Connecticut Unscathed: Victory in The Great Narragansett War (King Philip’s War), 1675-1676

Dissertation

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Major Jason W. Warren, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee:

John F. Guilmartin Jr., Advisor
Alan Gallay, Kristen Gremillion
Peter Mansoor, Geoffrey Parker
Abstract

King Philip’s War (1675-1676) was one of the bloodiest per capita in American history. Although hostile native groups damaged much of New England, Connecticut emerged unscathed from the conflict. Connecticut’s role has been obscured by historians’ focus on the disasters in the other colonies as well as a misplaced emphasis on “King Philip,” a chief sachem of the Wampanoag groups. Although Philip formed the initial hostile coalition and served as an important leader, he was later overshadowed by other sachems of stronger native groups such as the Narragansetts. Viewing the conflict through the lens of a ‘Great Narragansett War’ brings Connecticut’s role more clearly into focus, and indeed enables a more accurate narrative for the conflict.

Connecticut achieved success where other colonies failed by establishing a policy of moderation towards the native groups living within its borders. This relationship set the stage for successful military operations. Local native groups, whether allied or neutral did not assist hostile Indians, denying them the critical intelligence necessary to coordinate attacks on Connecticut towns. The English colonists convinced allied Mohegan, Pequot, and Western Niantic warriors to support their military operations, giving Connecticut forces a decisive advantage in the field. Connecticut’s native population chose to remain neutral or to actively assist the colony’s English colonists, a point often obscured by historians. A small number of Connecticut colonists adopted
Indian tactical methods, and conducted successful raids that disrupted the hostile coalition’s war effort. King Philip’s initial coalition did not target Connecticut immediately and then only as a secondary objective. When the Narragansetts dominated the war effort later in the war and sought to attack the colony, Connecticut forces killed the tribe’s primary war leader. Moreover, the colony had reconstituted its defenses upon the trace of its former frontier fortifications. Although enemy groups operated throughout the colony, by utilizing elements of European-style fortresses that had emerged from the Military Revolution of Early Modern Europe, Connecticut became a hardened target invulnerable to traditional Native American martial skills. The population density and settlement pattern of Connecticut’s colonists also aided in the defense of the colony, rendering more effective reconstituted defenses in key population areas. The colony abandoned outlying settlements, which were indefensible. Connecticut’s War Council also more effectively managed the war than the other New England colonies.

With historians focused on the terrifying events in Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth and Rhode Island, historians have relegated to the margins and distorted Connecticut’s success story. Both the colony’s English and native populations, however, emerged victorious, defeating and disrupting the hostile coalition as well as remaining unscathed compared to the remainder of New England. This dissertation refocuses Connecticut’s role in the Great Narragansett War—the latest episode in near-continuous Indian against Indian warfare in southern New England since the arrival of Europeans—and its victory over the hostile native groups. Further, it calls into question traditional interpretations of
warfare in early colonial America, and proposes a new paradigm for considering local relations between colonists and Indians as a major factor in successful war fighting.
Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of the members of the West Point Class of 1999 who have given their lives since 9/11 in service to the nation. *Grip Hands.*
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The mistakes, omissions, and oversights of this dissertation, remain my own, as do the arguments herein, which do not reflect the views of the United States Military Academy, West Point, the United States Army or the Department of Defense.
Vita

1999……………………………………….B.S. European History, West Point

2009……………………………………….M.A. History, The Ohio State University

2009 to present…………………………….Assistant Professor, Department of History, West Point

Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: History
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Chapter 1: Introduction, Background, and Historiography

Introduction

When writing less than a year after the cessation of major hostilities, the Reverend William Hubbard chose to emphasize the sheer brutality of New England’s King Philip’s War of 1675-1676: “The Matter of Fact therein related (being rather Massacres, barbarous inhumane Outrages, than Acts of Hostility, or valiant Atchievements) no more deserve the Name of War than the Report of them that Title of an History.”\(^1\) Certainly a ‘war’ by any modern standard, it was one of the bloodiest per capita in American history.\(^2\) Philip’s hostile coalition killed 600 colonial fighting men, not including allied Indian casualties; completely annihilated 13 settlements and damaged scores more; destroyed 600 dwellings, and caused Plymouth Colony alone to spend over 100,000 English pounds on a conflict that lasted little more than a year.\(^3\) Colonial and allied Indian forces, in turn, completely destroyed Native American power in southern New

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\(^3\) George W. Ellis and John E. Morris, *King Philip’s War*, Henry R. Stiles, ed. (New York: The Grafton Press, 1906), 288. Many women and children were also killed along with “innumerable” livestock.
England, with the exception of the allied Mohegans and Pequots. Connecticut Colony was the anomaly. Alone among the devastated New England colonies, Connecticut stood, almost completely unscathed by the war. In addition to intermittent raiding, Philip’s coalition managed only to destroy the abandoned town of Simsbury in the north-central region of the colony. Connecticut spent only 30,000 pounds on the conflict compared to the exorbitant amounts expended by the other New England colonies. The colony’s joint English-native field forces remained undefeated in the field, suffering fewer casualties than their colonial counterparts.

All along Connecticut’s border, Philip’s confederates devastated major settlements, but they did not launch major attacks against the colony itself. Elements of Philip’s coalition destroyed Springfield’s (Massachusetts Bay) abandoned outlying settlements, now Suffield, Connecticut and Longmeadow, Massachusetts, only 6 and 15 miles respectively from Windsor, Connecticut. There were reports that Hartford was under imminent threat of attack and that hostile Indians were sighted on both sides of the Connecticut River in the heart of the colony near Windsor, Wethersfield, Wallingford,


5 The one exception was that Connecticut sustained roughly half of the colonial casualties at the Great Swamp Fight, but this had less to do with tactics than the unique situation of that battle. Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 151, 157.

and what is now Glastonbury.⁷ Connecticut Colony’s eastern frontier was within easy striking distance of the Narragansett territory, once that largest of the southern New England tribes joined with Philip. Why did Philip and his allies not attack Connecticut, even after Connecticut’s forces attacked them outside of the colony? The answer to this question pivots on the unique relationship between the Connecticut colonists and local native groups, which allowed for effective military operations.⁸ A more detailed explanation of this thesis requires a background discussion of King Philip’s War to provide context and place it within the historical narrative.

**Background**

When the Pilgrims landed in 1620, many New England native groups had been decimated by disease, particularly those tribes on the coast from Maine to Rhode Island, due to contact with European traders. Though disease was not the primary factor for violence, it did alter the balance of power among the tribes in contact with Europeans along the coastal regions of Massachusetts. This shift caused the Wampanoag leader

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⁸ Connecticut’s tribes enjoyed relative success in the short term by not suffering destruction, slavery, or displacement as a result of the war. The Mohegan tribe actually increased not only its numbers with the integration of Indian refugees, but also its sphere of influence in terms of territory. Into the eighteenth century, however, there was a marked decline in Connecticut’s Indian population, with the exception of a temporary increase in tribes in the northwest portions of the colony, which combined into one large native community. These too disappeared or were displaced after a few decades.
Massasoit, Philip’s father, to seek an alliance with the newly arrived Pilgrims at Plymouth. Peace between the English and Indians in southern New England, with the exception of the Pequot War in Connecticut, lasted for the next 55 years. This was not the case with the region’s native groups. Struggling to adjust to European contact, native groups embarked on over a hundred years of conflict that spanned the spectrum from bloodless raids to coalition warfare. King Philip’s War was the culminating act in this Indian against Indian violence, as many tribes in southern New England met a devastating end in 1676.

The traditional explanation for ‘King Philip’s War’ begins with Massasoit’s death, when his son Wamsutta, Alexander to the English, succeeded his father as sachem of the Wampanoags.9 In the early 1660s, Alexander died soon after visiting the English, and was succeeded by his brother Metacomet or Philip. Philip suspected that the colonists had poisoned Alexander.10 Philip launched hostilities against the English at Plymouth in the summer of 1675, after years of rumors of Indian plotting. Since the early seventeenth century, historians’ focus on Philip’s Wampanoag band has been misleading. Though Philip led the initial outbreak of the war and continued through the winter of

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9 A Sachem was the political leader of a native group equivalent to a chief. Some sachems were more influential than others within native groups. See Hostile Threat chapter for more discussion on loyalty within native groups.

10 Although there are many histories that cover the prologue to King Philip’s War, among the best are Armstrong Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 59-67 and Ian Steele, Warpaths: Invasions of North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); 80-99. The more traditional narratives of King Philip’s War described in the historiography also offer insight for the lead-up of the conflict.
1675-1676 to build a coalition, he was overshadowed by stronger leaders from native groups with more military and political clout, particularly the Narragansetts.

Since 1620, relations had at times been tense between the New England settlers and Native Americans, over areas of friction such as land disputes, the encroachment of Puritanism on traditional Indian religious beliefs, differing views on private property regarding trespassing, grazing, hunting and fishing access, and the legal jurisdiction of the Indians in colonized areas. Adding to this underlying pressure was the demonetization of wampum in 1663 and the related collapse of the fur trade, the system that was the basis for the joint colonial-Indian economy.\footnote{Michael L. Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 158.} The Indians of coastal New England would string together seashells into belts, creating wampum. Wampum served as currency and was also a symbol of power; it especially was sought by inland tribes. In return for wampum, the inland Indians provided fur to the coastal tribes. The Europeans inserted themselves into this economic relationship, and ultimately, the demand for furs and beads outstripped supply. Once the English demonetized wampum, rendering it useless as a form of financial transaction, land became the Indians’ remaining commodity to deal economically with the colonists, becoming increasingly a point of tension with the expanding colonial population.\footnote{Starkey, \textit{European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815}, 64.} Colonial competition from the Dutch and French also intermittently threatened the security of New England’s English and native populations. These pressures had existed for some time in New England prior to the outbreak of the war, so the question remains ‘why 1675?’
The proximate cause for the war’s outbreak in 1675 was Plymouth Colony’s suspicion that the Wampanoags had murdered John Sassamon, and the subsequent trial of the alleged perpetrators. Sassamon was a ‘praying Indian,’ who had accepted Puritan-Christianity. He had served for a time as a chief advisor to Philip because he was English-literate and had experienced living and dealing with the colonists. Philip may have believed that Sassamon had cheated him financially in his interaction with the settlers, but in late 1674 Sassamon also reported to Plymouth Colony that Philip was planning an uprising. Sassamon was found dead soon thereafter. Although a joint Indian-English jury found three of Philip’s men guilty of the murder, the circumstances of the trial certainly were less than rigorous by modern standards. Reportedly, the colonists witnessed Sassamon’s body bleed anew when the suspects approached it, confirming their guilt.13 The handling of the trial further inflamed the Indians’ other grievances, but certainly the trial itself attacked Philip’s legitimacy as sachem of the Wampanoags. Philip stated during a conference with Rhode Island men prior to hostilities that he was angered over the Sassamon episode because the English were meddling in an Indian-only affair: “The English, they said, took them [Indians] out of the Jurisdiction of their Indian Kings … and that the Christian Indians wronged their Kings by lying about them …”14 This indicated that Philip accepted English jurisdiction in English-Indian disputes, but was angered about English meddling in what was perceived


solely as an Indian affair. The English, however, considered Sassamon under their jurisdiction because of his religious conversion and English literacy.\footnote{Jenny H. Pulsipher, \textit{Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 102-106, also concludes that the issue of Philip’s sovereignty over Native Americans was the primary factor in the onset of hostilities, but she characterizes it as a battle over rights instead of the more practical conclusion that Philip could not maintain authority as sachem without reacting to a major challenge to his power. Daniel R. Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War: Colonial Expansion, Native Resistance, and the End of Indian Sovereignty} (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 2, 11-12, 31, also discusses the issues of sovereignty leading up to King Philip War, though he focuses on land as the major issue. Eric B. Schultz and Michael J. Tougias, \textit{King Philip’s War: The History and Legacy of America’s Forgotten Conflict} (Woodstock, Vermont: The Countryman Press, 1999), 25, provide an example of one of Philip’s warriors turning on him when he concluded that Philip had failed to counter a colonial challenge to his authority.}

This issue of political legitimacy was more important to Native Americans than Europeans. European kings had the legal, if ‘divine,’ authority to command subordinates to action. Indian sachems did not have the same authority over their warriors, and they did not take lightly affronts to their limited jurisdiction. The English, on the other hand, had legitimacy concerns of their own with the Sassamon murder because he had been a Christian Indian, conferring on him a higher social status than non-praying Indians. If the English authorities left Sassamon’s murder unanswered, then what effect would it have on their conversion efforts? What of those natives who were already converted? The controversy over the legitimacy of ‘converted Indians’ struck at the heart of English-Indian relationship in New England. There was no compromise solution to diffuse the escalation in tensions between colonists and native groups over this issue. Only weeks after Plymouth authorized the execution of Philip’s men, Indian-colonial warfare erupted in New England.
King Philip may have decided to fight the English before the Sassamon trial, and it was likely only a matter of time before a similar incident triggered a conflict, but the Sassamon episode precipitated hostilities. Most of the Wampanoag tribe, the Nipmucks of central Massachusetts, the “River Indians” of the Massachusetts stretches of the Connecticut River, all rallied to Philip’s cause. In December 1675, the English attacked the powerful Narragansetts for allegedly supporting Philip, driving the tribe into his camp. Vaughan estimates that all of these tribes totaled 6,000-8,000 people, with perhaps 2,000 warriors.\(^{16}\) Individual warriors from neutral or tribes allied to the English also joined Philip, as indicated in the Connecticut records, which was unsurprising given the prevalence of intermarriage between tribes and the limited political and military control of sachems.

These tribes faced approximately 50,000 English colonists with around 10,000 Englishmen capable of bearing arms.\(^{17}\) Given the 5-1 colonial numerical advantage, historians have concluded that English victory was inevitable and the Indian fight suicidal. The war, however, proved that without allied Indians, the English could not

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\(^{16}\) Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians 1620-1675*, 3rd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 314. Ellis and Morris *King Philip’s War*, 17-18, argue that Philip’s confederates numbered 2,500, once the Narragansetts joined the war, not including the Abenaki of northern New England. An estimate of 2,000 warriors is slightly more accurate than Ellis and Morris because for every warrior one can assume that he had a wife, one or two children and one elderly adult and thus one warrior per 4-5 Indians; archaeology confirms this estimate (discussion with Kevin McBride, Foxwoods Museum, Mashantucket CT, March, 2011).

\(^{17}\) R. C. Simmons, *The American Colonies: From Settlement to Independence* (New York, WW Norton, 1976), 100, argues that the white New England population was 46,188 in 1670 with a black population of fewer than 400. It is safe to estimate then that the English population by 1675 was 50,000. Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 10. Statisticians have calculated that the militia to total population ratio was 5-1. Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before The Federal Census of 1790* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1966, originally published Columbia University Press, 1932), “Note on Methods of Calculation.”
decisively defeat Philip, and at the outset of the conflict, it was not assured that any Indians would rally to the English side. The war against the English certainly did not seem hopeless to the 8,000 southern New England Indians that joined Philip’s rebellion. Philip would never have won over so many supporters without some specter of success. He sent entreaties to the powerful Mohawks, as well as to other tribes, and was successful in convincing some of the northern New England Abenaki to join his operations. Some of the Abenaki groups cooperated with Philip’s coalition on the upper Connecticut River, while others attacked what is now New Hampshire and Maine to draw off Massachusetts Bay Colony forces from southern New England. The possibility of winning over the Mohawks and other powerful tribes was a motivating factor for the native groups that joined with Philip’s coalition.

There was also the possibility of indirect Dutch and French support, and Philip did meet with at least one French agent prior to the war. This support was only logistical as England had re-conquered New Netherlands a year prior to King Philip’s War and there was no Dutch administration to centrally control support to Philip’s coalition. France was temporarily allied with the Catholic-leaning English crown, and could not directly support Philip. Philip likely aimed at a negotiated peace, similar to the one that English colonists granted Virginian native groups after colonial-Indian conflict in the Tidewater region. In this scenario, Philip would have retained his honor and thus his hold on legitimacy over his tribe and its tributaries by successfully defending what he viewed as an English intrusion upon his jurisdiction. Philip’s ultimate objective was lost to history, but it was unlikely suicidal in nature.

18 Mandell, King Philip’s War, 78-81, 115.
Philip’s motives were not appealing, however, to all of New England’s Indians. The tactically dominant Mohegan tribe of southeastern Connecticut, along with remnants of the Pequots, and the closely related Western Niantics provided critical military aid to the English colonists. The Natick or Praying Indians of Massachusetts Bay Colony rendered military aid to the Bay and Plymouth colonies. The tribes that determined to remain neutral were also important because they did not add to Philip’s number of warriors. The neutrality of sachem Ninigret’s Eastern Niantics was important because this native group was the most powerful of the neutral tribes and closely related to the Narragansetts. The remaining neutral tribes of Connecticut, and the Indians of Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket, were smaller and of less military importance.

The English, although maintaining the advantage in size of population, logistics, and the possibility of reinforcement from elsewhere in the Empire, were not guaranteed total victory. Although colonial objectives shifted to correspond with the expansion of Philip’s rising from a local affair to a regional conflict, internal colonial disputes over land and military activities blunted the colonists’ war effort. The New England colonies, like native groups, were not a monolith with identical objectives, though the destruction of southern New England’s Indian power became the goal of the United Colonies of New England (the political administration consisting of the Puritan-Pilgrim colonies). This

19 Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 314. Vaughan overestimates that the colonies had the support of 5,000 allied Indians (he does not count the neutral tribes here) during the war. The combined Mohegan, Pequots and Western Niantics never had more than 200 warriors take the field in any campaign (200 in the expedition that some historians have mistakenly termed the ‘Long March’ [Caulkins cited below clarifies] and 150 at Great Swamp), and the Natick Indians were also relatively small. In 1680, Connecticut reported that 500 Indians were capable of bearing arms in the colony, but that was probably counting the entire adult male Indian population at the time. See Greene and Harrington for the 1680 report, *American Population Before The Federal Census of 1790*, 48.
objective proved more difficult to achieve than necessary because of the fractured war
effort of the colonies, and the failure of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth to employ
allied Indians in meaningful numbers from the beginning of the conflict. Particularly,
land disputes prevented effective pre-war military policy, and this issue surfaced again at
the conclusion of major hostilities, when the colonies sought jurisdiction by right of
conquer over defeated tribes’ territory, particularly at the expense of apostate Rhode
Island Colony. Throughout the war, Connecticut also was accused of not sufficiently
supporting the other devastated colonies, and later, for failing to participate in the
northern Indian war that afflicted Massachusetts on its northern frontier after the defeat of
the southern New England hostile coalition. The United Colonies did not survive the
political fallout of King Philip’s War, as England attempted to impose on the region “The
Dominion of New England,” a more centralized administrative body. This new
organization also faced the intransigence of New Englanders and further was undermined
by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 with William of Orange’s invasion of England and
his assumption of the English throne.

The English colonists faced the possibility of economic ruin and high casualties
during King Philip’s War, although complete annihilation at the hands of the Indians was
by that time impossible given the large population and the lack of Indian artillery needed
to reduce the main English strongholds. As explained, this did not immediately translate
into a suicidal fight by Philip’s coalition, but rather caused them to pursue a more modest
outcome, at least through the spring of 1676. The New England colonists, interestingly,
did not believe that the war with Philip would result in a general uprising of the region’s
native groups.\textsuperscript{20} The historical record makes clear that the colonists genuinely felt betrayed, especially by the local tribes, who joined the rebellion after having been the colonists’ peaceful neighbors for decades. The colonists may have been in denial or simply misunderstood their situation vis-à-vis the Indians, and therefore were ignorant of native-group animosity that they had generated since their arrival in the New World. The sense of betrayal and the accompanying desire for revenge was exacerbated by a lack of clear policy outlining the Indian’s legal status. The colonists categorized the hostile Indians as rebels, bypassing more stringent rules of war based on the concept of reciprocity sometimes observed in the Early Modern Era. This accelerated the violence in the conflict, which witnessed both sides commit atrocities and target traditional non-combatants.\textsuperscript{21} Those hostile Indians not killed outright or executed were sold into slavery or indentured servitude, depending on the capturing colony’s preference, while hostile Indians sold surviving English captives to the French in Canada. The unguarded nature of the colonial frontier and the colonists’ lack of preparation for war demonstrated that they misunderstood the environment in which they inhabited. Most of colonial New England would pay a price in blood for this lack of vigilance. Connecticut was the notable exception.

\textsuperscript{20} Vaughan, \textit{New England Frontier}, 309, reaches the same conclusion.

\textsuperscript{21} The issue of reciprocity is discussed in more detail below.
Historiography

This section centers on the historiography of colonial-Indian relations in the region during the seventeenth century, the conduct of warfare in early colonial New England, and the rather sparse coverage of Connecticut in King Philip’s War. These are the broader aspects of historiography for this topic, while more specific issues of historiography are integrated into the following chapters. Certain aspects of the main body are more readily examined with an accompanying discussion of the related arguments, which are of a more specific nature than the broader elements of the topic covered in this chapter.

Narratives of King Philip’s War

When considering narrative histories, some books are noteworthy for lacking a sound one, which is the case with Jill Lepore’s The Name of War. Any contemporary discussion of King Philip’s War must begin with Lepore because of her book’s popularity in the academic community—every historian mentions her first when inquiring about this project. Lepore does provide an insightful argument for the formation of individual identity through participation in war, particularly on the frontier, although she overstates her case in the Prologue. In it, she describes a scene where Connecticut English troops witness their Mohegan Indian allies torture a Narragansett captive. By the summer of 1676, this would have been far less of a novel experience for the English soldiers, having fought for over a year in a conflict that featured many bloody episodes. Beyond that, the
colonists were well aware of the Indian use of torture in their cultural rituals, having interacted with native groups for more than a generation. A number of the Connecticut troops, as described below, were also Pequot War veterans, and had witnessed torture in the earlier conflict. A handful of these soldiers were also veterans of the English Civil Wars, and had viewed some level of violence prior to King Philip’s War.

Lepore also offers an engaging analysis of how societies remember war, particularly in future generations. The shortcoming of this “war and culture” account is the lack of engaging war narrative, leading one to question if it is possible to analyze how war affects identity and how societies remember conflict, when the author largely ignores the substance of the conflict itself. With a lack of war-narrative detail, the audience is left wondering about the context for Lepore’s analysis of King Philip’s War besides generic violence on the frontier, which was common in America for three hundred years.

The standard modern narrative for King Philip’s War remains Douglas Leach’s Flintlock and Tomahawk, a well-researched and thorough account from 1958. Some of Leach’s judgments about Native American peoples are outdated, however, and reflect an earlier era of ethnic and racial concepts. Flintlock and Tomahawk suffers from other problems described below. Since Leach, there has been a dearth of King Philip’s War accounts that focus on the war’s entirety. Eric Shultz’s and Michael Tougias’s King Philip’s War (1999) is not considered a thorough academic account, though its treatment of key places in the conflict is well done, helpful for historians, and an interesting concept. Daniel Mandell’s recent and pithy King Philip’s War (2010) provides a basic account of the war, and although less detailed than Flintlock and Tomahawk, it is an
adequate synthesis of current ideas about the conflict, including expanded coverage of the role of the northern New England native groups. It is a solid text for undergraduate students. Although not a match for Leach’s analysis of the war and also consisting of some outmoded ideas concerning Indians, George Ellis’ and John Morris’ *King Philip’s War* is the best narrative account of the conflict. An early-twentieth century account, Ellis and Morris performed exhaustive research of the primary sources. They also visited important sites in the war that were then untouched by modernization, at a time when automobiles were only beginning to make their appearance. Ellis and Morris is a core secondary work for this dissertation. Given the current state of narrative King Philip’s War histories, academia requires a new comprehensive account of the war, including adequate historical analysis combined with new social and cultural ideas and attitudes.

There are a host of other historians that treat different aspects of the war, but a constant among most King Philip’s War literature is how closely it mirrors contemporary accounts from authors such as William Hubbard’s *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England*, Increase Mather’s *A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New England* and Benjamin Church’s *The History of King Philip’s War*, particularly when considering military matters. Hubbard and Mather attempted to offer their Puritan audience a largely religious explanation for the conflict, and one that focused on Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies. Unlike the contemporary accounts of today, many of the primary sources were unavailable to writers in the late-seventeenth century, and in the case of Hubbard and Mather, neither were trained historians nor military men. Benjamin Church, conversely, was a military man, and his account, and an update later published by his son Thomas, offer a solid appraisal of the operations in which he
participated and is a great source for the time period. He mainly concentrated on his colony of Plymouth and surrounding areas, however, and his work centered on his military prowess, which he exaggerated. Church’s son was one of the early writers to term the conflict “King Philip’s War,” the naming convention that has dominated the historiography on the war. The influence of these contemporaries cannot be overstated as they essentially determined the narrative of King Philip’s War that historians have maintained to the present. Many secondary sources substitute these contemporary accounts for primary record research, which has led to inadequate explanations of the war. This narrative concentrates on Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth, minimizing the role of the other colonies, especially Connecticut, distorts the influence and activities of Philip and the Wampanoags within the hostile Indian coalition, and fails adequately to describe military operations.

**Warfare in Early Colonial New England**

Historians examining King Philip’s War within the context of military operations in early colonial America have overly relied on the 330 year-old narratives of Hubbard, Mather and Church, when attempting to describe the ultimate triumph of the New England colonists and their Indian allies. Scholars have failed to challenge the standard narrative and operational context with most examinations of the conflict parroting each other and accounts contemporary to the war. Historians often recycle language to describe the events of King Philip’s War. The twentieth-century accounts of Leach and Shultz and Tougias quote Hubbard’s 1677 account to describe Captain Thomas Lathrop’s
defeat at Bloody Brook as “that most fatal day, the saddest that ever befell New England.”

The phrasing has appeared in many descriptions of the battle, as Mandell’s latest history of the war paraphrases: “Bloody Brook … became known as the worst day to befall the colonists during the war.” The rare history has challenged the conventional narrative, which itself, always has resided on shaky historical origins. Descriptions of events in Connecticut have avoided such redundancy because historians simply have ignored them.

In addition to the lack of original ideas, accounts of the conflict suffer from an inaccurate explanation of the colonists’ initial bungling of “King Philip’s War.” This argument contends that the European tactics were incompatible with the physical conditions of the New World and the “skulking” methods of the Indians. Accordingly, it took devastating defeats on the battlefield and a degree of socio-political adjustment before the colonists were able to defeat Philip’s forces by adopting Native American tactics and employing allied Indians.

Leach summarizes it thus:

The real answer to the problem of how to deal with the skulking tactics of the enemy, as time was to show, lay in the intelligent adaptation of standard English tactics to forest conditions, and especially the systematic use of friendly Indians as scouts with every English force that moved through the woods. These natives were experts in the art of detecting the

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22 As quoted in Schultz and Tougias, King Philip’s War, 51; Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk, 88.

23 Mandell, King Philip’s War, 75.
presence of other Indians, and whenever they were used ambushes became much less of a danger.  

The main point is that the colonists eventually adapted to New England battlefield conditions by co-opting and mimicking the Indians, and finally were able to conduct effective warfare in conjunction with Indian allies. Many historians correctly maintain that Connecticut Colony employed a successful military approach from the beginning of the conflict, but do not elaborate on the underlying factors for the colony’s success.


Perhaps historians realized that they would have to replace the straightforward explanation of colonial ‘adaptation’ in order to deal adequately with the case of Connecticut Colony, giving rise to the more complex question ‘why Connecticut and not the other New England colonies?’

A few historians have taken the theory that the colonists had adopted the Indians’ “skulking way of war” and developed it further. Patrick Malone in *The Skulking Way of War* argues for the superiority of the Native American way of fighting that had resulted in a military “tactical and technological” revolution in the wilderness, supplanting the traditional European military system. The colonial forces had to adopt the tactics of the Native Americans in order to defeat them. The revolution saw the colonists ‘go native’ by dispersing from formation to use cover and concealment, and by taking aim at individual targets with flintlock muskets instead of firing massed volleys. They also adopted Indian technology such as canoes and snowshoes, as well as ground maize for sustenance on the march.

An alternate theory that still leans on Native American military skills as its explanation attributes the hostile coalition’s defeat primarily to Mohawk intervention on the New England’s northwestern frontier. This argument, becoming a standard explanation for King Philip’s defeat, posits that the Mohawks defeated Philip in battle,

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29 Malone, *The Skulking Way of War*, 13, 128; Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815*, agrees with Malone’s argument that a revolution in Indian tactics occurred with the adoption of the flintlock musket. Essentially, Indian tactics remained the same, but became more deadly.
denied sanctuary to his forces near the Hudson River, and harassed Philip’s confederates near the Massachusetts’ stretches of the Connecticut River. As John Grenier in *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* contends, “Indeed, without Iroquois participation on the side of the colonists, it is difficult to imagine an English victory over King Philip.” Indians thus ultimately decided their own fate, and it was Mohawk interference in the war for their own strategic objectives that ultimately carried the day, largely without the knowledge of the New England colonists. The Connecticut records, however, indicated that Connecticut remained skeptical of Mohawk action against Philip as described in correspondence from New York Governor Andros and his agents, although they acknowledge that the Mohawks might have undertaken some action against the hostile coalition. The colony was highly suspicious of Andros’ intentions, and this

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32 General Court Records, Connecticut (Colony), in *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from April 1636 to October 1776 ... transcribed and published, (in accordance with a resolution of the General assembly)*, 15 vols. (Hartford: Brown & Parsons, 1850-1890), 2: 406-407; available at http://www.colonialct.uconn.edu/About.cfm (first accessed 13-17 February 2008). This collection hereafter is referred to as CCR (Connecticut Colony Records) and indicates the published documents for Volume 2 of the Connecticut War Council’s Journal of these records, unless otherwise noted. The Colonial Wars Series (CWS) and Indian Series (IS), also portions of the Connecticut colonial records, are cited hereafter as CWS or IS, series, volume: document. The CWS and IS documents were viewed on microfilm at the Connecticut State Library, Hartford, unless noted as “Original Manuscript;” original manuscripts were viewed in the reading room of the Connecticut State Archives, also at the Connecticut State Library.
led them to be suspicious of the Mohawks, who were viewed as an arm of the Royal colony’s military apparatus. Though a failed expedition, Andros attempted to invade the lower Connecticut River at the outbreak of hostilities under the guise of military protection. Fearing a revival of the Mohegan-Mohawk feud as well as Andros’ intentions, Connecticut repeatedly denied the Mohawk’s access to operate against hostile Indians within the colony’s borders. The “Mohawk argument” fails to explain how Philip’s hostile tribes managed to launch an offensive in the spring against the New England colonies that was the most devastating of the war, if the Mohawks had decisively weakened Philip at his winter quarters. Comparing the devastation before the Mohawks’ alleged raids on Philip’s winter quarters with the destruction that the hostile tribes wrought in the spring of 1676, one should conclude that the Mohawk offensive did not significantly weaken the hostile coalition, though it might have deterred other tribes from without New England from joining it.  

