

**MEMORANDUM WRITTEN
BY WILLIAM
ROTCH IN THE EIGHTIETH
YEAR OF HIS AGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649543670

Memorandum Written by William Rotch in the Eightieth Year of His Age by William Rotch

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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MEMORANDUM

WRITTEN

BY

William Kotch

IN THE EIGHTIETH YEAR

OF HIS AGE. 1879



**BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY**

1916

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Published June 1916

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AND FIFTY COPIES PRINTED AT THE RIVERSIDE
PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, U. S. A.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THOUGH a man of some prominence in his day and a member of a family still well known and honored in Massachusetts, the writer of this "Memorandum" is unnoticed in most books of reference, and it seems fitting to preface his reminiscences on their first appearance in book form with a brief account of his life.

William Rotch was a Nantucket Quaker, born on the island, October 15, 1734. He carried on a large whaling and shipping business in Nantucket, which was for many years the third largest port of New England. Though he was a man of peace, his fortunes were closely connected with the fortunes of war. While

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visiting London in 1773 he chartered three of his ships to the East India Company, and these ships — the Dartmouth, the Beaver, and the Bedford — brought the tea to Boston and furnished the scene of the "Boston Tea Party," one of the early outbreaks of the revolutionary spirit in New England. When the Revolution actually came it made serious trouble for the peace-loving inhabitants of Nantucket, who did their best to preserve their neutrality and keep the whaling industry alive to supply the world with oil. How William Rotch met these difficulties he himself relates in his "Memorandum." He was successful both during and after the war, and his ship Bedford was the first vessel to carry the American flag into a British port, when, on February 6, 1783, she reported at the London custom-house with a cargo of oil. There is a story that one of her crew, a hunchback, while on shore one day, was clapped on the back by a British sailor, who said, "Hello, Jack, what have

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you got here?" to which the Yankee replied, "Bunker Hill, and be d—d to you!"

It may be worth while to note that William Rotch's son Benjamin, who accompanied his father on his mission to England and France, related two interesting anecdotes which are not included in the "Memorandum." One of these is to the effect that when Mr. Rotch had completed his arrangements for sailing to France, Lord Hawkesbury sent word to him desiring another interview, and that the Quaker's reply was as follows: "If Lord Hawkesbury wishes to meet William Rotch, he will find him on board the ship *Maria* until the hour when the ship takes her anchor." The other story is that, during the visit to the royal chapel in Paris, the king himself, who shared the prevailing curiosity to see the wealthy Quaker, was present incog.

As related in the "Memorandum," William Rotch in 1795 removed to New Bedford, which was afterwards for many years the leading