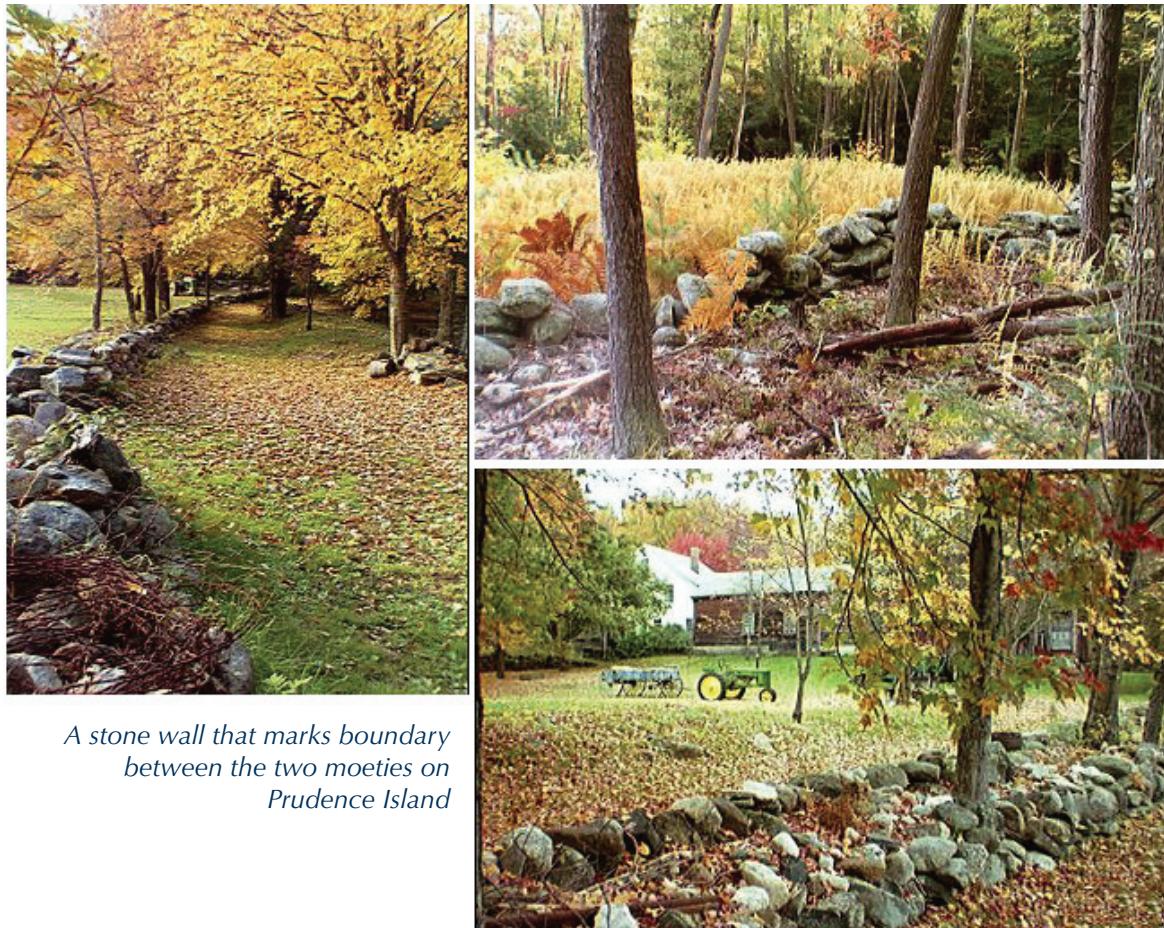
The above subscribers vizt. Mr. John Mumford suvyr Mr. Jeremiah Smith and Daniell Pearce perconly came before me the subscriber and did acknowledge concurrence and agreement to ye above written instrement with Willm Allin they Declared sined with their testimony whereof I have hereunto sett my hand att newport this 4th day of march 1713/4

To make sure that the line was marked by more than a “sartin rock” on the west shore and a pile of stones on the east side, the islanders built a stone wall across the island, which remains today in various states of repair (page 78).

When he wasn’t politicking, Jerimiah appears to have been a fairly successful farmer. The inventory of his estate in 1720 listed ten oxen, 25 cows, two mares, an old horse and a colt, three steers, a three year old bull, a heifer, 11 yearlings, 672 sheep and lambs, five hogs and 22 goats. The seven slaves in the estate were valued at £225.

His Prudence Island farm had created enough wealth for him to buy the Boston Neck land from the Winthrops, start another farm there and set up the ferry operation. On January 10, 1710, Jeremiah purchased 300 acres of land in the Pettasquamscutt Purchase from James Sweet of Prudence Island for £500. (Sweet reserved certain portions of this land for his son-in-law Samuel Boone.)

Jeremiah made his will on March 19, 1716, giving the Prudence holdings to Mary and divvying up the mainland farms and his share of the ferry among his three sons.



*A stone wall that marks boundary  
between the two moeties on  
Prudence Island*

# Feather Smith

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## ■ *John Smith (died 1771) and Mercy Westcott (born about 1677)*

Puritans forced her grandfather out of Salem. The Narragansetts ran her father out of Warwick. And greedy cousin Zorazobel threw her mother out of the homestead in the Four-Mile Township. But we have to believe that Mercy Westcott's luck changed in 1708 when she became the wife of a Narragansett planter in a ceremony performed by Assistant Pastor Eldred in Wickford.

Mercy Westcott was born just after the King Phillip War, an event that had dramatic impacts on Stukely Westcott's family. The natives in Rhode Island and other places had mixed feelings about the Englishmen's real estate development projects, as the tribes were unfamiliar with the English notion of private property and somewhat perplexed with the new neighbors' propensity to put up fences, walls and dams all over the place. But all the ambiguity was eliminated in December 1675 when the troops from Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay burned the Narragansetts' Great Swamp encampment to the ice line. Stukely Westcott's oldest son Robert was killed during the battle. In March, the natives retaliated with raids on all of the settlements in Warwick, torching almost every English house. The 84 year-old Stukely managed to escape with sons Jeremiah and Amos and their families to Prudence Island. Stukely then moved in with grandson Caleb Arnold (son of Gov. Benedict Arnold and Demaris Westcott) in Portsmouth.

## ■ *A Contest of Wills*

As Stukely was nearing death, he dictated a will to Demaris in which he gave his land and buildings in Warwick to Amos, who had been taking care him before the raids on Warwick. Unfortunately,

Stukely died before his sons arrived from Prudence Island to witness the will and Stukely never signed the document.<sup>88</sup>

After the Indian troubles settled, Amos and his wife Deborah (Deborah Stafford was his second wife; the first was her older sister Sarah) returned to Warwick, implemented the terms of the unsigned will, which the Warwick Town Council proved in 1677, and rebuilt the family farm in Shawomet.

When Amos died, his debt-bedecked son Amos got the property. Amos the Younger quickly turned the property over to his mother for some quick cash, and died in 1692. Deborah was enjoying the estate until Zorazobel Westcott of Kings Town, first son of Westcott's oldest son Robert, decided to contest the will and assert his claim on the land.

The case was argued several times before the Warwick Council, which could not decide whether to follow English law and throw the widow out, or break with tradition and send the scoundrel Zorazobel back to Kings Town where he belonged. When tradition ruled in Warwick, Deborah appealed to the Rhode Island Assembly. There is no record of the hearing, but Zorazobel prevailed and sold the place to his brother Robert, who in turn sold it to Moses Lippit.

## ■ *Solomon the Idiot*

Deborah appears to have managed for several years until 1689 when she informed the Warwick Town Council of "my inability in many respects," and surrendered her estate to provide care for her and her son Solomon, who is "very much devoid of common Reason and understanding" (Warwick General Record Book, [33]).<sup>89</sup> When Deborah died in 1706, the council offered the remainder of the estate to the Deborah's four daughters on the condition that they care for the "idiot son, Solomon." The girls

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88 J. Russell Bullock, "Stukely Westcote," *The Narragansett Historical Register*, Volume 1 (July 1886), Number 1, Page 1. (Facsimile reprint: Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1996).

89 *Early Records of the Town of Warwick*, Edited by Howard M. Chapin, (Providence: RIHS, 1926).

did not take the town up on the offer, but five years later, after Solomon's death, they settled up with the town and each received a share of the small surplus from the estate.

Two years after her mother's death Mercy married John Smith. Mercy Westcott was the fourth child of Amos Westcott and Deborah Stafford. Her future husband and future father-in-law may have known of her situation, as John the elder owned several parcels of land in Warwick. They had known Amos from his stay on Prudence Island, and the exploits of Zorazobel were probably the talk of Kings Town.

