

draft

Chapter I

Soul Liberty

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1. The Hope of Heaven (In the Beginning)

In the beginning, Roger Williams had a vision of the true church, a gathering of saints worshipping together. Salvation was all that mattered. It came only through repentance and the action of Grace on a free conscience. It could not be prescribed by English bishops nor legislated by the General Court of Massachusetts.

Between 1630 and 1635 Roger Williams pursued this vision from England to Boston, from Boston to Salem, from Salem to Plymouth, and back again from Plymouth to Salem. Wherever he went in New England, his support of Indian rights displeased the governors; his insistence on particular points of ritual angered his fellow clergymen; his denial that belief or ritual should be ordered by the civil government struck at the heart of Puritan hopes.

By January 1636, the General Court concluded that Williams was too dangerous to leave at large. They decided to arrest him and send him back to England. But John Winthrop, the governor of Massachusetts, sent him a warning, and he fled southward through the snow and took refuge among the Narragansett Indians, where he had perviously established trading friendships with the sachems, Canonibus and Miantonomu. For six weeks, ~~wh~~ he lived among the Indians, trading, teaching, and preaching. Then, after a brief stay in Seekonk, he bought from the Sachems the right to plant a colony at the head of Narragansett Bay at the junction of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket rivers.

Tradition tells us that, in the spring of 1636, Roger Williams, with four companions, William Harris, Joshua Verin, Thomas Angell, and John Smith, the miller, crossed the river from Seekonk in a canoe. They were hailed by Indians on the western shore calling, "What Cheer, Netop!" and the spot at which they first landed is marked by a monument now fifty yards from the shore. Williams' letters and other evidence remain to show that the first settlement was made along the eastern shore of the ~~West~~ Providence River; within a few weeks Roger Williams named the new settlement "Providence" because, he said, he was grateful to Providence, which had protected him.

That summer, when John Winthrop wrote Williams asking what he had gained by his intransigence, Williams answered, "I confess my gains cast up in man's exchange are loss of friends, esteem, maintenance, etc, but what was gain in that respect I desire to count loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Chirst Jesus my Lord: etc. To His all glorious Name I know I have gained the honor of one of his poor witnesses, though in sackcloth." Some months later, "in the midst of a multitude of barbarous distractions," Williams pulled together the grounds of his disagreement with the other churches of England and New England and wrote to Governor Winthrop more pointedly: "I know and am persuaded that your misguidings are great and lamentable, and the further you pass in your way, the further you wander, and have the further to come back, and the end of one vexation will be but the beginning of another til conscience be permitted

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(though erroneous) to be free amongst you."

2. Soul Liberty

. But what was the "free conscience" of which Roger Williams wrote and for which he and his fellow settlers left the comforts of England and the relative security of Massachusetts Bay to plant a settlement in the wilderness? It was partly political but mainly religious. Perhaps our best chance to understand it comes through considering, on the one hand, what "soul liberty" meant to Roger Williams in his relations to the Indians and, on the other hand, how he defined it in his famous appeal to Parliament, The Bloody Tenant.

Throughout his life, Roger Williams was a trader, a teacher, and a preacher. In trading with the Indians, he dealt honestly and, by the tactful use of gifts, built up friendships with the sachems. He also learned to be cautious in extending credit. He was a talented linguist (at the time of his arrival in America, he knew Dutch, French, Latin, some Greek and a little Hebrew), and he learned the language of the Narragansetts so well that his Key Into the Language of America remains a standard text. But, above all, as a minister and missionary, Roger Williams had a spiritual insight unique in his generation and rare at any time. He wanted the Indians to accept Christianity, as he hoped his fellow Englishmen would, because he believed that was the key to eternal life. At the same time, he saw that, for the Indians, the power of the English God was manifest in the wealth of English civilization. He wrote, "They have no clothes, books, or letters, and conceive their Fathers never had; and

therefor they are easily persuaded that the God who made the Englishmen is a greater God because he has so richly endowed the English above themselves; but when they hear that about sixteen hundred years ago England and the inhabitants thereof were like unto themselves and since have received from God clothes, books, etc., they are greatly affected with a secret hope concerning themselves."

Williams realized that, moved by this hope, the Narragansetts might adopt such practices as baptism and Sunday prayer meetings. But he wanted more than outward conformity; he wanted "a change of heart." And he suspected that, if he "converted" the Narragansetts, they would superimpose Christian forms on a base of Indian beliefs and practices. So he continued to teach and did not urge acceptance of Christian ritual. God, he thought, might forgive mistaken opinions or incorrect practice, "who knows with how little knowledge Christ may save," but Grace would hardly penetrate the delusion that ritualistic conformity guaranteed salvation.

This delusion, however, seemed to lie at the root of all established churches and, in 1644, when Roger Williams was in London trying to get a patent for Rhode Island, he wrote Parliament urging the claims of "soul liberty." Williams' pamphlet, The Bloody Tenant, contains the classic ~~argument~~ statement of his belief. He based his argument on religious doctrine and supported it by appeals to political experience. Williams assumed that religious truth could be known, but he insisted

that true belief came only through God's Grace, and that civil pressure to religious conformity hindered, rather than helped, accessibility to Grace. The true Christian, he thought must help others to enlightenment by prayer, preaching and exposition of the Bible.

Accordingly, he begins The Bloody Tenent: "First that the blood of so many hundred thousand souls of Protestants and Papists, spilled in the wars of present and former ages, for their respective consciences is not required or accepted by Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace."

This text, to which the next hundred and thirty-eight chapters are commentary, assumes the supremacy of Christian values. Like his fellow ministers in Massachusetts, Roger Williams considered salvation the ultimate goal of human life. But, where the Reverend John Cotton claimed a duty to make others walk the path he saw, Roger Williams was equally and oppositely convinced that civil pressure to conform in religious doctrine or ritual was death to the spirit.

For one thing, Roger Williams said, persecution tends to harden the opinions persecuted. He cautioned Parliament: "Whatever way of worshipping God your own consciences are persuaded to walk in, yet [do not force people to become] Papists, Prelatists, Presbyterians, Independents, etc by confirming all these sorts of consciences by civil force and violence to their consciences." Moreover, Williams said the hypocritical worship produced by civil pressure to conformity "stinks in

God's nostrils." He cited passages from Hebrews 11, Romans 14, and Isaiah 66 to support this.

Williams defended the right to preach religious doctrines which were contrary to established state religion. He cited Paul and interpreted the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife metaphorically to show that the true breakers of civil peace are those who cry out for prison and swords against others who cross their judgment in religion. He also observed that, since magistrates were chosen for civil capacity rather than their spiritual insight, they were not qualified to judge in spiritual matters and might easily err.

Besides these religious arguments, The Bloody Tenent appealed to reason and experience. Williams claimed that while the prayers of God's children, freely given, could procure the peace of the city they lived in, in general the actions of churches, whether true or false, need in no way affect the city's well being. Religious groups were like corporations of merchants or colleges of physicians. They could dissent, divide--indeed, dissolve into pieces--~~without~~ without disturbing the city's peace because the city ~~exists~~ "is essentially distinct from the particular societies; the city courts, city laws, city punishments, distinct from theirs. The city was before them and stands absolute and entire when such a corporation or society is fallen down." At the same time, insofar as civil government concerned itself with its proper functions of maintaining civil order and protecting men's lives and property, the unregenerate,

the heretic, even the heathen, might be good and loyal citizens.

In short, Roger Williams believed that salvation was the goal of human life, that a free conscience was necessary to salvation, and, therefore, that civil government should not interfere with religious beliefs or modes of worship. He did not think men had the right to believe any religion they chose or none at all, any more than they had a right to believe the earth was flat. He argued fiercely about the minutiae of ritual as well as doctrines of belief. He abhorred "Popish Christmas." He called the Church of England "Anti-Christian." He resigned from the church in Salem rather than accept Massachusetts' doctrine. But he distinguished between matters of belief and worship that concerned only man's relation to God and those of civil importance that had to do with men's relations to each other. Roger Williams did not "tolerate" diverse opinions, like his contemporary, Sir Thomas Browne, who would not quarrel with another man in matters of doctrine where he himself might change his mind in a few days. On the contrary, throughout his life, Williams battled for his vision of religious truth and heartily condemned the errors of those who thought differently. When he was past seventy, he rowed thirty miles down the Bay from Providence to Newport to debate with the Quakers. But he insisted that religious beliefs and modes of worship lay outside the domain of civil government, and this soul liberty was the rock on which he founded his plantation at the head of Narragansett Bay.