A contemporary account of the conflict, written by a colonist seeking aid from the royalists in England and thus having no reason to downplay the role of the Mohawks, who were supported by the *Royal* Colony of New York, described that the Mohegans and Pequots were more effective than the Mohawks in defeating the hostile coalition. The Mohawks, however, did harass the anti-English coalition and limit Philip’s options for refuge. The Mohawks in actuality only killed a

33 See Hostile Threat chapter below.

small number of Philip’s warriors, harassing his party and driving them from its winter
quarters.  

The theory concerning English adaptation to southern New England’s military
conditions, with minor variations, has remained unchallenged for over three centuries. In
addition to the fact that the vast majority of English soldiers never adopted Indian
warfare, there are a number of other contradictions. Michael Oberg in Uncas: First of the
Mohegans, provides an excellent history of the Connecticut’s Colony’s relationship with
Mohegan sachem Uncas, but presents contradictory evidence over the military
underpinnings of the Connecticut-Mohegan alliance. First, it was Uncas who “relied
upon the English for protection,” against his native enemies, who continually sought to
overthrow him in the years after his group supplanted Pequot power in southern New
England. During Philip’s uprising, however, Oberg argues that “the English could not
counter the hostile Algonquians’ “skulking way of war.” Thus according to Oberg, the
English at first provided protection to the Mohegans and then regressed militarily into
incompetence three decades later. William Shea’s “Militia” in Colonial Wars of North
America 1512-1763 complements Oberg’s theory by asserting that “the militia was

35 CWS, 1:1:44 a, b, c.
36 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 109, 130.
37 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 173.
ineffective as a static defense force against an enemy who could choose the time and place of attack.”

Malone and others contend that King Philip’s fight was “suicidal” and his defeat inevitable. Malone’s explanation is also problematic because the Indian way of war was supposedly superior to English tactics, yet the end result of Philip’s rising against the New England colonies was predictable defeat. Another contradiction of Malone’s theory is that the natives learned the concept of ‘total war’ from the English during the Pequot War, especially the use of fire as a weapon against villages. King Philip’s warriors then employed the use of fire against the English towns four decades later. Again we have military theory and method adopted from the English, who had supposedly little to offer frontier warfare.

The evidence indicates that both the English and the Indians adopted successful tactics and technology from each other. James D. Drake in King Philip’s War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676 argues that King Philip’s War was in fact a civil war because the cultures of the colonists and Indians had effectively merged over the preceding 55

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40 Malone, The Skulking Way of War, 1, 32; Steele, Warpaths, 92-93; Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815, 60; Grenier, The First Way of War, 21, 29-32. It was unlikely that the strategy of ‘total war,’ with the use of fire as its major tactic, was foreign to Native Americans pre-contact. Wayne Lee’s description of the “cutting off way of war” in “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” is a good counterargument to those historians who maintain that the American Indians were either ignorant of the concept of total war.

41 Malone, The Skulking Way of War, 100-106.
years. The colonists and natives had an intertwined economy, judicial system, and in some cases shared religious practices. Native Americans and the Puritans and Pilgrims also shared technology, especially in the realm of agriculture. Most colonists also considered the war a rebellion, indicating that they viewed the Indians as the King of England’s subjects. Sometimes the Indians viewed themselves as subjects and used this status to directly petition the king over land disputes. Philip believed that the English were sovereign in certain matters including legal jurisdiction over English-Indian disputes.

Drake’s argument does not need bolstering with additional evidence. This paper merely contends that there was a process of acculturation in seventeenth century New England, including things military. The numerous successes with “search and destroy” missions that tracked down Philip and his allies can be attributed to a small number of

42 This is a major theme in Drake’s *King Philip’s War*.

43 The Mohegans, Narragansetts, and Wampanoags all appealed directly to the throne at various times during land disputes with the colonists. For the Mohegan case see John W. De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford: WM. Jas. Hamersley: 1851), 323. After the Miantonomi episode described below, “the Narragansetts tried to free themselves from the [New England Confederation or United Colonies] domination by submitting themselves directly to King Charles I.” Richard C. Goode, “Narragansett” in *Colonial Wars of North America 1512-1763*, 469. Pulsipher’s *Subjects unto the Same King* 104-105, describes how Philip appealed to King Charles II, while Mandell details the Narragansetts submission to the English throne during the interwar year, *King Philip’s War*, 21.

44 See Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*.

45 Hirsch, “The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth Century New England,” 1187, argues for a process of military acculturation that was occurring between the Indians and the English as a part and not a product of the overall acculturation process. He concludes that there was no significant change in New England’s military affairs between the Pequot War and King Philip’s War because of the general absence of warfare. Like other historians, he omits the effectiveness of certain English military methods.
colonial forces adopting the “skulking way of war.” Only a handful of colonists were able to assimilate Indian tactics, while the colonial utilization of allied Indians remained the key element in most of those actions. Even then the search and destroy missions achieved most success when the hostile coalition was already teetering. It is thus inaccurate to claim that the colonial adaptation of Indians tactics led to victory.

While it took the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies, and Rhode Island well into the war to adopt these tactics, Connecticut Colony, aided by its implacable Mohegan-Pequot allies, implemented the “skulking way” from the beginning. A few individual colonial soldiers also were able to master Indian tactics, but their skills would never fully equal the Native Americans, whose military techniques were honed by their daily lifestyle. The Indians too incorporated aspects of English warfare, primarily military technology such as the flintlock musket and might have copied fortification designs.

Even with this process of acculturation, both the English and Indian military cultures retained their respective strengths. English forces assaulted Indian villages and their Indian allies formed perimeter security. The attacks on the Pequot fort at Mystic, the Narragansett fort at the Great Swamp, and the Indian village at Turner’s Falls, confirmed the utility of European tactics. The English were also adept at defending fortified-garrison-houses and strong points such as at Northampton, Hadley and Hatfield, Massachusetts, while inflicting significant casualties on Philip’s forces. By 1676, Connecticut field forces also had managed to cooperate with their Indian allies on the battlefield in a decisive way, with the Indians flushing out the hostile bands from difficult
terrain onto the blocking positions of the English forces. In light of these and other successes, it is difficult to contend that all European tactics were completely inadequate in the New England wilderness.46

Arguing the opposite of the standard ‘adoption’ explanation, Guy Chet’s Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast argues that “European tactics were not outdated or ineffective in the American wilderness, as the Seven Year’s War in North America clearly demonstrated. Reliance on European defensive tactics—in both offensive and defensive operations—often enabled the English to overcome and overwhelm their opponents.”47 He takes a long-view of New England’s military history, however, attempting to refute the idea of the development of an American Way of War beginning in the early colonial era.48 Thus his focus is not on King Philip’s War alone, and my interpretation of events significantly differs from his for the conflict. A difference in methodology might explain some of our interpretive divergence. Chet relies heavily on contemporary history from the standard King Philip’s War narrative, making less use of the New England colonial records for his chapter on the war. Chet inaccurately argues for the “ongoing degeneration of colonial armed forces” during King Philip’s War, ignoring Connecticut’s Colony’s undefeated

46 These battles are discussed in more detail below.


48 Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, Preface.
military record. He does highlight the English colonists’ ability to successfully defend town populations in garrison houses, if not town property, oddly arguing that the colonists’ garrison defenses were successful in this way, while at the same time asserting that the colonists’ defensive military skills were “degenerating.” Chet does not describe the importance of New England’s importation of elements of the European Military Revolution. Specifically, the trace italienne fortification design applied on a smaller scale to the garrisons led to successful garrison defense.

Chet also omits the Connecticut Colony Council of War’s decision to pursue more in-depth fortifications based on European design, once it became apparent that the garrison defense in the other colonies was inadequate. Further, Chet largely ignores the success of combined Indian-English military operations, viewing the military skills of each group as distinct on the battlefield instead of as a complementary system of fighting. He downplays the Indians’ fighting capability, echoing many colonists who deplored the Indians’ unwillingness to fight in a conventional European manner: “When Indian troops were successful against forces in the field, it was usually as the result of an ambush … rather than a battle that

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49 Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness*, 3. Chet argues that among other factors, New England military leaders by King Philip’s War were inexperienced. As described below, however, Connecticut did have a number of experienced Pequot War veterans as well as those with European military experience during King Philip’s War.

50 Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness*, 58. While Chet argues that the colonists’ military skills degenerated after the first generation of settlers, Kyle Zelner argues that elements of the colonists’ Essex County Massachusetts forces were degenerates. In an interesting and well-researched social-military history, Zelner argues that the actual fighting units of that county were pressed from the “undesirable” elements of the towns. Zelner, *A Rabble in Arms*, 214-216. See below for the social aspects of Connecticut’s forces.

51 Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815*, viii, 15, 37-42, 81, uses the term “Military Revolution” to discuss European influence on colonial military thinking, but then argues these methods were ineffective in the New World.
involved actual combat and required tactical skill."

Even with these shortcomings, Chet adds greatly to the historiography by elucidating that the European military skills played a decisive role in the New World, and that the colonists actively pursued European military methods for implementation in the colonies.

The English forces never defeated the natives at their own game without the assistance of allied Indians. The Indians thus retained their advantage in the “skulking way of war” and largely performed the scouting, navigation, and security duties for the English forces. The term “skulking way of war” itself is a misleading description of how the Native Americans fought. In “Fortify, Flight or Flee,” Wayne Lee describes Indian warfare as the “cutting off way of war.” He defines this concept as fluid strategically, yet static tactically: “Strategic and/or cultural motives for war might change, as might intensity, but the operational style of Indian offensives remained the same—and that was to “cut off” a select segment of the enemy, and do so with impunity.” “Skulking” implies an unwillingness to fight pitched battles, which was not the case with Native Americans. The early colonists who coined the phrase mistook Indian selectivity of military targets and “the ability to exploit particular conditions” as

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52 Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness*, 54. Chet underestimates Indian tactics and their longevity in the history of warfare. Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, 113, also downplays Indian tactics and blames the Massachusetts Bay forces’ Bloody Brook disaster, where a militia column was all but wiped out, on the commander’s abandonment of European standard tactics for Indian “skulking” tactics.

53 It is also erroneous to categorize all Indians as having attained the same level of competence in the “cutting off way of war.” As explained below, the Pequots and Mohegans were tactically superior to their southern New England Algonquin counterparts.

the lack of European courage and tactical wherewithal. In reality, the Indians were seeking to maximize their advantages in maneuverability, while minimizing the colonists’ advantage in firepower. To “cut off” was idiomatic, at times it meant literally to kill as the Indians were willing to execute deadly attacks against colonists and other Indians alike when the situation presented itself. Lee further explains, “At war, [the Indians] mobilized through persuasion and consensus, with the significant addition of young men who sought status through success in war. The combination of young men's enthusiasm with the cultural requirement of blood revenge meant that war was common, but for the most part conducted on a small scale.” In order to achieve increased social status, warriors sought war trophies and thus it was imperative to make it back alive in order to demonstrate military prowess. Becoming a casualty brought no increase in martial reputation, as northeastern American native populations could not readily replace lost warriors. The Indian “cutting off way of war” probably originated, in part, from the inability to replace casualties as a result of lower birth and higher mortality rates with smaller communities. The colonists perceived the Indians’ resulting unwillingness to sustain high casualties, as cowardice. This perception downplayed the devastating


56 Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 719-720.


59 Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815*, 18, mentions that the Indians did not want to sustain unnecessary casualties, but does not explain why.
effects of Indian raids and ambushes, usually executed when Indian forces perceived an advantage, as well as the occasional Indian decision for pitched battle. It also minimizes the role that Connecticut’s allied Indians played in the colony’s success in King Philip’s War.

Some modern historians repeat the colonists’ misunderstanding of Indian “cutting off” tactics. Leach derides Indian fighting ability as “not very far advanced in the science of organized warfare…. Apparently little attention was given to formal tactics except for ambush.”60 That the Indians usually would not stand and fight—although Philip’s confederates did at Great Swamp, Sudbury and Pierce’s Fight—did not make their form of warfare any less effective than European tactics. The Indians were fighting in a fashion that utilized their strengths and took advantage of colonial weaknesses. Besides social status requirements and the inability to easily replace casualties, Native American tactics utilized mobility and maneuverability. Chet gives the Indians credit for mobility, but ignores the importance of the Indians’ maneuverability. Mobility is the ability to deploy forces around the theater of operations and maneuverability is the positioning of forces on the battlefield (or the larger theater of operations) against the enemy. The Indians in King Philip’s War continually positioned themselves in an advantageous way against colonial forces, certainly not a simple task, and no less ‘tactical’ than European methods.

Chet also singles out the Indians’ inability to attack fortified positions, which is somewhat true given their lack of artillery, but completely in accordance with the

Indians’ “cutting off way of war.” Of course with the ease which the Indians incorporated flintlock muskets into the “cutting off way of war” and constructed European-like fortifications, it was probable that they would have learned some form of artillery usage, if they had possessed cannon. The examples that Chet offers for Indian incompetence in attacking garrisons at Northampton, Hadley, and Hatfield are misleading because the Indians did not know, in at least two of the cases, that large colonial forces happened to be temporarily quartered in the towns. The Indians would not have assaulted the fortifications if they had intelligence concerning the size of the garrisons. The hostile tribes failed because of bad luck and poor intelligence, not tactical incompetence. The concept that the Europeans introduced ‘total war’ to Native Americans thus also requires reinterpretation, as native-on-native warfare witnessed the destruction and displacement of tribes if the political or strategic objectives warranted—in some cases pre-contact. Both the English and Indian forces applied their traditional military tactics during the war, and although there was an acculturation process, it was how the allied Indians and English systems complemented each other that mattered most during this era of colonial warfare.

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61 Malone, makes the adoption of the flintlock a central theme in Skulking Way or War. See also Selesky, War and Society in Colonial Connecticut, 10.

62 Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, 43; Schultz and Tougias, King Philip’s War, 204, 227.

63 Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid, “Amerindian Power in the Early Modern Northeast: A Reappraisal,” The William and Mary Quarterly 61, no. 1 (August 2008), show that the Native Americans were capable of wielding strategic-level military and diplomatic power, even as non-state actors. While Baker and Reid focus on the northern New England Wabanakis (a.k.a Abenakis), the Pequots (through the Pequot War) and Uncas’ Mohegans are a good example of a southern New England tribe that exercised similar power.
Indian-Colonial Relations in New England

It was more than just pure war-fighting ability that determined the outcome of King Philip’s War. The relationship between colonists and their native neighbors influenced military operations both in positive and negative ways and was a critical factor during the conflict. A historical debate on Pilgrim and Puritan policy towards the Native Americans of New England continues today. There is a moral judgment involved in arguing that Connecticut Colony’s Indian policy was moderate, necessitating the juxtaposition of the predominant historical views on the subject. Without an analytical framework that defines harsh and lenient native policies, it would be difficult to term Connecticut’s policy as such. The modern historical debate over New England Indian policy began with Alden Vaughn’s *New England Frontier*, written to challenge the pervading view that the New England colonists were land-hungry, brutal oppressors of Indians, who swindled them out of their land. Vaughan sets the historical record straight in many ways by showing that the New England colonists were sometimes good neighbors and at other times misguided and ignorant in their treatment of the natives, rather than simply malicious (although there was some of that as well): “To my surprise, the evidence suggested a more humane and equitable treatment of the natives—at least in diplomatic negotiations, land acquisition, and the administration of justice.”

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64 Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 125, mentions that Governor Winthrop and Deputy Governor Leete “argued for moderation in the English response” to substantiated reports that the Narragansetts were sheltering some of Philip’s Wampanoags.

65 Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, xiii. Leach largely seconds Vaughan’s view, describing European colonization intentions as “peaceful.” Leach, *Arms for Empire*, 1. Dederer, *War in America to 1775*, 127, is in Vaughan’s camp as well, claiming that “[t]he colonists came to the New World thinking that they could convert the Native Americans not only religiously but...
however, does not adequately portray the Indian perspective: “by necessity, as well as by inclination, I have concentrated on the acts and attitudes of the Puritans toward the Indians and have not, for the most part, attempted to account for the actions and reactions of the natives.”

In recent editions, Vaughan has qualified his argument over protests from those arguing that the Indians were victims of colonial aggression.

The author of this school of thought, Francis Jennings, argues in *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* for a tradition of American underhanded policy. For Jennings, the Pilgrim-Puritan brutality stretched back to European feudalistic vassalage with the colonists forcing Native Americans into the role of vassals. Connecticut during King Philip’s War was just as “omnivorous” and its leaders as expansionist as the other New England colonies. Jennings argues that the western European “Atlantic coast countries” were especially prone to “conquest aristocracy,” and exported this aggressive mentality overseas. Jennings’ sweep through European medieval and early modern history in a mere fourteen pages leaves much to be desired and is at best, an historical stretch. He is better when examining individual cases of Puritan malfesance towards the Indians. A methodological problem with Jennings’ culturally.” Although it is not the focus of his study, Starkey identifies a middle ground, asserting that when judging actions, historians should be sensitive to morality of the time period. Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815*, 12-14.

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69 Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, 1, 7.
point of view is that in his attempt to portray the Indians as victims of unstoppable European aggression, he detracts from Indian agency, painting the natives as the “mythical creatures” that he sets out in the first place to expose as “rational human beings.” The historical problem with Jennings’ premise is that the Pilgrims and Puritans were not aggressive aristocrats, but Calvinist outcasts of a Protestant movement then under siege. The Counter Reformation was in fact at its strongest at the time of the founding of Massachusetts Bay Colony. France had largely destroyed Huguenot power by 1628, and a Catholic-friendly monarchy controlled England. The formidable Habsburg Empire was on the march in central Europe and the Netherlands to isolate and eliminate Protestant strongholds. Most Europeans shunned the Puritans, and thus Europe itself was not a monolithic giant seeking to impose a feudal system on distant lands. This would have been a difficult task even assuming that a Western European monolith in the seventeenth century had the political consolidation and military capability to impose feudalism on a distant land, at the same time that the devastating Thirty Years War and related conflicts were raging on the continent.

Another problem with the invasion argument was that in Plymouth’s case in the early 1620s, as with other early European settlements in the New World, the Pilgrims

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70 Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, 14. Steele, *Warpaths*, 1, 80. Steele agrees with Jennings that the colonists were invaders, although he produces a less scathing account of Puritan behavior.

were dependent on Wampanoag Indian patrons for food and military support, certainly an odd position for an “invading force.”72 In other regions of early colonial America, Native Americans also assumed the role of patron for Europeans as in the case of the Susquehananna or Susquehannocks, who were the patrons of the colony of New Sweden.73 Jennings’s theory detracts from Indian agency by assigning Indians the role of victims, when in fact many native groups maintained the position of power in their relationship with the original colonists, at least for the first few decades of European colonizaton.

Grenier’s The First Way of War actually takes Jennings theory one-step further, arguing that the English colonists’ objective was “extirpative war, what today’s soldier’s term unlimited warfare, manifested by the destruction of enemy noncombatants and their agricultural resources.”74 Two of Grenier’s prominent examples for New England are the oft cited “massacres” at the Pequot’s Mystic Fort and the Narragansetts’ Great Swamp fort.75 Although the colonists and their Indian allies often resorted to the destruction of resources, a technique known as “food fights,” the object was not the killing of non-combatants per se. For if this was the true objective, why did English-allied Indian forces bother to capture women and children on numerous expeditions and accept the surrender

72 Wayne Lee, “Subjects, Clients, Allies or Mercenaries? The British Use of Irish and Indian Military Power, 1500-1815,” makes this same point, while noting that the treaty between the Pilgrims and Wampanoags ironically claimed that the Wampanoags were the clients, when the latter were more powerful.


74 Grenier, The First Way of War, 21.

75 Grenier, The First Way of War, 27, 32.
of all categories of hostiles in others? This policy was not genocidal in nature as New England leaders courted and supplied allied Indian populations during the seventeenth century, groups who were closely related if not from the same “tribes” as their adversaries. The oft cited massacre at Mystic Fort and battle at Great Swamp are somewhat misleading examples because the Indian warriors in both cases were fighting from among the non-combatants in both of these cases. This created an unfortunate gray-shaded moral arena for the non-combatants, though there is no doubt that the English, and their Indian allies for that matter, committed atrocities by targeting non-combatants in both instances. It is a stretch to assert, however, that it was colonial policy to kill all Native Americans. Interestingly, atrocities committed by Native Americans have been omitted from Grenier’s account of early New England. Instead he measures the destruction wrought by Philip’s confederates in terms of houses burned and with the more sterile term “casualties.”

Neither Vaughan’s nor Jennings’ perspectives adequately portray the relations between native group and New England colonists, and certainly do not reflect Connecticut’s policy towards local Indians. Although there are numerous excellent studies of specific cases of Indian-colonist interaction, such as Richard White’s *The Middle Ground*, Daniel Richter’s *Ordeal of the Longhouse* and Alan Gallay’s *The Indian Slave Trade*, none encompass the entire New England region. Oberg’s *Uncas* provides excellent narrative of the special relationship between Connecticut Colony and Uncas, leader of the main group of Mohegans. Oberg’s account is but a slice of Connecticut’s story during King Philip’s War, however, opting to focus on the relationship with Uncas.

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instead of an analysis of the entire conflict or even Connecticut’s general policy towards native groups. Connecticut’s history, with the exception of the Pequot War, has remained a barren field of inquiry during the seventeenth century, particularly during King Philip’s War.

**Connecticut in King Philip’s War**

Historians have failed to address Connecticut’s role in King Philip’s War because they have adopted the narrative of contemporary chroniclers focusing on Massachusetts and Plymouth colonies. Contemporaries and historians alike focused their attention elsewhere because Connecticut seemingly lacked bloody and noteworthy events. It is inherently more difficult and less exciting for historians to examine Connecticut’s deterrence of hostile groups and the minor violence that occurred in the colony. The historiography cursorily mentions, but fails to analyze thoroughly, Connecticut’s good relations with local native groups and its corresponding military success. Harold Selesky’s *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* offers the best available explanation for Connecticut’s success during King Philip’s War. He has a similar point-of-view to this paper and makes the best use of the Connecticut’s colonial records compared to other historians. Selesky devotes only a handful of pages, however, to his examination of the colony during the conflict because he focuses on the social-military history of Connecticut’s entire colonial period. Selesky offers a cursory explanation for the colony’s relative success: “Connecticut survived the war in better physical, economic, and emotional shape than its neighbors because the Indians who lived among its towns
were satisfied with the status quo and chose not to join Philip’s cause, and because the hostile Indians did not attack simultaneously along the eastern frontier and down the Connecticut valley.”  Although it is true that Connecticut’s policy towards the local Indians was a key ingredient in its success, Selesky is constrained by his broader argument and thus does not present the same array of evidence as found here, especially of the colony’s moderate policy towards the Connecticut Indians. Selesky is simply weaving a larger framework of analysis, while this paper focuses on one aspect of his larger account.

With a different focus for his book, Selesky omits critical factors in Connecticut’s success found here: the colony’s successful employment of European-influenced colonial forces and defenses, the utilization of allied Indians in an ‘active defense,’ and effective English-Indian offensive operations. He overestimates the effect of Connecticut’s allied Indians on offensive success, claiming that the result of the earlier Pequot War “left Connecticut dependent on its Indian allies,” and that the “Connecticut soldiers … [were] cautious and unskilled, and were never able to trap the enemy.”  While it is true that Connecticut’s utilization of allied Indians was critical in the success of its offensive operations and a major difference between it and the other New England colonies, Connecticut’s colonists also performed admirably.  Connecticut for instance, did not

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79 Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 20. The other New England colonies eventually adopted a similar military approach to Connecticut Colony, albeit with smaller numbers of allied Indians, but none exercised a coherent Indian military policy when the
utilize Indian forces when it defeated the Dutch in the Connecticut areas of Long Island during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, and also provided logistical support to its allied Indians during the inter-tribal warfare that characterized seventeenth-century New England. The hostile Indians never defeated Connecticut forces and the colony’s expeditions did indeed score a number of successes, albeit with Indian assistance. The colony’s forces were in fact able “to trap” the enemy with Canonchet’s capture, the Sunk Squaw’s defeat and a battle on the upper Housatonic in Massachusetts at the end of the conflict. Connecticut’s colonists played a vital role at Great Swamp, the most decisive battle of the war, where allied Indians assumed a more minor role. Selesky minimizes the role of the colonists in these successes and wrongly criticizes the inability of Connecticut forces to bring about a single culminating battle, when the hostile tribes refused to accept such a confrontation. Thus Selesky misinterprets Connecticut’s role in the war from both the Indian and English perspective, which this account attempts to clarify. Even with these oversights, Selesky provides an adequate examination of Connecticut’s War Council and certain defensive measures, and contributes more than any other author to Connecticut’s story during the war. 80

Briefly commenting on the colony’s local relations, Leach accurately argues that “Connecticut … throughout the war had shown the greatest skill of all the colonies in dealing with friendly Indians.” 81 He fails to explore why this was the case and in which

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81 Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, 227.
situations these dealings occurred. Leach highlights some of Connecticut’s defensive measures and a number of offensive operations, but *Flintlock* lacks specific detail on the colony because of Leach’s broad focus on all of the New England colonies. Robert Taylor’s *Colonial Connecticut—A History*, a volume of the series covering the original colonies, mostly defers to Leach for Connecticut’s role in King Philip’s War. Taylor does offer an impressive political synopsis, including the colony’s confrontation with Governor Andros of the Royal Colony of New York and similar episodes with the other New England colonies. Oberg’s *Uncas* correctly suggests that Connecticut Colony’s cooperation with the allied Indians spared it “the worst of the slaughter.” Oberg wrote mainly a political history with military side notes, however, and does not sufficiently discuss the other key elements of Connecticut’s success. The strength of his book is his excellent treatment of Uncas’ dealings with Connecticut.

Continuing the focus on local Indians, Pulsipher argues that Connecticut treated the local native groups in a relatively more moderate manner than the other New England colonies because it could afford such a policy based on its greater security. She has mixed-up cause and effect in this instance, as it was actually Connecticut’s policy that rendered the colony more secure by keeping the Indians living within its borders allied or

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neutral.\textsuperscript{84} Richard Radune’s independently published \textit{Pequot Plantation} details much of the same information on King Philip’s War as Leach, though he does discuss the success of Indian and English raids launched from eastern Connecticut in greater detail than most secondary sources.\textsuperscript{85} This dissertation not only expands the theme of Connecticut’s role in King Philip’s War, but through analysis of local relations also charts a new course for interpreting warfare in southern New England in the early modern Atlantic world.

**Connecticut in the Great Narragansett War**

Historians focus on Philip’s role in instigating the conflict, and the responses of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies to his hostility, has resulted in a distortion of this turning point in early American history. Viewing the war through the lens of Philip and his Wampanoag groups has caused historians to minimize the role of the Narragansetts, and their leadership. The Narragansetts were the largest and most influential among the “tribes” of New England. By furthering this perspective of the war, historians have misrepresented the role of Connecticut and its Indian allies, who were the Narragansett’s primary adversaries. This dissertation addresses Connecticut’s role in this war—more properly termed The Great Narragansett War—particularly the colony’s

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\textsuperscript{84} Pulsipher, \textit{Subjects unto the Same King}, 113, 117. She has misinterpreted Connecticut’s unenviable geographic position as it was actually on New England’s frontier, facing first the Dutch in New Amsterdam and then the hostile royal New York colony that tried to assert its claim over the western portions of the colony as King Philip’s War broke out.

unique policy towards local native groups. This policy was the bedrock for Connecticut’s military success.

The failure of the current King Philip’s War narrative is clearly evident when considering the outcome of the war on a colony-by-colony basis, where Connecticut Colony stood alone, unscathed and victorious. With historians parroting the chroniclers’ focus on the gory details of disaster in the rest of New England, no comprehensive account exists that explores Connecticut’s success or actions, especially defensive, during the Great Narragansett War. Connecticut’s earlier Pequot War of 1636-1637 has garnered far more historical attention than the colony’s role in 1675-1676. The Pequot War and the interwar years, in fact, were crucial to Connecticut’s success in 1675 because of the relationships forged with local native groups. This dissertation analyzes the relative success of Connecticut’s native population and English settlers, which previous historians have relegated to the margins and footnotes.

To the extent that historians have addressed Connecticut’s success during the Great Narragansett War, they have tended to ascribe it to the colony’s close relationship with the Mohegan sachem Uncas. He formed close personal bonds with the English colonists beginning in the 1630s, entering into an alliance with them. Uncas remained a power to be reckoned with until his death in the late seventeenth century. The bonds he established with the English survived him, even with the Mohegan tribe becoming more and more assimilated into colonial New England culture in the following decades. Uncas’ actions and the decisions of many Indian leaders must be viewed through the prism of continual strife rather than the colonial view of seventeenth-century New England. Historians have characterized the interwar period as years of peace, punctuated
only by the relatively short-lived, yet devastating violence of the Pequot War and King Philip’s War.