The marriage took place in North Kingstown on January 8, 1708, witnessed by "John Eldred, Assistant." John and Mercy had seven children:

- Margaret (born 1708), who got religion at the age of 34, as we learn from a November 2, 1743, entry in the diary of brother-in-law Jeffrey Watson: "Margrate Smith was baptized this Day in the [Pettasquamscutt] River by the bridge," and who got her man at the age of 48, when she married the widower Joseph Hammond. The June 9, 1757, entry reads: "I was at Feather Smiths Maragret married Hammond it is a Dry time." Hammond's first wife, Rachel Gardiner, died in January 1757. The Hammond's farm along the Post Road was on the northern side of current day Tower Hill in North Kingstown. Their grist mill at the foot of the hill is birthplace of painter Gilbert Stuart.
- Bathsheba (born April 7, 1710, and died December 29, 1793) married Jeffrey Watson in November 1732, several months before Jeffrey purchased his share of the ferry, and began buying parcels from Ebenezer and Ephraim Smith. In his diary,<sup>90</sup> Jeffrey refers to his father-

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90 "An Exact Copy of the Diary of Jeffrey Watson Esq. Made By and Presented to the Wickford Historical Society by Caroline E. Robinson," not dated (from a copy made by Marjorie Schunke for the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, 1972). What survives of Jeffrey Watson's diary includes cryptic daily entries for certain periods from 1740 through 1745, in which Jeffrey records his itinerary, the weather and business dealings. In later years, there are longer but less frequent entries, with more attention paid to sermons (by Church of England, Baptists, and Friends preachers – Jeffrey seems quite ecumenical), and then almost exclusively to accounts of funerals. After his own death, another family member continued recording births, marriages and deaths in the diary.

in-law as “feather Smith” and seeks out John’s advice in his multiple dealings with Ebenezer, Ebenezer, Jr., and Ephraim, who were always trying to “cheate me out of the deed.”

- John (1712-1782) married Susanna (see “John Smith’s All-American Family” on page 85).
- Mary, also called Mercy, (1715-1715).
- Mercy, also called Mary, (1717-1737) married Benjamin Thomas.
- William (born 1719) went through two wives, Avis and Elizabeth, in producing 12 children, six of whom made it to adulthood.
- Phillis (born 1723).

As indicated in his father’s will, John had already divided the farm in two with son William taking the northern half and John the southern half. John also received a half interest in the ferry, which he shared with his cousins Ebenezer and Ephraim, sons of Jeremiah Smith. Ephraim died in 1722, and Ebenezer moved back to Prudence Island, leaving management of the ferry in the hands of his no-count sons, Ebenezer, Jr. and Ephraim (see “Whatever Happened to Jeremiah’s Farm?” on page 85 for the gruesome details).

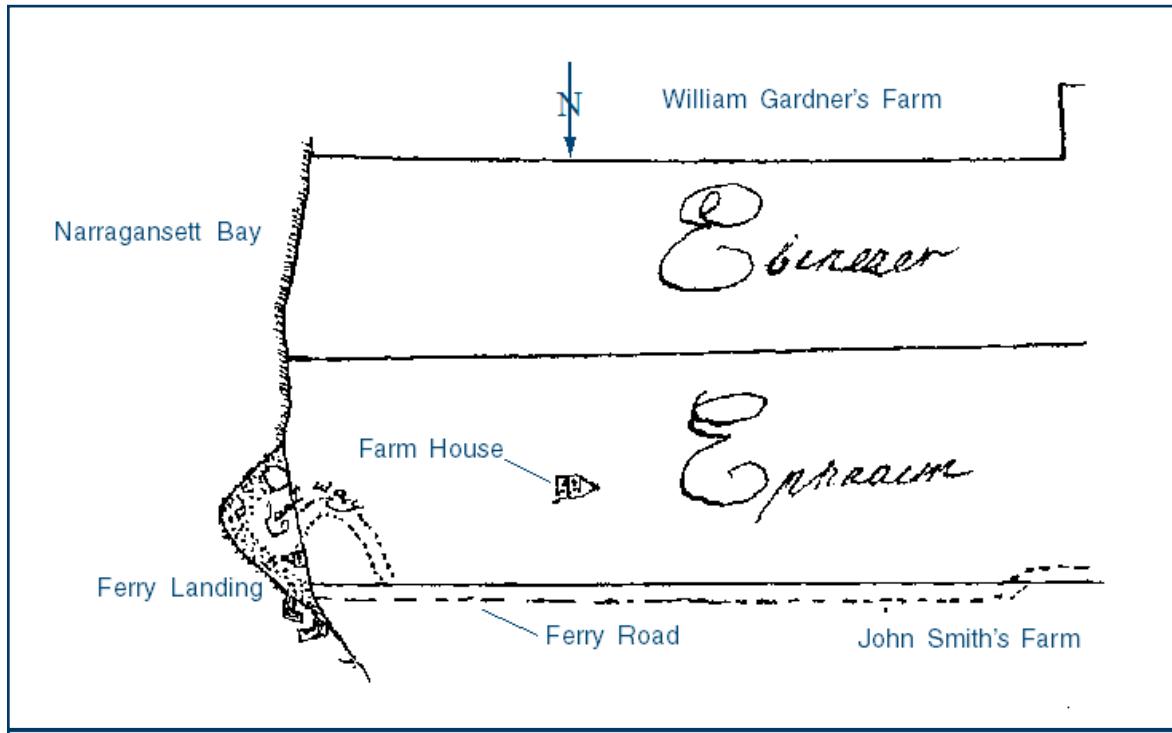
## ■ *John the Ferryman*

John took a active part in the running of the ferry, hiring a Jonathan Nichols as his ferryman, building a new ferry house at the cost of several hundred pounds, and adding a stable and a new freight boat. John cited these improvements in an August 1738 petition to the legislature for an increase in ferriage, along with the fact that Nichols had faithfully discharged his duties and lately purchased a larger boat for the service.<sup>91</sup> In the petition, they claim that the “ferry has gained the preference, both in respect of good attention and conviency and for the entertaining of travellers.” He probably also encouraged his son-in-law Jeffrey Watson to buy the quarter interest owned by Ebenezer’s sons, a good strategic move as it took operation of the ferry out of the hands of John’s two wild and crazy nephews. Watson was involved in operation of the ferry until 1742, when customer complaints got the best of him and he

sold his interest to Joshua Bill, a Jamestown innkeeper. On September 5, 1745, Bill bought the quarter interest owned by Ephraim Smith, Jr. for £900.

In 1750, John Smith and his two sons sold their half interest in the ferry to Abel Franklin, who operated the dock on the Jamestown side. By 1758 Abel's son John was the sole owner and proprietor of the ferry and began buying additional land from the Smiths so that by 1770, his Ferry Farm consisted of 100 acres bisected by South Ferry Road.

By the 1760s, the Narragansett plantations had begun to decline with a growing reluctance to use slave labor, wild currency fluctuations, and increasingly repressive measures by the British Crown. And as the planters divided the estates evenly among their sons, and dictated similar divisions in succeeding generations, the properties became smaller and less viable as commercial farms. Increasingly the Narragansett Plantations began to resemble the subsistence farms of northwestern Rhode Island.



This plat drawing of Jeremiah Smith's Farm on Boston Neck made on September 27, 1720 shows the property as divided in Jeremiah's will: Ebenezer's half to the south bordering William Gardner's land, and Ephraim's parcel bordering John Smith's farm to the north. Both sons received a quarter interest in the ferry. The drawing is from Charles V. and Anna Chapin, History of Rhode Island Ferries (Providence: Oxford Press, 1925). Note that the view is from the north.

# Whatever Happened to Jeremiah's Farm?

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Before the year of famine came, Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." (*Genesis 41:50-52*)

Today, the 330 acres on Boston Neck has two large drug stores, a pair of donut shops, a driving range, a fish-packing plant, and a nuclear reactor sitting atop the remnant of a 20-inch gun emplacement. There are about 100 homes distributed over the half square mile. Mixed use with mixed results. All that is left of the four Smith meadows south of Ferry Road are stone walls coursing through scrub oak and bramble. But at the beginning of the 18th Century, Jeremiah Smith's parcel had the potential of being one of the most productive plantations in the Narrangansett Country. This fruitful land and the ferry landing were to be Jeremiah's legacy for two sons, Ehrailm and Ebenezer, just as he had set up son John with 300 acres in the Pettasquamscutt Purchase. Until his death in 1720, Jeremiah was an absentee landlord working his own place on Prudence Island, and leaving management of the farm and the ferry to Ephraim and Ebenezer.

## ■ *Jeremiah's Sticky Will*

Jeremiah Smith made his will on March 19, 1716, giving the Prudence holdings to his wife Mary and divvying up the mainland farms and his share of the ferry among his three sons.

- To eldest son John he gave the 300-acre farm in Pettasquamscutt, that is, to John and his male heirs forever (if there were no male heirs in a generation, then it went to female heirs). The will gave John livestock, prevented him from selling or leasing the property without consent of his brothers, and provided £25 to add rooms to the farmhouse. The addition was built by cousin Emmanuel Clark in 1726. Perhaps, because he did not get a share of the ferry, brothers

Ephraim and Ebenezer were each to pay John £2 per year for life.