3. Early Quarrels

The hardy Englishmen who joined Roger Williams during the first years of planting in Providence all shared his devotion to soul liberty. But they gave it varying interpretations. Many of the first settlers had been members of Williams' congregation in Salem, but few, and ultimately none, ~~followed~~ could follow him in his search for religious perfection. Recurrently during the first ten years of settlement, differences in interpreting soul liberty and divisions on doctrine tore the community apart. Only the threat of Puritan bigotry made Providence and the other communities which developed around Narragansett Bay act together and secure their independence.

The first crack in town unity appeared within a year of the original settlement. Joshua Verin, who had crossed with Roger Williams in the canoe from Seekonk, was accused in town meeting of violating his wife's right to soul liberty.

Joshua Verin, a young man, newly married, had joined Roger Williams as one of the first shareholders of Providence. Joshua, the son of Philip Verin, a Salem merchant, had borrowed some money from Governor Winthrop to get his farm started. He probably joined the planters ~~there~~ at Providence because land was ~~there~~ available and cheap. But it seems likely that he also wanted to please his young wife, who was devoutly religious, and a convinced follower of Roger Williams in his quarrel with Massachusetts.

Once settled in Providence, Joshua Verin had no time for

anything but fencing, planting, and building. When ~~Roger~~ Williams suggested that Verin join him in trading with the Indians, Verin turned him ~~him~~ down. When the other settlers met for prayer, Verin continued his work. And when Verin's wife wanted to attend prayer meetings, he used threats and blows to keep her home.

The young woman, in her distress, appealed to Roger Williams for help. Williams sympathized with her and brought the matter up at a town meeting in May 1637, accusing Joshua Verin of interfering with his wife's freedom of conscience.

William Arnold ~~was~~ supported Verin. Arnold was a patriarch whose extended family constituted an appreciable fraction of Providence inhabitants. He had come to New England in 1635 with his wife, his daughter Elizabeth and her husband William Carpenter, his son Benedict, then aged twenty, his daughter Joan, two years younger, ^{and} a younger son Stephen. They stayed for some months in Hingham but moved to Providence at the very first settlement in April 1636.

Mr. Arnold seems to have had somewhat radical views in religion; one contemporary, not a friend of his, said that Arnold had been a great professor of religion in the west of old England but, in New England, was known constantly to do servile work on the Sabbath and claimed this as a virtue beyond that which his neighbors had attained. Arnold had, at the same time, relatively conservative views in politics; he often spoke in town meetings of the advisability of instituting a

more conventional form of government than the informal social contract which prevailed in Providence. And in line with this conservatism, Arnold based his defence of Joshua Verin on the principle of wifely subordination. He argued that freedom of conscience did not extend to a breach of God's ordinance requiring the subjection of wives to husbands.

John Green opposed Arnold. Mr. Green, a physician and surgeon, had left England ~~for~~ and come to Salem seeking a true church and a free conscience. He joined Rober Williams in Providence because he saw, as he told a Salem neighbor, that no conscience was free in Massachusetts. His later career suggests that he set particularly high value on individual rights and much less on social conformity. In May 1637, he opposed William Arnold, saying that, if they insisted on the subjection of wives, all the women in the country would rise against them.

Arnold answered, "Did you leave Massachusetts because you would not offend God to please man? And will you now break God's ordinance to please women?"

Roger Williams, who may have resented Joshua Verin's refusal to join the others in prayer or trade, and certainly hate his rough manners, said that, although they did not molest Verin for his refusal to hear the Word with them, they could not condone his brutish tyranny over his wife's conscience.

When it came to a vote, a majority of the dozen men who constituted the Fellowship of the Vote agreed with Roger Williams. Joshua Verin was disfranchised pending a change in his attitude.

"It was agreed that Joshua Verin upon a breach of a covenant for restraining liberty of conscience shall be withheld from the liberty of voting until he shall declare to the contrary."

Verin sore furiously that he would have justice in other courts, that is, in Massachusetts. Within a few months, he had sold his houselot and meadow to Richard Scott and returned to Salem, dragging his unwilling wife back with him. He never set foot in Providence, though he continued to press his claims as a shareholder in the town for more than fifty years.

William Arnold contented himself for the moment with writing an entertaining and biassed account of the affair to Governor Winthrop.

And gradually the cracks in town unity widened. By the fall of 1640, the settlement was split geographically. William Arnold and his family had moved to their holdings in Pautuxet, five miles from the original plantings. The Providence townsmen were at odds politically. The Combination had replaced the Fellowship of the Vote, but John Green and Francis Weston refused to sign the new agreement. Roger Williams had also given up religious leadership; after establishing the Baptist meeting in 1639, he had been assailed with doubts and resigned from the ministry.

The arrival of Samuël Gorton and his friends, who had already been exiled from Boston, banished from Plymouth, and thrown out of Porsmouth, was all that was needed to split the town permanently.

Gorton was a stirring preacher; he was a great attacker. His sermons attacked paid ministers as "hireling priests" and ridiculed sacramental wine as "a silly drink of grape juice." He vilified magistrates and defended the rights of Englishmen. In Providence, his preaching appealed to many who distrusted ritual and wanted a more inward religion than that of the established churches, and many who had suffered from the bigotry of Massachusetts liked his politics.

Within a few months of Gorton's arrival in Providence, he had attracted many followers. John Green and Francis Weston joined him. So did John Warner and Nicholas Power, who were among the younger men and had signed the Combination. Roger Williams, who condemned Gorton's theology and distrusted his influence, wished Gorton would leave on his own account ~~xxx~~ but was not about to throw him out. At the other extreme, the Arnold party, hating Gorton's levelling tendencies, accused him of advocating communism and free love.

In the spring of 1641, when Samuel Gorton and those who had come with him formally applied to the town for the rights of inhabitation and town privileges, they had so much support that Roger Williams thought of retreating to Patience Island. Nevertheless, when the five Disposers authorized in the Combination met in May, a majority voted against admitting Gorton and his friends.

However, though Gorton and his followers were not accepted as townsmen, they would not leave, and the town could

not without total disruption force them out. They stayed in Providence throughout the summer until, in the fall, matters reached a climax.

Francis Weston became involved in some dispute for which the arbitrators, arranged for in the Combination, judged that he owed fifteen pounds. On November 13, 1641, Weston and his friends sent a letter to the arbitrators giving reasons for his refusal to pay. They also posted a copy of the letter on a tree.

Two days later, Benedict Arnold and some others went to attach Weston's cattle, planning to drive them to the pound as hostages for the fine. Upon which, as Arnold wrote to the General Court of Massachusetts, "Samuel Gorton and his company . . . came and quarreled with us in the street, and made a tumultuous hubub, and although for our part we had beforehand principally armed ourselves with patience peacably to suffer as much injury as could possibly be borne, to avoid all shedding of blood, yet some few drops of blood were shed on either side; and after the tumult was partly appeased and that we went orderly into the cornfield to drive the said cattle, the said Francis Weston came furiously running with a flail in his hand and cried out 'Help sirs, help sirs, they are going to steal my cattle!'; and so continued crying till Randall Houlden, John Greene, and some others, came running and made a great outcry and hallooing. and crying 'Thieves, thieves, stealing cattle, stealing cattle'; and so the whole number of their company came riotously running, and so with much striving in driving hurried away the cattle, and

then presumptuously answered they had made a rescyem and that such should be their practice if any men in any time attach anything that is theirs."

Faced with this breakdown of law and order, fourteen Providence townsmen signed Arnold's letter to Massachusetts asking for help in getting rid of Gorton and his party. The General Court answered that they could not intervene unless they were given jurisdiction over the territory. Roger Williams worked hard to pacify both sides. Gorton and his followers bought some land in Pautuxet and started negotiations with the Narragansett chief, Miantonomu, for land further south known as Shawomet. So for the time being the quarrel subsided.

Within a year, however, the group of Providence men who had settled in Pautuxet, including Robert Coles and the several members of the Arnold clan, quarreled with Gorton again. This time they made a new agreement with local sachems and petitioned the Massachusetts General Court to be accepted under their government and protection. The Massachusetts Court, seeing an opportunity to expand their control of New England, willingly granted the petition and, for the next sixteen years, the settlers in Pautuxet were officially subjects of Massachusetts Bay.

The other Providence townsmen saw that the presence of Massachusetts in the Narragansett area threatened their liberties. So did the settlers of Newport, Portsmouth, and Shawomet, who were also refugees from the Bay theocracy. On

September 30, 1642, eleven days after Pautuxet had submitted to Massachusetts, representatives of Providence, Newport, and Portsmouth met and resolved on a joint course of action. Roger Williams was to sail for England to procure a charter for their territories.