The Indian view would have been one of continuing inter-tribal violence, in which the English played a contributing role during the years 1638-1674. In this conflict, the colonists assumed a role similar to the Narragansetts at the outset of King Philip’s War, as neutrals who leaned toward one Indian coalition or another. For Connecticut, the leaning was towards Uncas and the Mohegans and allied groups, at the expense of the upper Connecticut River tribes and the Narragansett groups that eventually became Connecticut’s bitter enemies during 1675-1676. What would now be made of a Great Swamp Fight-like attack (a major battle in King Philip’s War) on Hartford, Connecticut, by the Narragansetts during the 1640s, justified as a preemptive strike because the colony passively aided the Mohegans? The colonists later made this exact justification for the Great Swamp attack on the Narragansetts because the tribe passively had aided Philip in 1675. The Native American historical perspective, long ignored by historians, presents a different point of view for the interpretation of events in seventeenth-century New England.

When political, military, and cultural events during the interwar period are considered as a continuation of intertribal conflict, Native American actions during “King Philip’s War” seem less extreme and more in accord with previous political and military events. Connecticut’s adversaries also come more clearly into focus when viewed through this prism. The Great Narragansett War was but one episode in an intertribal conflict of over a hundred years in southern New England, stretching back to European
exploration of the region. Native groups looked to settle old scores by taking advantage of the military potential of new European allies, as well as to capitalize on fleeting economic opportunities to increase power. What had in all likelihood been bloody warfare that even featured wars of extermination between the tribes of southern New England pre-contact, continued after contact with Europeans, having been altered by disease, shifting alliances, and new military hardware. Archaeological evidence reveals that blunt force trauma and arrow penetrations accounted for the fatalities of remains in 19% of excavated burial sites from 1000-1600 A.D. in southern New England. Women and children accounted for five percent of that number, and these categories were often non-combatants in post-contact Indian warfare. The 19% is a conservative estimate based on only well-preserved remains with clearly identifiable battle scars, thus the actual number of combat deaths was probably much higher.86 These findings suggest anything but idyllic and peaceful pre-contact conditions in southern New England! As the Greek city-states were in a constant state of conflict prior to Xerxes’ Persian invasion, so were the pre-contact Native American groups; neither survived intact the invasions from powerful outside cultures, altering permanently their societies.

Disease also played a role in influencing the nature of war in colonial New England in the seventeenth century.87 Without adequate evidence, it is difficult to


87 Patricia Seed, “The Conquest of the Americas,” in The Cambridge History of Warfare, ed. Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 144, explains that the loss of military leadership within tribes was a significant obstacle for native military systems.
estimate the true impact of disease on North American native societies, though coastal areas have produced some archaeological evidence. The historiography generally inflates the impact of European disease on native groups because of over-estimated population sizes. Northeastern American Indian communities were small to begin with, subsisting on small-scale agriculture supplemented by local hunting, fishing and gathering, which would not sustain large populations. Large populations require a surplus of agricultural produce of the kind found in large river valleys of temperate climates like the Indus, Yellow, Yangtze, Euphrates, Tigris, Nile, and Po, and Mississippi river valleys. Taken at its largest estimates, Jennings holds that the Narragansetts fielded 5000 warriors pre-contact, which would have meant that the tribe’s total population was over 20,000, a fantastic figure for one tribe of pre-contact New England. By the Great Narragansett War of 1675, the Narragansetts fielded 1000 warriors, still a significant force, which dwarfed the other New England tribes. Yet even if Jennings’ overestimate holds true from the pre-contact period, the population of the Narragansetts, the most populous of southern New England tribes, would have been small compared to other areas of the world. Commonly held disease estimates would have meant that disease killed the Native American population a number of times over. Virulent diseases should have caused roughly the same percentages of deaths across different native groups as they had elsewhere, when new disease vectors were introduced into populations without immunity. Not all American native groups, however, seem to have been similarly affected. Some


88 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 17.
tribes initially seeking alliances with the Europeans were motivated in part by losses from
disease, while other tribes were strong enough not to have to seek new allies. Although
disease unquestionably impacted Indian communities and European-Native American
relations, the total effect of foreign illness on post-contact warfare has been exaggerated.

Tribes along the Massachusetts’ Atlantic coast experienced greater contact with
European traders and suffered the most from disease, while those originally without as
much European contact, such as the Pequots and Narragansetts, remained relatively
unscathed from the ravages of disease until later decades. Even then, these native groups
were far from eradicated by illness. Massasoit’s band of Wampanoags befriended the
original Pilgrim settlers, in part, because they sought an alliance against the newcomers
to thwart the nearby Narragansett threat.89 Previously, the Massachusetts tribe had
largely succumbed to disease carried by European traders, and perhaps this had in-turn
altered the relationship between the Wampanoags and Narragansetts. Disease does not,
however, explain the continuation of the Narragansett blood feud with the greatly feared
Pequots, one of the most important events in the history of early New England. The feud
was only partially settled with the Pequot War. A power vacuum ensued upon the ashes
of the Pequot empire that both the Narragansetts and upstart Mohegans—the latter now
freed from Pequot-tributary status—sought to fill.

Colonial passive involvement in this new conflict between the Mohegans and
Narragansetts native groups, both of which were rushing to take advantage of the new
power structure born of Pequot defeat, should be viewed as one conflict within this epoch

89 Vaughan, New England Frontier, 60.
of post-European contact. Episodic conflict occurred over the intervening decades after 1637, witnessing a number of Narragansett-led coalitions attempting to subdue the hated Mohegans. Fault lines also emerged during these years between the colonists and the Indians over religion, legal status, economic resources and political power created disruptive conditions that lasted through 1676. Yet the Connecticut Colony resourcefully arbitrated disputes, and almost always backed its principle native client, Uncas. With the support of the colonists, Uncas’ band of Mohegans were able to survive the Narragansett threat, which set the stage for future violence against Connecticut Colony and its Indian allies during the Great Narragansett War. The decades-long-Mohegan-Narragansett power struggle also set the stage for the broadening of Philip’s skirmish with the Plymouth colonists into a region-wide conflagration in 1675.

The Great Narragansett War was the latest and most devastating in a series of relatively brief wars over the previous century.90 This conflict, seated within the larger inter-Indian conflict of post-European contact, again pitted native groups against each other with the added strain in 1675-1676 of an Indian coalition aimed also at English power. Philip’s war was the first outbreak of English-Indian violence in New England since the Pequot War, although conflict between native groups and the colonists nearly occurred on a number of occasions. In the Great Narragansett War, many southern New England Indians had come to believe that the colonists favored certain tribes within the new cultural framework of a multi-ethnic New England—whether praying Natick tribes

90 Pulsipher, Subjects unto the Same King, Chapt. 5, titles the conflict “The Narragansett War.”
in Massachusetts or the Mohegans and Pequots of Connecticut—which motivated them
to join the hostile coalition.

Just as many wars trace their proximate cause to an event on the periphery of
larger power struggles, the Serbian-nationalist spark to the First World War for example,
Plymouth Colony’s local dispute with King Philip over his authority led to a region-wide
spasm of violence. Philip’s perception that the English were interfering with praying
Indians at his expense was at the heart of his uprising. With violence previously
smoldering at the traditional Indian-versus-Indian level, the fresh spark of Philip’s
resistance to the English turned the slow-burn into a full blaze. His hostility to the
colonists not only played on traditional intertribal antagonisms, but also brought other
formidable regional powers into the fray. In this setting, the Mohegans, the Narragansetts,
the Mohawks, and Connecticut Colony were the seventeenth-century equivalents of the
great powers in the lead-up to World War I. Yet in the historiography of the Great
Narragansett War, it is as if historians have distorted the role of Germany and the United
States, relating the story instead through the lens of Austro-Hungarian Empire and Serbia.
The historiography of the Great Narragansett War has thus substituted the equivalent of a
Balkan-centric view of World War I for a more accurate telling of the war focused on the
wider implications of the conflict.

The origins of the Great Narragansett War embodied more than a local conflict
between Plymouth and a band of Wampanoags. This war, for a variety of reasons,
eventually enmeshed all of New England: the fractious Puritan-Pilgrim colonies, apostate
Rhode Island colony, native groups and even included a parallel Indian uprising in
Massachusetts Bay’s northern holdings (now Maine and New Hampshire). In the case of
the best known southern New England affair, commonly referred to as King Philip’s
War, the Nipmucks and upper Connecticut River tribes of central Massachusetts carried
the conflict as the main combatants once Philip’s Wampanoags fled to them from the
Rhode Island-Plymouth border in the beginning of the conflict.91 With the Narragansetts
passively supporting Philip, it is likely that a number of Narragansett warriors secretly
joined Philip’s coalition until the Great Swamp Fight of 19 December 1675, when
colonial forces attacked a main village of the tribe in the infamous preemptive strike.
The entry of the Narragansetts drastically altered the nature of the war in terms of its
destructiveness and reach, and represented a continuation of the decades’ long power
struggle with the Mohegans.

Pulsipher also describes a “Narragansett War,” but does so as a phase in the usual
context of King Philip’s War. She provides a detailed explanation for the original
naming conventions and how the immediate chroniclers did not refer to the war as “King
Philip’s War” until Benjamin Church’s son termed the conflict such in the early
eighteenth century. Pulsipher briefly describes Uncas’ special relationship with
Connecticut as other scholars have, but does not integrate Narragansett and other Indian
groups’ actions into the larger narrative of the altered state of Indian warfare post-contact,
especially after the destruction of Pequot power in 1637. She also maintains the meta-
narrative’s Massachusetts’ focus, generally ignoring Connecticut’s critical role in the

91 Josiah H. Temple and Charles Adams, A History of the Town of North Brookfield
(accessed 11 July 2010), 74. The authors make the case that the war should have been titled the
Quabaug and Nashaway War, 99 n. 1.
ultimate colonial triumph, even including “Massachusetts” in the titles of three of her ten chapters. 92 This dissertation employs the more accurate title of Great Narragansett War, as it was this 1675-76 episode that witnessed the culmination of the inter-Indian power struggle in southern New England. This was the final chapter in the struggle for hegemony in southern New England between the Narragansetts and Pequots, and after 1637, the Narragansetts and Mohegans.

Connecticut’s success and Narragansett failure during the Great Narragansett War can be attributed to far more than the alliance with Uncas’ Mohegans and the remnants of the Pequots, though this was an important factor. Historians have highlighted that such a relationship existed between Connecticut and the Mohegans, the closely related Western Niantics and the remnants of the Pequot tribe. What emerges from the historical record is the story of the Connecticut colonists’ deliberately moderate policy towards Connecticut’s native population, and the local native groups’ acceptance of this policy. The colonists’ relationship with neutral and allied local native groups, driven by policy formulated at the General Court and War Council and reinforced at the town-level of government, formed the foundation for Connecticut’s military successes both in defensive and offensive operations. 93

92 Pulsipher, Subjects Unto the Same King, 119-134.
93 For the purposes of this paper, ‘local’ refers to those native groups with at least economic and social ties (if not military) to the English, who lived in proximity to them. The term policy is more accurate than diplomacy when referring to the interaction of ethnic groups in colonial Connecticut. Diplomacy usually denotes state-to-state interaction versus the interaction of dissimilar groups within a state, which would better be described as policy. Admittedly the line is sometimes blurred in late-seventeenth century Connecticut as colonial-Indian interaction also occasionally resembled an inter-state relationship.
The larger story of the New England colonists’ relationship with the area’s Indians has been debated extensively, and Connecticut’s early existence does not fit neatly into the categories epitomized by the arguments of Vaughan and Jennings above. Connecticut’s moderate policy towards its native neighbors was the cornerstone of its success during this Great Narragansett War, solidifying the military aspects of the colony’s alliance with native groups. ‘Moderate policy’ here meant that Connecticut Colony charted a middle course between the other New England colonies. The policy of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations could be equally as lenient, but it was not backed up by the equivalent military power of Connecticut, leading to the loss of many lives and the devastation of much of Rhode Island’s property during King Philip’s War. The stringent policy of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies, meanwhile, witnessed the harsh treatment and internment of Indians throughout the war, alienating in turn the very natives that its forces required on the battlefield. Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies also suffered high casualties and loss of property during the war. Connecticut Colony, in contrast, carried-out a middle-ground Indian policy by largely avoiding unnecessary violence towards the natives within its boundaries; arbitrating, rewarding, and negotiating with Connecticut’s native groups; and retaining lethal European military capability complemented by allied Indians to solidify these “soft-power” policy methods. The colony’s relationship with local native groups prevented more than minor violence within Connecticut’s borders by denying critical intelligence and support to the hostile bands. Connecticut’s moderate policy thus served as the bedrock for its security.
Certainly Connecticut’s conduct towards the local and allied Indians was not always ethical during 1675-1676, however, and for that matter, native groups committed their own atrocities. Although not suffering catastrophic losses, Connecticut was not operating in a vacuum free of invasion by hostile bands and hence experienced the same pressures that sometimes led to unethical anti-Indian retaliation elsewhere. War parties which had avoided Connecticut-Indians forces, operated within the colony’s borders throughout the war. While the colony implemented successful policy measures to keep the Mohegans, Pequots, and Western Niantic Indians militarily aligned, as well as native groups along the Connecticut, Farmington, Quinnipiac and Housatonic rivers neutral, if not for its military preparedness, policy alone would not have been enough to prevent attacks by Philip’s forces.94

The hostile coalition did manage to inflict minor damage on the colony, even with Connecticut’s advantageous policy and significant military capability. The Connecticut colonists’ response was not always ethical or moderate. In one episode, colonists committed revenge killings against two Narragansett prisoners of war. As noted, Connecticut soldiers witnessed the torture and killing of prisoners at the hands of their

94 Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 113, points this out as well. The Connecticut Colonial Records discussed below confirm this attitude. Pulsipher, however, goes on to claim that Connecticut could afford a more moderate policy because it was relatively more secure than the other New England colonies (117). Pulsipher has placed the cart before the horse here, as it was Connecticut’s policy that made the colony more secure by keeping the Indians living within its borders allied or neutral. Although Connecticut did not border Wampanoag country, the more powerful Narragansetts were geographically nearer to Connecticut than Plymouth or Massachusetts Bay Colony, and the Nipmuck and Connecticut River Indians to the north also bordered Connecticut. With about three quarters of the tribes composing Philip’s confederacy bordering Connecticut, the colony was certainly not in a more secure position than the other New England colonies, and in fact faced the additional threat of Governor Andros on its western flank.
Indian allies.95 Some town ordinances also restricted local Indian activities. But unlike Jennings’ characterization of colonists as oppressive towards native groups, Connecticut’s positive treatment and moderation outweighed negative incidents. Indeed, Connecticut’s actions towards the Indians within the colony’s borders were noteworthy even by contemporary standards. By treating both the allied and neutral Indians as humanely as possible, Connecticut sought to co-opt its native population’s fighting ability, as well as to keep native groups out of Philip’s camp. The colony’s moderate policy went beyond self-interest, however, as Connecticut possessed ethical leadership, which set it apart from the other New England colonies. Far from Jennings’ portrayal of colonists as aristocratic expansionists importing a feudal system, Connecticut’s settlers were practical farmers attempting to survive in the harsh New England wilderness.

Connecticut Native Americans had a choice in the course of events. This seems obvious, but the lack of primary sources for Indians always lessens historian’s ability to more precisely define Indian motives and reconstruct their worldview. The fluid nature of Indian societies rendered inaccurate the traditional European construct of political entities as “tribes,” leading to further confusion over Indian motives. Fragmentary evidence of the Indian voice has survived through the colonial records and other contemporary sources, but usually historians are left with only a fleeting glimpse of Indian motivations. Historians thus largely guess at the Native American perspective based on the back-story of the colonists’ accounts.

95 Lepore, The Name of War, 3-18.
The lack of Indian primary documents now, however, does not alter the fact of Indian agency during the Great Narragansett War. The Connecticut natives chose the colony as allies, and in some cases patrons, accepting the colony’s policy of moderation. There was no doubt that shrewd political actors, like Uncas and Ninigret of the Eastern Niantics of Rhode Island, understood that their best chance of survival was through cooperation with the English. Yet, a far greater number of New England native groups opted to fight the colonists, and chance their survival on the field of battle. With so many New England Native Americans deciding to fight against the colonists and their Indian allies, it is difficult to believe that their motivation was suicidal. The Connecticut natives faced three choices: to join with the English as the Mohegans, Pequots, Western Niantics did; to remain neutral as the Eastern Niantics and many of Connecticut’s tribes opted; or to take up arms against their colonial neighbors. Certainly, all local tribes were influenced by Connecticut’s relatively moderate policies. The neutral native groups of the Connecticut River valley also faced a measure of coercion from the Mohegans, who were actively in the field against Philip’s forces. Still these tribes could have chanced confrontation with the colonists for the same reasons as the hostile tribes. In terms of their immediate survival, they made the right choice by refusing to join with Philip.

Connecticut’s experience as a battleground during the Pequot War grounded its leaders in the practical necessity of maintaining positive relationships with the local native groups. A number of Pequot War veterans were town leaders in Connecticut at the onset of the Great Narragansett War, and their previous experience informed their decision-making during the later conflict. The colony’s senior leadership bequeathed their lessons learned to Connecticut’s second generation of leaders through direct contact,
correspondence and military texts. The second generation of colony leaders cultivated their own military experience during the English Civil Wars and the wars with the Dutch. The colony’s native groups, experiencing the security benefits of allying with the colonists during the Pequot War and interwar years of 1638-1674, chose to support Connecticut against the hostile coalition.

Connecticut’s defensive operations rested on the solid local relations with native groups, and capitalized on Connecticut’s position on the New England frontier. Before the Great Narragansett War, the colony had developed defenses to combat the threat of a hostile Dutch neighbor, as well as to ward off the threat of potentially hostile Indian tribes in the western New England and Hudson valley region. Historians largely have failed to analyze in a systematic way New England’s use of elements of European fortresses. These defenses, boasting elements of artillery fortress design from the Military Revolution in Europe, and sometimes built by veteran European military engineers, copied to varying degrees blueprints of fortresses in the Old World. The colonists allowed these defenses to decay during peaceful periods only to rebuild them during times of increased threat. Building upon the traces of former fortresses allowed Connecticut’s colonists rapidly to reconstitute their defenses early in the conflict, while the colony was only a secondary objective of the hostile coalition. The Indians on both sides, whether through their own initiative or with the assistance of Europeans also utilized elements of artillery fortresses. Connecticut complemented these fortifications by maintaining an “active defense,” actively patrolling its roads and outlying areas, while utilizing allied Indians to scout for enemy war parties operating in the colony. Faced
with Connecticut’s defenses, hostile war parties were unable to stage a large-scale attack on the colony.

Connecticut’s war council, a group of English political and military men, managed the conflict more efficiently than the other New England colonies’ war councils. This in part was due to Connecticut’s contiguous settlement pattern and resulting population density, easing military operations through the transmission of orders and intelligence. The culture of Connecticut’s council and its relationship with the colony’s military leaders ensured that the latter’s lack of operational and tactical military experience was not detrimental to the war effort. The colony’s council more willingly managed military affairs than the councils of Plymouth and Rhode Island colonies; at times Connecticut’s political leaders even dictated tactics. Massachusetts Bay’s council often issued detailed orders, but its non-contiguous settlement pattern and much larger population proved more difficult to manage with a council of roughly similar size and experience as Connecticut’s council.

Another emergent theme for Connecticut’s experience was the efficacy of Connecticut’s mobile dragoon force. Unlike other colonies, Connecticut’s field forces represented a cross-section of its population and even included volunteers, boosting its efficiency. Historians’ explanation that adoption of the “skulking way of war” led to ultimate victory does not explain Connecticut’s military success during the war. Connecticut’s forces were more successful than the other colonies’ English forces because they utilized competent Indian allies in large numbers from the beginning of the conflict. A military division of labor ensued, where each group performed duties associated with its respective military strength. This symbiotic tactical relationship
allowed Connecticut’s English forces to conduct effective operations compared to most other colonial forces. With allied Indian assistance, and aside from garrison duty and set-piece assaults, the skills of Connecticut’s English soldiers would have been useless. A small number of English soldiers, particularly in Connecticut, did adopt “the skulking war of war,” which proved useful in raiding into the hostile coalition’s territory. This adaptation, however, was not the primary reason for the hostile coalition’s defeat.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, Connecticut’s Indian forces were militarily superior to the allied Indians of other colonies. The martial reputation of the Pequots before the “Mystic Massacre” of the Pequot War embodied this fact. This climactic battle at what became the town of Mystic, Connecticut, shattered Pequot power, but the remnants of the tribe retained their tactical skills that Connecticut’s English capitalized on in later years by entering into an alliance with the surviving Pequots and closely related Mohegans and Western Niantics. The Pequots maintained an unenviable geographic position, surrounded by the Mohawks’ sphere of influence reaching down into southern New England from the northwest, the Nipmuck tribes to the north, the sometimes confederated Connecticut River tribes to the west, and the numerous Narragansett groups to the east. This poor geo-strategic position forced the Pequot confederacy, which at the time included the Western Niantics and Mohegans, to develop a potent military capability to avoid annihilation.

Analyzing events through Connecticut’s perspective challenges long-held assumptions about the nature of “King Philip’s War.” This dissertation not only brings the colony and its native population more clearly into focus, but places the war itself within the context of a century’s long Indian struggle to adjust to European contact of
which the Great Narragansett War was the final chapter. This paper proposes an explanation for Connecticut’s success during the war, highlighting the utility of European military skills in the New World under the right circumstances, while treating both New England’s colonists and native peoples as unique groups with agency. Connecticut’s story in the Great Narragansett War establishes a paradigm for historians to consider military operations in the early-colonial Atlantic World from the perspective of sound relations with local native groups.
“The Narragansetts will all leave you, but as for myself, I will never leave you,” promised Uncas “chief sachem of the Moheags” to Connecticut’s commander John Mason as they marched into Pequot territory. Many of the Narragansetts abandoned the march, but Uncas, true to his promise, remained loyal to the English. The Pequot War of 1636-1637 forged the Connecticut Colony-Mohegan alliance, which was further solidified over the following decades. This alliance was mutually beneficial, allowing Uncas to achieve greater power, while the Connecticut colonists gained critical intelligence, as well as military advantage because of the wilderness fighting skills of their native allies. Pequot native groups which survived the war were reconstituted during this era under Connecticut patronage, particularly that of future governor John Winthrop Jr. Although the interaction of English and Indians during this period of native-group conflict in southern New England remains murky and non-linear in nature, Connecticut ultimately supported Uncas over other native groups. Critically, the colony developed an appreciation for the importance of maintaining solid relations with local native peoples, which would serve Connecticut well in the Great Narragansett War, and set it apart from the other New England colonies.

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96 As quoted in Oberg, *Uncas First of the Mohegens*, 18, 66.
The causes and conduct of the Pequot War remain controversial to this day and are largely beyond the scope of this dissertation, accounting for a vibrant historiography of their own apart from that of King Philip’s War.\textsuperscript{97} Recent archaeology and historical analysis contribute fresh ideas to the existing body of literature, including new evidence concerning the attack on Mystic fort, the fate of Pequot native groups, and exclusively Indian battles.\textsuperscript{98} The Pequot War was also noteworthy for the lack of military reciprocity that the English showed to their Indian opponents, leading to atrocities.\textsuperscript{99} The Indians for their part also committed horrific acts of violence. The conduct of both sides reflected respective cultural frameworks for waging war. The critical aspect of the Pequot War for Connecticut was that the colony developed an appreciation for good local relations with

\textsuperscript{97} Although some of the causes of the war remain unknown, Alfred A. Cave, \textit{The Pequot War} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) remains the accepted historical authority for the war. He places the majority of the blame for the war on Massachusetts Bay colony, 121. Tensions had been flaring in Connecticut for some time with conflict over the fur and wampum trade in the early 1630s, leading to war between the Pequots and Dutch and between the Pequots and Narragansetts. The “murders” of merchantmen John Stone and John Oldham further aggravated the underlying tensions. Both killings involved cases of mistaken identity. The Pequots killed Stone because they thought that he was English, and the English blamed the Pequots confederacy for Oldham’s death even though Narragansett tributaries had killed him. For these issues, see Cave, \textit{The Pequot War}, 49-121. Kate Grandjean, “New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War,” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly} 68, no. 1 (January 2011), 75-100, offers a different explanation for the outbreak of the Pequot War. She argues that climate and weather conditions created food shortages, which in turn sparked violence over scarce crops.

\textsuperscript{98} Battle of Mystic Archaeological Project, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket Pequot Reservation, Connecticut, unpublished report, and interviews with staff. Kevin McBride’s interdisciplinary team recently has excavated and analyzed part of Mystic Fort, providing new insight into the battle. A summary of a portion of the Research Center’s Pequot War analysis can be found in the following brief: \textit{Battlefields of the Pequot War}, “The Mystic Fort Campaign,” Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, http://www.pequotmuseum.org/uploaded_images/.../grotonbattlefield.pdf (accessed July 2011).

native groups and the importance of Indian allies. These two critical lessons became a matter of survival for Connecticut during the Great Narragansett War.

Although Alfred Cave *The Pequot War* claims that their reputation for fierceness was overblown,\(^{100}\) the Pequots were the most militarily competent tribe in southern New England from the founding of the first English settlement at Plymouth in 1620 through the tribe’s defeat in 1637. Indicating Pequot military superiority was the tribe’s hegemony over the Mohegans, Western Niantics, and southern Connecticut River tribes, as well as the ability of the Pequot confederacy to fend off the more numerous Narragansett groups and intimidate them. In addition to this potent military capability, the earlier Dutch-Pequot War of 1633 taught the Pequots something about fighting a European opponent.\(^{101}\) Indeed, the more well-known Pequot War of 1636-1637 was far from a lopsided military contest between proficient Westerners and hapless natives as often portrayed. The remaining Pequots and the Mohegans and Western Niantics retained this military advantage in 1675-1676.

In late August 1636, military action against the Pequots began with Massachusetts Bay’s raids against Block Island and a principal Pequot Fort in southeastern Connecticut. Massachusetts launched these raids because of perceived Pequot provocations. Far from intimidating the Pequot confederacy, these failed attempts stirred it to military action. In

\(^{100}\) Cave, *The Pequot War*, 68.

\(^{101}\) The Dutch-Pequot War was precipitated by tensions over the fur and wampum trade, and began when the Pequots murdered other Indians at the Dutch trading post at what is now Hartford. The Dutch then murdered the Pequot sachem Tatobem. Cave, *The Pequot War*, 58-60.
a treaty between Massachusetts and the Pequots in 1634, Massachusetts demanded wampum and hostages from the Pequots, as well as the surrender of the “murderers” of English traders. The Pequots refused to meet all of these demands, ignoring a final ultimatum from the Bay Colony in July of 1636. After the ineffectual Massachusetts’ raids, the Pequots employed their closely related Western Niantic tributaries, and aided them in besieging Connecticut’s fort at Saybrook Point at the mouth of the Connecticut River. This force bested the garrison’s foraging parties in a number of ambushes. Lion Gardiner, the fort’s commander and Thirty Years War veteran, however, warded off disaster and oversaw the garrison’s effort to stave off defeat and annihilation. Gardiner avoided serious casualties, and though besieged, managed to feed his tiny garrison.

As the siege of Saybrook continued, a tributary sachem named Sequassen of the central Connecticut region requested that the Pequots raid Wethersfield on his tribe’s behalf because the settlers had swindled out of land. Given the state of war between the Pequots and English, the Pequots agreed, and on 23 April 1637, the Pequots launched a surprise raid on Wethersfield, Connecticut. The raiding party killed a handful of settlers and carried off two prisoners. Though a tactical success, the raid was a strategic blunder, as it escalated the conflict, especially with the Connecticut River settlements. Connecticut had been suspicious of its sister Puritan colony’s intentions in regard to the

102 Cave, *The Pequot War*, 70-72.


104 Cave, *The Pequot War*, 128-133.

Pequot confederacy, and some of its leaders did not support Massachusetts’ punitive expeditions of the previous year. The Wethersfield raid also demonstrated to the Connecticut colonists the importance of good relations with local native groups, as Sequassen’s invitation precipitated the raid. At the conclusion of the Pequot War, and revealing that it had learned from its previous mishandling of neighboring tribes, Connecticut pardoned Sequassen and admitted wrong doing in his provocation over the land disagreement.  

The tide turned against the Pequots when another Thirty Year War veteran, Captain John Mason, leader of the mainstay of Connecticut’s militia forces, conceived of an operation to take the war to the Pequots by assaulting one or more of the tribe’s main villages. Although initially suspicious of Mohegan intentions, Mason accepted the support of Uncas’ band to fight the Pequots and their loyal tributaries. Uncas had offered his tribe’s military assistance to the fledgling Connecticut Colony for reasons of realpolitik. Uncas asserted a claim of hereditary right to the Pequot sachemship prior to the Pequot War. As was often the case in southern New England, the intermarriage


107 Cave, *The Pequot War*, 142.

108 Historians first argued that the Pequots and Mohegans were one tribe, and that Uncas had changed the name back to the old tribal name of Mohegan, when he broke with Sassacus. Based on archaeology, however, historians now maintain that the tribes were separate entities based on ceramic pottery samples and other evidence. There is no basis for a previous unity of the tribes, although they were closely related. For the pottery discussion see Oberg, *Uncas First of the Mohegans*, 18. Cave, *The Pequot War*, 66, also describes recent evidence indicating that the Mohegans were a separate tribe such as a Dutch map from 1614 ascribing different names and areas to both as well as known hunting disputes between the two tribes. Kevin McBride asserts that the Pequots and Mohegans have different creation narratives, indicating different origins (interview with Professor McBride, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket Pequot Reservation, Connecticut, June 2009).
dynamics between closely related tribes led to political friction and eventually violence, as Uncas claimed the sachemship through his father, who was a son of the principle Pequot sachem.\textsuperscript{109} Uncas’ claim was rejected and his cousin Sassacus assumed the chieftainship of the Pequot confederacy. Uncas never forgave this decision, embarking upon years of subterfuge to overthrow his cousin and dominate both the Mohegans and Pequots. The Pequots even banished Uncas to the enemy Narragansetts on several occasions only repeatedly to grant him amnesty after Uncas pledged allegiance to Sassacus.\textsuperscript{110} When the Pequots ran afoul of the English in the years that followed, Uncas recognized an opportunity to finally overthrow Sassacus and to establish the Mohegans as the hegemonic native power between the Pawcatuck and Housatonic Rivers, much of what is now Connecticut. Prior to this time, the Mohegans were merely a tributary tribe of the dominant Pequots.