- To Ephraim, who is named executor of the will, he gave the northern half of the Boston Neck farm. Ephraim was already living in the farmhouse on this lot. Along with the 165-acre farm, Ephraim received a quarter share in the ferry.
- Ebenezer received the southern half of the Boston Neck farm and a quarter share of the ferry operation. The will also provided £100 for the construction of a home on Ebenezer's plot. The house was apparently used by his sons, Ebenezer, Jr. and Ephraim, as Ebenezer returned to Prudence Island after his father's death.

No land was given to the daughters, all of whom were married when the will was made. Giving them land would only allow good real estate to go to the families of their respective husbands.<sup>92</sup> To Sarah Hazard he left £50 and a silver cup. Mary Congdon received £50, a silver cup and slave girl named Maria, valued at £50 in the estate inventory. And to the youngest, Deliverance Reynolds, he gave £100 and a silver cup.

### ■ *Affliction in the Fruitful Land*

Poor Ephraim did not enjoy his property for long: he died suddenly in 1722 at the age of 48, leaving Margaret with four daughters, a six-month old son Ephraim, and another child on the way. And children was all he could have left. Under the terms of Jeremiah's will, the land was to pass to Ephraim's male descendants. And, because the children were still minors, the estate was controlled by Ephraim's brother Ebenezer and their mother Mary Smith, who made matters worse for widow Margaret by charging her rent. And then it got complicated.

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92 In Colonial Rhode Island, a man enjoyed coveture, which gave him legal right to all real and personal property brought into the marriage by his wife. The far-reaching effects of coveture are illustrated in Sarah Leavitt, "She Hath Left My Bay and Board": Runaway Wives in Rhode Island 1790-1810," *Rhode Island History*, 58 (August 2000), 3.

After the birth of her daughter Deliverance and several years of widowhood, Margaret found her handyman, her late husband's cousin Emmanuel Clark (he was the son of Benjamin Clark and Mercy Smith, Jeremiah and John's sister). They married on January 4, 1724/25.

## ■ “*There was a war broke out in Boston Neck*”

What we know about Emmanuel Clark – that he built the addition to John Smith’s farmhouse and that he married Ephraim’s widow – comes from two court cases recorded in the Newport Court Files, one in 1729 and the other two years later.<sup>93</sup>

The first case started when Clark took revenge on William Gardner for killing some of Clark’s hogs. William Gardner’s farm was just south of Ebenezer Smith’s lot and included what is today Bonnet Shores. Gardner, his son John, and grandson Colonel John Gardner, Jr., operated a very successful plantation right up through the Revolution. Neither he nor his slaves needed to slaughter their neighbor’s livestock for sustenance. More than likely, the hogs had gotten loose and were destroying some of Gardner’s crops. After Clark and Gardner had words over the matter, one of Gardner’s out buildings was “burnt and consumed to ashes.” Gardner filed a complaint against Clark because “he hath manifest cause to suspect it was sett on fire by Emmanuel Clark of sd South Kingstown.”<sup>94</sup>

Clark was arrested on October 5, 1729, and during questioning by Assistant Rouse Helme, the suspect denied any wrongdoing:

First he Declares that on the 4th Day of October 1729 he was at Joseph Powers in ye Evening till Nine or Ten a Clock & then went in Company with Eliezer Colegrove Home and after he had bin to Supper Went Directly to bed and Did not Goe out of ye House A Gaine till Mourning; But Upon further Examination he Declared yt he Did Goe out of ye House to Turn out a Travillers Horse in the Night After he had bin to bed Some Time.

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93 Abstracts of the two cases are in Jane Fletcher Fiske, Editor, *Gleanings from the Newport Court Files, 1659-1783*, (Boxford, Mass., 1998).

94 Fiske, *Gleanings from the Newport Court Files*, #427.

But as witnesses other than Gardner came forward, things started looking bleak for the alleged arsonist. First came Lawrence Whaley of North Kingstown who testified that:

...he was in company with Emmanuel Clark on 4 October 1729 "an hour before son sett and Clark told him yt some of his hogs were killed, and supposed it was done by William Gardner or some of his people and seemed to be in a great rage about it but after ye deponant had advised him to be more moderate he sayd he would indeavour to overcome evil with good or he said he would indeavour to overcome good with evil, but afterwards he said he would be even with Gardner within eight days time."

More damaging testimony came from John Lillibridge of South Kingstown who testified that:

Larrance Whaley "came to the widow Joslens on Satterday ye 4th of this instant and told this deponant yt there was a war broke out in Boston Neck between Emmanuel Clark & William Gardner and he believed there would be a fire before morning higher than a house; sd Whaley being present acknowledged the same and said he guessed at it from sd Clarks discorse.

No Code of Silence here.

On the next day Helme and Justice of the Peace George Hazard deposed Benjamin Allen of North Kingstown, who offered up some damaging hearsay from Clark's step-daughter Freelove:

...he being at Joseph Whitford's husking in North Kingstown in the evening of the last Saturday past a little after the moon rose & being out a doors saw a great light wch he supposed to be on Boston Neck and... then went into sd Whitford's house and declared what he had seen and there being in sd house Freelove Smith daughter to Ephraim Smith late of Sth Kingstown deceas't and also Barsheba Smith daughter to John Smith of sd Sth Kingstown and upon their hearing this deponent tell the same, they were both of them much surprised and went outadores & sd Freelove said the Lord have mercy upon her yonder is Gardners house or barn afire for I heard Emanuel sware that he would burn either Gardners house or his barn, for Gardner and Emanuel have had difference for Gardner has killed his hogs..."

Eighteen year-old Freelove Smith was Ephraim and Margaret's oldest daughter, and she did not cover very well for her step-father, as other witnesses would confirm:

Thomas Brown of South Kingstown swore to the truth of Benjamin Allen's statement, and said he was present at the same time. Lawrence Whaley of North Kingstown, of lawful age, and being at sd Whitford's at husking at the time and place with the two deponents Benjamin Allen and Thomas Brown, testified that he was out of dores and saw a great

light and said that he did believe it to be Gardner's house or barn afire and Freelove Smith beforementioned being present seemed to be much surprised and said that she did believe that Emmanuel Clark had bin at work this night for she heard him say that he would burn Gardner's barn in a night or two.

George Gardner of East Greenwich, of lawful age, testified that he was husking at Joseph Whitford's in North Kingstown and about ye moon rising saw a grate lite which seemed to be in Boston Neck and I heard Freelove Smith say yt she was afraid it was her father Clarks house but did not heare her say that her father threatened to burn Gardeners house or barn.

At an October 8 session of the local Justices Court, Clark was ordered to put up bond for his good behavior until his appearance at "ye nect Genll Court of Tryalls & Genll Gola Delivery to be held in Newpt on the last Tuesday of March next ensuing hereof." William Gardner was ordered to "give bond to prosecute said complt at sd genll Court." The following entry appears in the records for the March Court of Trials:

Emanuel Clarke of South Kingstown, husbandman, indicted last Tuesday of March 1730 "for that with malice aforethought and Evil intending he did on the fourth day of October AD 1729 wickedly and feloniously burn and consume with Fire... a certain Out House standing on the Farm of William Gardner of Sth Kingstown, yeoman ... value £300.  
Daniel Updike, attorney.

We don't know the outcome of the trial, as the verdicts and settlements for the Court of Trials were stored separately and were probably among the property destroyed by the British Army when it made its ungraceful exit from Newport in 1779. Chances are, he was unable to round up witnesses to refute the testimony in the depositions and that he had fork over the £300. That liability may have led to the second case, in which Mary Smith, Jeremiah's widow, sued Clark for back rent.<sup>95</sup>

In 1729, Mary (with Ebenezer acting as her agent) rented her son Ephraim's farm to Clark and Ephraim's widow for four years at £60 a year, of which Clark had only paid £5 by March 1731. His defence was that he had never been fully paid for putting on the addition to John Smith's farmhouse

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<sup>95</sup> This nasty family squabble is summarized in Fiske, *Gleanings from the Newport Court Files*, #536, which includes depositions from various Smiths and identifies how they were related (whether by blood or by marriage, and sometimes both).

specified in Jeremiah's will. Apparently, he was to receive the £25 in three installments, and the court records show that there were two payments of £8:6:8 "for building the addition to the house where Joseph Whitford now liveth in according to my Honor'd Father Jeremiah Smith's last will & Testament." But part three was not forthcoming. On December 28, 1729, widow Mary sent Clark "£2 on behalf of my son John Smith for his Legasie in full this which is due the 25th daye of next March." And the following April she dribbled out another "40 shillings which is due for John's Leagesy...should be paid in March and I am now in want of it." The court found for Mary and ordered Clark to pay the widow £226 and costs.