During the two years between the secession of Pautuxet and Roger Williams' return from England, Massachusetts made clear that she would not allow freedom of conscience or dissent from religious orthodoxy anywhere that she had the power to prevent it. She took no notice of the limits of royal patents nor of the presence of settlers whom she could regard as inferior.

On the pretext of a complaint from the Pautuxet settlers and the local Indians, the General Court summoned Gorton and his followers to appear before them although, at this point, the Shawomet settlement was distinctly south of any Massachusetts claim. When Gorton and Holden refused to come, Massachusetts sent soldiers to wreck the settlement and bring the men in custody to Boston. And when a group of leading men in Providence offered to mediate the dispute, Massachusetts turned them down, saying that Gorton and his followers were "no state but a few fugitives living without law or government," that the mediators were such as had been rejected by Massachusetts and the other New England governments, and that Gorton's views were blasphemous and should be stamped out.

Their reasoning was ominous. The General Court's ~~xxxxxx~~ procedures in arresting, trying, and sentencing Gorton and his

fellow settlers showed what many in Providence might expect unless they secured the protection of an English Charter.

No wonder, then, that, when Roger Williams arrived at Seekonk in September 1644 bearing with him a signed patent guaranteeing independence to the loyal and industrious Englishmen of Providence, Portsmouth, and Newport, with full power to govern and rule themselves, he was greeted by a flotilla of fourteen canoes. His friends and neighbors hailed him and hemmed him in as he returned to Providence. His triumph was the victory of the community, the fulfillment of their faith in freedom of conscience.

4. Later Quarrels

Once Providence had the Charter, its independence was never so seriously threatened again. But, though the ideal of freedom of conscience united the inhabitants when they were ~~not~~ attacked, it served as an excuse for quarrels when they were not. When Massachusetts threatened to take them over in 1642, when William Coddington tried to make half the Colony his personal province in 1650, when John Clarke was in England pressing for a Royal Charter in 1662, the men of Providence got together, voted approval of rates, brought in barrels of beef, pork, and flour to insure their freedom. On the other hand, when it was a matter merely of town expenses for the construction of a bridge, the payment of town officers, or the welfare of widows, freedom of conscience became a reason not to pay local taxes, which they called rates.

Resistance to ~~paying~~ rates was, of course, neither original in nor exclusive to Providence. In England, the assessment and collection of parish rates used for the relief of the poor and for other communal needs, as well as for the support of church and minister, had been increasingly resented since the beginning of the seventeenth century. By the 1650's, refusal to pay rates had become a point of principle with dissenting groups. Roger Williams himself sympathized with this point of view. In 1654, he wrote proudly to an English friend that the citizens of Providence had as much liberty as any people in the world. They were free from the iron yoke of

wolfish bishops, free from the new chains of Presbyterian tyrants, free from the overzealous fire of so-called godly Christian magistrates, free--as a climax--from taxes. "Sir," he wrote, "we have not known what an excise means; we have almost forgotten what tithes are, yea or taxes either to church or commonwealth."

Of course, any government needs funds and some service from its citizens. When the freemen claimed freedom of conscience as a reason for not paying taxes or serving in the militia, Roger Williams remonstrated that this was not what he meant at all. He wrote the town in January 1655: "That ever I should speak or write a tittle that tends to such an infinite liberty of conscience is a mistake which I have ever disclaimed and abhorred . . . It hath fallen out sometimes that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks may be embarked on one ship, upon which supposal I affirm that all the liberty of conscience that I ever pleaded for turns on these two hinges,--that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews or Turks be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship, nor compelled from their own particular prayers and worship if they practice any."

Roger Williams' concept of soul liberty had to do with belief and worship and did not extend to other aspects of civil government. But, while the distinction between true liberty of conscience and unreasonable license seemed clear enough to him, other people looked at it differently. In 1656, such differences of interpretation precipitated a quarrel between

Roger Williams and William Harris that reverberated in Providence for more than a hundred years.

William Harris had been among the very first to settle in Providence; tradition puts him in the canoe that came across from Seekonk. And it is certain that, in the spring of 1636, Roger Williams and William Harris were friends of five years' standing. They had crossed from England together on the ship Lyon, and William Harris was one of the "loving friends" whom Roger Williams first approached with his plan to establish a settlement on Narragansett Bay. We know little of William Harris's life between his arrival in Boston and the founding of Providence and less of his life in England before that. He seems to have come from Kent; he had some schooling and may have worked in a law office. Though Roger Williams later described him as "then poor," he had enough capital to pay his share as a town proprietor in 1636, when he spoke as an ardent follower of Roger Williams intent on soul liberty and true worship.

In 1640, William Harris was chosen by the town as one of four men to revise town government; it was he and the three others who drew up the Combination. In 1641, he signed the letter requesting help from Massachusetts to throw Samuel Gorton out. However, by 1645, he had changed his views sufficiently to sign another letter to Massachusetts, this time supporting Gorton.

Part of William Harris's change of attitude may have come

from his quarrel with the town of Providence. In 1644, he was disfeanchised for beating up a fellow townsman in the street; for ten years after that, he lived apart from the town, "like Nebuchadnezzar in the woods," his enemies said. It may be noted that this isolation did not keep him from bringing suit against Richard Osborne in a dispute about land rights. In the winter of 1654-55, Harris was back in Providence, and the town meeting in June 1655 spent some time arguing about a tumult and disturbance "under pretence of voluntary training" in which he was involved.

By 1656, Harris's political views seem to have been radically changed again, and he wrote a tract expounding his new opinions. This tract, of which he sent copies to the General Assembly at Newport and to the four Rhode Island towns, attacked all forms of civil government and law-making assemblies. It condemned courts, punishments, prisons, rates, and records as thieves, hypocrites, "satyrs," "owls," "courts of owls," "dragons," and "devils." And William Harris vowed he would maintain his principles with his blood.

At this time, Roger Williams was President of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, having been elected for a third annual term in March 1656. With all his selfless devotion to the public good, he had little feeling for public sentiment. And he had begun to hate William Harris.

Roger William's anger at Harris had many sources. Harris had begun by being a devoted follower of Williams in religion and

had become an opponent there. Harris had been a builder of town government and had become a disturber of civil peace. Worst of all, Harris had become a land speculator, interpreting Indian land grants in ways which Williams considered a betrayal of the original intent. The tract was the last straw. Williams, as President of the Colony issued a warrant against Harris and had him put in jail. He accused Harris of notorious defiance to his Highness the Lord Protector and of attempting to draw all English subjects of the colony into a traitorous renouncing of their allegiance and subjection.

At this time, however, many substantial citizens in Providence and Newport sympathized with Harris's views. The people who, during the next few years, ~~were~~ formed Quaker meetings agreed with his opinions on theology and politics. They believed that God was in man, that revelation was a continuing process, and that direct religious experience was more important than the forms and doctrines which their neighbors stressed. Minimizing the scope of government, they considered themselves simple, harmless people who, as a matter of conscience, would not fight or swear, or take an oath of allegiance to any government. They looked on William Harris as an able and eloquent spokesman for their position and bitterly resented Roger Williams's action in arresting him. Moreover, the persecution of the Quakers in Massachusetts increased the general sympathy with them in Rhode Island. In the election of March 1657, Benedict Arnold was chosen President of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence

Plantations. In May, William Harris was acquitted.

Back in Providence, Roger Williams had alienated several of his oldest friends. He had indicted sixteen of Harris's supporters there and threatened them with imprisonment--and they did not forget it. John Throckmorton, wife was included in that indictment of Harris's sympathizers, never forgave Williams though they had been closely associated for more than a quarter century before. Richard Scott, a strong Quaker sympathizer who had come to Providence in 1637 and who, in 1650, paid one of the highest rates in town, was permanently estranged and eventually moved to Newport.

Down through the generations, the quarrel between Roger Williams and William Harris embittered relations between Baptists and Quakers in Providence. Even one hundred and fifty years later, Moses Brown's anger as a Quaker against Roger Williams smoldered with perceptible heat.

5. Da Capo

The Royal Charter signed by Charles II of England in 1663 gave the people of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations "full liberty in religious concernments." It brought Roger Williams as close as men come in this world to the fulfillment of impossible dreams and yet heaven seemed no closer.