Fortunately for the English, Captain Mason, a savvy continental European veteran, capitalized on the opportunity to co-opt Uncas in the war against the Pequots.\textsuperscript{111} Uncas initiated his alliance with Connecticut early in the Pequot War by warning the colonists that they had to respond militarily to the Pequot raid on Wethersfield. Uncas warned the Connecticut leadership that if it appeared weak in fighting the Pequots, the colony’ risked pushing the Mohegans and other Connecticut native groups into the

\textsuperscript{109} Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 18.

\textsuperscript{110} Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 48.

\textsuperscript{111} Cave, The Pequot War, 137; Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 50-51; Selesky, War and Society in Colonial Connecticut, 7.
Pequot camp.  

With the Pequots as the local dominant military power—the Mohawks were the only tribe in the greater northeastern region that retained an even greater military reputation—Mason also understood that the Connecticut settlers had to act decisively so as not to appear weak to the other Indians. Uncas stood to gain from an English victory over the Pequots because of his desire to exact revenge on Sassacus and increase his own power. Even so, it is doubtful that he would have predicted the sudden collapse of the Pequot confederacy after Mason’s attack on the Pequot fort at Mystic.

Mason’s march from Narragansett Bay was the first major operation in New England that included a significant friendly Indian force. His army consisted of Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay forces along with Mohegans, Narragansetts, and Eastern Niantics, a native group closely related to the Narragansetts. Mason retained the element of surprise by indirectly approaching Pequot country. He bypassed Pequot territory by water, landing in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island. Mason requested that Miantonomi, a chief Narragansett sachem allow his countermarch through Narragansett country back to the Pequot stronghold at Mystic, Connecticut. Picking up the additional native allies to Uncas’ Mohegans along the way, the Indians performed scouting and security duties, while navigating the expedition through the wilderness.

As the army approached Mystic, most of the Narragansetts and Eastern Niantics retreated back to Rhode Island as Uncas had predicted. Mason sheltered his reduced


army at a place called Porter’s Rock, not far from the Pequot fort, yet in a position that offered excellent cover and concealment. High ground shielded this encampment and the Mystic River flanked the position on the west.\textsuperscript{114} Launching the attack in the early morning twilight, the Mohegans, remaining Narragansetts, and a number of colonists established “blocking positions” around the Pequot fort as the outer perimeter guard. This role tactic would become traditional for Connecticut’s native allies. Mason and another Thirty Years War veteran, Captain John Underhill, then assaulted the fort from the north and southwest respectively. Mason’s force established a position immediately inside the breach of the palisades, while Mason led a small detachment down the main thoroughfare of the fort, firing as they went. Sustaining many casualties and with the battle very much in doubt, Mason made the now controversial decision to fire the fort.\textsuperscript{115}

Undoubtedly, the failure of the English and the Pequots to establish reciprocity—the recognition of an adversary as a legitimate military entity that conferred protections for non-combatants as well as surrendered and wounded soldiers—affected Mason’s decision. The English viewed the Pequots and their tributaries as brigands and rebels. Categorizing the Pequots in this way was not out of the ordinary for English leaders

\textsuperscript{114} I analyzed this position with Kevin McBride, viewing how suitable it was as a rallying point for the future operation against Mystic Fort.

\textsuperscript{115} Battle of Mystic Archaeological Project. Kevin McBride’s interdisciplinary team recently have excavated and analyzed part of Mystic Fort, providing new insight into the battle. A full report form McBride’s team will be forthcoming for the National Park Service, but I have interviewed the participants of the dig team and viewed the artifacts at Foxwoods Museum (March 2011). It appears that the allied Indians and a portion of the colonists established blocking positions on avenues of egress from the fort, and that both elements under Mason and Underhill encountered heavy resistance inside the palisades.
during the Early Modern era; English forces viewed the Irish and Scottish insurrectionists in similar fashion.116

With Mason’s fight transpiring on the other end of Mystic fort, Underhill’s force did not breach the palisades until the village was already aflame. The Pequots then counterattacked his contingent, driving it back outside the compound with fierce hand-to-hand fighting.117 Many Pequots did not escape the burning fortress and even some of the allied Indians on the outer perimeter were accidentally wounded in the melee.118 None of the battle’s participants anticipated such a decisive victory.119 After Mystic, the Massachusetts Bay forces departed by water, while Mason and the Connecticut troops, ably assisted by Uncas, fought their way through the heart of Pequot territory back to Saybrook Fort.120


117 Battle of Mystic Archaeological Project, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center.

118 Cave, The Pequot War, 151.

119 Cave, The Pequot War, 152, argues that it was the devastation at Mystic that caused disbelief among the Indian allies. A more recent explanation, however, suggests that when the remaining Narragansetts protested the slaughter of the Pequots, they were actually protesting the destruction of potential spoils of war. See Wayne Lee, “Subjects, Clients, Allies or Mercenaries? The British Use of Irish and Indian Military Power, 1500-1815.”

120 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, describes Mohegan assistance during the Pequot War beginning on page 72. Johnson, “The Search for a Usable Indian,” 646, briefly describes the Mohegans and Connecticut Colony relationship as “balanced and mutually profitable interdependence.”
The battle at Mystic caused Patrick Malone to make his claim that Philip’s forces learned the use of fire against village from this episode, Adam Hirsch to argue that the Indians adopted the concept of total war from this conflict, and Ian Steele to claim both Malone and Hirsch were correct. Malone, Hirsch, and Steele, and many other historians, whatever their assessments, at least realized that the attack at Mystic was a critical moment in early New England colonial history. The most important outcome of Mystic in terms of military operations was that the friendly Native American forces utilized their military strengths—scouting, security, navigating—while the English demonstrated a willingness to assault fortifications in accordance with more traditional methods of European warfare. This watershed event confirmed Uncas’ allegiance and established a basis for joint Indian-colonists warfare in Connecticut. The other New England colonies did not capitalize on the lessons learned during the Pequot War of 1636-1637, especially in the area of utilizing native troops. They would pay dearly for this oversight during the Great Narragansett War.

Mystic set the tone for the remainder of the Pequot War. The English and allied Indians pursued Sassacus’ Pequot bands, who were desperately trying to flee Connecticut. Skirmishing with the Pequot rearguard and tributaries along Long Island Sound, the allied force cornered with the Pequots at a swamp near the town of Southport in southwestern Connecticut. Continuing the tactical cooperation established at Mystic, the Mohegans formed the outer perimeter, while the English assaulted the Pequot position. The Pequot noncombatants surrendered and became spoils of war, while many

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121 Battlefields of the Pequot War, “The Mystic Fort Campaign.”
of the warriors died in battle.\footnote{Cave, \textit{The Pequot War}, 160.} Sassacus managed to make his way through the Mohegan perimeter with some of his closest followers. This group turned course towards the northwest and New York territory, attempting to link-up with the Mohawks. Unbeknownst to Sassacus, the Mohawks already had thrown their support behind the English, and a war party ambushed the Pequot band at what is now Dover Plains, New York, on the eastern side of the Hudson River.\footnote{\textit{Battlefields of the Pequot War}, “The Mystic Fort Campaign.”} The Mohawks sent Sassacus’ scalp to the English as a sign of friendship.\footnote{Cave, \textit{The Pequot War}, 161.} The standard account of the Pequot War usually ends with this gruesome incident, but other events transpired that are just beginning to come into historical focus.

Sassacus’ defeat did not mark the end of the Pequot tribe, as a number of Pequot groups escaped into the wilderness or simply avoided the conflict all together. Other Pequots were held as prisoners, and in later decades, even managed to reconstitute Sassacus’ tribal band under Cassasinamon. With the Uncas-Mason forces’ attention focused on Sassacus, other Pequot bands escaped unmolested. The so-called Battle of the Northeast occurred between the Narragansetts, who sought to exploit the weakened Pequot confederacy, and another Pequot group separate from Sassacus’ band.\footnote{\textit{Battlefields of the Pequot War}, “The Mystic Fort Campaign.”} Undoubtedly, there were other Indian battles that did not involve the colonists that have been lost to history. Another significant Pequot band under Wequash, located on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cave, \textit{The Pequot War}, 160.
\item Battlefields of the Pequot War, “The Mystic Fort Campaign.”
\item Cave, \textit{The Pequot War}, 161.
\item Battlefields of the Pequot War, “The Mystic Fort Campaign.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Pawcatuck River fought against other Indians but not the English. Other fleeing Pequots and Western Niantics probably integrated into regional native groups, and perhaps returned to the reconstituted Pequot tribe in later decades.

The colonists divided a large number of Sassacus’ Pequots, Western Niantics and other captured Pequot tributaries between themselves and the Mohegans and Narragansetts. The failure of the colonists to resolve the Mohegan-Narragansett dispute over Pequot war spoils, particularly captives, worsened the relationship between these two tribes. The Mohegans, Narragansetts and Eastern Niantics scrambled to fill the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Pequot confederacy, and this resulted in a continuation of Indian against Indian warfare post-contact, and was a primary cause of the outbreak of the Great Narragansett War. With the fighting transpiring exclusively in the colony or the uninhabited wilderness, Connecticut experienced Indian warfare apart from the other New England colonies. Though Massachusetts Bay participated in military operations, its experience differed from Connecticut in that it did not directly experience Indian attacks on its settlements. Massachusetts thus failed to appreciate the value of solid relations with native groups, as well as the utility of employing native allies.

In the decades between the Pequot and Great Narragansett wars—termed here the interwar years—events indicated that the alliance between the Mohegans and Connecticut

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126 Harris, “The Second William Harris Letter of August, 1676,” 53; Matthew S. Muehlbauer, “‘They … shall no more be called Peaquots but Narragansetts and Mohegans:’ Refugees, Rivalry, and the Consequences of the Pequot War,” to appear in War & Society 30, no. 3 (October 2011).
Colony, was not based exclusively on the Pequot threat. Uncas and Mason understood the importance of what had been accomplished with the shattering of the Pequot confederacy, not only at the political level, with the extinguishing of Pequot hegemony in southern New England, but of the effectiveness of combined Indian and colonist operations. Both the Mohegans and the Connecticut colonists realized the mutual benefits of military cooperation, and even when there were disagreements during the interwar years, this sentiment prevented a severing of ties. This was the center piece of the Connecticut Colony-Mohegan. Survival was the obvious common interest of the two parties because of endemic native-group violence in seventeenth-century-southern New England and the threat of other Europeans powers. Without the mutual trust forged during the Pequot War, it is doubtful that this relationship would have been maintained peaceably with competing claims over the surviving Pequots, the colonists’ encroachment on the Mohegan’s native lands and religion, as well as diverging economic and political objectives.

As Uncas built a stronger Mohegan tribe on the remnants of the Pequot confederacy, and English power continued to grow in Connecticut, friendly ties with the Narragansetts established during the Pequot War began to unravel. As a closely-related tribe and tributary, the Mohegans maintained closer ties to the Pequots than they did to the Narragansetts, inheriting not only the Pequot’s position of preeminence in Connecticut, but also the tribe’s feud with the Rhode Island native groups. The straining of the Mohegan-Narragansett relationship occurred from memories of the Mohegans’ previous support to the Pequots, competition over the Pequot’s share of the wampum trade, claims over Pequot hunting grounds, and especially competition over Pequot
survivors. The fate of the Pequots was a point of friction not only between the victorious native groups, but also with the colonial authorities.

Uncas took advantage of the colonists’ good will towards his tribe for its support during the Pequot War, at the expense of the Narragansetts and their grand sachem Miantonomi. Uncas desired to fill the underlying economic and power vacuum created by the collapse of the Pequots exacerbated the tense situation with the Narragansetts. He accused Miantonomi of a conspiracy to ally various tribes, including the feared Mohawks against the English colonists. Although Miantonomi successfully cleared his name at Boston, he never forgave Uncas for approaching the English authorities. In 1643, he invaded Mohegan country with a much larger force than Uncas was able to muster. Miantonomi probably thought that he had persuaded the English to remain neutral in the intra-Indian feud, and thus was confident in his chances of defeating the smaller Mohegan tribe. Traditional accounts claim that Uncas used a ruse by challenging Miantonomi to individual combat, and when the Narragansett sachem accepted the invitation to personal combat, Uncas dropped to the ground as his Mohegans showered the unsuspecting Narragansetts with a barrage of arrows. Surprised, the Narragansetts fled in confusion and the Mohegans captured Miantonomi because he was weighed down by chain mail that he had worn into battle. 127 Presented as Uncas’ prisoner at Hartford, the colony turned Miantonomi back over to the Mohegan chief for disposition in a mock

127 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 103.
show of neutrality, as the colonial authorities knew that this was in effect a death sentence. The Mohegans subsequently executed Miantonomi.\textsuperscript{128}

The Narragansett tribe never forgave this episode, and through the intervening decades invaded Mohegan territory and instigated against Uncas. Connecticut Colony did not contribute direct military support for Uncas, but its decision to allow Uncas to adjudicate Miantonomi’s fate was clearly a vote in support of their Mohegan client. The Narragansetts never forgot Connecticut’s passive support for the execution of Miantonomi, using this incident as motivation to target Connecticut during the Great Narragansett War.

Pessicus inherited the Narragansett sachemship after Miantonomi’s death and went on the warpath against the Mohegans. He achieved more military success than Miantonomi, raiding Mohegan territory over the protests of the New England colonies, and even besieging Uncas’ main fort at Shantok in 1645.\textsuperscript{129} This time, the Connecticut colonists aided the Mohegans more directly, sending relief supplies up the Thames River and over the river’s bluffs into Fort Shantok, where the Narragansetts had failed to place a guard.\textsuperscript{130} Thomas Peters described this event to Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay Colony in May 1645: “I with your son [John Winthrop Jr.] were at Uncus Fort where I dressed 17 men and left plasters to dresse 17 more which were

\textsuperscript{128} For the Pequot War through death of Miantonomi see Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 72-111.

\textsuperscript{129} Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 112-114.

\textsuperscript{130} Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 113-114.
Not only did the English re-supply Uncas, the colonial gentry dressed the wounds of their native allies! Understanding that the mutual relationship was too important for the security of the colony, Connecticut’s leaders prevented Uncas’ defeat. The other New England colonies also realized the advantages of maintaining Mohegan power, forcing the Narragansetts and Eastern Niantics to accept a humiliating treaty in 1645.\textsuperscript{132}

Members of alliances often have diverging interests, and divisions within the Connecticut-Mohegan Alliance soon became evident. Colonial and Mohegan economic and political interests collided in the conquered Pequot territories. After the Narragansett-Eastern Niantic threat was temporarily blunted, both the English and Mohegans attempted to exploit the resources of the area. The main source of tension within the alliance occurred when John Winthrop Jr. developed economic interests on the lower Pequot River (Thames River). Winthrop later would figure prominently in Connecticut’s moderate policy towards Native Americans, but at this time he sought to undermine Uncas’ power.\textsuperscript{133} Even though Winthrop never resorted to violence to protect his claims, his material interests were at odds with Connecticut’s most valuable Indian ally.


\textsuperscript{132} Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 116.

\textsuperscript{133} Winthrop’s influence on Connecticut Colony’s policy of moderation is detailed below. For a recent account of the episode, see Radune, \textit{Pequot Plantation}. 
As part of his campaign to dominate former Pequot territory, Winthrop also championed the cause of the Pequots in proximity to his Pequot Plantation, further alienating the Mohegans. The symbolic nature of Winthrop’s settling (also known as Nameag and by 1658 New London) in the vicinity of a former Pequot fortress, along with the locations’ economic implications for the wampum trade, was not lost on Uncas. Winthrop, writing to Thomas Peters on the 3rd of September, 1646 from Boston, indicated the deterioration of his relationship with the Mohegans from the previous year when both men were assisting Uncas in person at Fort Shantock, “If the Pequotts be not taken under the English, If these Indians that we must live neere be still under Uncas command, there will be noe living for English there …” Uncas had argued that the remnants of the Pequots should act as a tributary tribe to his victorious Mohegans, while Winthrop advocated for the freedom of the Pequots in the vicinity of his new plantation. The underlying tensions centered on the potential use of Pequot survivors as labor, the disposition of Pequot territory for hunting and agricultural development, and the ability to dominate the former Pequot share of the wampum trade. Uncas had the added pressure of Indian legitimacy thrown into the economic mix because as a now powerful sachem, he had to wield power over the lesser Indian tribes in his sphere of influence, especially those he had conquered. Winthrop’s interests posed a serious threat to this mandate.


135 *Winthrop Papers*, vol. 5, 100.
The commissioners of the New England-wide (minus Rhode Island) political body known as the United Colonies were unprepared to abandon their erstwhile native ally, even if Uncas’ interests were at odds with the son of the Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Mohegans had become the most powerful tribe between the Pawcatuck River and the Housatonic River. Indicating Massachusetts’ tilt toward Uncas, Samuel Symonds wrote to Winthrop Jr. in September 1646 advising, “Uncas may be kept a friend still to the English; but yet soe that he be not suffered … to insult, or wronge other Indians.”\textsuperscript{136} For their part, the Mohegans did in fact warn colonial authorities of an alleged plot to kidnap Winthrop Jr., perhaps in an attempt to gain leverage and ingratiate the tribe with one of their political adversaries.\textsuperscript{137}

Even with this dubious attempt to provide the colonists intelligence, tensions boiled over in 1647, when Uncas backed up his demands over the Pequots and their former territory by force. He led a party of Mohegans on a raid of the Pequot village adjacent to Winthrop’s settlement, roughing-up some of the Pequots and looting and destroying their property. Although his war party did not kill any Pequots, this event sparked colonial diplomatic action, further propelled by the lobbying of Winthrop, who had written to Boston protesting the raid.\textsuperscript{138} John Mason, the patron of Uncas and the Mohegans, composed the ensuing treaty, however, establishing a formal tributary

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Winthrop Papers}, vol. 5, 100.

\textsuperscript{137} 27 September 1646 letter from William Pynchon at Springfield to John Winthrop Sr. at Boston advising him about this intelligence from the Mohegans, \textit{Winthrop Papers}, vol. 5, 114-5 and n. 1, 115 reference the treaty.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Winthrop Papers}, vol. 5, 124.
relationship between the Mohegans and Pequots. The agreement dated 24 February 1647 between Uncas and the Nameag Pequot sachem Cassasinamon ordered that the Pequots accept Uncas’ status as overlord, pay him tribute, and “attend him in such services of peace or warre as they shall be directed to by the Governor of Connecticott until the meeting of the Comissioners ...” Uncas’ claims had temporarily triumphed over the protests of the colonists at Pequot Plantation.

The relationship between the Mason family and Uncas would continue to develop over the intervening decades, and the Masons remained the most vigorous supporters of Mohegan land rights after King Philip’s War. The relationship between Mason and Uncas often placed Mason at odds with John Winthrop Jr., as the latter continued to remonstrate for the freedom of the Nameag Pequots from Uncas’ authority. Winthrop may have written to Mason from Pequot Plantation on 19 September 1648, the letter appears unfinished and it remains uncertain if it was actually sent. In it, Winthrop raised his concerns over the hunting disputes of various tribes and criticized the Mohegans

139 Winthrop Papers, vol. 5, 131.

140 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 155; Johnson, “The Search for a Usable Indian,” 649. There was also a major land controversy between the Masons and the Mohegans and Connecticut Colony that stretched over decades, and even reached the English Crown in the mid-eighteenth century; see Forest, History of the Indians of Connecticut, Chapt. 8.

141 Mason and Winthrop Jr. were not always at odds as indicated by a letter from Mason at Saybrook to Winthrop at Nameag on 9 September 1648, advising that Wequash’s Pequots at Pawcatuck were “very desireous of frindship with the English” (Winthrop Papers, vol. 5, 250).
“Surmises and Jelousie.”  Even if Winthrop never sent the letter, it is a good indication of his continued rivalry with Uncas.

In July 1649, Winthrop wrote to the Commissioners of the United Colonies at Boston, again making the case that the Pequots at Nameag should be free from the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, and arguing for their autonomy because “Uncas hath sole militia of all the other Pequotts.”  Winthrop sent another letter on 28 August 1649, to Connecticut Colony Governor John Haynes, asking him to prevent Uncas from provoking the Narragansetts.  A Mohegan war party had raided a Narragansett village killing “an old woman,” and the Narragansetts had killed one Mohegan warrior in the subsequent skirmish.  Winthrop also mentioned Narragansett wampum as a central factor in his desire for keeping the general peace as it was a stipulation of the treaty of 1645: “so they (the Naragansets) may the more securely goe on in the providing the wampam that is yet behind.”  Although this letter was also unfinished, Winthrop followed it with another on the same day to Governor Haynes, which was sent.

In 1650, Winthrop advised Captain Humphrey Atherton, leader of an expedition into Narragansett territory sent to collect the overdue wampum, not to provoke the powerful tribe into fighting the English colonists.  He did so probably as much due to his

143 Winthrop Papers, vol. 5, 354.
144 Winthrop Papers, vol. 5, 360.
adherence to a policy of moderation towards the native peoples as well as his economic interests at Pequot that would be disrupted by hostilities.146

These exchanges between English leaders make clear that a complicated intersection of colonial and tribal politics, economic factors, and struggles for power emerged in the former Pequot territory less than a decade after that tribe’s defeat.147 The complexity of events demonstrate that there was no clear line of demarcation between the interests of the native groups of southern New England and the English, as Mason supported Uncas and Winthrop supported Cassasinamon. The Narragansetts and Eastern Niantics were the exception because they lacked powerful English patronage, a fact that would plague both groups through King Philip’s War.148

Uncas did not always enjoy the full support of the English, especially those colonists whose interests were at odds with his own objectives. This was magnified when Winthrop became Connecticut Governor in the mid-late-1650s, and Uncas’ prerogatives began to lose support, especially concerning his power over the Nameag Pequots. Yet when push literally came to shove, when the Narragansetts, Eastern


147 The English did not always understand the complexities of Indian-European relations as Winthrop explained in a letter to his son-in-law about Dutch and Wappinger overtures to Uncas in 1658. *See Winthrop Papers*, vol. 8, 53. The Wappinger were an Algonquian people, a sub-group of or closely related to the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indian cultural group, inhabiting the Hudson River north of Manhattan northwards towards Mahican territory, and northwestwards towards Mohawk territory.

148 Roger Williams of the Providence Plantations was the most vocal supporter of the Narragansetts, but because of the Puritan suspicions and distaste over his religious beliefs, he never held much sway with colonial authorities.
Niantics, Pocumtucks, Mohawks and other tribes intermittently attempted to conquer Uncas, the English colonists invariably supported the Mohegans. In 1648, a confederacy of tribes hostile to the Mohegans, consisting of the Mohawks, Pocumtucks, Narragansetts, determined to attack Uncas. By threatening war, the colonists dissuaded the hostile tribes at Pocumtuck (now Deerfield, Massachusetts) from molesting Uncas. Soon afterwards, the colonists resolved a dispute between Uncas and his brother Wawequa that witnessed the English send forces to protect Uncas at Fort Shantock.\textsuperscript{149}

Uncas also persuaded colonial leaders that Ninigret, sachem of the Eastern Niantics, and at that time various Narragansett groups, was plotting to ally with the Dutch against the English in the early-1650s.\textsuperscript{150} The Dutch and English both claimed Connecticut territory, and the Anglo-Dutch wars brought these tensions to the surface.\textsuperscript{151} A Dutch-Ninigret alliance would have given the Dutch a powerful ally to reinforce their claims, and potentially open another front in their global war against England. Thomas Stanton, who had been the colonial emissary at Pocumtuck, warned Ninigret not to conspire against the English.\textsuperscript{152} Whether there was an actual conspiracy is beside the

\textsuperscript{149} Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 130-135.

\textsuperscript{150} Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 132-133.

\textsuperscript{151} The Dutch eventually gave way to the English at Hartford, but there were continual tensions between the Dutch traders and English colonists. The English even fired cannon at the Dutch on at least one occasion, and fortifications with European-style elements were built in part because of the Dutch threat to the Connecticut Colony. This is described in more detail below.

\textsuperscript{152} Oberg, \textit{Uncas First of the Mohegans}, 136.
point, Uncas had again succeeded in convincing the colonists to protect his interests. The English came to his assistance once more in the late-1650s, when the Narragansetts drove Uncas from Shantock, and again when Uncas was besieged by a confederacy of hostile tribes at the Western Niantic fort. The Western Nantics had become tributaries of the Mohegans after the Pequot War, and were connected through intermarriage. Uncas’ son Attawanhood, or Joshua to the English, was sachem of the Western Nantics during King Philip’s War. There was yet another Dutch-Indian conspiracy in 1669 that even witnessed the disarming of a group of Mohegans by their patron, now Major John Mason, although warfare did not actually occur between the English and southern New England native groups. Even during this period when Connecticut Colony did not always support Uncas’ economic and political objectives, it was unwilling to allow Uncas’ power to diminish at the hands of the other tribes. Connecticut had learned during the Pequot War that it needed Native American support in order to effectively battle other Indians.

The interwar years demonstrated that the Indian way of war was not the only effective tactical method of fighting in colonial New England. The English successfully deterred hostile attacks on Uncas at Shantock and the Niantic fort. As Oberg asserts, “Uncas ... relied upon the English for protection” during this interwar period.

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153 Uncas planted the seeds of discord between the colonists and the other Indian tribes throughout the interwar period, such as in Ninigret’s case and the earlier situation leading to Miantonomi’s execution.

154 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 140-150.

155 IS, 1:1.
English also successfully assaulted the powerful Pequots at Mystic and Southport utilizing European style tactics. These battles demonstrated that the European way of fighting was not completely obsolete in the New World, foreshadowing similar English actions during the Great Narragansett War.

The period 1636-1674 witnessed the overall strengthening of the Connecticut Colony-Mohegan alliance. Sometimes at odds over economic interests and political objectives, the alliance proved resilient in times of danger. New England’s English leaders understood that Uncas’ continued friendship impacted colonial security, and they supported him, sometimes even over the interests of well-connected leaders like John Winthrop Jr. English military methods proved decisive in maintaining Uncas’ power, a favor that he returned when the Mohegans and their tributaries proved their military effectiveness during the Great Narragansett War.

The complexity of background events in Connecticut during the interwar years were matched by the shifting alliances and power bases in the greater New England region. Connecticut was but one colony within this mosaic of economic, political, and cultural turmoil, post-European contact. The surprising aspect was that the English colonists were not involved in an earlier wide-spread conflict, given the upheaval post-1620. This situation simmered until King Philip’s band of Wampanoags retaliated against Plymouth Colony for the execution of a few of its warriors in the spring of 1675, but any similar incident could have engulfed New England in region-wide warfare.

156 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 130.
When war did come at the end of June 1675, it did not immediately encompass all of New England, initially including only a narrow portion of Plymouth Colony around the Wampanoag stronghold of Mt. Hope. Philip’s warriors first struck at Swansea, Plymouth, and elements of his band of Wampanoags then raided the local English settlements on Plymouth’s border with Massachusetts Bay and Rhode Island colonies.\textsuperscript{157} At this point, Connecticut was the furthest colony from the violence. Colonial forces skirmished with Philip’s warriors, but were unable to corner them. The colonists sought a knock-out blow before Philip could escape and potentially widen the war.

Abandoning his headquarters at Mt. Hope within Plymouth Colony’s jurisdiction, Philip and his band repeatedly escaped the colonists. Following standard Indian “cutting off way of war” tactics when pursued by a larger force, Philip fled to a nearby swamp at Pocasset, Plymouth. The colonists believed that they had surrounded him and even built a fort that dominated a main access point into Pocasset Swamp.\textsuperscript{158} Taking advantage of local flooding, however, Philip’s band crossed the Taunton River on rafts and doubled-

\textsuperscript{157} Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 48-51; 51-53.

\textsuperscript{158} Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 57.
back past Mt. Hope into northern Rhode Island. A colonial force soon picked up his trail.

With the assistance of local Rhode Islanders, and joined by Owaneco’s Mohegans, this motley crew surprised Philip’s camp at Nipsachuck. Forced to stand and fight while his noncombatants fled, Philip lost a significant percentage of his warriors and a few key leaders, but he escaped once again. Besides monitoring events, Connecticut’s only participation during this early phase of the conflict had been Owaneco’s chance presence in the area, returning from a mission to Boston to swear fealty to Massachusetts Bay. Connecticut had also sent a force in July under Wait Winthrop, the Governor’s son, along with soldiers from the other New England colonies to force a treaty of neutrality upon the Narragansetts.

By early August 1675, Philip led his band north from Rhode Island into Nipmuck country in central Massachusetts. The union of the Nipmucks with the Wampanoag bands under Philip represented the very expansion of the conflict that the colonists had sought to avoid. The Nipmucks, just prior to Philip’s arrival, had ambushed Captain Thomas Wheeler’s expedition, sent by Massachusetts Bay to confirm the tribe’s loyalty. Wheeler, wounded and hotly pursued, barely limped into Brookfield, the lone settlement.

159 Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 70.