It's hard to imagine what life was like for Ephraim's widow Margaret, especially when Emmanuel lit up Gardner's farm and her in-laws went after the back rent. But all her troubles ended in 1731, when she died at the age of 45. The following year, the South Kingstown Town Council appointed Margaret's brother, Nathaniel Pierce of North Kingstown, guardian of daughters Sarah, Renewed, and Deliverance, and named Margaret's father, Daniel Pierce of Prudence Island, guardian of Ephraim, Jr. (age 11) and his sister Margaret. Apparently, they did not trust Emmanuel Clarke with care of the children and the property.

Ephraim, Jr. probably moved to Prudence Island. When he reached his majority he began selling off his share of Jeremiah's legacy. In 1745, he sold his quarter interest in the ferry to Joshua Bill for £900. Bill already owned a quarter interest, which he bought from Jeffrey Watson. Several years later, Bill sold both shares to Abel Franklin, whose son John purchased the remaining half interest from the heirs of John Smith. By the 1758, John Franklin owned all of the ferry and began buying adjacent land, including a 63-acre parcel from Ephraim, Jr. that included the original farm house shown on the 1720 plat drawing (see page 84).<sup>96</sup>

## ■ *The South 165*

Perhaps Jeremiah should have spent a little more on legal services because his poorly constructed will created an estate tail on his various properties (the grant to successive generations of Smiths meant the property could not be sold), which Ebenezer and his sons Ebenezer and Ephraim discovered two decades later when they began selling off their heavily mortgaged share of the ferry and the southern 165 acres that bordered the Gardner plantation.

The Smiths petitioned the General Assembly in 1741 to dock the estate tail and grant them ownership in fee simple, so they could sell 69 acres of the farm to Jeffrey Watson for £4,000.<sup>97</sup> Watson had already purchased a small plot of land and the quarter interest in the ferry held by Ebenezer, Jr. and Ephraim. Jeffrey had a stormy relationship with the Smith boys. In several places in his diary, he notes that boys tried to Welch on various deals and would hide from Jeffrey when he came looking for a title. Entries from March 1740/41 include:

**9 I was about all Day and this Day Ebe and Eph Smith Tryed to Cheate me by altering the Date of there Deede -<sup>98</sup>**

Apparently, the Smith brothers had mortgaged the property to Watson and then agreed to deed the land to Watson as payment. Watson originally fought the docking, because he feared it would give an opening for John Gardner who was looking to enlarge the property he had inherited from his father William Gardner.

**11 I was up at Ebenezer Smiths for Ebenezer Smith Jr to acknowledge a deed he had signed to me but John Gardner advised him not to do it and he would Give him more for the Land this Day many People there the Snow was three feet Deep on a leavel. it mire cattle so they could not pass - - -**

**13 I was at home all Day and Eph Smith Gave me a Deed of a Cettain price of land for payment of certain Sum of money Set fort in Said Deed**

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<sup>97</sup> Chapin and Chapin, *History of Rhode Island Ferries*. “Docking” the estate tail is by analogy to *docking*, or cutting short, the tail of an animal.

<sup>98</sup> “Diary of Jeffrey Watson Esq” transcribed by Caroline E. Robinson.

**26** I went out in the farm to feth Some Cattle and their was Mr Willit and Gardner at Smiths and they Came out to Desire me to go in to Smiths they wanted Some advantage but I would not go in

**28** I was at home ale Day and heard that Ebenezer Smith, Ebenezer Smith Junr and Eph Smith ale was a Willits Contriving to Give John Gardner Some writtin of their land that they had mortgaged to me So as to Cheate me of my mony by Disbraying my Securuty the mortagage Deed Cranston finished mendeng my boate.

**31** I went to Newport to make intrust with the Deputies not to Dock Smith land that (the?) Seting I they Did it would give Smith and Garner and advantage of me which they were a Seeking to take but I found my friends so many I did not Vallue them - - -

The conflict dragged on through April and into May, with Watson becoming more bothered by his scheming friends and the Smiths being pulled this way and that, as evidenced by these entries in early May:

**5** I was a bout home ale Day and Ebenezer Came over to Sell me his land and before I Could Draw the Deed he was Gone ---

**8** I went to Newport again and Chosen John Sweete went with me and there wee Saw Gardner Updike they protested if I would not Consent to hev the Land Dokt I should loose ale the money I had payed which was 3254 pounds have friends indeed! - -

**9** I came Home in Company with John Gardner and hee and I had some Cross Words this is but the beginning

Watson eventually took possession of the land (but not without more wrangling and trips to the court and Colonial Assembly in Newport) and began farming the 69 acres. The following July, Ebenezer Jr. called on Watson to help negotiate the sale of another 20 acres of the property to Gardner. The matter was peacefully settled, but was followed by numerous squabbles about fences lines. An entry for April 18, 1743, recounts how Watson and Emmanuel Clarke (yes, the pyrotechnician) were putting up fence when John Gardner, "the Deavill in Sheaps Cloathing," stopped by to inspect the work. Jeffrey comments:

I for Saw what the Villian was a boute to Lay on me by the Lash of fals tongues and for that Reason our Dispute will neuver be eanded.

Jeffrey was not a patient man, as evidenced by the sudden sale of his ferry interest to Joshua Bill when Francis Willet and other plantation owners complained about service. Watson was also quick with the petitions before the South Kingstown Town Council to help the Smith boys manage their property. In 1765, he was appointed Ephraim Smith's guardian because 49-year old Ephraim had become an "idle." On February 13, 1775, the council voted to extend his jurisdiction to include Ephraim's wife Mercy:

Whereas Jeffry Watson Esqr was by ye Town Council of South Kingstown on ye 14: day of Octr 1765 appointed Guardian to Ephraim Smith of South Kingston & it appears to this Council that their was a Bond given to John Smith of South Kingston Signed by John Smith Jur for ye sum of Two Thousand pounds old Tenner Conditioned for ye payment of Nine hundred pounds old Tener which was to be paid to Mercy Smith ye wife of Ephraim or to her needy Childeeren born of her body as Shall stand in need by Reason of minority or Casualty but not by Extravagancy or Idleness &C which Bond was by a Release & Discharge of John Smith ye obligee Discharged ye 18th July 1766 And since upon ye 4th day of November 1774 John Smith gave a nother Bond for £31.6.0 Lawful Money in Lieu of ye old Bond formerly given & for ye same Use mentioned in Sd old bond and this Council ye premises into Consideration Do take the said Mercy Smith under their Care, do vote & order Sd Bond to be Delivered {6:38} to ye Clerk of this Council and the same is Delivered accordingly there to Remain untill further orders of this Council<sup>99</sup>

It's not clear whether this Ephraim Smith is the son of Ebenezer or the son of Ephraim, but the pattern is played out several times by various Smith cousins, who sell off their inheritance to cover debt or fund "Extravagancy or Idleness." After several generations, most of Boston Neck was owned by the Watsons, the Gardners and the Hazards, and the land that was still owned by the Smiths was ready for developments such as donut shops and a driving range.

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99 *South Kingstown, Rhode Island Town Council Records 1771-1795*, transcribed by Jean C. Stutz (Kingston: The Pettasquamscutt Historical Society, 1988), February 13, 1775 meeting, [6:37-38].



# John Smith's All-American Family

## ■ *John Smith (1712-1782) and Susanna (died 1780)*

The notice in Jeffrey Watson's diary<sup>100</sup> is as follows:

John Smith Departed this life the 27 day of March 1782 and was Buried the 29 Day of March William Northrup and Caleb Allen preached at the funiral the Tex was Isaach 38 first Verse. Thus Saith the Lord Set thine House in order for then Shalt Die and not live &

There is no commentary on whether John Smith was a model or an object lesson in the matter of having one's house in order. His will (proved on April 8, 1782) indicates that the estate was quite a bit smaller than that left by his grandfather (1730). While John the Grandson is by no means a pauper, his estate is less than a third of the patriarch's. His interest in the ferry has been sold to Abel Franklin, whose son John owned all of the ferry assets by 1758. The Narragansett farm has been divided with brother William, and John further divides his 165 acres among his three "beloved sons, Thomas, John and Amos."

As much of a symptom as cause, the two wills show the decline of slavery on the plantations. Unlike his grandfather, who distributes slaves to all his children and grandchildren, John's estate includes only one adult Negro, Cuff. In his will, John frees Cuff, and declares that the slave "shall not be under the Command or Control of any of my children but shall be exonerated and made free."

On May 10, 1782, Col. John Gardner, Elisha Watson and Clarke Gardner filed their appraisal of John's estate. They valued Cuff at \$40, "two small Negro Girls Rose & Peach" at \$90, and the rest of his personal property – a cow and a hog, with some tools, furniture and clothing – at \$39. Even if he had already distributed livestock to his sons, it appears that the blockades, currency shocks, and other disruptions of the Revolutionary War had made it increasingly difficult to operate a large commercial farm.