In May 1664, Williams wrote his friend John Winthrop, the oldest son of the first John Winthrop and governor of Connecticut at that time: "Sir, when we that have been the eldest, and are rotting (tomorrow or next day) a generation will act, I fear, far unlike the first Winthrops and their Models of Love. I fear that the common trinity of the world, (Profit, Preferment, Pleasure), will here be the tria omnia as in all the world beside; that Prelacy and Papacy will in this wilderness predominate, that the God Land will be (as it now is) as Great a God with us English as God Gold was with the Spaniards." Six years later, Williams wrote Major Mason of Connecticut in protest against some Connecticut claims to land in South County. After reviewing the history of Rhode Island and justifying the Colony's boundaries, he returned to his religious vision which represented to him the only significant truth.

Williams's letter to Major Mason begins, after references to God's justice and compassion, by rehearsing the original circumstances of settlement. Roger Williams, banished from Salem in the midst of a New England winter, came to Narragansett Bay at the suggestion of Governor Winthrop. He

moved from Seekonk to Providence at the request of Plymouth Colony, and his claim to Providence was recognized by both Plymouth and Massachusetts.

Williams continues by telling how he helped all the New England colonies in 1637 at the time of the Pequot War. In that emergency, he saved them from disaster. Having taken a canoe through stormy wind with great seas from Providence to the sachem's house, he stayed there three days and three nights expecting every moment to be murdered by the Pequot ambassadors who were already there. Finally, he succeeded in establishing a league of the English, the Narrangassetts, and the Mohegans against the Pequots and served as liaison between the English and the Indians. His help was acknowledged at the time by Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts and other members of the New England Council although he was not rewarded as he might have been.

Next, the letter reviews the history of boundary quarrels. Williams himself had drawn the line of his colony up from the Pawcatuck River as he firmly believed that land was free of any English claims. Despite Massachusetts's claims, no other charter to the land was ever acknowledged by the English commissioners. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ The agents of Connecticut and Rhode Island had come to solemn agreement on the boundary line, and ~~Major~~ the recent ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ purchase by Major Atherton of Connecticut of land claimed by Rhode Island did not have the consent of the General Court and was prompted by an unholy greed.

Finally, having surveyed history and politics, Roger

Williams moves back to his primary purpose: "Alas, Sir, in calm midnight thoughts, what are these leaves and flowers, and smoke and shadows, and dreams of earthly nothings, about which we poor fools and children, as David saith, disquiet ourselves in vain? . . . Sir, the matter with us is not about these children's toys of land, meadows, cattle, government, etc. But there, all over this colony a great number of weak, distressed souls, scattered, are flying hither from Old and New England, the Most High and Only Wise hath, in his infinite wisdom, provided this country and this corner as a shelter for the poor and persecuted, according to their several persuasions." Freedom of conscience had been granted to the people of Rhode Island by Royal promise, and "we must part with lands and lives before we part with such a jewel."

After pages of political and historical argument, Roger Williams concludes by saying that he has a plan for peaceful settlement of the dispute which he would gladly discuss at some quieter time; he hopes it will be accepted but, if not, "It ~~xxx~~ is but a shadow vanished, a bubble broke, a dream, finished. Eternity will pay for all." In the end, as in the beginning, salvation was all that counted.

1. Thomas Angell

Some say the world is saved from catastrophe for the sake of the hidden saints, though their virtue goes unremarked by contemporaries and is generally unknown to later generations. And from this point of view, it seems ~~waxx~~ well worth while to consider the life of Thomas Angell, who lived in Providence from 1636 to 1695.

Thomas Angell seems to have come from England as an apprentice to Richard Waterman. In the spring of 1636, he came down to help Roger Williams in planting at Seekonk. When Williams, under pressure from Plymouth, moved across the river, Thomas Angell was in the canoe with him. By the spring of 1637, Thomas Angell, then clear of his apprenticeship, bought himself a two shilling grant of land in Providence. He signed with his mark an agreement to subject himself "in active or passive obedience to all such orders as shall be made for the public good of our body, in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated together in a town fellowship."

For the rest of his life, a stretch of almost sixty years, Thomas Angell remained an inhabitant of Providence. Like the traditional English yeoman, he stood at the heart of community continuity. He worked hard, he paid his rates, and he served in various town offices. He treasured

his land and his conscience. He was generally peaceable, but he could not be pushed around. He had no special taste for controversy, but he stood up for what he saw as right. He judged soundly the men and circumstances of which he had direct knowledge, though he read little and could not sign his name.

Thomas Angell's sturdy holding strength served Providence particularly well during the first ten years of settlement when quarrels nearly tore the town apart. In 1640, when the Combination replaced the earliest form of town government, Thomas Angell signed it. The next year, when Samuel Gorton's preaching swept many in Providence away from their former ties and town quarrels had pushed the Arnold faction to ask help from Massachusetts in driving Gorton out, Thomas Angell was among those who held the center. He stayed in Providence, farming his land, favoring neither Gorton nor Arnold. However, in 1645, when Massachusetts threatened to take over Gorton's settlement in Warwick, Thomas Angell signed testimony supporting Gorton's right to an independent settlement.

In 1650 and 1653, when quarrels between the four Rhode Island towns--Providence, Warwick, Newport, and Portsmouth--threatened to disrupt the colony, Thomas Angell was one of six commissioners chosen by Providence to meet with commissioners from the other towns in a colony

assembly. They eventually achieved a settlement which allowed the colony to survive intact.

In the ordinary course of town affairs, Thomas Angell's sensible, impartial judgment made him a valued jurymen. Eight times in the years between 1649 and 1660, Thomas Angell was elected one of the "triers of causes" and took the oath: "You shall faithfully and truly judge the matter between party and party, according to the light of your conscience upon the evidence given in, as you will answer at your peril."

The little that we know of Thomas Angell's ~~xxx~~ private life also has a pleasant fragrance. He married around 1644 a young woman named Alice, and they had eight children, three sons and five daughters. Their son, Hope, died young; but the other children grew up and married, in the years between 1663 and 1682, children of other ~~Rxxxx~~ Providence freemen. Thomas and Alice Angell lived to see at least one grand-daughter married.

The town rate lists made between 1650 and 1690 show Thomas Angell to have been consistently in the middle group of taxpayers. He was not as rich as traders like like Richard Scott or cattle owners like William Carpenter, but he did not have to fear that he might become, like William Burrowes, an object of charity. He does not seem to have speculated in buying out his neighbors, and he was only once involved in a private suit. But, over

the years, he shared in the town divisions of common lands and thus increased his holdings. By the end of his life, he owned a substantial number of acres.

In 1685, being nearly seventy, he felt himself "very aged" though sound in mind and memory and made his will. He gave his son John a farm of one hundred ~~xxxx~~ and twenty acres in the area called Caucaunjawachuck and his son James the homestead farm in the center of Providence. He bequeathed to each of his daughters two ~~xxx~~ silver shillings and to his widow the use of their house with its furnishings during her widowhood. All these provisions were standard and unremarkable. But the special care he took for his widow to have space for a garden in back of the house and a passageway in front of the house to go out and in as she pleased, ~~ix~~ and a milch cow which their two sons were to care for and replace in case it should fail, gives substance to his phrase ~~xxx~~ "loving wife."

As it turned out, these carefully elaborated provisions were hardly necessary. Thomas Angell ~~xxxx~~ lived nearly ten years after he made his will and, four months after he died, his wife followed him to the grave.

The inventories of their estates, taken on January 21, 1695, show the essential furnishings of their generation: feather beds, bolsters, a few sheets, and a couple of blankets; not much wooden furniture, a table,

a chest, and a couple of chairs; some pewter dishes, and brassware for cooking, a few iron vessels; and a few tools; some personal clothing, including Thomas Angell's old hat, "out of fashion," and sundry linen and woolen garments of Alice Angell's sufficiently ~~imf~~ important for her to ~~spec~~ specify that they are to be divided ~~exactly~~ evenly among the daughters.

Thomas Angell outlived the others who had taken part in the first planting in Providence. The settled village in which he spent his old age was a far cry from the wilderness to which he had come with ~~Reynolds~~ Roger Williams. He and some contemporaries had rooted themselves in the land. They and their children laid claim to the wilderness.

2. Claiming the Wilderness

In 1695, when Thomas Angell died, the town of Providence had claimed land as far north as the hills of what is now Woonsocket and as far west as the twenty mile line, drawn twenty miles west of Fox Point. The townsmen had divided among themselves thousands of acres. In doing so, they had displaced the Indians and, by 1725, the town of Providence had become a set of agricultural villages. Most of the town's expansion took place after 1660, but the attachment of men to land had determined town structure from the earliest beginnings.

