

**THE HISTORY OF THE
PEQUOT WAR: AND
BATTLE OF STONINGTON ;
ILLUSTRATED**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649272181

The History of the Pequot War: And Battle of Stonington ; Illustrated by George W. Lewis

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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GEORGE W. LEWIS

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1891
Press of CITY STEAM PRINTING CO.
BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

215 10896.37.50

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CHAPTER I.

AS a province, the territory known as Connecticut, more especially its southern border, in its earlier history was perhaps the scene of as frequent encounters among its aboriginal tenants as well as between those and the white new comer, as any like portion comprising the colonial dependencies. The conflicts, more or less sanguinary, and not unfrequent, might seem to be the consequent outcome of a race, separated by tribal divisions, fostered by clannish and traditional prejudice. It was quite otherwise with the white claimant to his new foothold. Generally he is expressed as an aggressor and invader, yet this view is not wholly tenable, earnestly assailed. However it is not the purpose of this little volume to enter upon such disquisition, but simply draw out from accessible sources a relation of events, incidents and episodes pertaining to a section of the province referred to as above.

It may be possible that there were pioneers from the settlements, through the southeastern portion of the territory at a date earlier than that to which our attention is directed, but as evidence of such fact, if it has existence, is wanting, it may be assumed with considerable safety that the expedition here cited was the first to pop through the Naragansett country.

"Posterity," it has been said, "delights in details." Two figures in the lapse of little more than one decade are prominent in early New England history and arrest attention. The one Miles Standish of Plymouth, the other John Mason of Windsor. Both trained to arms in the low countries, both men of strong characteristics as well as sentiment. But it is only with the latter that we have to do.

Saybrook Fort, from the time of its construction, had been seemingly the particular object of Indian suspicions, perhaps animosity. The neighborhood before 1637 had been witness of scenes the most shock-

ing and barbarous, and in subsequent years they were not less so, if the records of writers be reliable, as presumably they are, and it is notable that the pen of the colorist in its artificial and marvelous has so lightly invaded its precincts.

In May, of the year aforesaid, Mason, with ninety men and about seventy Mohigan, or Mohican Indians under Uncas, Chief of that tribe, left Hartford in three little vessels—a pennace, Pink & Shallop—for the purpose of destroying the Pequot forts or camps, near what is now New London and Mystic. As they dropped down the river, the Indians, unused to confinement and restriction became restless, and upon application Mason permitted them to land and continue the journey on foot. This they did. On the Monday following—the 15th—the little vessels arrived at Saybrook.

Here was Uncas and his men awaiting. They had proved their loyalty by capturing eight Pequots. One of these had sometime been an inmate of the Fort, and was known at that time as a notorious scamp and perfidious villian. The seven men he held as prisoners at the Fort, while the former was turned over to the disposal of Uncas and his followers. Needless to say further than that they roasted him, tore his limbs from the trunk and ate him. Not long previous, in a foray upon Wethersfield by the Pequots, among others abducted were two young women. These were held captives, and their captors had condemned them to die. The Dutch Governor at New Amsterdam—Keift—learning of this sent an agent in a vessel with instructions to purchase these of the Pequots. Upon his arrival at the camp of the latter, they refused to entertain any proposition tending to that end, and the efforts of the agent seemed about to become fruitless.

Whether the Dutch held any Pequots as prisoners is not now certain, or whether those now at Saybrook, or held elsewhere, is equally uncertain, but it was at length proposed to exchange for the two young women six captive Pequots. The proposition was agreed to, and the girls were at the Fort when Mason arrived. Keift had upon gaining possession of these turned them over to the English, and delivered them to Fenwick at that time and for a long time in charge of that port. Keift's record has been repeatedly assailed, and charges had been made against him of infamous acts; but assuredly this generous and kindly exhibition on his part, only so far as humanity and sympathy were concerned utterly gratuitous, were duly and suitably acknowledged, and should have been lastingly remembered. Those at all conversant with what has been said of Keift's treatment of the Indians on the Jersey shore, will recognize the reference here made. From these late captives Mason obtained information as to the intended

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movements of the Pequots, and from his scouts on shore that the Pequot spies were observing his every movement from their hiding places. The girls were subsequently restored to their surviving friends at Wethersfield.