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100 "Diary of Jeffrey Watson Esq" transcribed by Caroline E. Robinson.

## ■ *The Brood*

Very little is known about John's wife Susanna beyond her name:

- On August 13, 1743, she had a son William, who died of small pox 17 years later in St. Kits.<sup>101</sup>
- She testified in a 1766 case brought by Jeremiah Hazard against George Gardner over a female slave named Hagar.<sup>102</sup>
- She died on November 28, 1780.<sup>103</sup>

From John's will, we can conclude that he and Susanna had at least six other children who made it to adulthood. He made bequests to four by name, the three "beloved sons" and Marcy who married Lowry Gardner. He also leaves each of his three granddaughters, Ann Northrup, Mary Shearman and Luvanna Shearman, "150 Spanish Milled Dollars." Apparently he had two other daughters, one marrying a Northrup and the other a Shearman, and both dying before John.

Someday I'll mine the story of Marcy and Lowry Gardner, drum up a defense for the couple and prove they were unfairly run out of town:

At a Town Council held in South Kingston at the dwelling House of Samuel Curtis the Second Monday of July 1783 AD....

Whereas a Vote of the Town Council & an Order made that Lowry Gardner should be removed from the Town to the Town of North Kingston, & by a Mistake sd Lowry Gardner was not removed Therfore it is Voted that a Warrant be issued against sd Lowry Gardner in order to remove him and his Family to sd town of North Kingston.<sup>104</sup>

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101 From an entry in Jeffrey Watson's Diary and an interlinear note by Caroline E. Robinson.

102 Jane Fletcher Fiske, *Gleanings from Newport Court Files*, (1659-1783), (Boxford, Massachusetts, 1998), #1062.

103 From the Watson's diary: "Susannah Smith Departed this life the 28d Day of November and was buried the 30th of November 1780 Doct Wailt preached her funeral Sermon his Tex was Isaiah the 55 chapter and first verse - - -".

104 *South Kingstown, Rhode Island Town Council Records 1771-1795*, transcribed by Jean C. Stutz (Kingston: The Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, 1988), meeting second Monday of July, 1783 [6:96].

But alas, there are other mysteries to solve first.

## ■ *The Color of Amos*

In Rhode Island's 1774 census,<sup>105</sup> the John Smith household is enumerated as follows: Three white males above 16 (John, Thomas, and John Jr.), no white males under 16 (where's Amos?), three white females above 16 (Susanna, Marcy, and perhaps, Ann Northrup's mother), one female under 16 (the mother of the two other grandchildren?), and two adult Blacks (Cuff and another).

Two years later, when South Kingstown Town Council drew up a list of young men to arm, Amos and Thomas are among the missing:

By order of the Town Meeting agreeable to an act of the General Assembly holden at Providence in ye County of Providence in the Colony of Rhode Island on the Second monday in Jany AD 1776 [6:47] Were ordered to make a List of all Persons in this Town being Inhabitants thereof & obliged by Law to equip themselves with a good Fire Arm Bayonet & Cartach box who are not able to Purchase ye same and make Report thereof to a Town meeting agreeable to said act of Assembly  
Agreeable to said order of Town Meeting we present the Following List of all the Inhabitants & other persons now Residing in this Town who are not able to equip themselves as aforesd Viz Mumford Hazard...<sup>106</sup>

The roster of 65 citizens who needed a weapon includes "John Smith Jur" but not older brother Thomas or younger brother Amos. It is not all that surprising that the Smiths did not own firearms, as muskets were relatively expensive items, the native population had long ago been subdued and they did not enjoy Charlton Heston's advocacy. There are no firearms in the estate inventory of John the elder or his grandfather.

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<sup>105</sup> *Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1774.* Edited by Robert Bartlett (Providence, 1858; reprinted Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969).

<sup>106</sup> *Town Council Records*, February 23, 1776 meeting [6:46-47].

From the 1777 Military Census of Rhode Island<sup>107</sup> we learn why John is the only Smith to be armed. The males in Smith household are listed after “John Gardner (Bostone Neck)” as follows:

John Smith, 50-60 U[nable]  
Thomas Smith, 16-50 U  
John Smith Junr, 16-50 A[ble]  
Amos Smith, N[egro]  
Primas Smith, N  
Cuff Smith, N

Assuming the enumerator was correct, the Negro Amos is probably the third of “my three beloved sons” in John’s will, and not a slave named after the son. There does not seem to be a custom of slaves having a given name used in the owner’s family. In Grandfather John’s will, for example, the names are Hager, Flonso and Ceasar. In 1777, John is 64 and the census in the previous year listed no white males under 16 years. And there is no Amos (or Primas) in his probate inventory. Cuff, Peach and Rose are listed.

Was Amos the son of John Smith and a slave, or Susanna and a slave? Or was Susanna of mixed race? For whatever reason, Amos could pass for black, and it was to his temporary benefit to do so. When war broke out with England, there was at first a great reluctance to enroll blacks – slave or free – in the Colonial militias on the fear that armed blacks would go over to the British side in exchange for freedom and property. Of course, attitudes changed quite a bit once the war was in full swing, and in the spring of 1778 the colony organized the Rhode Island Regiment consisting entirely of black soldiers and white officers. The regiment saw action in the Battle of Rhode Island and at Saratoga. Amos is not called out as Negro in the 1790 Federal Census, but there was no war on then and no reason to be counted among the slaves.

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107 South Kingstown enumeration (attested April 18, 1777) in *1777 Military Census of Rhode Island*, Transcribed by Mildred Chamberlain (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1985).

## ■ *Thomas Needed Help*

The Military Census may also provide a reason for the later trouble between Thomas, the Unable, and John, who was able to serve throughout the Revolutionary War but was apparently unable to do anything else. If the Military Census listing and the enumeration of my three beloved sons indicate the birth order, it's strange that the first-born is named Thomas, not John. Perhaps Thomas was Susanna's child by a previous marriage. More reason for conflict.

Thomas Smith's patrimony was the 55 acres of the farm bounded on the east by the Narragansett Bay and on the south by the Ferry Road. On April 12, 1770, Thomas sold 28 acres adjacent to the ferry to John Franklin, who added the parcel to land bought from Ephraim Smith, Jr. to create a 100-acre farm around the ferry.<sup>108</sup> Perhaps he was unable to work the land (especially the area that slopes sharply down to the shore), and without the help of slaves, selling land is how he kept body and soul together. By 1789, Thomas is at the mercy of the town:

South Kingstown Town Council Records, 6:159 (July 13, 1789)

Voted that Thomas Smith be allowd the Sum of Six Pounds for One Month and that  
Geoge Brown have an Order on the Town Treasurer for sd Sum to be laid out for Neces-  
saries for sd Smith {Ord Given}<sup>109</sup>

Thomas appears frequently in the records through March 1794, with various individuals providing shelter and clothing and being reimbursed by the town.

He certainly would not have received a lot of help from his brothers. Shortly after their father's death, it appears the boys were spending their time at the Ferry house and not tending to the fields, forcing the Town Council to put their property under the watchful eye of John Gardner, the executor of the John Sr.'s will:

Whereas this Council hath on sundry & repeated Complaints that John Smith and Amos Smith (sons of John Smith late of this town dec'd) that they through Idleness, Drunkard-  
ness and making foolish bargains when intoxicated with strong drink and want of discre-  
tion will soon squander away what they have & become a town charg, for the preventing

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108 Chapin and Chapin, *History of Rhode Island Ferries*.

109 *Town Council Records*, July 13, 1789 meeting [6:159].

of which this Council takes said John & Amos under their care and appoint John Gardner  
Jun Guardian to both s'd John Smith & Amos Smith to have care of them and their estate  
by giving bond with two sureties in the sum of One hundrd pounds Silver Money  
9 Dec 1782<sup>110</sup>

Thomas applied a more incendiary approach to curbing his carousing brothers, but that all plays out in the story of “Dancin’ John and Faithful Mary” in the next chapter.

# Dancin' John and Faithful Mary

## ■ *John Smith (d. 1815) and Mary Allen (1754-1843)*

John Smith was a mercenary, an idler and a tavern regular. The young beauty Mary Allen loved the way he danced, and despite the warnings from her family and employers, she married John on May 11, 1779, one year before the Great Dark Day.

Their story is told in a lengthy application Mary submitted in February 1839 for benefits under an 1836 act granting Revolutionary War soldiers and their widows \$85.00 a year in lieu of bounty land.<sup>111</sup> This was Mary's second attempt to secure the pension, as she narrates in her deposition:

I would also declare that in the fall of the Year 1837 I employed the late William P. Newell, Esq. to prepare & represent my claim. that he took minutes of what I could recollect relative to the service of my late husband that he took several depositions of those that was knowing to his service and after this told me to make my self comfortable that he had sufficient proof to entitle me to a full pension & I was in hopes of obtaining the dispensation of my husband's pay while in the service. but before he had completed the papers he was taken sick & died. soon after his decease I was taken sick and was so disordered both in body & mind so as to be truly unqualified to make a dictation.