161 Leach, *Flintlock*, 76.

162 Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 62.
in the heart of Nipmuck territory, sounding the alarm. Before it was relieved, the Brookfield garrison house scarcely withstood a multi-day siege that witnessed the Indians employ a number of ingenious techniques to breakthrough its defenses.¹⁶³

The native groups of the upper Connecticut River next went over to Philip’s hostile coalition, exposing the Massachusetts towns on the upper Connecticut River to assault. The colonists there had failed to court the loyalty of local Indians, and in some cases exacerbated tensions at this time of mutual suspicion. The Pocomtucks of Deerfield, the Norwottocks of Northampton, the Woronocos of Westfield and groups of Western Abenaki in what is now Vermont, all joined Philip’s coalition. Elements of the coalition annihilated colonial expeditions outside of Northfield and at “Bloody Brook” near Deerfield, in September, 1675. The hostile Indians ambushed Captain Richard Beers on his way to relieve isolated Northfield, Massachusetts. Those members of Beer’s command not immediately killed or incapacitated rallied on a small knoll not far from the site of the ambush. They eventually succumb to the Indians, and some were mutilated and tortured. Soon after Beers’ defeat, Captain Thomas Lathrop led a contingent from Deerfield south to harvest much needed crops. The hostile groups ambushed him when he was crossing a creek thereafter known as Bloody Brook and Indians killed nearly his entire command.¹⁶⁴ These defeats filled the colonists with terror as the English underestimated Indian fighting ability since arriving in the New World. Both Beers and

¹⁶³ Leach, *Flintlock*, 81-84; Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 64-65.

¹⁶⁴ Leach, *Flintlock*, 87; Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 73.
Lathrop were even veterans of the Pequot War.\textsuperscript{165} The colonists abandoned both towns. The hostile groups had wrested the initiative from the English during this phase of the war.

While colonial forces failed to locate their enemy in the wilderness, the hostile coalition raided other settlements along the upper Connecticut River of Massachusetts Bay, inflicting widespread damage and casualties. One of the most shocking attacks from the English point-of-view occurred on 5 October at Springfield, Massachusetts, when the local Agawam native group shielded members of the hostile coalition before joining with them to attack the town. Although Springfield’s English leadership had received intelligence of an imminent attack, there was doubt over the veracity of the report based on perceived good relations with the Agawams. A Lieutenant Thomas Cooper, ignoring the warnings of some of the town’s inhabitants about the Agawam’s loyalty, decided to visit the tribe at its nearby fort. En route, he was ambushed and mortally wounded, but managed to give the alarm at Springfield in time for most of the inhabitants to crowd into garrison houses. The hostile coalition destroyed most of the town.\textsuperscript{166}

It was not until mid-October that Philip’s coalition faced its first significant setback in this region. Major Treat’s Connecticut troopers along, with Massachusetts Bay soldiers garrisoned at Hatfield, defeated an attack, claiming to have inflicted

\textsuperscript{165} Bloody Brook and these issues are discussed in more detail below.

\textsuperscript{166} Leach, \textit{Flintlock}, 89-91; Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 75-77.
numerous casualties. With the remaining western Massachusetts Bay towns under siege, the hostile tribes went into winter quarters, where Philip attempted to strengthen his alliance by bringing in tribes from without New England. The Mohawks, who Royal New York Governor Andros enlisted to support the New England colonists, disrupted Philip’s diplomatic entreaties by driving his winter camp away from the upper Hudson River. During the fall 1675, Connecticut had experienced scattered violent acts, but nowhere near the magnitude of the carnage that the colonists experienced in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies.

With winter approaching, the New England colonists decided to launch a daring, if morally questionable, preemptive strike on the hostile-coalition-leaning Narragansetts in December, 1675. The Great Swamp Fight was one of the best known episodes of the war, and the largest colonial action with over a thousand soldiers deployed. The United Colonies council at Boston coordinated this action, though not all Connecticut leaders approved of the plan because the Narragansetts had not been openly hostile to the English. Governor Winthrop at Boston insisted that Narragansett groups had remained neutral and should not be attacked in accordance with accepted practices. The majority of Puritan leaders, however, argued that the Narragansetts had violated the terms of two treaties which forswore aid to Philip, when the tribe’s members sheltered the hostile bands’ non-combatants, and provided other logistical support.

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167 Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 127.

168 Mohawk intervention is described in more detail below.

169 Connecticut’s dissent is covered in more detail below.
Plymouth’s Governor Josiah Winslow led the expedition, though the army represented a proportional contribution of the Puritan-Pilgrim colonies based upon each individual colony’s population size. Massachusetts and Plymouth forces marched into Rhode Island and Connecticut troops arrived by water. There was minor raiding and skirmishing as the now combined colonial force entered Narragansett country. A renegade warrior then led the colonial force through the wilderness toward a main Narragansett fort at Great Swamp.

On 19 December 1675, the Narragansett guide located the fort in present day West Kingston, Rhode Island, and the colonial army assaulted it across a frozen swamp. The Narragansetts initially prevented the English force from gaining entrance (led by Captain James Avery, the army’s Connecticut Indian allies formed the outer cordon as it had in such assaults during the earlier Pequot War), but part of the colonial army probed the defenses until it found an unfinished portion of the stockade and made its way inside. Heavy fighting occurred from within the stronghold and played to the English force’s strength of massed fire at close quarters. The colonists eventually overcame the Indians, driving them out of the fort. They were aided in this effort by the effect of a fire of unknown origins, which burned the wigwams, killing non-combatants. The fire also served the military purpose of preventing the reoccupation of the fort. The Narragansett non-combatant population suffered serious losses, though many warriors probably escaped. The Narragansetts inflicted heavy casualties on the English force, especially the Connecticut contingent, which happened upon a heavily guarded entrance protected by a
Narragansett blockhouse. 170 Major Treat after the battle, in order to replace casualties and reequip, and over the protests of Plymouth and Massachusetts, withdrew Connecticut forces from the field. 171 The English maintained the population and logistical base to replace losses, however, and Great Swamp marked a major turning point in the war. Though the strongest native group now joined with the hostile coalition, it did so in a weakened state.

By mid-January 1676, many of the Narragansett groups made their way north to join the uprising, evading another colonial army, which failed to follow-up the success at Great Swamp. Narragansett leaders, particularly Canonchet, a respected warrior and sachem, now came to the fore in influencing the coalition’s activities. 172 Canonchet eventually led hostile native forces in one of the greatest Indian victories of the war against Captain Pierce’s Plymouth force outside of Providence, Rhode Island in March 1676. 173 There was a relative break in the hostile coalition’s operations as it reorganized and sought re-supply during the winter.

The enlarged coalition then launched a counter-offensive in late winter that would last through June, 1676. This was the bloodiest phase of the Great Narragansett War, with the hostile coalition inflicting damage or devastation on many of the interior towns.

170 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 149-153.


172 Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 89, also mentions that Canonchet came to the fore during this period, an issue discussed in more detail below.

of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth and Rhode Island colonies. The success of this offensive also calls into question the overall effectiveness of Mohawk raiding on the hostile coalition during the winter. Connecticut too experienced an uptick in violence, particularly with the burning of the abandoned Simsbury at the end of March, although the colony all but avoided major losses of people, property and livestock.\textsuperscript{174}

Hostile war-parties began raiding in February of 1676 as part of this offensive, with the towns of Lancaster, Medfield, and Northampton destroyed or badly damaged.\textsuperscript{175} The bloodshed and devastation escalated in March, when the hostile coalition destroyed the settlements of Groton, Marlborough, Sudbury, Rehoboth and Providence, as well as other towns in Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Rhode Island colonies.\textsuperscript{176} The colonies’ military response during the February-March timeframe was ineffective. The hostile coalition retained the initiative and even caused Massachusetts Bay to debate abandoning its frontier, withdrawing the remainder of the English population behind a large wall the colony would erect in the vicinity of the towns near Boston itself.\textsuperscript{177}

Canonchet’s massacre of Pierce’s force outside of Providence, Rhode Island further contributed to this siege mentality. Canonchet had out-maneuvered Pierce, waiting until he had crossed a river, and then ambushed him with the water to his rear.

\textsuperscript{174} Described below.

\textsuperscript{175} Leach, Flintlock, 157-158; 159-160; 163; Mandell, King Philip’s War, 90.

\textsuperscript{176} Leach, Flintlock, 157,168; Mandell, King Philip’s War, 96-97, 100, 101.

\textsuperscript{177} Mandell, King Philip’s War, 57.
Pierce’s force was outnumbered and could not maneuver in that position. Few of his command escaped the battle.\textsuperscript{178}

The death of Canonchet in early-April 1676 at the hands of Connecticut forces was another turning point in the conflict, degrading the leadership of the hostile coalition.\textsuperscript{179} English and allied Indian search and destroy operations and smaller raids, especially those launched by Connecticut patrols led by Captains George Denison and Avery, increasingly disrupted the logistics base of the hostile coalition and caused the decline of its war effort. Although in late April the hostile coalition wiped-out Captain Wadsworth’s command at Sudbury, Massachusetts Bay, and destroyed much of the town, its military capability increasingly declined. Wadsworth had responded to an attack on Sudbury and a hostile group lured him into an ambush. He managed to lead his force to a strong defensive position on a hilltop, surrounded by clear fields of fire. The Indians, however, set fire to the field, causing Wadsworth’s men to break ranks. Almost Wadsworth’s entire force was destroyed.\textsuperscript{180}

On 19 May, the English stunned the hostile coalition at Turner’s Falls with a surprise attack on a major encampment there, in the upper Connecticut River valley. Although inflicting heavy losses on the hostile encampment, the English force failed to regroup and the camp’s warriors nearly destroyed Turner’s command. The Indians then

\textsuperscript{178} Described in more detail below.

\textsuperscript{179} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 202.

\textsuperscript{180} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 210-213; Leach, \textit{Flintlock}, 172-175; Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 107-108.
counterattacked Hatfield, where the raid had originated. In this running-battle, the English sustained losses that they could replace, but the Indian non-combatants at Turner’s Falls sustained heavy losses, lowering hostile coalition morale and damaging an already weakened logistical base. Many of the non-combatants were swept over the falls and drowned, adding to the terror of the English assault.\textsuperscript{181}

In mid-June, a hostile-coalition’s large-scale assault failed, as a colonial force defeated it at Hadley on the upper Connecticut River. Colonial operations then finished-off the anti-English native groups, fracturing the hostile coalition in southern New England by late-summer, 1676, though native groups in northern New England continued fighting. Connecticut forces, led by Major John Talcott and Captain Denison, played a major role in this effort, inflicting large defeats on the hostile groups, particularly the Narragansetts. In July, Talcott devastated the Sunk Squaw’s band not far from the Nipsachuck battle site.\textsuperscript{182} By this stage of the war, the other New England colonies had copied Connecticut’s use of large numbers of allied Indians as well as volunteer English troops, and also began to score successes that a few months before were all but unthinkable.

Accelerating the decline of the hostile coalition in the late-spring and summer, 1676, Indian elements began to desert and join with the colonists to hunt-down their former comrades. Plymouth’s Benjamin Church, one of the few non-Connecticut leaders

\textsuperscript{181} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 232-240; Leach, \textit{Flintlock}, 201-204; Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 114-115.

\textsuperscript{182} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 249-250.
who utilized allied Indians from the beginning of the conflict, led a party that eventually killed Philip near his traditional homeland. 183 In late summer, 1676, Talcott again destroyed a fleeing group of the coalition, this time near the Berkshires of Massachusetts in the last major engagement of the war. 184 Over the next year, parties of colonists with native allies, continued to pursue hostile remnants and many of these surrendered. The war was over. 185

Connecticut’s experience in the conflict was vastly different than the other New England colonies, as it only suffered minor violence during the war. This was not a result of a lack of hostile attention, but rather sound military operations begot of solid relations with local native groups. Hostile groups operated within the colony, but the historiography has failed to address their activities, while the primary records scarcely address this topic. Without addressing the hostile groups and how they operated, it is impossible to evaluate Connecticut’s defenses, a key ingredient in the colony’s recipe for success during the war.

183 Leach, *Flintlock*, 233-236.


185 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, and Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk* offer the most detailed narratives of the war. Mandell’s recent *King Philip’s War*, is less detailed but a solid overview, and also contains new ideas from the Indian perspective. The main events of the war involving Connecticut colony and its forces are described in more detail below.
Chapter 4: The Hostile Threat to Connecticut During the Great Narragansett War

Despite a lack of historical attention, hostile bands entered Connecticut during the conflict and managed to carry out a number of violent acts, including the burning of an abandoned Simsbury, and even caused Connecticut to temporarily withdraw from the upper Connecticut River valley in Massachusetts. Large bands entered Connecticut at least once, and sought targets of opportunity by temporarily occupying a central position within the colony. When Philip’s confederates did sally into Connecticut, how did they do so, what were their objectives, and what threat did they pose? This chapter demonstrates the targeting of Connecticut through the lens of a Great Narragansett War; identifies the leadership and make-up of the hostile war parties; examines the coalition’s objectives in relation to Connecticut; and analyzes the military actions of these enemy groups.

In late June 1675, when the Wampanoags began the war with a revenge attack on Plymouth for the execution of its warriors for the Sassamon murder, Connecticut was not Philip’s primary target. Connecticut posed no immediate threat to the Wampanoags, with the exception of Nipsachuck, where the Mohegans supported the colonists. When Philip successfully evaded capture, he joined the Nipmucks and the upper Connecticut

River Indians according to previous alliance arrangements. These events transformed the nature of the war from a local conflict to a regional war, “endangering also the neighbor Colony of Connecticut, which hath also suffered somewhat by the fury of this Flame, though not considerable to what the other colonyes have undergone.”

Philip’s expanded coalition threatened Connecticut for the first time. The Nipmuck groups, occupying areas that even expanded into northeastern Connecticut, were ancient enemies of the Mohegans and Pequots. Given the upper Connecticut River Indians’ similar animosity towards these groups, when they joined with Philip they also indirectly threatened the colony’s English population with the potential of raiding across its northern frontier. Connecticut’s English leaders were well aware of the threat from both native groups of central Massachusetts, and for his own purposes, Uncas stoked their fears of violence.

Connecticut also provoked this animosity of Massachusetts native groups by sending English-allied Indian forces to aid the hard-pressed Massachusetts Bay towns on the Connecticut River beginning in the late summer, 1675. Although Connecticut’s forces met with neither defeat nor decisive victory, their actions altered the military objectives of the hostile coalition in regards to the colony. Philip’s forces then sought to disrupt Connecticut’s offensive operations, thereby isolating the Massachusetts Bay towns on the Connecticut River and forcing them to fight alone or to abandon altogether.

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187 William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians* (Boston: John Foster, 1677), 28.

the western New England frontier. Without valuable assistance from Connecticut, the isolated Massachusetts Bay towns stood little chance of success against Philip’s coalition.

Philip sometimes achieved this objective when Connecticut repeatedly withdrew its forces from the upper Connecticut valley to respond to threats within its own borders. This was short-lived success, however, as the colony’s forces always returned to conduct numerous offensive operations throughout the war. Massachusetts Bay Colony repeatedly urged Connecticut to play an even greater offensive role and to supply it and Plymouth Colony with more material aid. In the western theater of operations along the upper Connecticut River, there was even a crisis in the colonial chain of command over overlapping territorial claims, and differing military strategies. This situation was a microcosm of the division within the United Colonies, which England eventually disbanded following the war, attempting to impose the more centrally-controlled Dominion of New England.

Before the Narragansett’s assumed control of the war effort, Philip’s secondary goal was to invade Connecticut with enough warriors to force it to come to terms, perhaps by destroying vulnerable areas of the colony. Those towns geographically isolated from the rest of the colony and relying only on garrison defense were most vulnerable to the hostile coalition. The hostile coalition would have had to reduce the frontiers of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies first, however, in order to concentrate exclusively on Connecticut without worrying about rear area logistics. This nearly occurred in the spring of 1676. With Connecticut forces operating in the field and disrupting his confederacy’s operations and logistics, Philip and his allies had little
choice but to confront Connecticut militarily within its own borders, convincing the colony to abandon its operations upriver and negotiate in a way favorable to his coalition.

Philip’s objectives changed when the Narragansetts joined the conflict en masse after the colonies’ attack on Great Swamp. Narragansett leaders had considerably more clout than Philip, the tribe was more numerous, and likely dictated new objectives to the hostile coalition. Canonchet, son of Miantonomi, was the leading warrior within Philip’s confederation and he probably determined the coalition’s operations during the winter and spring of 1676. Canonchet was a more respected warrior than Philip and the Narragansetts were a more powerful tribe and more regarded by northeastern Indians than the Wampanoags. There is some evidence that Philip’s coalition, which originally included more tribes than actually ended up fighting with him in 1675, selected Canonchet as war leader in a great pow-wow in 1674. The Narragansetts initially would have led the coalition, if Philip’s warriors had not precipitated the conflict before the other tribes were prepared to fight.¹⁸⁹ When the Narragansetts entered the fray, Canonchet assumed the role of war-leader of the anti-English revolt. The colonists also had received intelligence that Canonchet was fighting around Hadley when the upper Connecticut River tribes joined the hostile coalition months before the Narragansetts joined the war in December.¹⁹⁰ The elderly Pessicus was another leading Narragansett sachem within the hostile coalition, but too old for field service. Pessacus’ group of Narragansetts and assorted allied tribes established a presence up-river from the


Massachusetts’ settlements on the Connecticut, and participated in attacks upon these towns in 1676.\(^{191}\)

The Narragansetts were more disposed to attack Connecticut than Philip. During the interwar years, the tribe had repeatedly tried to annihilate the Connecticut-supported Mohegans, and had grown to distrust and dislike the United Colonies. The Narragansetts never forgave Connecticut for tacitly approving the Mohegans’ execution of Miantonomi in 1643.\(^{192}\) Soon after this episode, the tribes hostile to the Mohegans and now the English, “conclude[ed] then that the only way to succeed against the English was to begin with Uncas.”\(^{193}\) After being driven from their traditional home in southern and central Rhode Island in the winter of 1676, the Narragansetts decided to risk the outcome of a total war, instead of what were probably Philip’s more modest goals. As detailed below, the Narragansetts were behind the rejection of two Connecticut peace proposals, and although groups of Nipmucks and Wampanoags eventually defected from the confederacy, no significant Narragansett group attempted to submit to the English.\(^{194}\) The one exception was the Sunk Squaw, who might have been negotiating with Rhode

\(^{191}\) Temple and Adams, *A History of the Town of North Brookfield Massachusetts*, 128. The authors also claim here that the death of Canonchet sounded the death knell of Philip’s coalition.


\(^{194}\) The Wabaquassets, a sub-tribe of the Nipmucks and tributary to Uncas placed themselves under Uncas’ protection during the war (CCR, 474), and various Wampanoag groups went over to Benjamin Church (Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, 251). Other Nipmuck sub-groups went over to Massachusetts Bay Colony; Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 315.
Island authorities when Connecticut forces attacked her band.\textsuperscript{195} Given its enmity for the colony, the Narragansetts certainly included Connecticut’s destruction high on its list of objectives.

Connecticut had always feared that the Narragansetts would join with Philip, acting in the beginning of the war to secure its eastern border and sending a force to ensure Narragansett neutrality. Connecticut’s Governor Winthrop at Boston argued against the Great Swamp expedition, in part to prevent Narragansett retaliation against his colony’s eastern frontier. Faced with Philip’s confederation on its northern flank during the late summer 1675, Connecticut, after Great Swamp, faced a two front war. The determining factor for the operations of the Narragansett-led hostile coalition during this Great Narragansett War was that the tribe had lost its food stores, having abandoned their traditional territory after Great Swamp. Faced with the starvation of its non-combatant population during the winter, the Narragansetts fled in the only direction—north—where they could seek shelter, and this put them further from the Connecticut frontier. Canonchet launched his fatal expedition in April 1676 to gather hidden seed for the planting season, and when Connecticut forces captured and executed him, the coalition lost the only leader capable of leading a concerted effort against Connecticut’s hardened defenses. Though it probed Connecticut’s defenses, the hostile coalition continued its best military option given a lack of leadership and supplies, attacking the closer and more unfortified Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth settlements. This again spared Connecticut the worst of the war’s fury. This plan worked to some degree against

\textsuperscript{195}Jennings, \textit{The Invasion of America}, 320-321; some historians argue that this was a massacre.
the other New England colonies, causing the most damage of the war during this 1676 ‘spring offensive.’ It was ultimately a losing strategy, however, as Connecticut Colony remained unharmed and able to launch the expeditions that played a vital role in defeating the coalition. The colony continued to supply the other Puritan colonies with food and material. Although hostile war parties prior to Canonchet’s death entered into Connecticut, as did some afterwards, without the support of the local Connecticut tribes, facing more advanced defenses, and lacking Canonchet’s leadership, these groups were unable to deliver a decisive blow.

Reports from various sources throughout the Great Narragansett War described Connecticut as a major target. Governor Andros warned Connecticut of imminent attack on a number of occasions, although his reports must be viewed with a degree of skepticism given his desire to acquire all of Connecticut Colony west of the Connecticut River for the Royal Colony of New York.196 Andros actually attempted to do so in July 1675, using Philip’s rising as an excuse to invade the colony.197 He did eventually arrange, however, to engage the Mohawks against Philip’s coalition during the winter of 1675-1676.

Philip’s winter camp had been about twenty miles northeast of Albany on the eastern side of the Hudson River, at an Indian rallying point named Schaghticoke along the Hoosic River, where he was attempting to enlist the support of other tribes. This


197 CCR, 334-5. As described below, Andros was met by Connecticut militia flying the King’s colors commanded by Captain Thomas Bull at Fort Saybrook, and returned to New York without a shot fired.
report from escaped English prisoners through Governor Andros indicated that Connecticut was a priority target for Philip’s coalition. An April 29th interrogation of “Wuttawawangkessnek Sucqunch Messenger of Pessicus” revealed that Mohawks killed five, three, and three of Philip’s warriors respectively in three raids, one at Schaghticoke, and the latter two at “Squackheag” (Northfield). Philip was attempting to recruit 500 “French Indians” marked by straw in their noses, and the neighboring Mahicans (not to be confused with Mohegans) to his cause. Before the Mohawks arrived, Philip had been entertaining 2,100 young warriors at his camp, according to this report. Major Palmes, a leader in the southeastern portions of the Connecticut headquartered at New London, also received intelligence in the winter that Philip’s bands would operate to the southward of Nipmuck country, which meant Connecticut. This intelligence validated that hostile groups targeted Connecticut.

Although the secondary sources are silent about the threat to Connecticut, a few primary documents illustrate that war parties operated within the colony despite the best efforts of the Connecticut forces. In addition to the handful of Connecticut Indians that joined the rebellion, others entered from surrounding areas. Preventing the entry of forces hostile to the colony was impossible given the small nature of the war parties, their ability to avoid detection, and the sheer amount of territory that Connecticut forces had to patrol.


199 CWS, 1:1:44 a, b, c.

200 CCR, 402-3.
Rugged in many areas, Connecticut’s highest point in the area of hostilities was approximately 1800 ft. The rugged terrain and rivers served as obstacles, not impenetrable barriers. There were four main ‘avenues of approach’ for enemy forces into Connecticut. The northern approaches were from southwestern Massachusetts, where Philip’s forces operate with impunity, into north-central Connecticut. The primary avenue of approach was the Connecticut River Valley, a band of flat terrain, 5-10 miles in width, running on either side of the Connecticut River. This terrain is suitable for the movement of a modern mechanized division with large, modern vehicles, let alone small groups of lightly armed Native Americans. The second avenue of approach was a north-south corridor on the western side of the river divided from the Connecticut River valley by a trap-rock ridgeline that runs from north of Holyoke, Massachusetts, south to the outskirts of New Haven, Connecticut. This valley is 5 miles at its greatest width, and would have also been accessible to native war parties. Simsbury is located in this valley, and hostile warriors had obviously gained access to this area when they burned the abandoned town to the ground.

201 Avenues of approach are more than mere trails or pathways. These corridors are marked by traversable terrain that allows for rapid movement. Valleys and flat meadows are good examples of terrain that corresponds with avenues of approach. Also of note, the terrain surrounding the trail is sometimes more important than the trail itself. If forces can occupy terrain that allows forces to cover the trail, then these forces effectively control the movement of forces along that route.


The third approach, from Narragansett country in Rhode Island into eastern-southeastern Connecticut is more rugged than the Connecticut River Valley. There is a nearly continuous ridge running in a north-south direction along the entire Rhode Island-Connecticut border until the area of North Stonington close to the ocean’s shore.\textsuperscript{204} Where the ridgeline ends is in fact where route I-95 North now runs from Connecticut into Rhode Island because the area is much less rugged. From this location, the Narragansetts would have had the same freedom of movement as Philip’s other allies in western Massachusetts considering their ability to travel light and fast. The final avenue of approach into Connecticut was from Nipmuck country in the northwestern corner of the colony, moving southeast towards the Thames River and ultimately the Connecticut River. This was a narrow corridor of approach, and could have been observed by Connecticut’s Mohegan allies. The Nipmuck-Wabbaquasett band traversed through this area when submitting to Uncas. These were the main entry points into the colony, though other smaller approaches existed, which were passable given the small nature of many hostile parties.

There were other obstacles that disrupted invading war parties besides the large, natural terrain features of Connecticut’s small mountain ranges. Hostile war parties traveling along the Connecticut River would have had to negotiate water obstacles. These included flooded areas, tributary rivers, and numerous bends along the river, all of which would have increased the physical danger and infiltration time from southwestern

Massachusetts. The straight-line distances noted in the introduction would have been increased by such obstacles. From a defensive perspective, these barriers were beneficial to the forces conducting an active defense because they would have channeled the enemy war parties into passable areas, especially fording sites on rivers and larger streams.

Figure 4.1. Avenues of Approach and Hostile Incidents Topographical Map. Based on my original research, William Keegan, Heritage Consultants, LLC, prepared this Map specifically for this Dissertation.
Philip’s warriors gained access into Connecticut even with the defenses and terrain obstacles because of the nature of their war parties. Even with natural impediments increasing straight-line distances by a few miles from Springfield’s southern most plantations, a mere 6-8 miles to begin with from Windsor, Connecticut, an Indian war-party could have rapidly covered that distance. A modern combat infantryman carrying full combat gear is expected to march 12 miles in three hours.\textsuperscript{205} An Indian patrol, carrying relatively little compared to the modern infantryman, and inured to traveling long distances for hunting, would have quickly covered that distance.\textsuperscript{206} As Malone explains, “Stealth, surprise, and high mobility were major assets in the irregular warfare at which the Indians excelled.”\textsuperscript{207} This high degree of mobility, and the ability to move undetected through the wilderness, allowed Philip’s warriors to bypass obstacles and defenders alike to enter Connecticut.\textsuperscript{208}

The Indians were also not weighed down by excessive equipment, which not only made noise while traveling through the woods, but also required more energy to carry. Besides the ubiquitous flintlock musket and the occasional bow and arrow, a hatchet or knife, a pouch for bullets, a horn for powder, and a purse for ground maize, the Indians


\textsuperscript{206} Malone, The Skulking Way of War, 27, argues that Native Americans covered long distances very quickly.

\textsuperscript{207} Malone, The Skulking Way of War, 128.

\textsuperscript{208} Eames, “Forts, Provincial” in Colonial Wars of North America 1512-1763, 217, also argues that in the later French and Indian wars “no defense could totally stop the small Indian raiding parties.” The same applies to Connecticut’s defenses during King Philip’s War, which were less advanced than those of the later French and Indian wars.
carried little else. Native Americans simply added water to the ground maize for a high-energy ration, and hunted game on the warpath occasionally to supplement this crude mixture.\textsuperscript{209} L. Foxhall and H. A. Forbes in “Sitometria: The Role of Grain as a Staple Food in Classical Antiquity,” show that “exceptionally active” men, such as military personnel conducting field operations, need 3,382 calories daily.\textsuperscript{210} Donald Engels in \textit{Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army} estimates that Macedonian warriors consumed 3,600 calories a day during combat operations in arid conditions.\textsuperscript{211} The 200 calories difference between the two studies is negligible for our purposes, although Foxhall and Forbes completed the more reliable study.

Foxhall shows errors in Engels’ additional calculations, such as Engels’ contention that calories were lost during the processing of wheat flour into bread. Foxhall ground the wheat in his experiment and no calories were lost during the process of baking the ground flour into bread. He further argues that the Macedonians would have carried whole grain instead of ground wheat flour because it kept better and was easier to transport.\textsuperscript{212} Whole grain also packed more calories with over 3,900 calories per

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\textsuperscript{209} Malone, \textit{The Skulking Way of War}, 13.


\textsuperscript{211} Donald W. Engels, \textit{Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 123.

\textsuperscript{212} Foxhall and Forbes, “Sitometria: The Role of Grain as a Staple Food in Classical Antiquity,” 80-81.
The Native Americans’ ground maize ration contained more calories than both wheat and whole grain, with over 4,000 calories per kilogram. Averaging the two studies’ estimates for the required caloric intake to 3,500 calories for soldiers in field operations, a Native American warrior would have had to carry slightly less than 2 lbs of rations per day to meet this caloric level. This total would further be reduced if the Indians supplemented the maize with other food during operations, such as fish, game and berries that were eaten immediately, and not carried for future use.

This analysis demonstrates why native war parties did not need a logistical tail of re-supply wagons that so influenced European operations. As such, Native Americans had an operational advantage over their European adversaries and were inherently more mobile than colonial formations. Wayne Lee argues, however, that this was a short-term operational advantage because warriors, a link in the Indian food chain, could not remain away from their villages indefinitely, especially in winter when hunting was critical to the Native American diet. Allied Indians did take advantage of both this short-term logistical operational advantage because the colonists became their long-term supplier.

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215 Calculation: 3500 cal (needed by soldiers in field operations)/4100 cal/kg (of ground maize) X 2.2 (to convert to lbs) = 1.88 lbs of ground maize rations carried by Indian warriors.

216 Lee discusses these issues in “Fortify, Fight or Flee.”
The absence of a supply train allowed Indians to negotiate difficult terrain because the only physical constraint on their mobility was the natural limitations of the human body—not the restriction of machines and beasts of burden that often determined the course of European operations. Even with the ability to move across difficult terrain, the natural human tendency, however, is to take the path of least resistance, which requires less energy and thus less caloric intake. This accounts for many trails traversing flat terrain and passing near waterways, which tend to be of lower elevation and often an easy form of transport. The native war parties preferred to move along the flat valley bottoms, and only traversed the more difficult terrain if obstacles or Connecticut’s forces blocked their primary route-of-march.

