

## SACHEM CANONICUS OF THE NARRAGANSETT



1565

It would have been at about this point that *Canonicus* would have been born, the 1st son of the union of the son and daughter of the *Narragansett* headman Tashtassuck. Such a birth in that culture was considered auspicious, so we may anticipate that this infant will grow up to be a Very Important Person.

Canonicus's principle place of residence was on an island near the present Cocumcussoc of *Jamestown* and *Wickford, Rhode Island*. The island would receive the name *Conanicut* (*Quononicut*) in his honor. He had three younger brothers. Eventually, Canonicus would share rule with his brother Mascus, with Canonicus providing leadership in counsel and Mascus serving as war leader. During this time the Massachusetts, *Wampanoag*, Nipmuc, Sakonnet, Nauset, Shawomet, Niantic, and Coweset peoples came to be subject to Narragansett rule. At the height of their influence, the Narragansett ruled about 30,000 people. Mascus died before the arrival of the English. However, shortly after his death, in about 1618, *Ousamequin* Yellow Feather (*Massasoit*) of *Pokanoket* and ten of his sachems would be obligated to attend a council held by Canonicus and Mascus's son and successor, Miantonomi, and formally acknowledge himself and his lands as vassals of the Narragansett.

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1618

The epidemic of what most likely was either measles or scarlet fever reached *Wampanoag* country, causing mass depopulation. The war with the *Narragansett* was put on hold. At about this period *Ousamequin* Yellow Feather (*Massasoit*) of *Pokanoket* submitted to *Canonicus* of *Narragansett*.

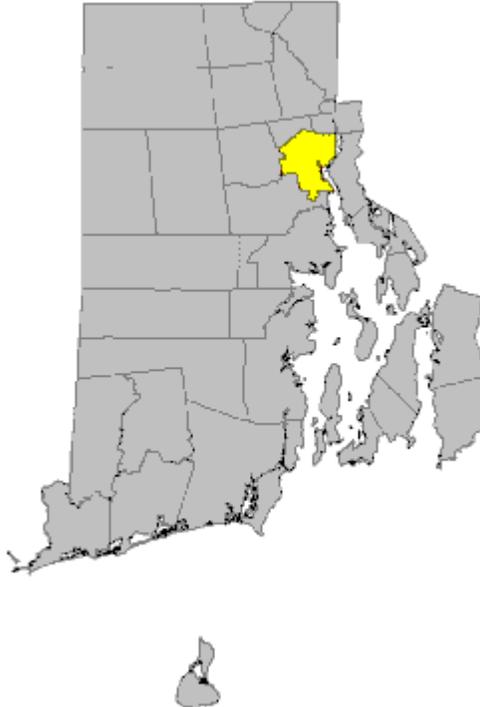


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1638

March: At a council held on the west bank of the Pettaquamscutt River, the [Narragansett](#) headmen [Canonicus](#) and Miantonomi granted to the Reverend [Roger Williams](#) permission to occupy a tract which included the [Providence](#) area from the Seekonk estuary to Neutakonkanut Hill on the west.



(There was no indication that this permission to reside was to be in any manner exclusive. This was in no sense a deed, or a title, or a grant of political independence, but quite to the contrary, amounted to a pledge of honest white subordination to the beneficent red leader. When the Reverend met him, he was tall, erect, heavy of frame, yet spare and bony, attired in a skin robe with fringes, with long feathers in his hair, carrying a bow and a spear in the fold of his arms. Williams characterized him as “a wise and peaceable prince ... for any gratuities or tokens, Canonicus desires sugar, Miantonomi, powder.” The friendship of Williams, Canonicus, and Miantonomi would not waver, and it was Canonicus who granted Chibchuwesa, to be called Prudence Island,

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**There are no authentic depictions of any of these persons (including Rev. Williams)**