But a year later she had fully recovered and hired William R. Noyes to round up the remaining evidence and submit the application. On January 4, 1839, Mary appeared before William Peckham, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in Washington County, to make her case. Actually, they all appeared at Mary's house, as she was "too feeble to attend in open court." Doctors and judges made house calls in those days.



Depiction of the typical revolutionary soldier in a British editorial cartoon.

<sup>111</sup> Pension/Bounty-Land Records, #W13913, National Archives and Records Administration. Smith, John, R.I., res & enl at South Kingstown, R.I. & there he d. 2/29/1815. Mary W13193.

Like other applicants, Mary had to prove that she was married to a soldier who had served honorably in either the Continental Army or a state militia, that he had left her a widow, and that she had not remarried.

Proving John's military service and their marriage was made difficult years earlier when brother-in-law Thomas Smith burned John's military records, the marriage certificate and other personal property when he threw John out of his house. It seems that after the war John spent most of his time making the rounds (probably starting at the Ferry House), bragging about his exploits against the enemy and showing off his collection of discharge papers.

The first testimony, of course, comes from Mary herself, whose lengthy narrative (more than 1,300 words even after eliminating some lawyerly phrases injected by the scribe) details John's multiple enlistments in Revolutionary militia and multiple entreaties to Mary. The account is backed up by depositions of ten others including:

- Ebenezer Smith of South Kingstown, aged 81, John's cousin and himself a Revolutionary War pensioner. Ebenezer served aboard the Frigate Providence from August 1776 to June 1777. The Providence patrolled Narragansett Bay, helping to contain the British on Newport and more importantly for the war effort, privateering. He also served on land, in Col. Christopher Green's regiment with John on John's last tour of duty. Ebenezer's exact relation to John is not known but he is probably the great grandson of Jeremiah Smith who, with brother John, purchased the Boston Neck tract in 1692.
- Thomas Billington, 82, and Joseph Champlin, 77, both of South Kingstown, and Ethan Crandall of Charlestown. They served in various units with John Smith. Crandall places John at battles in the New York and New Jersey campaigns in the fall of 1776 and the start of 1777.
- Jedediah W. Knight and Charles Lippitt who have account books and muster rolls that include a John Smith, private soldier and drummer.
- Sarah Clarke, Phila Dorset and Mary Mumford who testify that Mary Allen was in fact married to John Smith. Dorset witnessed the ceremony, while the other two were part of the Helme household where Mary worked at the time.

- Thomas B. Hazard, the Narragansett blacksmith and diarist known as Sailor Tom, and Asa Steadman, 70, Deacon of the First Baptist Church and Mary's neighbor, two character witnesses who vouched for the veracity and good character of the women and cousin Ebenezer. (Of course, there is no need to confirm the veracity of the other veterans and Revolutionary War pensioners.)

It's not surprising that Attorney Noyes calls in perennial expert witness Sailor Tom, whose reputation was described by Thomas Hazard, Shepherd Tom, as follows:

Thomas B. Hazard was a most remarkable man. His fund of anecdote and old time historical and biographical knowledge seemed inexhaustible. During the most of a long life he kept a daily record of passing local events, which was so often brought into court as evidence that the "Blue Book," as it was popularly called, was at length "ruled out of court," on the alleged ground that its endless memoranda of dates and corresponding events when sworn to by Sailor Tom, tended to unsettle not only the titles of real estate, but, through litigation, the peace of the community.<sup>112</sup>

Although he did not serve with John, Sailor Tom provides a valuable explanation for the lack of a marriage certificate and other problems, and offers interesting commentary on the main characters and the character of the times.

## ■ *John Smith, Private Soldier and Drummer*

From these and other witnesses, we know the military career (more correctly, the military careers) of John Smith. Joseph Champlin, who knew both John and Mary "previous to their intermarriage," testifies that "said John Smith was a soldier in every sense of the word & was engaged either in the State or United States service nearly all the war."

Before he joined the Revolution, John Smith was not translating the Horatian Odes or experimenting with new seed corn on Boston Neck. Ebenezer describes him as a "high buck and inclined to be

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<sup>112</sup> Thomas R. Hazard ("Shepherd Tom" in His Eighty-first and Eighty-second Years), *Recollections of Olden Times: Rowland Robinson of Narragansett and His Unfortunate Daughter. With Genealogies of the Robinson, Hazard, and Sweet Families of Rhode Island.* (Newport, R.I.: John P. Sanborn, 1879; reprint Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, 1998).

disapated when young." According to Thomas Billington, "Said Smith was in the army nearly all the time during the war. it was all he was fit for as he would not work at other business."

John enlisted in June 1775 for six months in a local company commanded by Captain Christopher Gardiner. The troops mustered to Newport and were attached to a regiment of state troops commanded by Lt. Col. Henry Babcock. The regiment marched off to Boston, where the new Colonial Army had surrounded the city.

Units from all over New England had answered the call after Lexington and Concord. But the initial enthusiasm wore thin by the end of the year just as Washington was taking over command of the disorganized army of local militias. In fact, things became downright ugly as enlistments came to an end and troops tried to return home. Nathaniel Green reported that "the people upon the Roads express so much abhorrence at the conduct for quitting the Army" that many units returned for another hitch.<sup>113</sup>

John Smith's company returned to South Kingstown when its enlistment ended in December. And they returned with a less than stellar record. Lt. Col. Babcock had been dismissed for insanity, replaced by Col. Christopher Lippit, and Capt. Gardiner "was broke for cowardice."<sup>114</sup> But because John Smith was fit for nothing else, he enlisted for another hitch, this time in a company commanded by Capt. Thomas Arnold, Lt. Thomas Davis, and Ensign William Gardiner.

The company was attached to Col. Lippitt's Regiment, which was charged with defending Rhode Island. Lippitt was a rising star, saving the good citizens of Prudence Island from a raid by a British

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113 For details of Revolutionary War campaigns, I have relied on Richard M. Ketchum, *Decisive Day* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1962) and *The Winter Soldiers: The Battles of Trenton & Princeton* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1991).

114 Captain Gardner's headstone in the Gardner Rodman lot on Mooresfield Road in South Kingstown tells us that Christopher was a "Captain in Revolutionary War, fought in Battles of Concord, Lexington and Bunker Hill" (John E. Sterling, Ed., *Rhode Island Cemeteries Database*, Rhode Island Historical Society). Perhaps, but if Gardner was at Bunker Hill, he was freelancing, as the Rhode Island contingents (under the leadership of Nathaniel Greene) were dug in at Roxbury protecting against a British advance to the southwest (Ketchum, *Decisive Day*).

squadron. His regiment was brought into the regular army, and Washington granted Lippitt and his officers Continental commissions. In September 1776, the regiment marched off to join Washington's forces. Mary Smith recalled:

In this Regiment said Smith was marched to the west through Connecticut, New York & New Jersey and was in several actions under Gen'l Washington in New Jersey and suffered much from want of shoes, clothes, and shelter from the inclemency of the weather. I heard so much of the suffering which on this campaign from sd Smith & the officers of sd company who belonged in this vicinity that it made an indeniable impression on my mind.

The first destination was Fort Washington in Harlem, New York. The unit saw action in the Battle of White Plains under the command of General Lee, and later marched to New Jersey, where Lee was captured. Major General John Sullivan assumed command and the army finally joined forces with Washington across the river from Trenton in December 1776, just as enlistments were again coming to an end. As Ethan Crandall recalled,

We marched to the State of Newjersey and said troops continued to serve in said Newjersey and at other places until the 14th of January 1777 which was one year from said enlistment. the deponent knows that the said John Smith served as a private in said Thomas Arnold's company until the 2d day of January when the deponent thinks that John Smith was wounded in the battle at Princeton.

The Battle of Princeton was a surprise attack on the British rear guard a week after Washington crossed the Delaware on Christmas night and captured two Hessian regiments in Trenton. As part of Sullivan's Army, Lippit's Rhode Island Regiment was in the thick of both battles. John Smith may have been wounded at Princeton, when a group of New England regiments under Daniel Hitchcock (one from New Hampshire, three from Rhode Island and one from Massachusetts) counterattacked and routed Colonel Mawhood's 17th Regiment just south of the town. Mary says nothing about him being

**Colonel Henry Babcock** of Westerly (1736-1800) was a hero of the French and Indian War, a friend of Ben Franklin and a South County character who enhanced his transatlantic reputation as *Crazy Harry Babcock* by giving the Queen a lesson in New World chivalry. Shepherd Tom retells the story thus: "A short time after this [causing a stir at Covent Garden], Col. Harry Babcock received an invitation to the palace, and was introduced to the royal family. When the Queen, in accordance with usage, offered him her hand to kiss, the gallant Colonel sprang from his knees, briskly exclaiming, 'May it please your majesty, in my country it is custom to salute, not the hand, but the lips of a beautiful woman!' and suiting actions to his words, he seized the Queen by the shoulders and impressed on her lips a loud and hearty smack." (Thomas R. Hazard, *Recollections of Olden Times*).