Indians wore very little in the warmer months, when much of the campaigning took place, usually only a loincloth. This was a natural advantage over their colonist contemporaries, who were heavily clothed and wore sturdy leather or quilted jackets for protection. This was even an improvement over the equipment that was worn when the colonists first arrived in New England, which in addition to helmets, consisted of “a back and breast-plate (corselet), tasses for the thighs, thules for the groin, and a gorget for the neck.” The colonists thus adapted their equipment to the local military situation, particularly after the lessons learned from the Pequot War, but they still carried more weight in equipment, and were more restricted physically because of it than the native New Englanders.


Hirsch in “The Collision of Military Cultures” claims that the colonists stopped wearing steel armor once the Indians adopted muskets, but this would not explain why some still wore heavy leather or quilt during King Philip’s War. The change in body armor likely resulted, in part, from the colonists’ loss of mobility during field operations, not because of the Indians’ adoption of the musket. Quilted or leather vests could stop arrows, which were the primary weapons of the Native Americans through mid-century, and these still existed into King Philip’s War. Most Indians used flintlocks, however, and the colonists’ vests would have been of little use against firearms. Wearing vests suggests that the colonists had not completely transitioned their equipment to meet the new threat, lacking perhaps intelligence concerning Indian military developments since the conclusion of the Pequot War.

Contrary to Peterson’s account of colonial weapons during this era,219 Connecticut Records indicate that many soldiers still carried swords, which were not only of limited use in combat in colonial New England, but also difficult to carry in the undergrowth of the forests. Colonists lacked a means to close with the enemy and swords would have served this purpose as (socket bayonets were not yet invented), as there is little evidence that New World colonists used plug bayonets. Before the Great Swamp

219 Peterson, “Military Equipment,” 199. John F. Guilmartin Jr., “The Cutting Edge: An Analysis of the Spanish Invasion and Overthrow of the Inka Empire, 1532-39,” eds., Kenneth Andrien and Rolena Adorno, Transatlantic Encounters: Europeans and Andeans in the Sixteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 40-64, describes the effectiveness of Spanish steel against the Incas. The New England Indians by mid-seventeenth century had largely adopted flintlock muskets, however, allowing them to engage the colonists at a distance, unlike the Incas who had to move within striking distance with their hand-held war clubs. In hand-to-hand combat, colonists utilized swords in New England, and one could make the argument that swords would have been effective against hand-held Tomahawks (not necessarily thrown Tomahawks) in more open terrain because of the greater reach of a sword.
expedition, the Connecticut War Council ordered that each county equip ten soldiers with hatchets, which were beginning to be recognized as a more effective all-purpose tool for fighting and hewing through the wilderness. This indicated, however, that most soldiers still carried swords, if any edged weapon. There is even a reference to Massachusetts Bay militia using swords to close with the enemy at Turner’s Falls.

Most Connecticut troops were mounted, which meant that they had to travel on trails and open land generally free of debris. At the outbreak of hostilities, the colony’s forces consisted of both cavalry and dragoons, with the intent that dragoons would dismount to fight, while troopers would fight on horseback. Dragoons were armed with long muskets because they fought on foot, and thus did not need the shorter-barreled carbines that the cavalry carried in order to fire while on horseback. Given the uneven and wooded terrain of New England, this limited the opportunity of mounted troops to maneuver, even in the very rare occasion that enemy Indians could be caught in the open. Based on these terrain considerations, traditional cavalry normally fought as dragoons, dismounting to fight. This is why the Connecticut General Court, ordered the troopers to arm themselves with long muskets, essentially turning them into dragoons. Selesky argues that all Connecticut troops were mounted all of the time, but those militia assigned

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220 CCR, 385.
221 Please see chapter on Connecticut’s offensive operations below.
222 CCR, 386; Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 20-32.
224 General Court Records, CCR, 270.
to garrison defense were dismounted unless scouting, which was part of the reasoning behind Connecticut’s General Court order for town officers to distinguish between field and garrison forces.\(^{225}\) During the march to Great Swamp three soldiers shared a horse, indicating that when Connecticut employed large field forces, not all of the troops were mounted.\(^{226}\)

It is also doubtful that all of the mixed Indian-colonial forces were mounted when constantly raiding into the Narragansetts’ territory and scouring possible refuge areas in Connecticut late in the war. How far away from the objective were these parties dismounting so as not to alert the hostile Indians to their presence? Guilmartin’s “The Cutting Edge,” demonstrates how horses were more tactically effective and logistically efficient when operating over shorter distances, while dismounted soldiers retained the locomotive and logistical advantage over longer distances.\(^{227}\) This factor perhaps explains how Connecticut’s dismounted Indian allies maintained the rate-of-march with their mounted colonial comrades, a factor aided by the less encumbered nature of Indian tactics. A small number of leading Indians might have been mounted at times during the conflict, as the 1674 Connecticut Court granted Uncas’ son Joshua, sachem of the Western Niantics “liberty to purchass two horses, the one for himselfe and the other for

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\(^{225}\) General Court Records, CCR, 268-269.

\(^{226}\) CCR, 386. Selesky attributes this instance to a lack of feed during the winter.

\(^{227}\) Guilmartin, “The Cutting Edge,” 40-64.
his Interpreter, that they may be the better capacited to attend their meetings with Mr. Fitch; the markes of the horses to be entered at Norwhich with the recorder there.”

Given the potential mobility of Philip’s forces, to what extent were these forces actually present in the colony and what threat did these forces pose? There were numerous reports of enemy war parties operating within the colony, with a number of reports verified today by existing evidence, while other reports reflected overactive imaginations stirred by the fear generated from the nearby Indian uprising. As early as 7 July 1675, reports indicated that Connecticut colonists suspected that Indians from the coastal area around Saybrook had joined with Philip, while Uncas warned the colonists not to trust a Narragansett group near Hoccanum and Podunk. These fears surfaced amidst the news in late June that the war had spread from the initial violence near the towns the Plymouth-Massachusetts Bay-Rhode Island border to elsewhere in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. On 24 August, reacting to the new threat on its northern border after the Nipmuck raid on Brookfield and other hostile activity to the north, the Connecticut leadership commissioned Joshua of the Western Niantics to interdict Philip’s forces, which reportedly were moving towards Norwich. There were no follow-up reports indicating that hostile forces were actually in the area. On 30 Aug

228 CCR, 238. Ms. Faith Davison of the Mohegan Tribe, alerted me to this reference, and sent a compilation of references to Joshua in a document entitled “Joshua Trust/Joshua Tract, Attawanhood’s legacy,” Mohegan Archives.

229 CCR, 333, 336. Podunk now encompasses portions of South Windsor and East Hartford. Winthrop described the area of Podunk as “a place between ys towne & Windsor,” meaning Hartford and Windsor, Winthrop Papers VIII, 100. It should be noted that both towns extended over the Connecticut River at the time, accounting for Podunk’s location on the eastside of the river. Hoccanum is now part of East Hartford.

230 CCR, 353.
1675, colonists of New Haven, Milford, and Derby were “alarmed with the hostile conduct of Indians in these parts, who it was apprehended were marching in a Body towards Paugasset to make an attack upon it.”\textsuperscript{231} Though no attack materialized, this intelligence demonstrated a high level of insecurity by some of Connecticut’s colonists during the early weeks of the war. There were repeated alarms about the Indians in the New Haven-Milford area during the conflict, but neither colonists nor natives allowed perceptions to lead to out-right violence.

On 31 August, in one of the first acts of violence in Connecticut against the English, four hostile Indians out of an estimated party of eight shot at “Christover Crow” on his route from Simsbury to Hartford.\textsuperscript{232} Apparently, a hostile war party was operating in the corridor between Simsbury, Windsor, and Hartford as it also fired upon John Coalt the next day in the north meadows of Hartford. The same day, colonists claimed to have observed hostile warriors in arms on the lower Housatonic River.\textsuperscript{233} Nearly simultaneous to these comparatively minor incidents in Connecticut, hostile groups attacked the Massachusetts’ Connecticut River valley settlements on 1 September at Deerfield, and on 2 September, at nearby Northfield (Squakeag).\textsuperscript{234} On 10 September, a friendly fire incident occurred north of Hartford when “Some [soldiers] were sent out after Stray

\textsuperscript{231} 31 Aug 1676 (this is an error, the year should be 1675) letter to Connecticut Governor, booklet entitled “Minutes relative to the Indian War in 1675 and 1676 from Letters in the Secretary’s Office” attached to page 112, vol. II, Trumbull Manuscript Collections, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

\textsuperscript{232} CCR, 358.

\textsuperscript{233} CCR, 359.

\textsuperscript{234} Leach,\textit{ Flintlock}, 87; Mandell,\textit{ King Philip’s War}, 73.
Indians in our Meadows in the night & my Man was amongst them & being forward in seeking After them was shott by one of ye Company in Sted of an Indian, one bullet stroke his arm & broke it but I hope it may be recovered it is set & the wound Mr. Bulkly hopes is Mending.\footnote{10 Sept. 1675 letter transcribed at the Eva Butler Collection, The Indian & Colonial Research Center (ICRC), Old Mystic, Connecticut.}
Philip’s war parties were probing Connecticut’s defenses, as his coalition sought to develop intelligence, while simultaneously launching attacks up river in Massachusetts. Central to these probing raids was determining the loyalty of native groups in Connecticut towards the English. If Philip could have convinced Connecticut’s local, unaligned tribes to join his coalition, then Connecticut’s defenses would have been extremely vulnerable to attack in the fall of 1675, when the colony’s defenses largely were unprepared. English disasters on the upper Connecticut River at Beers’ defeat (4 September) and Bloody Brook (18 September) might have focused Philip’s coalition on the western reaches of Massachusetts Bay, as his coalition attempted to reinforce this battlefield success.²³⁶ Philip’s confederates along the Massachusetts stretches of the Connecticut River would have turned their attention to Connecticut Colony next, during the late fall, had they driven most of the Massachusetts’ settlers farther east, forcing them to abandon their towns along the river. Connecticut’s forces prevented this beginning in August, as they reinforced the Massachusetts’ Bay forces operating along the upper river and in garrison defense of that colony’s towns.

²³⁶ Leach, *Flintlock*, 87-88; Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 73, 75.
Soon after the hostile coalition’s devastating attack on Springfield (5 October) only miles from Windsor, the War Council received a report of enemy activity on the east side of the Connecticut River. This seems to have been an isolated piece of intelligence, however, as Connecticut remained relatively quiet through the Great Swamp Fight expedition of mid-December and into January. English forces, including

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237 For the Springfield attack see Leach, *Flintlock*, 89-91; Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 75-77; this report occurred on 9 October, 1675, CCR, 374.
Connecticut troops under Major Treat, defeated Philip’s confederates at Hatfield, Massachusetts on 19 October,\textsuperscript{238} likely saving Connecticut from similar attacks during the fall and early winter. With this setback, Philip’s forces regrouped and resupplied, avoiding Connecticut until mid-January, when intelligence from the field indicated imminent attacks on the colony. Whether Connecticut’s English leaders understood that offensive operations up-river bought critical time for Connecticut to coordinate its own defenses remains lost to history, but by forcing Philip to concentrate on its forces in Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut became a secondary theater of operations for the hostile coalition.

By mid-January, Deputy Governor Leete reported to the United Colonies that Connecticut’s enemies had infiltrated into the colony, which had been a fear of the colonists after the preemptive strike on the Narragansett fort at Great Swamp.\textsuperscript{239} Connecticut came under attack in late-January or early-February from a raiding party of Narragansetts, who killed two men and captured a boy near the Shetucket River in the vicinity of Norwich.\textsuperscript{240} The colonists recorded this incident as a minor revenge attack against the English for the earlier Great Swamp battle.

\textsuperscript{238} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 127.

\textsuperscript{239} CCR, 395-6.

\textsuperscript{240} CCR, 403; Radune, \textit{Pequot Plantation}, 218; Charles H. S. Davis, \textit{History of Wallingford CT: From its settlement in 1670 to the present time, including Meriden, which was one of its parishes until 1806, and Cheshire, which was incorporated in 1780} (Meriden: Published by the author, 1870), 351 n. 2., http://books.google.com/books (accessed 2 January 2011), names the two men killed on 28 January 1676 as Josiah Rockwell and John Reynolds, apparently not father and son as reported elsewhere. It was reported that in addition to these two fatalities, the Indians captured a young boy, son of one of the men. As discussed below,
The hostile coalition continued to emerge from its winter quarters for a late-winter, early-spring offensive during February, and attacked the Massachusetts’ towns of Lancaster, Medfield, and Northampton from the 10th to the 21st. On 18 February during the onslaught, a war party wounded William Hill near Hoccanum, Connecticut. The colony’s War Council subsequently ordered inhabitants on the eastside of the Connecticut River into garrison houses with the “evident” threat of hostile war parties in the area. With the addition of the Narragansetts after Great Swamp, and a reorganization of hostile forces during the winter, the coalition now targeted Connecticut beginning in early 1676. Even though the Mohawks had driven Philip’s own band of warriors from its winter quarters, his coalition remained far from defeated as the bloody actions of 1676 demonstrated. In fact, most of the hostile bands remained undisturbed during the winter months, a respite used to regroup and refit for the coming campaign.

As subsequent events determined, March was the climax of the coalition’s spring offensive. The hostile native groups assaulted settlements outside of Connecticut at Groton, Marlborough, Sudbury, Rehoboth and Providence, among others. Connecticut itself witnessed a corresponding increase in enemy coalition activity in March, facing a substantial series of threats, including the worst attack on the colony during the war—the burning of an abandoned Simsbury towards the end of the month. The threat was not

Connecticut forces captured two Narragansetts and a lynch mob killed them in revenge. There is not enough records remaining to verify if these Indians had killed Rockwell and Reynolds, or if Narragansetts had even been involved in the ambush.

241 Leach, *Flintlock*, 157-158; 159-160; 163; Mandell, *King Philip’s War*, 90.

242 CCR, 409-410, 411.

only to Connecticut’s northern border, however, as an 8 March letter from the colony to Governor Andros described the incarceration of an Indian prisoner named George at Saybrook, who was later transferred to Hartford. The colony detained him for “thefts and deceits,” though the letter did not specify if George was a source of intelligence or even if he was operating as part of a larger war party.244 On 17 March, the same day as the Simsbury burning, a war party abducted a man at Windsor, indicating that a hostile group was operating between the two towns.245 This band also killed Henry Denslow near Pine Meadow, now the Suffield-Windsor Locks-Windsor area.246

The most salient evidence, however, of the existence of hostile war parties was a 30 March letter detailing a group of approximately 100 warriors operating in the area between the Blue or Hanging Hills (in what is now Meriden and the south Kensington portion of the town of Berlin) and the Mattabassett-Lamentation hills of Wallingford, Middletown, and Berlin. This rare piece of specific intelligence came to the English from a party of friendly Indians possessing a movement pass from Major Treat, Connecticut’s military commander in chief. The Indians claimed to have spent the night at Sergeant Beckley’s of Wethersfield (now Berlin), whose house was near an important path running through the wilderness from Hartford to Wallingford then on to New Haven and New York or to Haddam and the coast beyond.

244 Wyllis Papers, 240.
245 CCR, 423.
246 CCR, 472.
This letter from John Mosse (Sr.) and Nathaniel Meriman, the town leaders of Wallingford, alerted the council that a Goodman Cole’s house burned there in the early morning, and that they originally suspected the seemingly friendly party of Indians of committing the attack. Mosse and Merriman reconsidered their original inclination, however, because Cole’s house had burned “quickly after sun sett, which made us think they were not soe much to be suspected.”247 Henry Cole—“goodman” was a standard designation for a male church member at the time the “Mr.” of today—was the unfortunate buyer of the farmstead only two years before this attack, in what was then Wallingford and currently Meriden.248 Cole may have perished along with his family in this incident as Nathaniel Merriman filed his remaining inventory in New Haven Probate Court a month and a half after the incident.249 Various histories place the Cole’s estate in north-central Meriden, not far from present-day Berlin, astride the old colony path between Hartford and New Haven; the same path that the friendly Indians in question

247 CWS, 1:1:55; George Munson Curtis and C. Bancroft Gillespie, A Century of Meriden: An Historic Record an Pictorial Description of the Town of Meriden, Connecticut (Meriden: Journal Publishing Co, 1906), 18, http://books.google.com/books (accessed 2 January 2011), cites a land transfer to Henry Cole in 1673 from the original owner of the farmstead, Edward Higbey, probably the first Meriden resident. Henry was the “goodman” Cole cited above. The author identifies the farm’s location as south of the intersection of present-day Kensington Avenue and Colony Street. In fact, the “old colony” path from New Haven to Hartford, and later the “new colony” path from New York to Boston ran through this portion of Meriden, and the Coles farm seems to have been astride the original route. The current Connecticut Routes 5-15 roughly trace the route from Hartford to New York.

248 Davis, History of Wallingford, 126 n. 2, also places Cole’s farm in what is now Meriden, although Curtis, A Century of Meriden might have relied on him.

249 “Reunion of descendants of Nathaniel Merriman at Wallingford, CT June 4 1913; with a Merriman genealogy for five generations,” www.archive.org/stream/reunionofdescend00merriala/reunionofdescend00merriala_djvu.txt (accessed 1 Jan 2011), 75-76, also cites the location of the farmstead and also that Henry Cole (and his family) probably died because Nathaniel filed what remained of his inventory in New Haven Probate Court on 12 May 1676, 80.
would have transited to Wallingford from Sergeant Beckley’s farmstead, in what is now the Beckley quarter of Berlin.  

There was a tavern and inn to the north of the Cole farm extending from present-day Meriden into Berlin, known as the Gilbert farm and later the Belcher farm on the same colony route that existed well before the time of King Philip’s War. The tavern-inn served as a way-point for those journeying from New York and the shore to Hartford and Boston. It is possible that this structure existed before the Great Narragansett War, and interestingly seems to have survived the attack on the nearby Cole homestead. There was nothing but the colony path and wilderness between the Gilbert inn and Beckley’s farm then in Wethersfield. Wallingford was miles south from these two northerly farmsteads at this time, and that was the reason Moss and Merriman did not see the flames from Cole’s burning farmstead, relying instead on the friendly Indians’ report. Perhaps the Gilbert dwelling as a tavern-inn had been converted into a garrison-house, which was how it was later reported to have been constructed, and the hostile war-party opted to destroy the “softer” target of Cole’s farmstead.

The friendly Indians provided a troubling estimate of the enemy’s numbers within the colony: “And these indeans say that they saw a great many traks, and some of them went to ward Matabesut mountaines, and others toward the hanging hills as they did

\[\text{\textsuperscript{250}}\text{ Davis, History of Wallingford, 126 n. 2; Curtis, A Century of Meriden, 18; “Reunion of descendants of Nathaniel Merriman at Wallingford, CT June 4 1913; with a Merriman genealogy for five generations”, www.archive.org/stream/reunio...du.txt (accessed 1 Jan 2011), 75-76.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{251}}\text{ Curtis, A Century of Meriden, 13-25.}\]
judge near a 100 These things being considered wee doe judge the enemie is near us and therefore doe desire that you would speedyly consider our condition, and send us some help.” Considering the usual operating number of Philip’s forces, 100 warriors was a significant force, larger than many hostile parties. This intelligence indicated that Connecticut was a primary target of Philip’s coalition, now likely headed by Narragansett leaders, who viewed the colony and its Indian allies as inveterate enemies. Far from being a sideshow to Philip’s main effort in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth, the size of this hostile band places Connecticut at the center of the coalition’s war effort. That Connecticut did not succumb to a large-scale attack from this force sheds light on the overall quality of the colony’s defenses, and the underlying loyalty of the local Indians to the colony. March ended with a report of Indians skulking in the proximity of Connecticut’s towns.252

The hostile activities of the now Narragansett-led coalition began to wane in April 1676. Canonchet had just defeated Captain Pierce outside of Providence in late March, in one of the hostile coalition’s largest victories of the war, when Connecticut forces captured and executed him.253 The loss of Canonchet was a crippling blow to the hostile coalition’s operations. That Canonchet was on a mission to retrieve seeds for planting indicated that the hostile groups were concerned with spring planting, a critical re-supply activity that they never achieved respite to complete because of the constant patrolling of

252 CWS, 1:1:55.

253 Ellis and Morris King Philip’s War, 190-192; Leach, Flintlock, 167; Mandell, King Philip’s War, 100.
English-allied-Indian forces.\textsuperscript{254} The hostile bands’ attrition among its leadership and the failure of its logistics spelled disaster for their cause. In Connecticut around the first of April, a hostile band at Hoccanum killed Deacon Goodman and carried off his compatriot Thomas Reede. Reede later escaped from Pessicus’ encampment near Turner’s Falls and delivered a report used by the English to launch the attack there.\textsuperscript{255} This report indicated more than the activities of the hostile bands up the Connecticut River, it also revealed that raiding parties in Connecticut were in contact with coalition members as far away as the Massachusetts-Vermont border.

In early April, Governor Leete wrote to Connecticut leaders on the coast acknowledging receipt of one of their letters to the Council at Hartford, which described a house burned and a colonist shot at in the woods.\textsuperscript{256} The original letter appears to have been lost, but Leete’s reply was further confirmation of the threat to the colony from hostile parties. There was a chance that the report of the burning house was Henry Cole’s dwelling of Wallingford, as the town was part of New Haven’s district. It more likely indicated, however, that another Indian raiding party operated deep in the colony, along the coast with Long Island Sound. The Indian Sepawcutt, a confederate of Philip’s claimed to have killed seven colonists of the “seaside,”\textsuperscript{257} although it is not entirely clear,

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\textsuperscript{254} Please see the offensive operations chapter below for a more detailed description of these raids and Canonchet’s capture.
\textsuperscript{255} 15 May letter from Rev. Russell of Hadley to unknown recipient (likely Connecticut’s War Council) in Temple and Adams, \textit{A History of the Town of North Brookfield Massachusetts}, 129.
\textsuperscript{256} CWS, 1:1:60.
\textsuperscript{257} CCR, 472.
\end{flushright}
this likely referred to Connecticut colonists. The “seaside” in the Connecticut records referred to the Connecticut coast and many times New Haven County. In early May in fact, a band of Indians ambushed Anthony Howe from a nearby swamp, killing him as he was rounding up cattle near Branford, along the coast.\footnote{258} While war parties were harassing Connecticut without a significant breakthrough, in late April, hostile native groups scored one of their last tactical successes at Sudbury by wiping out the colonial contingent commanded by Captain Samuel Wadsworth.\footnote{259} Raiding parties also accounted for the killings of colonists G. Elmore of Podunk and a colonist named Kirby between Wethersfield and Middletown.\footnote{260}

As English field forces, particularly Connecticut’s under Major John Talcott and Captain George Denison, enjoyed more success in the late spring and throughout the summer 1676, the hostile coalition’s ability to carry out offensive operations dramatically declined. After the English surprise attack on Turner’s Falls on 19 May, which resulted in large numbers of Indian non-combatant casualties as well as the destruction of the colonial force, the Indians counterattacked Hatfield, but the settlers repulsed them.\footnote{261}

\footnote{258} “Minutes relative to the Indian War in 1675 and 1676 from Letters in the Secretary’s Office” attached to page 112, vol. 2, Trumbull Manuscript Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

\footnote{259} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 210-213; Leach, \textit{Flintlock}, 172-175; Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 107-108.

\footnote{260} CCR, 472, 479-480.

\footnote{261} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 232-240; Leach, \textit{Flintlock}, 201-204; Mandell, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 114-115.
Connecticut forces repulsed another assault at Hadley on 12 June. That was one of the last major hostile coalition attacks of the war, and Connecticut forces hunted down rebel bands for the remainder of the conflict.

Two episodes near the conclusion of hostilities further demonstrated the presence of war parties within Connecticut. In August, with general military operations winding down throughout southern New England, a hostile Indian named Menowalett was captured in the wilderness near Farmington, Connecticut. He had been hiding in the woods with a very small band, and they had been captured, probably by the combined forces of colonists and allied Indians then scouring the woods for the remnants of Philip’s coalition. Upon interrogation by the colonial leaders, Menowalett confessed to belonging to the party that had burned Simsbury and killed the colonist Kirby between Middletown and Wethersfield and G. Elmore of Podunk. He had also taken part in battles against the English settlers on the Massachusetts stretches of the Connecticut River, signifying another connection between events on the upper river and Connecticut.

Menowalett claimed that his war party in Connecticut Colony had consisted of seven to nine warriors from a number of different tribes including the Norwottocks of Northampton, the Agawams of Springfield, Narragansetts, the Quabogs of the Nipmuck confederation, renegade Mohegans, as well a tribe abbreviated as “Wer,” likely the

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263 Hubbard, writing only a year after the war, mentions Menowalett briefly in *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, 281-282.
Woronocos of Westfield. He himself was half Mohegan and half Narragansett.\textsuperscript{264} This evidence, if uncorroborated, would have been difficult to rely on alone. Prisoners have not always been known to reveal critical intelligence, and Menowalett undoubtedly knew that the English were executing Philip’s warriors who had killed Englishmen, and that others had been handed over to the allied Indians for torture and execution. Interestingly, Menowalett could have related events without incriminating himself, or only confessed to one event instead of three, or not have said anything about these attacks at all, but he seems to have revealed everything.

In early September 1676, another renegade named Cohas, who was captured by allied Indians between New Haven and Milford, confessed to two of the murders and the burning of a farmstead, all of which Menowalett had earlier accused him of committing. The Council turned Cohas over to an allied Indian, who promptly executed him.\textsuperscript{265} Cohas corroborated three of Menowalett’s allegations against him, confirming the validity of most, if not all, of Menowalett’s testimony. If Menowalett had not specifically given names, only describing general attacks against Connecticut colonists, and then Cohas had admitted to the attacks, there would have been lingering doubt that Cohas had confessed to incidents that he had not committed. Menowalett, however, had named Cohas in his testimony.

\textsuperscript{264} CWS, 1:1:108, 214, 217; CCR, 471-472.

\textsuperscript{265} CWS, 1:1:108, 217; CCR, 479-480; Hubbard, \textit{History of the Indians Wars in New England}, 281-282, recounts some of the Cohas episode, but focuses on the retreat of the hostile tribes to the Hudson River.
The examples of Menowalett and Cohas, besides helping to reveal the nature of war parties in Connecticut, illustrated the complex nature of identity and tribal loyalty during the Great Narragansett War. As Uncas had warned early in the conflict, at least a number of Narragansetts lived in Connecticut who supported Philip’s uprising, but he failed to mention that a number of Mohegans also did. Even then, the case of Menowalett and Cohas demonstrated that the colonial method of identifying Native Americans—based largely on the political entities identified by the colonists themselves and mostly parroted by historians today—was insufficient in establishing identity and loyalty during the war. The high degree of intermarriage between southern New England Indian tribes, and the fluid political nature of their warrior societies, clouded the colonist’s intelligence picture of who was supporting who among the tribes.

As half Mohegan and half Narragansett, Menowalett either identified with Philip’s cause or fought for personal gain, and more likely a combination of both. He might have switched sides, a not uncommon occurrence during the war, and not uncommon for Europeans to do the same in Early Modern Europe, and in fact up through the early-nineteenth century. The Rhode Islander William Harris, writing to the King’s Privy Council in the summer of 1676, revealed just that: “It is Indian custom not to distinguish their men by place of residence but by voluntary obligation, that is, they are or are not this or that sachem’s men.” Unfortunately, Menowalett’s English interrogators did not ask the critical question of why he joined Philip’s confederation.

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Based on his testimony, Menowalett clearly did not support Uncas’ faction of Mohegans, which was the majority of the tribal group. Perhaps he resented Uncas’ domineering leadership or his continuing conflict with the other side of his family, the Narragansetts. The Mohegan “tribe” was also hierarchical and lineage based to some extent, with Uncas’ sons Owaneco and Joshua dominating the Mohegan war effort in support of the colonists. Menowalett might have resented this lineage or was perhaps from a rival clan. Clan-based identity was common in Native American cultures, where clan-membership sometimes trumped tribal affiliation. This might have influenced Menowalett’s choice of sides. He might have identified with other tribal groups for marriage or “political” reasons. Finally, he might have done so simply because he identified with the anti-English cause of Philip’s coalition.

The impact of violence on native communities loosened traditional bonds. Colonial-Indian military operations or even the threat of them forced migrations upon native groups and this in turn perhaps altered more traditional Indian communities. As discussed, the bands of Narragansetts and Wampanoags hostile to the English fled to central and western Massachusetts, joining Nipmucks and upper Connecticut River Indian communities there. This altered the already loose groupings of tribal peoples based on intermarriage and shifting political loyalty. These new groupings represented the mixed warrior parties that threatened Connecticut during the conflict.

After decades of contact with many underlying grievances, a large segment of New England’s Indians feared the growing political, economic, and cultural power of the colonists, and scattered attempts at Christianization. Plymouth colony’s challenge to
Philip’s legitimacy as sachem exacerbated these underlying tensions. This resulted in a regional uprising of native groups and individuals motivated to stop the perceived threat to their way of life. The sometimes pan-tribal nature of the Great Narragansett War indicates that Indians identified with anti-English sentiment to some degree. Once these warriors joined in battle with the colonists, perhaps they derived an identity of fighting against the English threat, and violence in turn reinforced anti-English feelings from before the war.

The Indians who remained loyal to the English or chose the English side or none at all reveal as much about identity and loyalty as those who joined with Philip. The Indians of Connecticut, a scattered population of Mohegans and Narragansetts excepting, remained loyal to their English neighbors. Connecticut’s colonial leaders cultivated this relationship through moderate policy, examined in a later chapter, but in the end, the local Indians chose to remain neutral or allied to the English. Certainly the colonists’ latent military capability and fear of the allied Indians, particularly the majority of Mohegans and all of the remaining Pequots, influenced this decision to some degree. For reasons similar to Menowalett’s motivating factors, (with the exception of anti-English sentiment) Connecticut’s native groups remained consistently, and overwhelmingly, pro-colonist or neutral.