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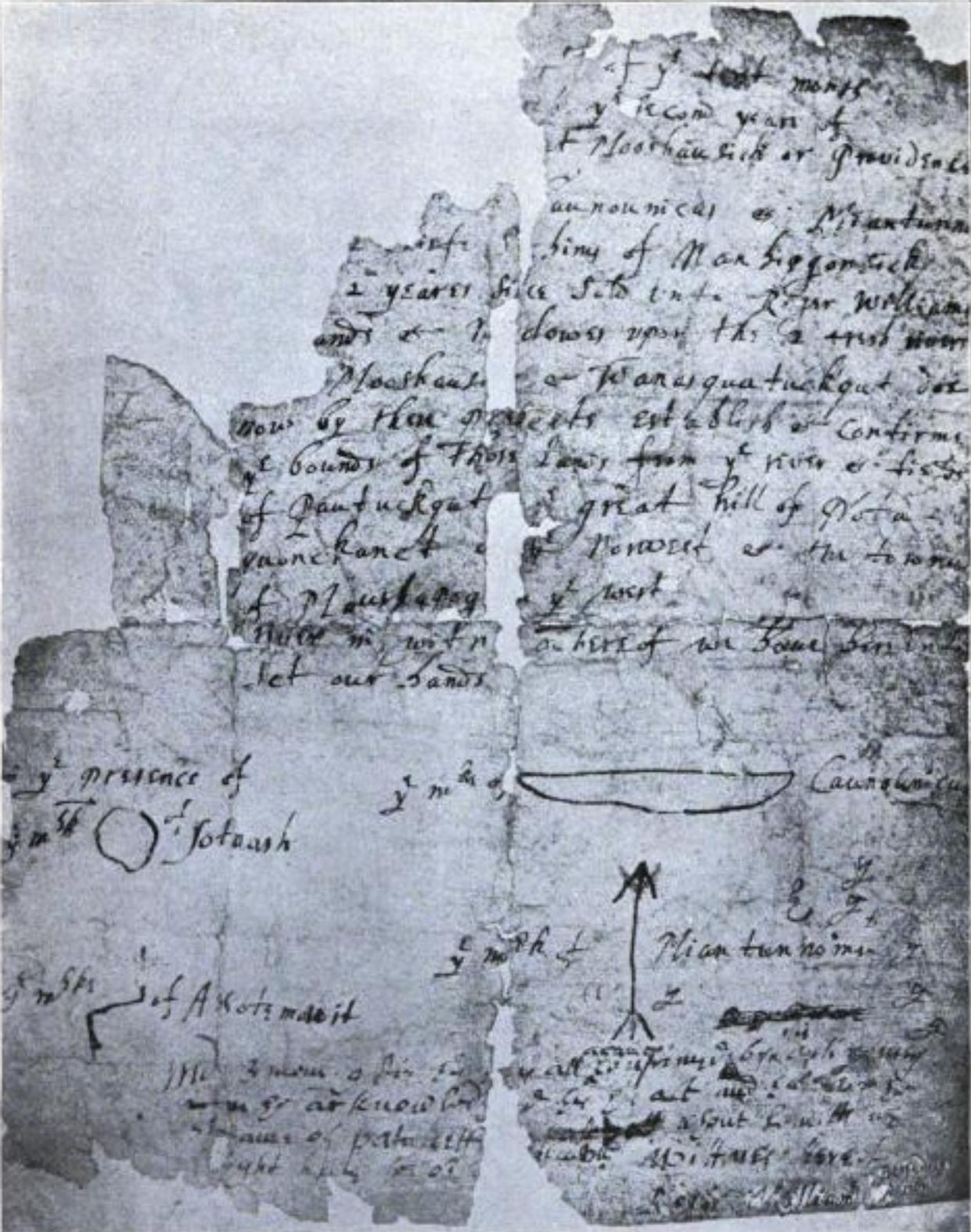
to Williams as a place of residence.)<sup>1</sup>



1. The Narragansett sachem Tashtassuck had had one son and one daughter, who, within the culture of their tribe, as son and daughter of a sachem, had been united in marriage. The first of their offspring had been [Canonicus](#), although eventually he would have three brothers. The youngest of his brothers, the war leader Mascus, would be the father of the war leader Miantonomi. Canonicus and Mascus came to share the tribal rule, with Canonicus playing the role of peace leader and Mascus that of war leader. The tribes that were in submission to the Narragansett during the period of the height of their influence were the Massachusett, the Wampanoag, the Nipmuc, the Sakonnet, the Nauset, the Shawomet, the Niantic, and the Coweset, amounting to an alliance of about 30,000 people. Mascus had died before the arrival of the English, but the *Massasoit* (headman of the headmen) of the Wampanoag and ten of his sub-sachems had formally re-acknowledged their subordination to the Narragansett. (Massasoit's son Metacomet, who would be known to the English as "Phillip," was at this point still a rugrat.) Primarily, [Canonicus](#) resided near what is now Cocumcussoc, at [Wickford, Rhode Island](#).