After bussing the Queen, Harry studied engineering and artillery at Woolwich, skills he put into use during the Revolution. "He was a sturdy patriot in the Revolution and in 1776 was appointed Commander of the American forces at Newport. On the open beach, according to tradition, with an 18-pounder, which he fired himself, he drove off the British man-of-war, Rose." Howard M. Chapin, *Our Rhode Island Ancestors, collections of newspaper columns, Rhode Island Historical Society*.

wounded, but the frostbite and hunger suffered by the Revolutionary soldiers in December 1776 was probably far worse than a minor wound.

Thomas Arnold's company did not winter with Washington at Morristown, but returned to Rhode Island in January 1777. But how are you going to keep the boy down on the farm he never worked, when he could enlist for another 15 months in Colonel Gray's Regiment in the Brigade commanded by General Varnum? John served as a "private soldier and a drummer" from February 1777 until the fall of 1778, when he re-upped for a third time in a Regiment commanded by Christopher Lippit. The regiment wintered on Ten Rod Road in North Kingstown just a few miles from where Mary Allen was working in the home of the venerable James Helme.

John's third tour of duty ended in May 1780, and faced with the prospect of returning to the farm on Boston Neck, John enrolled in a militia company commanded by Parris Card, in which John satisfied the military obligation of his former company commander, Christopher Gardiner. Because the captain had soiled his britches and lost his commission, he was still required to serve. This tour must have been doubly satisfying, providing both cash and story material at the expense of young Christopher. Ebenezer Smith says of John's service as a substitute, "this I distinctly recollect of hearing at the time & since more than fifty times." This tour was the first of a series of short hitches in Card's company, which patrolled Boston Neck and Pt. Judith.

In August 1780, he joined Colonel Green's Regiment as a quota soldier for the town of Exeter. In addition to his great patriotism, there were some financial motives in John's final tour of duty. As Mary Smith recounts, John "disliked the Militia and was attached to the regular service – having spent nearly all his money, being in a neighboring town on a frolic." He was discharged in March 1781.

John Smith had served in so many units that it was not that difficult to prove service, even after 60 years. But just to make certain, Attorney Noyes dug up two witnesses that had found John Smith on the rolls, and he added their testimony to the file in June 1839:

- Jedediah W. Knight of Westerly had the muster of Thomas Arnold's Company in Col. Lippitt's Regiment in 1776 from the Orderly Sergeant, Nicholas Clarke of Charlestown, and the roll contained the name John Smith.

□ Charles Lippitt made the following affidavit:

I hereby certify that I find in a book in my safekeeping purporting to be a copy of the proceedings of a committee of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island the following entry - To wit - To John Smith, Drummer in Col. Gray's Regiment, there is a balance of £9.10.10 due him for depreciation of his pay."

## ■ *A Remarkable Industrious & Indispensable Girl*

It is not known when Mary Allen first met John Smith, but from her deposition it appears that it was as early as December 1775, right after his first hitch, when he served in Captain Christopher Gardiner's company. She was 21 at the time, and as Sailor Tom recalls, "When said Mary Smith was young she was much admired for her beauty."

In 1776, Mary was in the service of the John Watson family, one of the wealthiest households in South Kingstown. Apparently, Watson had a very low estimation of John Smith, or at least thought his carousing a distraction to the help. The low estimation may have come from his brother Jeffrey, a Smith-in-law who tangled frequently with Ephraim Smith and other clan members over various land deals and the running of the ferry. The Watson family did what they could to discourage the relationship.

Then after John's second tour, things got a bit more serious:

on his return to South Kingstown which I think was in December 1776 or January 1777, I was engaged to him and expected to be married but it was violently opposed by my relation to the family with whom I lived that I dismissed him & the next day he enlisted in General Varnum's Brigade Col. Gray's Regiment for 15 months as a musician. This if my memory serves was February of 1777 of the exact time I am not positive but it was soon after he returned from New Jersey. From this time until the fall of 1778 I saw him but once or twice as he could not visit me at Mr. Watson's where I then lived & I heard little about where he was.

But by the time Col. Lippitt's Regiment went into winter camp on Ten Rod Road in December 1779, she had decided to see less of the Watsons and went to work for the recently married Mr. and Mrs. James Helme in Kingston. The Helme's daughter Mary Mumford said Mary Allen had left the Watson's because they objected to "the intimacy between said Mary Smith & sd. John Smith."

The Helmes also objected to John's occasional visits to their home during the winter and to a possible marriage as Mary was "a remarkable industrious & indespensable girl & because John Smith was a Soldier and a wild spendthrift." It is clear from her deposition that Mary understood the objections to her marrying a man who had spent "nearly all his patrimony and must eventually depend on me for support." But love, or something like it, won out:

The latter part of the Year 1778 or the first of 1779 said Smith was attached to a Regiment I believe commanded by said Lippit and was quartered for the winter at North Kingstown on the Ten Rod Road. At this time I was living with Hon. James Helme at what is now called Kingston & but a few miles from the head quarters of the army. in the course of this winter and the spring following he renewed his addresses and in May AD 1779 I was married to sd Smith who had left the army on furlough for one week only.

Oh, Mary, what did you see in this guy? Well, it was certainly not a way to improve her station in life, as the Smiths were no longer among the great plantation families. They have divided up the property among their descendants, who were each selling off parcels to the Watsons and other more prosperous families. And John would not make anything of his inheritance and have nothing to do after the Revolution. Perhaps, it was the attraction of opposites. For every reference to John as a carouser, there are three praising Mary for her diligence and dependability. Perhaps it was that John represented a real break from the drudgery of household service and a few moments of exuberance. Sailor Tom tells us as much when he writes of his disapproval of the union:

I remember of hearing said Mary was asked soon after her marriage how she came to unite her fate with sd. John & her reply was that he was an excellent dancer. as I did not think dancing one of the most useful qualifications for a husband I have remembered it.

Mary Allen and John Smith were married on May 11, 1779 by Joseph Torrey, and Mary says that Rev. Mr. Torrey gave John a certificate, which his brother Thomas set on fire with the discharges and papers from their father. Ebenezer Smith insists the marriage took place:

I was not at the marriage but heard of it at the time & I was knowing to the opposition of her relations & the families with whom she has lived. I know all the particulars of the marriage as well as I know anything I did not witness myself.

And Nailer Tom explains that even if there was no certificate, that wouldn't be unusual in wartime Narragansett country:

from my recollection of the fact, the characters of these who have testified in this case, I firmly believe that said John & Mary was legally married on the 11th day of 5th Month 1779 as by these stated & from my knowledge of the character of sd. John I have no reason to believe said marriage was ever recorded either in the Town or Church records. In fact, there was but little attention paid in this vicinity to the record of marriages & births during the War of the Revolution and it is even neglected in many instances at this time.

The one surviving witness was Phila Dorset, age 69, of Newport, who testified the wedding was in May 1779 before the Great Dark Day. She remembers the wedding because it was the first wedding she had ever seen. "After a few days Mary went to live with the Helmes and John returned to his regiment where he was a musician."

## ■ *The Great Dark Days*

The total eclipse of the sun on May 19, 1780, seems to have been as significant an event as the skirmishes with the British encamped at Newport or any other contemporary event.<sup>115</sup> Many of the narrators remember that the marriage took place in May 1779, not the following May when they had the Great Dark Day. The eclipse followed an extreme winter, when a giant snow drift overhung Pettasquamscutt Hill and all of Narragansett Bay was frozen over. Oxen teams dragged sleds of wood from Narragansett to Newport, where the price of firewood had risen to \$40 a cord. Harvesting wood was one of the few bright spots in the bleak economy of South Kingstown disrupted by the war and stifled by years of blockade. The eclipse was an appropriate symbol and marker for some pretty dark days indeed.

It is not surprising that when John's furlough was up, Mary returned to the Helme household.

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115 Nailer Tom noted the event in his diary with his usual precision and detachment: "19th C.r.t Fn An F [cloudy, rainy, thunder, forenoon; afternoon foggy] verry dark about 4 hours, made nails." *Thomas Hazard, Nailer Tom's Diary*, edited by Caroline Hazard, (Boston: published by subscription, 1930)

when the time expired he returned to the army & I went back to live with James Helme Esq. this man & his family was very much opposed to my marrying sd. Smith & said much to me about uniting my fate with a man so much attached to the army and one who had spent nearly all his patrimony and must eventually depend on me for support. in consequence of this opposition & the Regiment to which my sd Husband belonged being ordered to the North he visited me but twice until a few days before the Great dark day of may 1780.