The Menawolett and Cohas interrogations, excellent evidence from a sparse record, demonstrated that small war parties still operated within Connecticut after most hostilities had ended. A number of war parties with diverse tribal backgrounds had been...

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267 Lepore, *The Name of War*, makes the case that violence in war challenges individual identity.
operating within the colony’s borders during the war, indicating that the participants in King Philip’s War were more difficult to define than through traditional tribal delineations. These bands, which identified and exhibited loyalty to Philip’s cause for a host of reasons, ranged in size from small war parties to large bodies of 100 or more, and they had been able to infiltrate Connecticut undetected. Major Palmes, commander at New London, had sent a letter to the War Council at the end of January 1676 with intelligence that Philip’s forces had in fact broken into small bands and were operating “downwards” from Nipmuck country, placing them inside Connecticut’s boundaries.268 A few weeks later, Cohas’ band killed William Hill at Hoccanum.269 These events, in light of the later testimony from the interrogations, confirmed that elements of Philip’s coalition were operating within Connecticut.

When Philip fled his traditional tribal area and enlisted support of the Nipmucks and the upper Connecticut River valley tribes, he began to lose control the coalition’s war aims. Connecticut came under eventual attack because of its support of the English settlements upriver and due to the traditional hostility of tribes there towards the colony’s native allies. Connecticut became a primary target once the powerful Narragansetts joined with Philip’s coalition, and the Narragansetts’ traditional antipathy towards the colony and the Mohegans resulted in the region-wide conflagration more accurately titled the Great Narragansett War. Placing these events within the framework of episodic Mohegan-Narragansett conflict since the defeat of the Pequot tribe and violence

268 CCR, 403.

269 CCR, 409.
exacerbated since the arrival of the English, generates a new perspective of the conflict and Connecticut’s role in it, while challenging the previous naming convention of “King Philip’s War.” How did Connecticut generally avoid this violence and devastation that similar marauders had caused in the other New England colonies?
Chapter 5: Puritan Outlier – Connecticut Colonists and Local Native Groups

As for your Postcript Respecting a house burnt, and a man shott at in the woods, nott known by whom, we Can but ad vise that it will be well lookt into and finding matters cleard against any that justice be done yet must likewise desire that injustice may pass instead of justice, and we wish due Consideration be had that as yett Indian hath appeared Convict of breaking out into hostility that belongs to this Colony in any part of it since the warre began wh we acct a favour therefore we would have one Care taken that ye grounds be very cleare, ore we drive them to hostility as is by some doubted to have been don in other Collonies too hostile but we Can well trust your Good discretion in these matters and must have it to God and you that right may be don for both and against all Indians & Remain

Yours to affectionately to seek peace & well fare off the whole.

William Leete by Request of the Council\textsuperscript{270}

Acting Governor Leete’s prescient guidance to the “Assistants sea side” at New Haven, Connecticut, reveals how the colony’s leadership sought to maintain an environment of understanding and cooperation between the native groups and English settlers. Although he did not know at the time that a handful of local Indians did join hostile forces, Leete understood that most of the colony’s native groups remained allied or neutral. Good policy—mostly obeyed by Connecticut’s colonists and complemented by the decision of the colony’s Indians to eschew the anti-English uprising—created mutual security for both communities. This prevented foreign hostile native groups from

\textsuperscript{270} CWS, 1:1:60.
gathering local intelligence or secure locations from which to launch attacks.

Connecticut’s colonists experienced first-hand the importance of maintaining Indian allies during the earlier Pequot War and understood that their security rested in part, on good relations with the local native groups. During a meeting of the General Court in October 1675 as the threat to Connecticut was increasing, the Court proclaimed, “But its advised that all due care be taken to treat the Indians amicably in all parts, and not to put them upon any unrighteous or intollerable tearmes to be obserued.”

This proclamation and others like it indicated a critical difference between Connecticut and the other Puritan colonies. Connecticut’s leaders, like Leete and Governor John Winthrop Jr., enacted moderate and practical policy towards native groups that combined security concerns with a sense of justice different from that of their contemporaries in the rest of New England.

There was a trend in the other New England colonies of local Indian-settler disputes that turned violent and paved the way for King Philip’s forces entry into those areas. Philip and his confederates adeptly took advantage of these local disputes. After the outbreak of the conflict in the early summer 1675, a Massachusetts Bay Colony expedition led by Captain Thomas Wheeler aimed at determining the Nipmucks’ position toward Philip’s Wampanoags. It turned into a disaster when local Brookfield men, insisting on the tribe’s loyalty to the English, led the force into an ambush. The Indians

\[271 \text{CCR, 272.}\]
then besieged Brookfield itself.272 The Brookfield inhabitants misunderstood the close relationship between the local tribe and the Wampanoags, while overestimating their own ties with the native community. Background tensions over land served to exacerbate the situation, 273 as this irritant had with Philip’s own band vis a’ vis the local English community at Swansea in Plymouth Colony. 274 At Northampton along the Massachusetts’ stretches of the Connecticut River, “the Improvident demands of Captn Lathrop made upon the Narwartteck Indians” drove the tribe into Philip’s coalition by attempting to disarm them as a preventative measure, an action which the Connecticut leadership considered a blunder.275

On September 2nd 1675 at Northfield, the northernmost settlement along the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s stretches of the Connecticut River, a band of River Indians surprised the colonists even though hostilities had been ongoing in New England for almost two months.276 The colonists’ lack of military preparations in western Massachusetts Bay Colony indicated that they trusted the local Indians similar to the


272 Schultz and Tougias, King Philip’s War, 149. Hubbard, The History of the Indian Wars in New England, 104-105, indicates that the colonists felt betrayed by the Nipmucks, especially after sending several expeditions to secure their neutrality.

273 Temple and Adams, A History of the Town of North Brookfield, 46, 47, 74, 75. Temple argues that Massasoit—the famous Wampanoag sachem that greeted the Pilgrims—might have been the sachem at Brookfield in the early 1660s before his death. Regardless of Massasoit’s whereabouts, Temple’s assertion about the close relationship between the Wampanoags and Nipmucks is correct.

274 Jennings, The Invasion of America, 293.

275 10 Sept 1675 letter from Connecticut General Court Secretary Allyn to James Richards of Boston, transcribed document from Butler Collection, ICRC. Leete referred to the disarmament and other incidents in his quote at the beginning of this chapter.

276 Schultz and Tougias, King Philip’s War, 163.
inhabitants of Brookfield, apparently misunderstanding the loyalties of the local Native American community.

The situation replayed itself at Springfield, when inhabitants refused to believe that the local Agawam tribe would turn against them. Rejecting town-leader Major John Pynchon’s developing suspicion of the Agawams, constable Lieutenant Cooper was ambushed on his way to the tribe’s village.\textsuperscript{277} Members of Philip’s confederacy, joined by the Agawams, who had clandestinely sheltered them in their nearby fort, then turned on the town, destroying most of it.\textsuperscript{278} Winthrop had recorded only weeks earlier that the Indians “up the river (as those have to us) have assured Maior Pynchen of their fidelity to the English.”\textsuperscript{279} The colonists’ trust of the local natives is manifested in passages such as this as well as in the general lack of colonial military mobilization in Nipmuck country and along the upper Connecticut River.

This trusting posture explains the colonists’ sense of outrage at the perceived disloyalty of the Indians, once the native groups joined with Philip. From the hostile Indian perspective, there were legitimate grievances that the English failed to comprehend, causing a number of native communities to join Philip’s coalition. Though Native American motivation will remain somewhat unclear because of a lack of records, Indian outrage over the colonists’ confiscation of firearms, disillusionment over English

\textsuperscript{277} Schultz and Tougias, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 178-9.

\textsuperscript{278} CCR, 372-373; Hubbard, \textit{The History of the Indian Wars in New England}, 119-123, describes the events at Springfield and the colonists’ strong feelings of betrayal.

\textsuperscript{279} \textit{Winthrop Papers}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ser., vol. 8 (Cambridge: University Press, John Wilson and Son, 1882), 170.
encroachment on agricultural and hunting-fishing grounds; both aggravated Indian apprehension of burgeoning English politico-economic and cultural power.

The situation was markedly different in Connecticut. Not only did the colonists there allow the Indians to maintain their firearms, they did little to incite the ill will of their native neighbors. By 1675, the Indians of southern New England had fully adopted the flintlock musket as their primary means of fighting as well as hunting, and their disarmament would have meant disaster for native families: “They had become quite dependent on those Arms to procure the Means of living, and hence it is not strange that they should consider the Seizure of them an Act of great Injustice.”280 Most native warriors had adopted the flintlock by the outbreak of King Philip’s War for purposes of war as well, “Not making Allowance for the Difference of Times, when they before engaged us, only with Bows and Arrows; but now came to fight us with our own Weapons.”281

Connecticut had previously disarmed a handful of Mohegans during the scare of a New England-wide Indian conspiracy of 1669-1670.282 The patron of the Mohegans, Major John Mason Sr. was so convinced of a conspiracy that he “pursuades” Owaneco, Uncas’s son, and a number of other warriors to hand over some of their weapons.283

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282 New England colonists feared French and Dutch support for the conspiracy.

283 IS, 1:1.
Reconsidering disarmament employed only a few years earlier, Connecticut’s War Council during King Philip’s War not only disapproved of the “improvident” disarming of the Norwottock tribe at Northampton Massachusetts Bay Colony, but the Council also refused the request of the town of Stratford to disarm its local Indians in mid-August 1675. 284

Connecticut’s colonists also arranged local peace-agreements with neighboring tribes after Philip’s rising in exchange for English clothing. 285 The English clothing was more than a practical offering to protect the natives from the elements. The Indians’ acceptance of the colonists’ gifts indicated that a friendly relationship existed between the parties and the wearing of English clothing identified the Native Americans as allied or neutral in regard to the neighboring colonists. There were several occasions when the Council authorized the allied Mohegans to deal with the local, neutral tribes. Connecticut’s War Council sanctioned Owaneco to establish a fort with local Indians near Hoccanum for their joint safety as well as for the Mohegans to undoubtedly watch these native groups. 286 Allowing natives to deal with natives ensured that the colonists would not violate native taboos, and demonstrated that the tribes that were in good standing with the English would be empowered to act as leaders within Indian communities. Any policy entails risk, and there was some danger inherent in establishing


286 CCR, 379.
a fort at Hoccanum, if the Mohegans had mistreated these other native groups. Connecticut’s leadership in fact often fielded complaints from local tribes about mistreatment at the hands of Uncas prior to the conflict.

The Connecticut War Council reminded the colonists to treat the local Indians fairly, as in this letter to the town of Milford: “we must desire that you would cause all your people to carry so tenderly towards the Indians that they may not receiue any just provocation to stir them up against us. We have enemies eno, and let us not by any harsh dealing stir up more yet.” This was a similar warning to the colonists as Leete’s above, and the Council remarkably issued the latter after Connecticut came under attack in the spring of 1676 with a house burned and a colonist shot at in the woods along Long Island Sound. Connecticut’s leaders also sought to provide security for the allied Pequots’ non-combatants, while the warriors were away supporting English forces. The protection of the Pequot families left behind was an incentive for the warriors to take the field against the hostile coalition.

The General Court ordered that the towns establish methods for identifying local Indians to keep them from becoming confused with Philip’s confederates, attempting to prevent friendly-fire incidents. When Connecticut’s allied Indians joined colonial troops in western Massachusetts Bay at Quabog-Brookfield, the Council ordered Marshal

287 CCR, 419.

288 CWS, 1:1:60.


290 CCR, 272.
Gilbert to ensure their safety through proper identification, as well as to ascertain why more friendly Indians did not join the expedition.\textsuperscript{291} The council ordered Major Robert Treat on 19 January 1676 to see to the identification and general good treatment of the allied Indian contingent remaining in Narragansett country after the Great Swamp Fight.\textsuperscript{292} The council issued this order after reports that the non-Connecticut colonists accidently targeted Connecticut’s Indian allies during the battle.

The most significant and notable element of this policy, however, was when the War Council “desired” Wethersfield, Middletown and Hartford to allow the local tribes into their towns along with their corn, for mutual protection from the hostile tribes.\textsuperscript{293} That the Council would even consider such a step during a time of tension between colonists and Indians was incredible and indicated that peaceful relations existed at least along the stretches of the lower Connecticut River valley in Connecticut. This was truly a remarkable event as Massachusetts Bay Colony forcibly drove off peaceful local tribes or imprisoned them on Deer Island in Massachusetts Bay.\textsuperscript{294} Captain Samuel Moseley, a privateer of Massachusetts Bay Colony and commander of a volunteer company of pirates and other ruffians, raided a village of a loyal tribe near what is now Concord, New Hampshire. As a result, Massachusetts Bay had to send a delegation to attempt

\textsuperscript{291} CWS, 1:1:12; CCR, 349.

\textsuperscript{292} CCR, 400.


\textsuperscript{294} For the driving off of friendly tribes see Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 98. For the Deer Island captivity see Schultz and Tougias, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 107 and Vaughan, \textit{New England Frontier}, 318-319.
reconciliation. Moseley on another occasion sent eleven friendly Indians to Boston for execution, though they eventually were released. ²⁹⁵ Such anti-Indian acts and the eventual Massachusetts Bay policy of removing friendly Indians to Deer Island caused irreversible damage to the relationship with the neutral or friendly Indians, causing some to fight with Philip against the English. James Quanapohit, a praying Indian and spy for Massachusetts’ Bay, reported that praying Indians previously loyal to the colonists had fled to the hostile Nipmucks after the Deer Island removal. A number of these Indians “went willingly, others of ym unwillingly as they told him for befor they went away they were in a great strait, for if they came to the English they knew they shold bee sent to Deere Iland, as others were …” ²⁹⁶ Moseley’s worst act of anti-Indian violence occurred at Springfield, when he had a captured Indian woman “torn in peeces by Doggs,” even though she had provided intelligence to the colonists. ²⁹⁷

Massachusetts Bay was not alone in detaining friendly or neutral Indians on inhospitable and unfamiliar islands off of the Atlantic coast, as Plymouth joined with its neighboring Puritan colony in its brutal Indian removal policy: “The councell of war now assembled doe order, that the Namassachessett Indians be speedily removed to Clarkes Iland, and ther to remaine, and not to depart from thence without lycence from authoritie

²⁹⁵ Bodge, Soldiers in King Philip’s War, 67.


²⁹⁷ Letter from Moseley to Massachusetts Bay Governor John Leverett in Bodge, Soldiers in King Philip’s War, 69.
Historians have focused on the Deer Island episode as the epitome of Puritan mistreatment of New England’s native population, but none have connected Plymouth’s ‘Clark Island’ example of cruelty to the Indian population as part of New England’s larger storyline of Indian treatment since the first settlement in 1620.

The Plymouth authorities ordered the tribe’s removal to this small island in Plymouth Harbor between the end of February and early March 1676 at the exact worst time for native groups to be able to fend for themselves on barren, windswept islands. Like Deer Island, Clark’s was devoid of adequate shelter or food sources. In 1620, a small scouting party from the Mayflower had originally landed on Clark’s Island, named after the ship’s first-mate, when a storm forced them to seek shelter before reaching the mainland. Clark’s Island exemplifies a dual-narrative sometimes found in early America history, representing on the one hand a ‘positive’ discovery-narrative, which locals still celebrate today with a picnic and religious service at the ‘original’ Plymouth rock; on the other is a little known account of atrocity committed against a local people. It was ironic that the Plymouth colonists of 1675, only a generation removed from their religiously-persecuted Pilgrim ancestors, in turn persecuted the local Indian tribes. The Namassachusetts undoubtedly suffered a fate similar to the Natick groups removed to Deer Island. Almost unbelievably, Plymouth instructed that its press-masters

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299 Philbrick, Mayflower, 74-75.

compel into service 20-30 local Indians at the same time as the Clark’s Island removal, as if such actions would not affect the motivation of Indians to fight with the English against other nearby Indians of Philip’s coalition.\textsuperscript{301} Later that month, a hostile force wiped-out Plymouth’s Captain Michael Pierce’s expedition, leaving one to question the loyalty of the pressed Plymouth Indians who accompanied it.\textsuperscript{302}

Perhaps the Clark’s Island episode was a culminating event in Plymouth’s anti-Indian policy for earlier on 6 December 1675, the colony enacted a precautionary measure against its local Indians: “Wheras great damage may acrew to the collonie by the southeren Indians theire frequent resort to Plymouth, the councell have ordered that speedy notice be given to those Indians to come noe further towards Plmouth then Sandwich, which shalbe theire confine, on paine of death or imprisonment.”\textsuperscript{303} This specific policy at Plymouth stood in stark relief to Connecticut’s actions to bring the local Indians into their communities. Connecticut’s humane treatment and policy of joint-security with neighboring tribes compared favorably to the other New England colonies’ poor treatment of neighboring native groups. Misunderstanding the local situation proved devastating for English settlements elsewhere. At the same time, such misguided actions, xenophobic and perhaps racist in nature, lessened the willingness of Indians to cooperate militarily with the colonists.

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\textsuperscript{301} Original Manuscript Collection \textit{Plymouth Colony Records}, Plymouth County Courthouse, Plymouth MA, Doc. 130.
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\textsuperscript{302} Please see chapter on offensive operations below.
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\textsuperscript{303} Original Manuscript Collection \textit{Plymouth Colony Records}, Plymouth County Courthouse, Plymouth MA, Doc., 127.
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The colonists of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, the outcast colony of New England, treated their local native groups relatively better than Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies. Roger Williams was known for his special relationship with the Narragansetts, yet even he provided intelligence for New England colonists before and during the Great Narragansett War. Members of the colony appear to have maintained a close relationship with Philip, as was the case when the Wampanoag sachem revealed his rationale for war to Rhode Island men soon after the outbreak of the conflict.304 Even with a relatively better relationship with local native groups than Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies, no Rhode Island town appears to have cultivated or sustained the relationship with the local Indians such as existed in Connecticut towns like Wethersfield and Middletown. In fact, a 13th March 1676 order from Rhode Island’s War Council ordered that Indians must be “bound” if out of doors, while its colonists had to escort Indians by day and lock them up by night.305 This was a harsher policy of control than any Connecticut enacted during the conflict.

Unlike Connecticut, the hostile coalition devastated Rhode Island during the war, destroying nearly the entire colony besides the settlements and seat of government on ‘Rhode Island’ (Aquidneck Island) itself. The Narragansetts spared Aquidneck Island because they had little capability of launching an amphibious operation against Rhode

304 Samuel G. Drake, ed., The Old Indian Chronicle; Being a Collection of Exceeding Rare Tracts, Written and Published in the Time of King Philip’s War, By Persons Residing in the Country (1867 Boston; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1976), 229.

Island’s coastal patrol. Rhode Island launched a fleet of four patrol boats manned by five or six soldiers each.\textsuperscript{306} The colony’s reputation of leniency towards native groups appears to have been overblown at least during King Philip’s War, and a special relationship with local native groups, which would have spared the Rhode Island’s destruction, did not exist during the conflict.

Such a relationship, especially with the neighboring Narragansett groups, might have spared New England’s English and native populations the worst affects of the Great Narragansett war. Clearly Roger Williams did not have the influence to persuade the region’s most powerful tribe from passively supporting Philip at the outset of the conflict, providing the pretext for the colonial attack on Great Swamp. If Rhode Island—an area considered by its three neighboring Puritan colonies as inhabited by apostates—had influence with the rest of New England, then it might have worked within the apparatus of the United Colonies to soften its distrustful perception of the Narragansetts. Likewise, the Narragansetts cultivated the least influential English colony as a patron, even though the tribe had the most influence among native groups in southern New England. The imbalance between the Narragansetts’ real power and the tribe’s lack of an effective colonial supporter in New England’s political circles fanned the flames of violence in the interwar years, and resulted in the sympathetic pro-Philip stance of the tribe in 1675.

Wayne Lee has categorized as “resident alien” status the close association between certain Indians and settlers, such as a number of Connecticut colonists’

\textsuperscript{306} Bartlett ed., Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, held at Newport, the 4\textsuperscript{th} of April, 1675-6, 535-536.
relationships with similarly influential natives. This association sometimes existed in combined colonial and Native American villages or those Indian towns adjacent to colonial settlements. As the case of Connecticut indicated, the influence of the “resident aliens” mattered for local defense and security. Native American resident aliens desired the symbol of colonial protection, if not actual joint-defense in return for providing intelligence to the colonists. The intermingling of colonists and natives was in accord with Indian cultural norms for diplomacy, with those Native Americans living with the colonists serving as “diplomatic ‘entry points,’ go-betweens, and early warning mechanisms.” The Indians also at times invited colonists to live with them for many of the same reasons and especially to demonstrate their loyalty to the English. The Natick “praying Indian” community of Massachusetts Bay Colony, after the onset of King Philip’s War convinced two Englishmen to live with them. The positive experience of these men, however, did not influence the Indian attitudes of enough Massachusetts Bay colonists to affect that colony’s native group policy or prevent the internment of the community on Deer Island.

In recent times of extreme crisis, people have sometimes resorted to an insular tribal instinct like that of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies during King Philip’s War. That tendency makes Connecticut’s actions, and the behavior of the Connecticut


Indians (and the Natick community), that much more extraordinary given the relative religious and racial intolerance of that era as well as the colonists’ lack of security. The policy was thus practical in addition to moderate, denying critical local intelligence to hostile forces. Without this intelligence, the hostile Indians were unable to carry out the attacks that they had managed in the other New England colonies in conjunction with the local tribes. Local intelligence was of critical importance for the type of warfare that the Indians practiced: “As the Indians had lived promiscuously with the English in all parts of the country, they were generally as well acquainted with their dwellings, fields, and places of worships, as themselves. They were perfectly acquainted with their roads times, and places of resort. They were at hand to watch all their motions, to attack them at every difficult pass, and in every unguarded moment.”310 Connecticut was able to extract critical intelligence from the local native groups as well. For instance, an Indian from the locality of Windsor named Toto, exposed the hostile plot against Springfield, but unlike Connecticut’s, Springfield’s inhabitants were unwilling to believe the intelligence and suffered the consequences.311 Connecticut Colony avoided the hostility of the local tribes through its unprecedented moderate policy and this was a major contributing factor for the coalition’s lack of success in the colony.

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309 Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 316, reaches the same conclusion, pointing out American behavior towards German and Japanese Americans respectively in 1917 and 1941.


Connecticut extended its moderate policy towards the local natives to the hostile Indians as well. Almost unbelievably, the War Council sent a letter by way of a Narragansett messenger named Tiawakesson (alias Watawaikeson) to Philip’s forces requesting a prisoner exchange and proposing a peace conference, the day after the burning of Simsbury.\(^{312}\) Simsbury, located to the northwest of Hartford and Windsor, was then an outlying settlement, and the only town in the colony that hostile forces destroyed. Certainly the Council could have been motivated by a sense of weakness after such an attack, but this seems unlikely because Simsbury had been abandoned and no inhabited Connecticut towns had been attacked.\(^{313}\) Connecticut’s field forces, heavily aided and guided by Indian allies, also had been the most effective of any colonial military units during the war.\(^{314}\) It seems then that the Connecticut Colony was offering conciliation out of a position of strength rather than weakness, and hence continuing its moderate policy. When there was no definitive reply to this peace entreaty,\(^{315}\) another more active proposal was approved on April 18\(^{th}\) 1676, when a force was sent to Hadley to affect this meeting on the first of May.\(^{316}\) Philip and his allies never decisively acted

\(^{312}\) CCR, 425.

\(^{313}\) Schultz and Tougias, *King Philip’s War*, 274-275, describes the attack on Simsbury.

\(^{314}\) Please see below the offensive operations chapter.


\(^{316}\) CCR, 435, 439.
on Connecticut’s peace proposals. Connecticut forces in Narragansett country later killed Tiawakesson the messenger in combat, and the “Ticket for his free passage” from the English was found folded in his pocket.317

Compared to Massachusetts and Plymouth, Connecticut had a relatively forward-looking internment policy: “Connecticut was alone in forbidding the sale of other Indians into foreign slavery. Instead, the colony sentenced captives to ten years of domestic servitude if they were sixteen or over at the end of that term; those under sixteen served until age twenty-six.”318 Rhode Island’s internment policy was slightly more lenient than Connecticut’s with a term of nine years.319

As with all of the New England colonies, Connecticut enacted the death sentence for Indians that killed colonists. This was not in breaking with the standard English law practice at the time for citizens who had committed murder or treason, and this was how the colonists viewed Philip’s “rebellion.” Many Native Americans viewed slavery, especially far from their native land, as a fate worse than death, however, and Connecticut’s move to outlaw this form of punishment for those hostile natives, who were not known to have killed colonists, was therefore moderate in comparison to the other colonies’ policies. More effectively, Connecticut’s policy moved away from the

317 CCR, 458-459; Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 249-250.


Indians’ fear of slavery, creating an incentive to surrender to Connecticut authorities instead of continuing to fight.

The controversy over the disposition of Philip’s captured wife and young son also demonstrated that Massachusetts and Plymouth colonies were in no mood to offer quarter, when a number of influential ministers sanctioned the pair’s execution. Samuel Arnold, John Cotton, Increase Mather, and James Keith all used Old Testament biblical passages to formulate a “legal opinion” on the disposition of Philip’s family. Only Keith argued against a death sentence. The colonists eventually sentenced the family to slavery in Bermuda. Connecticut’s opinion on the matter was not recorded, but it is difficult to imagine the colony supporting slavery for non-combatants, even Philip’s family, let alone a sentence of death.

The treatment of the hostile coalition in the field by Connecticut forces, however, might not have been as lenient as the colony’s reintegration or voluntary surrender policies. There is some evidence that the colony’s field forces did not always accept quarter if they captured hostile forces, as opposed to these forces coming in of their own volition: “[T]hese Connecticut men capture very many Indians, and kill all they capture except some boys and girls. This so frightens the Indians that they hasten to surrender themselves to Massachusetts, Plymouth, or Rhode Island, where their lives are spared,

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321 Schultz and Tougias, King Philip’s War, 128.

322 In an upcoming book, Margaret Newell of The Ohio State University argues that some Indians in Connecticut were held after their term of indentured servitude essentially enslaving them.
excepting known notorious murderers.”

There was also debate over the severe defeat suffered by the Sunk Squaw’s band of Narragansetts at the hands of Talcott, with some considering it a massacre. Yet, it is clear that Connecticut did take prisoners and its policy was evidently more lenient than the other colonies in the other ways described above.

Connecticut Colony’s record was not completely unblemished either, when dealing with the local Indians. In Hartford for instance, the Indians were required to register and were not allowed to leave the vicinity of the town without a special permit. The colonists mandated where the Tunxis tribe of Farmington could establish its village.

The motivation for these rules, however, was partly for the Indians own protection so they would not become victims of circumstance. On the 1st of September 1675, however, the War Council passed an ordinance that allowed colonists to shoot Indians on sight, if the latter did not immediately throw down their arms and profess friendship.

Connecticut also forced the local tribes to provide hostages for the duration of the conflict, including their primary Indian allies, though Uncas petitioned the court to allow a grandson to remain at Norwich with Reverend James Fitch, in Mohegan territory.

The court also released sachem Turramuggus of the Wangunk or closely related Mattabassett group, and two other Indians on the 23rd of June 1676 before the

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323 William Harris, “A Rhode Islander Reports on King Philip’s War,” 77.

324 CCR, 376.

325 CCR, 359.

326 CCR, 344-345, 378.
cessation of hostilities, acquiescing to another Indian petition.\textsuperscript{327} The hostage policy deserves special consideration because Governor Winthrop, then at the convocation of the United Colonies commissioners in Boston, disapproved of the English demanding hostages from the Narragansetts, while the tribe was neutral. Perhaps this policy was the action of Deputy Governor Leete and other magistrates acting in the Governor’s absence.

The Connecticut colonists’ worst example of mistreatment of Indians during the war was the murder of two captured Narragansetts in a New London prison. The motivation for this ugly episode was the Narragansetts’ killing of two English colonists and the capturing of a young boy not far from Norwich. The local military authority Major Edward Palmes, attempted to bring the perpetrators to justice, but local civilian leadership frustrated his plan.\textsuperscript{328}

In late August 1676, when Philip’s threat had significantly diminished, the Council told Uncas that the victory over the hostile coalition was ultimately the colonists’ own, and therefore so were the prisoners of war. Connecticut Colony apparently waited until the services of the Mohegans were no longer critical to its survival to reassert authority over one of the last remaining powerful sachem in southern New England. This

\textsuperscript{327} CCR, 455. Catharine M. North, \textit{History of Berlin, Connecticut}, ed. Adolph B. Benson (Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1916), 23, http://books.google.com/books (accessed 12 July 2010), identifies Turramuggus as the sachem who sold the land of Berlin to the colonists in the late 1660s. He may have been a lesser sachem as son of a more powerful sachem during King Philip’s War, as the practice was for the colonists to keep hostage the sons or grandsons of Indian leaders. The popular notion of hostages bound and gagged by their captors did not apply in seventeenth century New England as trusted English families essentially took the hostages into their homes for the duration of the conflict. There were some escapees, indicating the loose “internment” of the hostages.

\textsuperscript{328} CCR, 403.
incident was not indicative of a complete realignment of policy, however, as the colony only a week later allowed Uncas to maintain jurisdiction over its Wabaquasset-Nipmuck tributaries that had surrendered to him. A year later, the Council also sent representatives asking Governor Edmund Andros of New York to intercede with the Mohawks to release Owaneco, who had been captured by a Mohawk raiding party.