While Roger Williams was still in Salem, he had spoken with some friends about the possibility of establishing a plantation on the shores of Narragansett Bay, and a few had bought shares in the project. In the spring of 1636, when Roger Williams gave Canonicus, chief sachem of the Narragansetts, thirty English pounds for the privilege of planting and building on the lands and meadows of the fresh rivers called Moshosick and Woonasquatucket, he invited these friends and other congenial settlers to join him and pay a proportionate part of the expense.

In the course of a year, thirteen men ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~joined~~ joined on these terms. They were: William Arnold, William Carpenter, Robert Cole, John Green, William Harris, Ezekiel Holliman, Thomas James, Thomas Olney, John Throckmorton, Joshua Verin, Richard Waterman, Stukely Westcott, and Francis Weston. These men, with Roger

Williams, made up the Fellowship of the Vote. They were not the only inhabitants of Providence; apart from wives, children, and servants, we have records of several other settlers who received lots on which to plant and build during the first two years of planting. But the Fellowship of the Vote set town policy.

For the first few months, matters went peacefully enough. The householders, meeting every two weeks, easily agreed about such matters as watches and planting. During the second year of planting, arrangements were somewhat more formal: fines were imposed for non-attendance at town meetings; Thomas Olney was appointed town treasurer; fairly regular records were kept of town orders. It was at this period that the battle over Mrs. Verin's liberty of conscience resulted in Joshua Verin's disfranchisement and subsequent departure.

In these early months, the younger men who joined the settlement were given a household lot for which they paid a few shillings and asked to sign an agreement in which they promised to obey the orders made by a majority of the masters of households for the good ~~was~~ of the town, with the proviso that their obedience was only in "civil things." These junior members of the plantation were much wanted -- their work was needed and their presence strengthened the community -- but they had no vote in town meetings and held no share in the common lands.

In October 1638, Roger Williams formalized his

agreement with the first proprietors. He deeded the town land, which had originally been his personal property, to the original proprietors, with the exception of Joshua Verin, and to "such others as the major part of us shall admit into the fellowship of the vote with us." At about this time, these townsmen of Providence bought from Miantonomu the rights to lands as far south as the Pautuxet River, and this Pautuxet Purchase was confirmed as their joint personal property. As we have seen, William Arnold and his son Benedict, now twenty-three years old, and his son-in-law William Carpenter soon moved away from the central settlement in Providence to their holdings in Pautuxet. They settled at the ford where the Pequot Trail crossed the Pautuxet River. During the ~~next~~ next years, they built up their farms and their trade with the Indians there.

By the end of 1639, the Fellowship of the Vote was clearly inadequate to town government in Providence. The younger men, deprived of the vote and, correspondingly, of the power to dispose of town lands, were seriously discontented. The masters of households who had the vote quarreled among themselves about the boundary between the town of Providence, which was common property held in trust for the town, and the Pautuxet Purchase, which was private property to be divided among the purchasers. The Fellowship of the Vote also failed to provide regular and convenient

procedures for admitting new inhabitants, assigning land to newcomers, or to inhabitants who wished to increase their holdings, or for adjudicating quarrels among the residents.

In the early months of 1640, Robert Cole, William Harris, Chad Brown, and John Warner were chosen by the town as arbitrators to resolve current conflicts and to devise a system of government for the future. On July 7, 1640, they proposed the Combination as a social contract.

Although the form of government set forth in the Combination was unconventional, it satisfied most of the inhabitants of Providence. It provided for a boundary between Providence and Pautuxet; it called for the election of five Disposers, who would be entrusted with the assignment of land and the arbitration of disputes among townsmen. It reasserted "as formerly hath been the liberties of the towne; so still to hold forth Liberty of Conscience."

Eventually, thirty-nine people signed the Combination, and it served as the basis for town government for several decades. But, while the form of town government remained stable, the people who made up the township changed. Some moved away: by 1650 more than half of the original settlers had removed to other communities. Joshua Verin had returned to Salem in 1638 and moved on to Barbados. In March 1640, Thomas James had sold his house lot to William Field and left for Quinquinuck. William Arnold, William Carpenter, and Robert Cole had set up a

quasi-independent settlement in Pautuxed [Pautuxet?], which, as ~~wh~~ we have seen, seceded from Providence in 1642 and became officially part of Massachusetts. ~~Re~~ John Green, Ezechiell [~~right-spelling?~~] Holliman, Richard Waterman, and Francis Weston had joined Samuel Gorton in settling in ~~Shaw~~ Shawomet

Nevertheless, these men and their heirs continued to hold their land in Providence. Most of them are listed on the Providence rate lists of 1650 and later. All except Joshua Verin shared in the divisions of land later in the century. He put up a fifty-year fight which was still not settled in 1719 when ~~& Thomas~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ King, of the parish of St. James on the island of Barbados and his wife Agnes, formerly the wife of Joshua Verin, deceased, appointed William Browne, a merchant of Boston, to act as their attorney and get all money, lands, tenements, and homesteads which pertained to Verin's estate.

Throughout the 1640s and 1650s, the population of Providence grew slowly but steadily. Immigrants, like Pardon Tillinghast and Gregory Dexter, came directly from England. A few settlers, like John Whipple, drifted down from Massachusetts. The sons of the first settlers grew to manhood and wanted farms of their own. In 1650, there were fifty rate-paying families; by 1662, ninety-four persons had been admitted as townsmen with a right to share

in the division of town lands. As the population increased, it began to seem that soon there would be hardly ~~any~~ enough land to provide for Providence townsmen and their descendants in the manner to which they aspired. At the town meeting in March 1660, William Harris suggested to the freemen that a committee be appointed to run a line twenty miles west of Foxe's Hill.

Roger Williams strongly opposed this proposal, arguing that Harris's claim to land "upstreams without limits" was a gross misreading of the agreement made with Canonicus and Miantonomu. Few of the townsmen agreed with Williams; in April, the town appointed six men to "set the bounds of our plantation" twenty miles west of Foxe's Hill. The members of the committee were each to be paid four shillings a day for every day they were out. They were also empowered to hire an Indian guide at the town's expense. At the same meeting [which: April? March?], the town voted, against Roger Williams's opposition, to close the rolls of purchasers, that is, of those entitled to shares of the common lands, and to divide the lands east of the seven-mile line among purchasers already enrolled. Williams still thought of Providence as a haven for those distressed of conscience, and he worried that, if the common land were all divided, future refugees would find no place to settle. The freemen of Providence cared no more for future refugees than

for Indian agreements made a generation earlier. The land, as they saw it, was theirs, and the problems of dividing it among those who currently made claims were complicated enough.

By the terms of Roger Williams's deed to the ~~town~~ town in 1638, every man "admitted to the vote" was an equal partner in the town holdings. A later agreement, made in 1645, had established a group of "twenty five acre men," whose initial contribution to the town treasury had been smaller, who could not vote in town meeting, and whose rights in the common land were correspondingly less.

By 1662, there had been much coming and going of townsmen and, with it, much buying and selling of town rights. Thus, claims on town lands were distributed among several groups: original purchasers and their heirs who still lived in Providence; purchasers and heirs who still held their rights but no longer lived in the town; twenty-five acre men and their heirs, in and out of town; and men, in Providence or not, who had bought rights in common land from the original grantees.

Not surprisingly, this confusing variety of claims took time to resolve. Purchasers felt entitled to more land than twenty-five acre men; people currently living in Providence considered that they had better claims than absentee owners. Records were not always ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ complete nor explicit. However, by 1665, the town published a list of

shares in the lands east of the seven-mile line, in an order established by lot. Twenty-five acre men living in Providence, if they had not sold their rights, got a quarter share of the lands east of the seven-mile line and a full purchaser's share of the lands west of the seven-mile line.