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1643

The Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Hartford, and New Haven colonies of the English, together with their allied native tribes, formed something they termed the New England Confederation, while deliberately leaving the [Rhode Island](#) colony of the English and its allied native tribe, the [Narragansett](#), out in the cold, not invited to be any part of the defensive coalition. Isolated, these Rhode Island natives decided they would have to deal with the Mohegan by themselves. Meanwhile, the native response to the “Wappinger War” of the Dutch colonists had come to include nearly 20 tribes and in consequence the Dutch were at risk of being defeated. Concluding a treaty of friendship with the Mahican and Mohawk, they offered to pay 25,000 guilders to the English of the Connecticut colonies for soldiers to back up the Dutch military.

[Canonicus](#) sold additional land to [Roger Williams](#).

In a later timeframe the Reverend William Hubbard would have his own imitable comments on this “lustre of years” in New England.

CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

READ HUBBARD TEXT

**Chapter XLIII. Ecclesiastical affairs, with other occurrences, at Providence and Rhode Island, to the year 1643. Intercourse between them and the Massachusetts.**

By this point in time, [Hobomok](#) had died. In a pamphlet entitled NEW ENGLAND’S FIRST FRUITS, of unknown authorship, published in London, [Hobomok](#)’s affections toward Christianity were described:

As he increased in knowledge, so in affection, and also in his practice, reforming and conforming himself accordingly; and though he was much tempted by inticement, scoffs and scorns, from the Indians, yet could he never be gotten from the English, nor from seeking after their God, but died amongst them, leaving some good hopes, in their hearts, that his soul went to rest.

[Hobomok](#) assisted Myles Standish for the most part, whereas [Squanto](#) (*Tisquantum*) assisted William Bradford. Both were used as translators, but Hobomok generally gets much less credit for his work, despite the fact that unlike Tisquantum, he never betrays the First Comers. (Hobomok also served the Plymouth Colony for a much longer time period than did Tisquantum, who died in November 1622.)

After [Squanto](#)’s (*Tisquantum*’s) death, [Hobomok](#) would become the primary translator and guide for the First Comers, and he would perform this duty faithfully. He would guide and translate for the Plymouth English on their trips to visit Massasoit, and to the Massachuset and Nauset among others.

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A conspiracy of the Massachusett and the Connecticut with headman Uncas of the Pequot, probably encouraged and rewarded by the English of Boston, produced the murder/execution of Miantonomi, war leader of the [Narragansett](#), brother of headman [Canonicus](#). (Eventually Canonicus's grandson Canonchet would take over as the tribe's war leader, and he would be leading the tribe during the episode known as "[King Phillip's War](#)".)



Miantonomi was captured by the Mohegans and the newly formed United Colonies of New England ordered Uncas, sachem of the Mohegans, to have him executed.

The [Narragansett](#) war against Uncas was halted due to English support of the Mohegans.



"As the star of the Indian descended,  
that of the Puritans rose ever higher."  
— Tourtellot, Arthur Bernon, *THE CHARLES*,  
NY: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941, page 63



# SACHEM CANONICUS

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1647

June 4, Tuesday: Sachem [Canonicus](#) of the [Narragansett](#) died, more than 80 years old with snow-white hair. His name would be applied to the place at which he had lived, [Conanicut](#) (Quononicut) Island — which eventually would become the site of the white town of [Jamestown, Rhode Island](#). The Reverend [Roger Williams](#) wrote, “were it not for Canonicus ... Rhode Island would not be.” Headman Canonicus’s grandson Canonchet (Nanuntemo) would lead the [Narragansett](#) during “[King Phillip’s War](#)”.



In the English Civil War, the army took King Charles I as its hostage, and held him at Newmarket.

1883

September 21, Friday: There had been a proposal to establish a memorial to the [Narragansett](#) headman [Canonicus](#) who had been such a good friend to the Reverend [Roger Williams](#). One proposal had been to carve a “head of an Indian” into a boulder atop Neutakonut Hill, but then during road work on South Main in [Providence, Rhode Island](#) (the street that used to be “Town Road” when it had been just about the only road in the town), an oblong boulder was dug up which someone fancied to have once lain at the shoreline. This had been erected in the North Burial Ground, in a place now referred to as “Sachem’s Glenn.” The boulder is now inscribed “Canonicus” over what is supposed to be the sachem’s mark, but the carving does not greatly resemble the mark he placed on the original papers — whoever carved this stone did not grasp that an arrow strung to the bow would indicate an intent to cause harm: Canonicus’s arrow had rested beside the bow, indicating his intent of peaceful racial coexistence and mutual benefit.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"  
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: October 9, 2013

*ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT*

*GENERATION HOTLINE*



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.  
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.  
Arrgh.