Living in the Helme house appears to be a good idea while John is off soldiering. They lived together (with Mary's sister) for a short time between enlistments, but then John went back to the regiment and was expected to ship off to New York again, and Mary returned to the Helmes.

I was living with Mr. Helme... who observed that it was good news and the longer he stayed away the better it was for me. but for some reason, but what I do not remember, he did not go to the west & served his time out in the state of Rhode Island & was discharged & returned to me in March 1781 – and persuaded me to leave Mr. Helme again but as Mrs. Helme had young children & my husband was very unsteady I prevailed on him to let me stay with Mrs. Helme & earn something to go to housekeeping which he consented and went away & I remained with Mrs. Helme until the next spring. after the peace toward the Spring of 1784 & subsequently was more or less in sd family for many years.

## ■ *Down on the Farm*

It takes a hefty dose of speculation to fill in the story of John Smith and Mary Allen from the end of the war until John's death in 1815, but it appears that Mary continued to live with the Helmes through much of the '80s and John managed to lose the rest of his inheritance. John's father died in April 1782, and in his will, recorded on April 4, 1782, bequeathed to his:

three beloved Sons Thomas Smith, John Smith and Amos Smith all the residuary part of my Real and Personal Estate to them their heirs & Assigns forever, lying and being in South Kingston on Boston Neck to be equally divided between them.

Actually, the land may have been divided up before the death, as Thomas sold 28 acres of his parcel bounded by Narragansett Bay and the South Ferry to the ferry owner, John Franklin, in 1770.

It's doubtful that John made any improvements to his 55-acre parcel during his days as a "high buc" and when he was soldering, nor did he receive any livestock from his father's estate. The older John Smith's inventory of personal property recorded on May 10, 1782, included only one cow and

one hog (valued at £5, 2s). Selling off the land was the quickest way to raise money for food and drink, mostly drink.

By the end of 1782, John and brother Amos were in such a land-selling mood that the town fathers put them under the guardianship of John Gardner, Jr., the executor of the father's will.

Whereas this Council hath on sundry & repeated Complaints that John Smith and Amos Smith (sons of John Smith late of this town dec'd) that they through Idleness, Drunkardness and making foolish bargains when intoxicated with strong drink and want of discretion will soon squander away what they have & become a town charg, for the preventing of which this Council takes said John & Amos under their care and appoint John Gardner Jun Guardian to both s'd John Smith & Amos Smith to have care of them and their estate by giving bond with two sureties in the sum of One hundrd pounds Silver Money

9 Dec 1782

Jeffrey Watson, esq

George Babcock

Samuel Teft Esq

Samuel Perry

Capt Daniel Shearman Jnr<sup>116</sup>

This was not unusual business for the Council. Much of the town fathers' monthly meeting involved reimbursing citizens for their care of the poor, bastards, invalids, the demented and other town charges. The rest of the time was split between preventing cases such as John from becoming charges and granting "Licenses to Sell all Sorts of Spiritous Liquors," which fetched from 6 to 20 shillings per month. (Of course, every meeting ends with an order to open the Treasury to pay for the Council's dinner, usually the cost of a liquor license.)

The Council kept a close watch on drunks and idlers such as the Council President's nephew, John Watson, Jr., who was drifting after the death of his father (John Watson, Sr. was Mary Allen's first employer). They also kept an eye on itinerants, whom the Sheriff would "remove and transport to the

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116 *South Kingstown, Rhode Island Town Council Records, 1771-1795*, transcribed by Jean C Stutz. (Kingston, R.I.: The Pettaquamscutt Historical Society, 1988).

town of their legal settlement," and disabled veterans, who apparently had yet to receive any support from the Continental Army or the Colony of Rhode Island.

At its March 10, 1783, meeting, the Council again took up the matter of John and Amos Smith:

Voted that Jeffry Watson Esqr be Guardian to John & Amos Smith (in the room of John Gardner Jr) he giving bond in the sum of One hundred pounds<sup>117</sup>

On May 10, 1784, Jeffrey finished tangling with the Smiths for good and went to his Maker. A year later the Council restored liberty to John and Amos:

At a Town Council held in South Kingstown by adjournment the 14th June 1785...

Whereas heretofore (viz) upon the 10th day of March 1783 Jeffry Watson Esqr was appointed by the Town Council of the Town Guardian to John and Amos Smith and the said Jeffry Watson Esqr being Deed and the said John and Amos Smith having since the Decease of said Watson transacted their own business, this Council taking the premisses into Consideration they think said John Smith and Amos at Present capable of transacting their own Business and do hereby entirely set them free from any Guardianship whatever<sup>118</sup>

In the 1790 Federal Census, John Smith is listed as the head of a household situated between John Gardner (son of William) and Stephen Gardner, and not far from the Watsons on Mooresfield Road. Living with John are three "free white females," probably Mary, and daughters Margaret (born 1787) and Susannah. So, here's the speculation: John worked as a tenant on the Gardner farm, while Mary remained in service at the Helmes. By the mid to late '80s, the Gardners had brought John back in line, and John and Mary moved into a house on the Gardner farm and started a family.

Three lines before John in the census is a household of six "other free persons" (that is, non-whites) headed by Cuff Tew. This could be Cuff, the slave that John's father freed upon his death, who perhaps became a tenant on the Gardner farm by his own choice and not by edict of the town fathers.

The 1790 census lists Amos Smith as heading a household on Boston Neck next to John Franklin, probably living in the original farm house. The household includes three white males under 16, a free

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117 *Town Council Records*.

118 *Town Council Records*.

V 4372  
Mary Smith  
widow of John

R. I.  
Act 4 July 36

service money

15 mo & 2 days  
9 mo, inc

85 77

No deduction

Wm R. Boyce  
~~Postmaster~~  
~~of Nekoport~~  
R. I.

R Telcock 3031

Mary Smith  
widow of John Smith

R. I.  
who died on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 1815  
of a disease known in the State of R. Ireland  
who was a drummer & in the County commanded  
by Captain Gardner of the Regt. commanded  
by Babcock in the R. I.  
long for 2 years

Inscribed on the Roll of R. Ireland  
as the rate of 85 Dollars → Cents per annum  
to commence on the 4th day of March, 1836.

Certificate of Pension issued the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Feb.  
'39, and will run from R. Days,  
Naples, R. I.

Arrears to the 1st of Mar. - \$ 68 0 00  
Semimonthly allowance ensuing \$ 2 50  
\$ 722 50

{ Revolutionary Claim,  
Act July 4, 1836.  
Section the

Recorded by R. B. Bunting Clerk  
Book A Vol. 2 Page 98

Cover Page and Payment Records from Mary Allen's Case

white female, and two other free persons. A novelist would identify the last two as the “Two small Negro girls Rose & Peach” listed in the inventory of father John Smith’s personal property and valued at £27. But that’s too speculative, as is trying to pull a narrative out of the 1800 and 1810 census records, which in South Kingstown are in alphabetical order rather than route order.

## ■ *Mary’s Reward*

On September 3, 1839, Mary Smith was awarded a widow’s pension of \$85 per year starting March 4, 1831 and was paid \$722.50 (arrears of \$680 and a semiannual payment of \$42.50). Now suddenly a rich woman, Mary writes a will, and here is where we learn that Mary and John had at least four children, and a grandson who carries on the name:

I give and bequeath to my beloved Daughter Margaret Smith the sum of eighty Dollars and likewise bequeath the sum of eighty Dollars to my beloved grandson John Smith (son of Susannah Northrup). further I give and bequeath to my dear son and daughters Westcott Susannah Northrup and Hannah Knowles the sum of one hundred and forty dollars to be equally divided between them three.

Mary Smith, 86, is listed in the 1840 Federal Census as a “Pensioner for Revolutionary or Military Service.” She is the head of household, which includes another white female between 40 and 50 years of age, probably daughter Margaret. (Her neighbors are Susan Allen and James W. Smith.)

According to her South Kingstown death record, Margaret was born in 1787 and died a single woman on August 15, 1863. In the 1860 Federal census, she shows up in the household of widower Westcott Smith, with separate personal property of \$300.

Not much is known about Susannah other than that she married someone named Northrup and that her son John Smith (not John Northrup) is the executor of Mary’s will. Susannah may be the other female listed in the 1790 census. On November 11, 1839, the Probate Court in South Kingstown appointed grandson John as Mary’s guardian with \$1,000 surety to John Babcock and George Clarke.

Hannah Smith was born in 1799, married Ebenezer Knowles, had a daughter in 1841, and died on August 6, 1866. Young Hannah may be the luckiest one in this whole story, because in addition to her share of the \$140, she got Mary’s threads:

Likewise all my wearing apparel or clothing of any kind that I may be possessed of at the  
the time of my decease I give and bequeath to my beloved daughter Hannah Knowles.

The widow Mary Allen Smith is quiet in her deposition and in her will as to what happened to her  
and John after the war other than that she remained married to John until his death in 1815 and that  
she never remarried. I just hope they had some moments to dance.