In the years that followed the first division of land, many rights were laid out. Thomas Harris surveyed many miles of boundaries and John Whipple, the town ~~clerk~~ clerk, registered dozens of deeds. Few people moved as much as five miles from the town center. The woods were dense and the wilderness was bleak. The lines that bounded claims might be rivers, but they were not roads. The corners of estates, marked by notable trees or rocks or, where there were no natural features, by piles of stones, were mainly observed by wolves and squirrels. Thus, in 1667, when William Carpenter had one-hundred acres laid out to him from rights he had bought from John Green and Robert Cole, the limits of his grant were set on the north and on the east by the Woonasquatucket River, on the west by a white oak, marked, and on the south by a maple tree, marked. And, fifteen years later, when Thomas Olney died, having served the town in various offices for over forty years, he bequeathed to his heirs large estates of half-charted wilderness. He left his son Epenetus; sixty acres of his grant from Providence; a parcel of low, swampy land on the

north side of the Woonasquatucket; another fifteen acres ~~on the south side of the Woonasquatucket~~ on the south side of the Woonasquatucket; and "sundry other pieces of meadow and marsh" nearby. His son-in-law, John Whipple, got five acres in the central settlement, entailed to Olney's grandson. The residual heir, Thomas Olney, Jr., inherited lands whose extent is suggested by the phrases "upland, meadows, and marshes . . . all sorts of land and meadow, salt or fresh lying on the aforesaid Wanasquatucket River or on the Moshassuck River, or lying and being in any other place withing the liberties of the town of Providence." At the same time, cattle and moveable goods are disposed of in one sentence: they are to be equally divided among Thomas Olney, Jr., Epenetus ~~Olney~~ Olney, and their sister, Liddea Williams. The inventory of moveable goods shows that the wooden furniture in Thomas Olney's house consisted of one bedstead, one small table, and four chairs.

In those years, the twon offered special inducements to those who sould undertake to settle in the wilderness. In 1663, William Hawkins and John steere, for instance, were offered fifty acres of upland each, apart from other rights, if they would go to Wayunkeke that summer, plant there and build houses, and spend three years there, winter and summer. Both of them made good their promise, but they were exceptionally hardy. Life was perilous and

bare enough when there were neighbors within earshot; out in the woods, an Englishman was at the mercy of the bears and the Indians. By 1660, the Indians had begun to resent the English presence.

3. The Narragansetts

In 1660, when the townsmen of Providence voted to extend the town's boundaries, the Narragansett Indians still constituted a majority of the population in the area and still, in their own eyes as in Roger Williams's, owned most of the land. Why, then, did they offer no effective opposition to English expansion?

Part of the reason lay in their long tradition of peaceful and seemingly profitable coexistence with the English. In 1636, when Canonicus offered Roger Williams a grant of land, he was by his own standards, a wealthy and powerful ruler. He with his nephew Miantonomu controlled territories which included the islands in Narragansett Bay and stretched as far inland as the present state of Rhode Island. They had twelve hundred warriors at their command. Though not conspicuously warlike, they had defeated the belligerent Pequots of Connecticut and they exacted tribute from their neighbors on the east. Their people were, by English testimony, numerous, rich, and industrious. The country was theirs, and their dominion was generally recognized.

At this time, the Narragansett way of life supported a stable and prosperous society based on agriculture supplemented by hunting, fishing, craftsmanship, and trading. The staple food was corn, which the women planted, gathered, and dried. At harvest time, a family might gather two or

three heapt of corn with twelve or fifteen, sometimes even twenty, bushels in a heap. The corn was carefully spread on mats to dry, covered with mats during the night, and opened to the sun during the heat of the day. Besides corn, they dried acorns and currants. In summer, they gathered strawberries which grew in great profusion and they cultivated varieties of squash. The men shot game with bows and arrows. They caught turkeys and geese in nets as the birds were feeding on the ground. They trapped deer, beaver, and sometimes wolves. They fished in the Bay. Some were artisans and traders. Craftsmen made pipes which were exported to England. Many hunters traded beaver and otter furs for English goods, and some made a double profit by trading again with Indians farther west. A contemporary English writer described the Narragansetts as "the mintmasters of New England" and "the storehouse of all kinds of wild merchandise."

In Canonicus's experience, English presence brought only minor and beneficial changes to the Narragansetts. They came to prefer cloth mantles to coverings of skins and furs since the cloth was warm enough and lighter. They began to use iron tools and guns though, as late as 1644, these were still rare. They adapted a few English words, such as "cupaimisch " meaning "I will pay you," "cowsnuck" meaning cows, and "pignuck" meaning swine. But these changes of custom and language only brushed the edge of

their life, as exports from New England only touched the ~~fix~~ fringes of European life. In each case, imports from across the ocean provided luxuries but did not seriously change the habits of the average man. Roger Williams, lamenting that every sorry rag and hatchet had to be brought to America over the dreadful Atlantic Ocean, added "and yet that Europe be not proud, nor America discouraged, . . . how have foule hands (in smoakie houses) the first handling of those Furies which are after worne upon the hands of Queens and heads of Princes."

In this context of expanding trade, Canonicus and Miantonomu expected to profit from having an ~~Eng~~ English trading post in their area. In 1634 or thereabouts, Canonicus offered the trader John Oldham an island in Narragansett Bay if he would settle there. In 1636, though the sachems had become slightly suspicious of English expansion, they accepted in good faith Roger Williams's proposal to plant a small English settlement at the junction of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket rivers. Canonicus trusted Williams as an honest and ~~peaceable~~ peaceable man. He expected that Williams and his friends would set up a few farms; he understood that they would graze their cattle in the meadows. In return, the Narragansetts could trade corn and furs for cloth and tools, and might learn some English skills. He and Miantonomu could ask for what they wanted from Roger Williams. ~~He~~ Williams and his friends were free to use what land they

needed. Throughout Canonicus's life, he expected that "if the Englishman speak true, if he mean truly, then shall I go to my grave in peace and hope that the English and my posteritie shall live in love and peace together."

By 1660, however, the balance of power had shifted. Although the Narragansetts still held most of their territory and outnumbered the English settlers, their political and economic position had deteriorated. Canonicus had died. ~~xxx~~ Miantonomu had fallen victim to Indian enemies and New England politics. Between 1639 and 1644, the Narragansetts, led by Miantonomu, were recurrently at war with the Mohegans, led by Uncas. Finally, Uncas captured Miantonomu. Uncas knew how to ingratiate himself with the English of Massachusetts; after holding Miantonomu captive for several weeks and accepting gifts from the Narragansetts which they intended as a ransom, he brought Miantonomu to the Commissioners of the United Colonies for judgment. The Commissioners distrusted Miantonomu's independence and resented his friendship with Roger Williams and Samuel Gorton. After consultation with a group of ministers who held the same prejudices, they delivered Miantonomu to Uncas for execution, claiming that he had violated their treaty.

At the same time, with time the value of Narragansett wampum in English goods ~~xxx~~ [I really don't know what you want me to do with this sentence] the price of beaver in English markets had fallen. In 1634, Governor Bradford of Plymouth noted that coat beaver brought twenty shillings a pound in England and, at that time, Englishmen gave nine

or ten shillings a fathom for wampum. During the next years, the price of beaver fell in England and, with it, the value of wampum in New England. By 1643, wampum was worth only five or six shillings a fathom in English goods, and the Indians ~~xxxxxx~~ resentfully accused the English of false dealing. Moreover, to add to Narragansett difficulties, the overhunting of beaver destroyed the local supply, while the spread of English settlements westward to the Connecticut Valley intercepted the Narragansetts' profitable role as middlemen.

Even more insidiously, the pressure of English expansion and the temptation of English liquor began to erode the Narragansett way of life. Though Roger Williams promoted English interests in the Narragansett area, he shared Canonicus's hope that the English and Indians might live together in peace; he always refused to help projects which he thought injurious to Indian life. As we have seen, he opposed his neighbors' land grabbing schemes, and he tried constantly to curb their liquor trading and gun running. Eventually, he decided he could only trade in good conscience in those items which made for the civilization of the Indians since this precluded not only liquor and guns but clothes and other vanities -- it is no wonder that Williams died a poor man and, in his last years, was supported by his son Daniel. But few of Williams's fellow settlers shared his scruples. When it came to trade, they considered the Indians fair game. Land,

liquor, and weapons were the sure roads to riches and, as years went by, the English built up their holdings and corrupted Indian character.

English settlers grew more numerous and more prosperous; their farms increasingly interfered with Indian modes of life. The Narragansetts, when Roger Williams first traded with them, were fairly thickly settled along the shores of the Bay. In the course of twenty miles, one might come across a dozen settlements, some bigger, some smaller. In each village, the Indians lived on the corn they raised in nearby fields and on the clams which they gathered along the beaches. They protected their corn from wild animals by setting dogs to guard the fields, and they kept no pigs or cattle. The English, on the other hand, depended on domestic animals for food and trade. They fenced their confields and left their livestock free to forage. As a result, the English swine rooted the clams along the beaches and even unhinged the doors behind which the Indians had stored their corn, and English cattle wandered into Indian fields, destroying the corn as it stood.

When the Indians killed the ~~pigs~~ or when ~~the~~ Indian dogs attacked the cattle, the English were furious. They ~~hxx~~ hauled the Indians into English courts for theft of swine. They threatened to shoot any dog which molested their cattle. And they passed town resolutions calling for

the Indians to fence in their corn.