The report of the surveillance by the Pequot spies were afterward ascertained to be that the expedition had gone further eastward, probably to Block Island. With the facts now before him and the information gained, Mason, after consultation, determined to sail for Narragansett Bay. His previous place had been in accordance with the arrangements before leaving Hartford, to land on the east side of the river opposite Saybrook and march to the Pequot's defence, leaving twenty of his men at the Fort to return for the defence at Hartford, and taking in their place Captain Underhill and twenty men from Massachusetts—who had of late garrisoned Saybrook—he proceeded on his way.

The vessel arriving at Narragansett on the 20th, the next day with Captain Underhill and a guard he visited the Camp Canonched, Canonicus or Nauametto, the son of Meantonmah, chief Sachem of the Narragansetts. Canonicus immediately dispatched a runner for Miantonomah, who arrived not long after, from his own camp. Mason informed him of the object of his expedition, its strength, and requested Miantonomah's permission that he might pass over his territory. The Sachem approved of his purpose and readily assented to his request. He, however, told Mason that his "force was insufficient, that the Pequots were great Captains, and skilled in war, and that they were many"—but that he would send men; which he did.

About this time a message from Captain Patrick, who had been despatched from Massachusetts with forty men to co-operate with Mason, and who had just reached Providence, was received. Captain Patrick in his message requested Mason to remain where he then was until he, Patrick, could join and co-operate with him. Mason, however, upon consultation resolved otherwise; reasoning upon the possibility of his advance reaching the ears of the Pequots, whom it was very important that he should surprise. He therefore determined to move without the assistance of Captain Patrick. At this point many Indians who stood in fear of the Pequots joined Mason's force, so that when finally, he left the Narragansett's camps he had with him some five hundred belonging to the several camps of the latter tribe. The Camps of Ninegrit, Ninegrate or Nincerat, another chief of that tribe was situated some short distance west, within the boundary of Pawtucket, afterward Sotherton, now Stonington. Mason's force was moved to Ninegrit's Camp, but his reception was cool and the chief distant. He hated the Pequots, and his love for the whites was by no means of the

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owing kind. He would suffer none of Mason's men to enter his camp. Now Mason himself, well knowing Indian nature, and thinking it possible though not probable that a message might be conveyed to the Pequots, he determined that as none of his men were permitted to enter the camp, none should go out. He therefore posted a cordon of sentinels to that end, and encamped for the night. The Pequot scouts having witnessed Mason's departure from the mouth of the Connecticut river, had so reported and it was concluded by them that he had gone farther east, and dare not attack them. At this very time they were traveling in their camps, upon the inference that the English feared to come near their stronghold. On the following morning many of the Ninegets men came from camp and added themselves to Mason's force.



PORTER'S ROCKS.

Ninegets himself was inwardly in accord with the movement, his duplicity forbidding its disclosure. Mason well knew that his allies, though not to be relied upon when the great struggle came, were in no wise disposed to be otherwise than true in their friendship to him. They, however, boasted of their powers and of what daring things they could do and what deeds they would perform in the coming contest. On the march that day which was very hot, some of the men by reason of exertion became very faint, and a halt was made. His allies now inquired of Mason his real intentions and did not conceal their dread of the Pequots. He told them he had come to fight. Many were dismayed and returned at once to their camps. The march resumed about three miles further on they came to a cornfield, and Mason calling his guards around him inquired the distance to the Pequot Fort. One Squash, a Pequot, who for some fancied or real wrong done him by his tribes, had left it and joined the English, and remained true, gave

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