~~Amos~~ The Indians, on their part, built up a smoldering rage against the settlers, who fenced land which had been free for hunting and who kept marauding animals. For many years, Indians only showed their anger when they were drunk. Then they were likely to break out in sudden violence, which led the English to pass town orders forbidding the sale of liquor to Indians. However, since selling liquor remained profitable, these orders had little effect.

By 1662, when Philip, a young and able chief, became leader of the Wampanoags, the Indians of southeastern New England had begun to think of revolt. They had not use for the English, whose settlements and claims cut back Indian control of the land and whose courts chipped away at their independence. They dreamed of returning to the days of their fathers, when the forests were full of game and the streams of fat fish, and the beaver flourished. They thought it an easy matter to get rid of the interloping farmers.

The English settlers, on their part, gave little thought to future trouble. When the expanded bounds of Providence were found to include at least one sizeable Indian village, the freemen said, "When we plant there we will agree with the Indians either to remove or to fence." The governments of Plymouth and of Massachusetts Bay were even more disdainful of Indian rights. Convinced of their own righteousness, they exacted from Philip a series of

humiliating and ultimately unenforceable treaties.

Finally, in September of 1667, they made Philip sign a covenant which stated that he and his people were subject both to royal government and to colony government, and were bound by their laws.

Philip himself did not underestimate the English. He worked for at least two years to build up a federation with the other Indians of New England. He consulted the Powaws, who, in the manner of oracles, gave ambiguous advice. They foretold correctly that Philip would not be killed by an Englishman, and they promised success if the English fired first. However, in the spring of 1675, Philip's warriors forced his hand. In June and July of that year, New England was terrified by explosions of Indian fury. The village of Swansea was burned out. Warwick was threatened. As far south as Stonington, Connecticut, the English trembled.

The story of King Philip's War has often been told; the best recent account is Douglas Leach's ~~King~~ Flintlock and Tomahawk. It devastated the Indians and, in proportion to population, inflicted greater casualties on the English settlers than any other war in our history. Most Providence families took refuge in Newport, leaving, by the spring of 1676, only twenty-seven men to defend the town, including Roger Williams, by then a man past seventy, and two of Thomas Angell's sons.

On March 29, 1676, when a troop of Indians, fresh from the destruction of Rehoboth, descended on Providence, Roger Williams went out to talk to them. But it did not help. They drove away the cattle, and burned the houses and mill at the north end of the settlement. The town records, which had been stored in the mill, were rescued from the flames and thrown in the stream. The south end of town, protected by Field's garrison house, remained more or less intact.

By the time ~~xxx~~ the Indians burned Providence, however, the tide of war had turned against them. The Great Swamp Fight in December 1675 had destroyed a huge gathering of Narragansetts, warriors, women, and children. In August 1676, the death of Philip, ~~wax~~ shot down by an Indian, brought an end to organized Indian warfare. On the fourteenth of that month, the townsmen of Providence, meeting in front of Thomas Field's house under a tree by the waterside, appointed a committee of five, headed by Roger Williams and including Thomas Angell, to decide how to deal with the Indians in the area.

Chuff, so called because of his surliness against the English in times of peace, ~~xxx~~ who had been a leader of local attacks during the war, was executed summarily "to the great satisfaction of the town." Others were bound to be sold as slaves or to serve as slaves for a fixed period in town--seven years for those over thirty, eight years for

those between twenty and thirty, and for younger people until they were 26, 27, or 28.

The Indians in outlying areas resumed their planting, hunting, and fishing. They remained thorns in the sides of the settlers. In 1683, five Providence townsmen presented a bill to the town complaining that Indians not inhabitants of the town nevertheless fished and hunted in the area, and the town responded with an ordinance forbidding any Indians "that have not served their time in our town . . . to hunt, or fish, or to inhabit" on pain of losing their guns or traps. As late as 1697, the town appointed a series of scouting parties to "seek and destroy . . . the cruel and barbarous Indian enemies."

4. The Farming Village: Third Generation

After King Philip's War, the freemen of Providence reclaimed their land, rebuilt their houses, and continued to expand their holdings. There had been a second division of land in 1675, and there was a third division in 1684. For the next forty years, the patterns of Providence life seemed as fixed as the constellations. The rituals of religion, the labor of farming, the quarrels of town meetings recurred as regularly as the seasons, while children grew up, young men grew old, and the first generations died off.

Though everyone considered himself a Christian, there was no public meeting house or church in Providence until about 1700, when Pardon Tillinghast built a small meeting house for the Baptists near what is now the corner of Smith and North Main Streets. Both Baptists and Quakers disdained settled ministers; lay elders led the service on Sundays in private houses. At Baptist services, the deacon lined out psalms and the elders offered prayers; at Quaker meetings, the congregation waited until someone felt called to speak.

Farm products were the source and measure of wealth in every Providence family. Although Epenetus Olney described himself as "shoemaker," and John Whipple and William Turpin each had a license to keep a public house,

there was little trade and less industry. In a tax return of 1688, Joseph Jenckes complained that, though he had a sloop and a sawmill, the sloop was little used and the sawmill ready to fall [fail?] for lack of custom. Apart from land and cattle, people had little in the way of material goods and less in hard money; they paid taxes and other bills in "country pay," corn, rye, beef, or pork.

~~MM~~ Every man with a freehold could vote in town meeting and, four times a year, as the quarter days rolled around, the townsmen of Providence gathered at the house of Daniel Abbot, the town clerk, or at John Whipple's inn to deal with recurrent problems. The bridge at Weybosset continually needed repair. The conflict between livestock and plantings was endless. From time to time, there were orphans to be provided for, widows who needed help, luckless inhabitants who found themselves in old age dependent on the charity of the town.

For many years, the town considered each hardship individually. Thus, in 1650, when the first Daniel Abbott died, the town took care to see that his son, later town clerk, was properly placed as an apprentice and that his daughter made a suitable marriage. In 1662, when William Burrows, who had full purchase right and vote, fell on hard times and, through age and weakness, could no longer support himself by farming, the town saw to it that a neighbor took care of him. The neighbor was paid by

townsmen who contributed to Burrows's support with the understanding that any property left after his death would be distributed among the contributors.

As time went, the distance between giver and recipient widened. The town made efforts to have only self-supporting inhabitants and to avoid being stuck with what they considered unfair burdens. For instance, in 1686, when Thomas Waters, a tinker, applied to Providence for admission as a resident, he was turned down because of his reputation as a shiftless ne'er do well and warned to leave town. But he did not leave and, a year or so later, when he had been convicted of a felony and transported, his wife and young child were left destitute. The town, accordingly, placed the child in the care of Joseph Woodward, who was paid for his trouble and expense by a tax on the townsmen. However, though the freemen of Providence accepted this responsibility, they did not like it and, at the next quarterly meeting, they specifically authorized the selectmen to "remove out of our town all such persons who in their judgments may be chargeable or troublesome; or at any time create any charge or trouble to our town."

The town's efforts to avoid being saddled with the support of unfortunate inhabitants sometimes pushed it into arbitrating between husband and wife. When Ephraim Pearce announced that he disowned his wife, Hannah, and tried to forbid anyone from having dealings with her,

she complained to the town that he had locked her out of doors and sold his farm so that she needed town assistance, upon which the town, seeing that, on account of these difficulties, the "family and estate is like to fall to ruin, and thereby the town is like to have charge fall upon them," decreed that Ephraim Pearce "Shall not dispose of his propperty [this the original spelling?] for a year without the advice and consent of Captain Arthur ffener [spelling OK?], Pardon Tillinghast, and Thomas Olney."

In the early years of settlement, all the homes in the compact part of Providence were built on the east side of the Providence River, while many pastures and plantings were on the west side, as were the paths ~~of~~ to Pautuxet and to Connecticut. It was, correspondingly, useful to have a bridge, but it seemed very difficult for the town to provide one. As early as 1663, George Sheppard had donated some of his rights in Providence land in order to built and maintain a town bridge at Weybosset. Four years later, the bridge that had been built needed repairs, and a committee was appointed to see what might be done. Apparently, the committee saw no way to finance the needed work because, a few months later, Roger Williams undertook to finance the bridge ~~and~~ by requisitioning labor from the townsmen who used the bridge and charging a toll to strangers. This scheme also

failed. In 1675, George Sheppard asked for and received the return of his rights in Providence lands since the town had failed to maintain a bridge at Weybosset. Forty years later--other bridges at Weybosset having, no doubt, come and gone in the interim--the town was still debating ways and means to keep that crucial crossing in repair.

The common lands of Providence, in which most inhabitants had rights of planting and grazing, were also a constant source of friction. Some townsmen used them for raising crops; others liked to leave their swine and cattle free to forage. But, then, the cattle ate up the young corn and the swine rooted in the meadows. In 1664, the town passed an order forbidding the grazing of cattle in the common fields of the town and allowing any swine found in fields or meadows to be killed without recompense to the owner. Twenty years later, a similar order was passed. In 1715, the problem was still unsolved although, long before that, a pound had been built for holding strays.

Nevertheless, with all the seeming sameness of Providence life, gradually and imperceptibly, like the dripping of water on stone, the repetition of farming, prayer meetings, and town meetings produced clear and irreversible changes.

Men grew richer. Farmers with plenty of pork and beef laughed to think that their fathers had considered it

a feast to have boiled bass without butter. As surplus food accumulated, men bought lots between the Town Street and the salt water where they could build warehouses and store the barrels of meat and bushels of grain which ~~aw~~ waited for shipment to Newport. By 1704, when the demand for warehouse lots threatened to block passage across the cove, the town reserved a block of shoreline as common land so that the farmers of Providence could ~~xxx~~ ride horses, cart produce, and swim cattle to and fro between their east side homesteads and their west side fields.

At the same time, the increased stability and prosperity of life in Providence made new enterprises and new life styles possible. At the quarter day town meeting of January 27, 1704, William Smith was granted a forty-foot square lot in town provided that, within a year, he set up his trade as a weaver there; William Edmunds was granted a similar plot to set up a smithy provided, again, that, ~~xxxx~~ within a year, he begin work as a blacksmith. Gabriel Bernon, a Newport merchant, wanted the town to give him the use of all the pine trees on Black Hill and from there to the Pawtucket River to leak them and make pitch of the turpentine; although the town refused this privilege, he considered the prospects of trade in Providence sufficiently promising to buy a warehouse lot from Samuel Whipple.

The increase of population and of wealth in Providence

also attracted new churches. Sometime before 1720, the Reverend Thomas Greenwood, minister of the Congregational Church in Rehoboth (now Rumford), made occasional trips across the Seekonk to hold services in Providence.

Encouraged by his success, three Massachusetts ministers, Peter Thacher of Milton, John Danforth of Dorchester, and Joseph Belcher of Dedham, wrote to a dozen leading men of Providence suggesting, "If it should come to pass that a small meetinghouse should be built in your town, to entertain such as are willing to hear our ministers, we should account it a great favor if you all, gentlemen, or any of you, would please to build pews therein . . .

And we hope and pray that ancient matters that had acrimony in them, may be buried in oblivion." To this, Jonathan Sprague, one of those addressed, wrote an indignant and forceful reply: "Since you wrote this letter the constable at Attleborough has been taking away the estates of our dear friends and pious dissenters to maintain the minister. The like has been done in Mendon." Nevertheless, in June 1722, Dr. John Hoyle, a "practitioner of physick" and the chief lay promoter of Congregationalism in Providence, bought from Zachariah Mathewson an acre and a quarter of land at the junction of two great country roads, the road to Connecticut and the road to Pautuxet (later Weybosset and Broad Streets), ~~xxxxxx~~ and a ~~xxxxx~~ month later, sold an acre of the land to a group of

Congregational trustees, ministers and deacons from Rehoboth and Taunton in Massachusetts and Hartford and Windham in Connecticut, with the understanding that they would build a meetinghouse, horse sheds, a minister's dwelling, and burying place there. Construction was started on the meetinghouse but, before the roof was over it, people accused the trustees and Dr. Hoyle of building the church out in the country accessible to no one, so the timbers were taken down, a new piece of land at the top of Rosemary Lane was bought from Daniel Abbott, and the meetinghouse was built in the center of population. The land remained as a cemetery.

At the same time, the Church of England, not to be outdone, acceded to the requests of some other Providence residents, including, notably, Gabriel Bernon, who had moved to Providence from Newport, and established a mission in Providence supported by their Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. By 1722, while the Congregationalists were still struggling with relocating their meeting house, construction had begun on King's Church, a "neat and pretty" building, the first "Steeple house" in town, located on the site of the present St. John's Cathedral.

While the central settlement of Providence grew denser and more diverse, the wilderness around it receded. The wolves were hunted out of the ~~xxx~~ forest. For a few years, a bounty was offered for squirrels caught in

the local woods. Sone and grandsons of the first ,
purchasers took up claims west of the Seven-Mile Line.
Roads were built out into the country. John Steere,
having pioneered in staying at Wayunkeke, had settled there
permanently. By 1700, ~~max~~ his daughter and her husband,
Peter Plaice, had established a farm nearby. By 1701,
Major William Hopkins and Thomas Olney, the town
surveyors, were ordered to lay out, "with what convenient
speed they may" a highway "from the town to
Wayunkeke and so through the Wayunkeke woods as far as they
see convenient." They were allowed three shillings a day
from the town treasury for each day they worked on it. In
1703, John Steere, senior, and some others petitioned the
town for a highway from Wayunkeke to Captain Richard
Arnold's mill on the Woonasquatucket and thence to the
town; three years later, a highway from Arnold's mill to
Wayunkeke was ordered.

By 1730, the spread of farms which had been envisioned
seventy years before, when the town hhad the Twenty-Mile Line
surveyed, had been achieved. The towns of Smithfield,
Scituate, and Gloucester were set off from Providence.
The Olneys, the Angells, the Ballous, together with other
families that had moved out from Providence and some who had
moved down from nearby Massachusetts, set up new farming
towns while the town of Providence, following the lead of
Pardon Tillinghast, entered a new era.

5. Pardon Tillinghast

While Thomas Angell brought with him from England and transplanted in Providence the values and attitudes of English yeomen, providing continuity with generations past, Pardon Tillinghast, only five or six years his junior, impresses us more as an ancestor than as a descendant. He is the first in Providence to prefigure the type of New England merchant: shrewd, hard driving, thrifty, and, at the same time, pious, hardworking, and public spirited.

Pardon Tillinghast, born in Beachy Head in Sussex, England, in 1622, came to Providence as a young man seeking, like many of his contemporaries, a truer religion and better economic opportunities. He was admitted as one of the twenty-five acre men in Providence in 1645 and, a few years later, won the chance to purchase a house lot. By 1663, he had left Providence and was living in Newport but, before 1672, he had returned to Providence, where he lived for the rest of his long life.

In January 1680, Pardon Tillinghast asked the town for "a little spot of land against his dwelling place, above high water ~~mark~~ mark, of twenty feet square, to build himself a storehouse with the ~~privilege~~ privilege of a wharf also." This modest request was granted, and the storehouse and wharf must have prospered immediately, as,

within nine months, two of his neighbors made similar requests. Although not all wharf owners were equally successful--one, in fact, lost all his property and fell to the care of the town--shipping had come to Providence to stay.

Pardon Tillinghast was a devout Baptist. As a man of fifty, he hesitated to enter a Quaker meetinghouse, even to listen to debate, until Roger Williams assured him it was no sin. He served for many years as deacon in the Baptist meeting. As a man of eighty, in 17__, he built the first public meetinghouse in town, known to the irreverent as "Pardon Tillinghast's haystack" from its round shape and thatched roof. Tillinghast was also an honest, hardworking, thrifty and intelligent businessman. When he died in 1718, at the ripe age of ninety-six, he had accumulated what was, by Providence standards, a fortune. His fellow townsmen respected his principles and his brains. They elected him several times to look out for their interests as deputy to the General Assembly in Newport, and they entrusted him with the town's affairs. For more than twenty years, he served as town treasurer and a member of the town council.

With all this, his life style remained simple, almost primitive. The inventory of his estate shows that he held more than a thousand pounds worth of bonds, as well as another three hundred pounds in silver money, bills of credit, and payments due. But some plain clothes, bedding,

table linen, a few chairs, three brass kittles, a warming pan, three skillets, and some earthenware dishes served his needs when he was old and rich as they had when he was young and poor. It was his son Philip who build a "mansion house" which stood on South Main Street for more than a century.

Pardon Tillinghast looks to us shrewd, aparing, and self-righteous, but we must give him his due. He was the first man in Providence to see that trade, rather than farming, was the road to riches. Before he set up his storehouse and wharf, Providence farmers were at the mercy of Newport merchants. Once he showed the way, his neighbors began to follow, and Providence shipping and commerce grew steadily if, at first, very slowly.