Why did the Connecticut settlers—members of the same Puritan-English cultural background as the Massachusetts and Plymouth colonists—treat their neighboring Indians relatively better during the conflict? The brutal experience of the Pequot War forty years prior to Philip’s rebellion was the vital experience that the other New England colonies did not share with Connecticut. The other colonies were never in danger from Pequot war parties. Although Massachusetts Bay troops participated in the Pequot War to a certain extent, the other New England colonists never experienced Indian attacks during an Indian war. The Connecticut colonists, on the other hand, quickly learned that war in the New World could not be effectively waged without the support of Indian allies. The Pequot War alliance with the Mohegans helped generate Connecticut’s respect for their Native American neighbors during the Great Narragansett War, connections maintained during the intervening years through personal relationships, such as that of Uncas and the Masons and the Pequot sachem Cassasinamon and the Winthrops. Demonstrating the danger of poor neighborhood relations to Connecticut colonists during the Pequot War, local Indians had sided with the Pequots for the raid on

329 CCR, 472-474.
330 CCR, 499-500.
Wethersfield because of a local disagreement between Indians and colonists. In this case, the local tribe provided intelligence and assistance to the colonists’ enemies. The Connecticut colonists capitalized on the sometimes brutal experience of the Pequot War that the other New England colonies lacked. The lesson of maintaining sound relations with local native groups informed the policy of the latter generation of Masons, Winthrops and other Connecticut leaders. There were even a handful of English leaders remaining from the earlier period to continue to influence policy, such as John Winthrop Jr., Connecticut Governor until his death in early spring of 1676.

Connecticut’s policy of moderation was, in part, a reflection of its Governor’s leadership. Winthrop had long-experience in matters of governance and war. Winthrop began his professional career as an executive officer to Captain Best on the Man of War Due Repulse, as part of Admiral Lord Buckingham’s armada sailing in relief of Huguenot forces at the besieged fortress of La Rochelle in 1627. He experienced the ugliness of war, particularly at the battle of the Ile de Re, where he witnessed the royal French Catholic army slaughter poorly marshaled English forces. Robert Black, in The Younger John Winthrop, claims that this experience colored Winthrop’s view of war, and that he thereafter sought diplomatic solutions to solve disputes, and that “from war itself

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331 Jennings, Invasion of America, 217.

332 6 June 1627 letter from Winthrop Sr. to Winthrop Jr., Winthrop Papers, vol. 1 (Boston: Plimpton Press, for the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929), 352.

he would shrink as from an evil beyond calculation.”

Although Winthrop preferred diplomacy to resolve conflict, there is no evidence that Winthrop actually feared war. The primary documents do not specifically note Winthrop’s feelings concerning his first military expedition, but he was waiting anxiously to sail back to England: “I hope we shall not stay here long after [relief from England arrives] I thinke soone after Michaelmas.”

Throughout the course of his public service, Winthrop tried to resolve crises through diplomacy. His actions in Connecticut during the years between the Pequot War and Great Narragansett War indicate his preference for negotiation over

334 Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 33.

335 September 1627 letter from Winthrop Jr. to Winthrop Sr., Winthrop Papers I, 359; Richard S. Dunn, Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 62, does not specify how the La Rochelle expedition shaped Winthrop Jr.’s feelings about war; Neil Kamil, Fortress of the Soul: Violence, Metaphysics, and Material Life in the Huguenots’ New World, 1517-1751 (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 630-631, 863, claims that his experience there developed an aggressive mindset that sprung from militant international Protestantism of the era. Jennings, The Invasion of America, 308, argues that Winthrop was an expansionist, a term corresponding to his characterization of the Europeans as “invaders.” Jennings, Warpaths, 204-206, argues that Winthrop attended a meeting of English and Pequot leaders, where colonial demands were delivered to the tribe. Steele, Warpaths, 91, agreeing with Jennings, implies that Winthrop was heavy-handed in his negotiations with the Pequots as chief negotiator for Massachusetts Bay Colony during the Pequot War. Vaughan, New England Frontier, 126, asserts, however, that the beginning of the conflict preempted Winthrop Jr.’s delivery of Massachusetts Bay’s terms. Cave, The Pequot War, 102, does not demonstrate that Winthrop was at a meeting though this might be the implication of his claim that the Pequot’s allies, the Western Niantics offered Winthrop Jr. land. All accounts refer to Lion Gardiner’s (commander of Fort Saybrook) relation of the event, A History of the Pequot War: Or A Relation of the War between the Powerful Nation of Pequot Indians, once inhabiting the Coast of New England, Westerly from near Narragansett Bay, and the English Inhabitants, in the Year 1638 (Cincinnati: J. Harpel, 1860), 11, http://books.google.com/books (accessed 15 January 2011), which lacked detail and was exceedingly vague. The evidence seems to be sparse concerning Winthrop Jr.’s involvement in the Pequot War, thus it is difficult to ascertain if Winthrop had always been sympathetic to Connecticut’s Indians or if he was more heavy-handed against the Pequots during the earlier conflict and then his attitude towards Indians thereafter shifted.
force. During the crisis leading up to the Pequot War, Massachusetts Bay appointed Winthrop as chief negotiator for that colony’s diplomatic mission to the Pequots. In the events prior to the Great Narragansett War almost 40 years later, Winthrop was again an active force in Indian affairs.

By the outbreak of war in 1675, Winthrop was an old man suffering from chronic illness. He was in a state of semi-retirement, and had at least twice attempted to resign Connecticut’s Governorship so that he could return to England, presumably to die in the land of his birth. The colony’s General Court simply would not accept his resignation, especially after the onset of hostilities. Winthrop returned to work and resumed leadership of the colony, presiding over a number of meetings during the crisis of July 1675. Connecticut’s policy of moderation towards the natives was undoubtedly a hallmark of Winthrop’s predilection for the diplomatic solution. Even during the early days of Puritan hysteria, fostered by the uncertainty of the scope of the Indian rebellion, Winthrop maintained his composure, and on 9 July 1675, argued that the Wampanoags, who had fled to Ninigret, should have “hopes of good quarter if delivered


337 Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 185.

338 Two of Winthrop’s letters of resignation still exist, one to the Connecticut General Court and one sent a month later “To the Deputy-Governor and Assistants of Connecticut;” both were written prior to the onset of major hostilities, Winthrop Papers VIII, 168-170. See also Winthrop Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 185. Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 346, cites the later resignation attempt was on 1 July 1675.

339 Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 185, the crisis in early July 1675 was not only due to the hostile Indian threat, but also from Governor Andros.
to us, &c.  

Three days later Winthrop penned guidance to New England field commanders then in Narragansett country reminding them of Narragansett assistance during the Pequot War, and “to cosider whether it be not far better to take up wth such ingagements of amity as can be attained freely & willingly [from the Narragansetts], then that the potetest of all our neighboring heathen should be made open, professed enemies.”

Winthrop argued against a “so absolute” position regarding the surrender of Narragansett hostages, pointing out that European nations did not require hostages from “newtralls.” Given Winthrop’s veteran experience in these matters, he undoubtedly saw more room for negotiation with the Narragansetts, a powerful tribe and a former English ally with an unknown policy toward Philip. Underlying Winthrop’s argument for treating the Narragansetts like fellow Europeans was also a realist view of affairs: “I believe there is difficulty ynough wth that one enemy, & why to stir up an other before an issue wth ye first [is settled].”

Connecticut Colony did take appropriate measures for its defense, but the colony’s leadership did not allow xenophobia to carry the day. Winthrop left his mark on the colony’s Indian policy before he was summoned to Boston on 19 August 1675, as a senior representative to the assembly of the United Colonies. The Governor’s sons

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340 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 171.

341 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 173.

342 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 173.

343 Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 350.
Majors Fitz-John and Wait Winthrop not only continued their father’s service to the colony, but maintained his policy towards the local native communities. Fitz-John furthered his father’s policy of moderation by distributing cloth to loyal Indians,\footnote{Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 279-280; Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 208.} while Wait led a mission to trade coats to the friendly Mohegans, Pequots and western Niantics in exchange for those tribes handing over hostile Indians.\footnote{CCR, 408.} Wait also participated in the expedition at the war’s outbreak to exact assurances of neutrality from the Narragansetts.\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 348.}

Governor Winthrop would see neither Connecticut nor England again. He died in service at Boston, succumbing to an illness apparently exacerbated by his other health problems.\footnote{Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 185.} While in Boston before his death, Winthrop enraged the other colonial leaders by not restraining Connecticut’s Deputy Governor Leete’s and the War Council’s decision to withdraw Connecticut forces from Massachusetts Bay.\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 351-352.} He was later ignored by the other United Colony assembly delegates when he argued against the December 1675 Great Swamp expedition that he believed was “unnecessary,”\footnote{Quoted in Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 353.} preferring another negotiated settlement with southern New England’s largest tribe.

\footnote{Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 279-280; Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 208.}

\footnote{CCR, 408.}

\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 348.}

\footnote{Dunn, Puritans and Yankees, 185.}

\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 351-352.}

\footnote{Quoted in Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 353.}
Winthrop also advised acting Connecticut Governor Leete to allow Uncas and Ninigret to “draw of fro the enemy all yt will come ine & live quietly,” implying good treatment of those who surrendered. He considered that such treatment would be “an expedient towards peace” and would open the possibility of a treaty with Philip, perhaps setting the stage for Connecticut’s peace entreaties later in the spring.\footnote{Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 177.} Regardless of the other New England commissioners’ animosity, Winthrop was given an extravagant (by Puritan standards) public ‘state’ funeral after he died on 5 April 1676 to pay tribute to his long public service.\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 355.} One of his last major acts at the United Colonies was to urge a policy of leniency for captured or surrendered Indians instead of a policy of slavery advocated by some of his peers from Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies.\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 354.} This argument was very much consistent with his former policy positions regarding Indian relations, and served as a moderating point-of-view to his co-commissioners at the United Colonies. Winthrop influenced Connecticut Colony’s policy of moderation towards Indians, and his leadership was a critical factor in the colony remaining unscathed during Philip’s rising.

Connecticut Colony survived the worst of the Great Narragansett War because it benefited from the experience of a major Indian war on its soil and had the leadership in place to implement a practical policy of moderation towards the neighboring, unaligned native groups. While Connecticut succeeded in maintaining solid relations and effective

\footnote{Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 177.} 
\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 355.} 
\footnote{Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 354.}
policy, its Puritan neighbors misunderstood the loyalties of neighboring Indians and miscalculated their willingness to assist Philip’s coalition. Conversely, Connecticut’s native communities chose to remain allied or neutral during the conflict for reasons that were not recorded, but good relations with their English neighbors were a contributing factor. This relationship prevented Philip’s coalition from obtaining the critical local intelligence necessary to carry out large scale attacks in the colony. Connecticut’s experience in the Pequot War along with the colony’s superior leadership resulted in mostly moderate and practical policy during the period 1675-1676. This resulted in good relations with local native groups, which proved vital to the security of the colony. The presence of allied or neutral native groups in the vicinity of the English settlements improved security for both colonial and native communities. Although local relations were the critical aspect in Connecticut’s emergence unscathed from the Great Narragansett War, there were other factors that contributed to the success of the colony’s defensive operations.
Chapter 6: Defending Connecticut – Influences of the Military Revolution on the New England Frontier

The colony’s positive relationship with local tribes established a foundation for successful defensive operations. Connecticut established a more advanced defensive-military posture than the other New England colonies throughout the course of the Great Narragansett War. The colony’s defenses were similar in style, but on a smaller scale, compared to Europe’s fortifications. The Old World’s Early Modern Era witnessed the development of fortifications based on geometrical design, termed trace italienne. Europeans developed these forts in response to the increased firepower of deployable field artillery of the gunpowder revolution, which readily destroyed the vertical stonewalls characteristic of Medieval defenses. Connecticut was on the frontier of New England and retained the traces of these European-style fortifications built to ward off other European colonies, which the colonists reconstructed during the Great Narragansett War. The hostile coalition did not immediately target Connecticut due to its remote location from the conflict and the initial passive nature of Narragansett support.


354 The gunpowder revolution was the spark of the broader Military Revolution, which according to Parker, included advances in addition to artillery and artillery fortresses such as linear tactics and ships-of-the-line boasting the new artillery. Geoffrey Parker, The Military Revolution: Military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6-44.
for Philip’s coalition. This allowed the colony to reconstruct its fortifications and increase its defensive posture before it became a primary target for the Narragansett-led coalition in the winter-spring of 1676. A surprising number of Pequot War veterans also survived to fight again in King Philip’s War. This also translated into a relative military advantage compared to the other New England colonies with less experienced military leadership. Connecticut leaders passed on military knowledge directly and through military texts bequeathed to subsequent generations. Connecticut’s War Council capitalized on its experience by adequately managing the conflict. Conflict-management was aided by the concentrated nature of Connecticut’s towns and the density of its population in these settlements. Finally, Connecticut maintained an active defense, utilizing friendly, native groups in addition to colonial forces to patrol the countryside.

**Warfare of the Old World and the New**

The inability of attackers to easily overcome developed defenses often led to military stalemate in Europe. “As the English military writer John Cruso observed in 1632: ‘The actions of the modern warres consist chiefly in sieges, assaults, sallies, skirmishes etc., and so affoard but few set battels.’” Another military writer from this era, “Johann Behr stated that, in Germany, ‘Field battles are in comparison scarcely a topic of conversation.... Indeed at the present time the whole art of war seems to come down to shrewd attacks and artful fortification.’” The great Vauban, the most famous military engineer of the epoch, described the importance of fortifications in Europe just prior to the outbreak of King Philip’s War, “its importance has increased to the point where one
can say that today it alone offers the means of conquest and conservation.”

New England’s, and especially Connecticut’s reliance on elements of European-like fortifications from the Military Revolution, and the general absence of set-piece battles during the Great Narragansett War, signify the similarity in fighting styles between Europe and New England. In Connecticut’s case, during the early part of the conflict when it was not a primary target, it created hardened defenses that Indians without artillery found difficult to assault. Compounded by the absence of support from the local tribes, Philip’s coalition stood little chance of offensive success in the colony.

Considering that during King Philip’s War, most of New England was under siege, with colonists crowded into garrison houses and other fortifications and very much afraid to harvest their crops, warfare in the New World was not much different from warfare in the Old World. There were only occasional set-piece battles. The battle at Great Swamp and Pierce’s massacre somewhat resembled a standard European battle, with opposing forces firing close order musketry. The majority of non-siege fighting in New England, however, consisted of “shrewd attacks” (ambushes) or the “sallies” that the European military writers lamented. The Great Narragansett War provided numerous

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355 All as quoted in Parker, “The Artillery Fortress As An Engine of European Overseas Expansion, 1480-1750.”

356 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 151, claims that the Narragansetts at Great Swamp fired a ‘volley’ that killed Captain Davenport and decimated his company of Massachusetts Bay Colony soldiers. At Bloody Brook, Hubbard recounts that Captain Moseley used European tactics for a charge through the natives, who were pillaging the dead from Captain Lathrop’s command, as part of a larger discussion criticizing the colonists’ adoption of the “skulking way of war.” Pierce’s Fight witnessed the Indians advance en masse, in a way that at least resembling ranks (please see below for further discussion of this battle). See Drake, The Old Indian Chronicle, 221, 307; Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 191; Hubbard in Ellis and Morris, 113.
examples of Indian war parties attacking colonial garrisons in all of the New England colonies besides Connecticut. The Great Swamp Fight, for example, saw the colonists battling the Narragansetts behind their fortifications until successfully storming the breech. Both of these military situations resembled the conditions of warfare in Europe. What can we now make of the assertion that “neither [the English nor the Indians] observed traditional European military conventions” because it was incompatible with American conditions, the Indian way of war having to be adopted for the ultimate success of the colonial effort during King Philip’s War?\textsuperscript{357}

With the combatants generally waging King Philip’s War with the methods then en vogue on the European continent, they faced similar problems, namely the inability to capture fortified positions. Philip’s warriors would normally burn the outlying and abandoned homes and farm-buildings, but were often unwilling to attack (in accord with the “cutting off way of war”) or unable to defeat the garrison houses.\textsuperscript{358}

Hubbard confirmed just that:

For [only] at Lancaster where they seemed to have had the greatest Cause of boasting for their Success in any Assault (although it were since known, that they had five hundred fighting Men when they assaulted that small Town of about fifty Families) yet were they able to surprise but one Garrison House, which neither was fenced round, nor were the Defendants able to ply their Shot behind it, but so as the Enemy came to the very

\textsuperscript{357} Starkey, *European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815*, 81.

\textsuperscript{358} Philip’s forces successfully assaulted at least four garrison houses: at Lancaster (Hubbard above), one of Groton’s garrison houses (but most of its inhabitants escaped, Drake, *The Old Indian Chronicle*, 252), William Clark’s garrison house outside of Plymouth, and Bulls’ Garrison near the shore of Narragansett Bay, the appointed rendezvous for colonial forces for the attack on Great Swamp, Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 147-148, 187.
Walls, and Roof on the back Side with their Fuel, or else they had never been able to have dispossessed the Inhabitants.\textsuperscript{359}

The garrisons normally held, but usually at a high cost. Without artillery and military engineers, Indian forces did not normally have the capability to defeat garrisons, and especially full-scale fortifications in a direct manner, although victory through infiltration and surprise could never have been entirely ruled out. Some Connecticut towns relied on the same strong-point system of defense that utilized reinforced garrison houses, but large settlements constructed more advanced fortifications, more so than the other colonies.\textsuperscript{360} The garrison houses served as “the first line of defense for frontier communities,” and the inhabitants were sometimes required to shelter there at night.\textsuperscript{361} A standing guard was required to defend them.

The “history of Ancient Woodbury” Connecticut describes a typical garrison house as:

palisaded … a deep ditch was dug all around the house; logs were then placed perpendicularly in the ditch all around it, leaving space for a gate. Logs sharpened at the top, placed close together, and about twelve (12) feet above the ground. The ditch filled in and the earth replaced and stamped down, and here part of the ditch open; this with the gate was a good defence against sudden attacks …\textsuperscript{362}

\textsuperscript{359} Hubbard, \textit{The History of the Indian Wars in New England}, 260-261.

\textsuperscript{360} General Court Records, CCR, 268-269, the Court ordered each town to provide for its own defense, and at this stage of the war, it was almost always garrison defense. The records have instances of the War Council approving or requiring garrison houses in certain towns.

\textsuperscript{361} Eames, “Garrison Houses” in \textit{Colonial Wars of North America 1512-1763}, 259.

\textsuperscript{362} Quoted in Charles Hervey Townshend, “The Quinnipiack Indians And Their Reservation,” in \textit{Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society} VI, 180-256 (New Haven: 165
Garrison houses were sometimes similar to the European-style fortifications, but on a much smaller scale. The typical garrison house adopted at least two of the features of early modern European fortifications. The “open ditch” from this account, was a small-scale moat, and a War Council’s order to fortify garrison houses in Hartford (and eventually elsewhere) with flankers was standard for the European geometric fortification design. Consisting of wood, the garrison houses were especially vulnerable to attacks with fire, which Malone claims the Indians adopted from the English during the Pequot War. Only a limited number of colonists, an “uncomfortable ‘heap’ of humanity,” could squeeze inside the garrison houses, slightly larger than normal dwellings for the time period converted for defense. By the late fall of 1675, Connecticut mandated the fortification of its major towns because of these weaknesses of a garrison defense, the proven effectiveness of the hostile Indians in destroying towns in the other colonies, and the entry of the Narragansetts into the conflict.

Whether in Europe or the Americas, fortifications alone made for ineffective security. During the Great Narragansett War, the garrisons failed to protect property and sometimes the lives of the colonists, while almost all fortifications even in Europe during

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363 CCR, 375; Eames, “Garrison Houses” in Colonial Wars of North America 1512-1763, 260, argues that “flankers … built at opposite corners of the palisade that could … cover the outer walls in case of attack” only occurred “as the French and Indian wars progressed,” when in fact Connecticut Colony, and likely the other New England colonies, utilized garrison flankers at least a decade before the French and Indians wars during King Philip’s War.

364 Malone, The Skulking Way of War, 32.

this period succumbed to siege, if no relief force was forthcoming and the supplies of the offensive forces held out.\footnote{Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” n. 100.} This was in fact what happened at Fort Saybrook during the Pequot War, when a lack of provisions forced Gardiner to send parties to bring in corn and hay. The Pequots successfully ambushed these.\footnote{Vaughan, \textit{New England Frontier}, 130.} Attackers frequently reduced bypassed fortifications: “Initially, the colonial governments tried stationing small, immobile garrisons in forts situated on the major avenues of approach into the settled areas. However, the Indians quietly bypassed the forts and ambushed the surprised settlers.”\footnote{Larry E. Ivers, “Rangers,” in \textit{Colonial Wars of North America 1512-1763}, 620-621.}

Military engineering capability from Europe crossed the Atlantic with veterans like John Mason and “Lion Gardener, [who] had fought as a youth against the Spaniards with an English volunteer force in the Netherlands.... He stayed on in Holland, winning appointment as a lieutenant of engineers on the staff of the prince of Orange. Having twelve years experience with the Dutch as a master of fortifications, Gardiner was ideally suited to supervise the building of a refuge for Puritan noblemen in the American wilderness.”\footnote{Cave, \textit{The Pequot War}, 91-92; Vaughan, \textit{New England Frontier}, 117, n. 117, also discusses Gardiner’s European military engineering pedigree.} At Saybrook Point in the 1630s, Gardiner “constructed a very respectable fort. The placement of the two cannons on “Fort Hill,” a ten-foot-high mound within the palisade, enabled Gardener to command the treacherous, sand-clogged channel at the
After having served together as sergeants in Colonel Vere’s English regiment in Dutch service in the Netherlands, Major John Mason and Captain John Underhill also served successful yet controversial political and bloody military careers in the early history of New England and New York. The English and Scots maintained five standing regiments in Dutch Service during part of the Eighty Years War, in support of their Protestant coreligionists on the continent. Mason likely served during the siege of S’Hergatobosch, where the Dutch commander implemented a daring and unique plan to capture the fortress. Perhaps Mason employed the same flexibility by setting fire to the Pequot fort at Mystic, at the point in the battle when the

370 Cave, The Pequot War, 92.

371 "Het Staatsche Leger, 1568-1795, Bewerkt Door, F.J.G Ten Raa, gep. Kolonel der Infantrie, en F. De Bas gep. Luitenent-Generaal der Cavalerie, Directeur van het Krijgsgeschiedkunig Archeif van der Generalen Staf, Deel IV., Van den dood van Mauritus, prins van Oranje, graaf van Nassau, tot het sluiten van den vrede te Munster. (1625-1648), No. 540c., Breda. De Koninklijke Militaire Academie., 1918." This citation is the official Dutch military history that details the English regiments in Dutch service, which was translated for me by Prof. John Stapleton, West Point.

372 Major John Mason likely served at the siege of S’Hergatobosch in the Netherlands. Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut, 322, related that Mason had served under Sir Thomas Fairfax, who was in college until joining Vere’s Brigade in Dutch service in 1628-9, Ian J. Gentles, “Fairfax, Thomas, third Lord Fairfax of Cameron (1612-1671),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, on-line ed. 2008 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), (accessed 8 May 2011); And if Stiles was correct in his assertion that Mason arrived in the New World in 1630, Stiles, The History of Ancient Windsor, Connecticut, 124, 1629 was the only overlapping year of service, which was the year that the great siege took place. It was known for its novel tactics, with the chief Dutch engineer re-routing two streams thus de-swamping the area and allowing for a formal siege. Perhaps Mason learned novel approaches to assaulting fortresses, leading to his later actions at Mystic. Underhill, who was likely in the same unit as Mason in the Netherlands, employed a similar technique during Kieft’s War against local Delaware nation tribes.
English were losing. Although Gardiner, Mason, Underhill and many of the other military leaders of the Pequot War had died or were too old for service by the time of the Great Narragansett War, the knowledge that they brought from the Old World survived with the soldiers that they trained, and the fortifications that they designed.

Chet argues that “Colonial commanders, as a group, were simply remarkably inexperienced and unprofessional. Unlike Miles Standish, Lion Gardiner, and John Mason, most of the colonial commanders during King Philip’s War were not professional soldiers trained and seasoned on the battlefields of Europe.” A closer look at the record reveals that a number of Pequot War veterans in fact survived to fight in both wars, and others gained experience fighting other Europeans. Their military experiences, especially in an Indian war, were invaluable for Connecticut forces in the Great Narragansett War. Indeed, many of the Pequot War veterans had become civic and military leaders of their respective Connecticut communities. The following leaders were documented to serve in both wars, but it is certain that others, whose service cannot be confirmed, served in both conflicts. In addition to Governor John Winthrop Jr., a veteran diplomat from the Pequot War, there were a number of military men who attained leadership positions during King Philip’s War. Captain Thomas Bull, who led Connecticut forces at Saybrook against Andros was a Pequot War veteran. He

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373 Battle of Mystic Archaeological Project, 2010-2011, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket Pequot Reservation, Connecticut. Most historians consider Mason’s actions immoral and against the rules of war even by Early Modern Era standards.

374 Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, 39, 67.

375 Selesky, War and Society in Colonial Connecticut, 16 n. 23.
responded to not only the War Council’s order to repair to Fort Saybrook, but also the request for assistance from fellow Pequot War veteran Captain Robert Chapman of Saybrook. Joining Captain Chapman near Saybrook were Pequot War veterans Lieutenant William Pratt and Thomas Munson. Lieutenant Thomas Tracy served as local quartermaster in the vicinity of Saybrook, and disposed of the surrendered weapons of hostile Indians. It is likely he served in the earlier Pequot War.376

Farmington’s Burnham brothers, John and Thomas, were veterans of Massachusetts Bay forces during the earlier Indian conflict. The War Council ordered Pequot War veteran Lieutenant Edward Culver out on at least one scout with a John Stedman. Hostile Indians killed Edward Elmer, who was a veteran of both wars. Narragansetts killed Pequot War veteran Captain John Gallop Jr. “while in the command of a company of Pequot Indians” at Great Swamp.377 Jacob Waterhouse also survived the Pequot War only presumably to die of wounds on 1 September 1676, near the conclusion of the Great Narragansett War. Captain Nathaniel Merriman of Wallingford, discussed in a previous chapter, was a Pequot War veteran as was John Stanley, who after the war settled in my hometown of Kensington, and whose family lent its name to a part

376 Chapman from CCR, 3:15, also 28 July, 1676 letter, from Robert Chapman (at Saybrook) to War Council at Hartford, Old Saybrook Historical Society, Saybrook Families, Box 12, Chapman, 1; William Pratt from the Society Descendants of the Founder of Hartford, video genealogy, 2006, retrieved from, http://www.foundersofhartford.org/Founders/pratt_william.htm; also Old Saybrook Historical Society, (n.d.) Pratt, Saybrook Families, Box 12 DB 12.43; Thomas Munson from Society of the Colonial Wars in the State of Ohio (1916), Register of the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Ohio, Cleveland, OH, 72; D. Tracy, Lieutenant Thomas Tracy and “The Widow Mason” of Wethersfield, Connecticut (Boston: 1907), transcript. This note from a Pequot War-King Philip’s War veterans’ file from Ms. Ashley Bissonnette, comp., courtesy Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket Pequot Reservation, Connecticut.

377 CCR, 3:22 note.
of the city of New Britain. Nicolas and Richard of the leading Olmstead family of Hartford both served in the Pequot War.\textsuperscript{378}

Connecticut’s second generation of leaders, as did their parent’s generation, cultivated combat experience in the Old World as well as the New. Captain George Denison, Connecticut’s most effective field commander, not only served in the Pequot War, but was wounded fighting in the English Civil Wars. After Denison served in the Pequot War, he had returned to England to fight with the Parliamentarians against the Royalists. Genealogical accounts claim that he was wounded at the battles of Marston Moor and Naseby,\textsuperscript{379} the former of which Oliver Cromwell snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in a daring nighttime cavalry assault, while the Early of Manchester


pushed forward with his infantry in support. Did Denison learn tactics for his English Civil War experience that he employed against the Indians 30 years later? Likely not, but he learned how to handle stress, fear, and pain on the battlefield. He also increased his knowledge from his earlier Pequot War experience about how troops respond to combat, and he might have drawn some conclusions about what leaders should do in battle and how they should do it. Perhaps Dension also witnessed the utility of employing dragoons at Naseby. General Thomas Fairfax employed his dragoon’s as an ambush force in the hedges on the New Model Army’s left, and perpendicular to the main line of forces. The dragoons played a decisive role in the battle, pouring in enfilading fire down the lines of the advancing Royal Army. Some of the earliest generation of New Englanders had served under Fairfax when he was a captain in the Netherlands during the Eighty Years War, including Mason and Underhill.

Captain Fitz-John Winthrop (son of the Connecticut Governor and later Governor himself) prepared to fight in 1658 for Charles II prior to the restoration, though this occurred without major combat, and thus he did not gain direct combat experience from that venture. Fitz-John did experience combat in 1673-1674, when leading Long Island English militia against the Dutch in a number of skirmishes. Fighting “conventional”


battles of the time period against other European forces did translate into tangible experience for Connecticut’s leaders. Fitz-John Winthrop’s actions against the Dutch on Long Island in 1673-4, though not as extensive or intense as those that Denison experienced in England, also prepared him for decision-making in the Great Narragansett War and beyond, though he was not involved in major military actions during Philip’s rebellion.

Although the tactics were sometimes different in Indian warfare as discussed in the offensive operations chapter below, general leadership experience and the ability to manage fear and make decisions under fire mattered as much in the seventeenth century as it does today.383 As celebrated military theorist Karl Von Clausewitz asserted, only an experienced commander can come to terms with friction on the battlefield, where theoreticians without combat experience risk catastrophic failure: “Is there any lubricant that will reduce this [friction]? Only one, and a commander and his army will not always have it readily available: combat experience.”384 England’s battlefields provided a handful of Connecticut leaders such experience.

Besides the use of dragoons, there were administrative and organizational similarities between the Parliamentary armies and New Model Army and Connecticut forces during The Great Narragansett War. The trainband flag at Saybrook was even a

383 I have spoken with a number of combat veterans in West Point’s Department of History about their experience under fire and they unanimously agree that training will only approximate battlefield conditions to an extent, but no peacetime activity can truly replicate direct combat.

replica of the “Blew Trayned Bands” of the city of London from the English Civil Wars. The New Model Army, as at Naseby, employed its mounted forces generally in squadrons of 300 troopers and officers, which corresponded roughly to the amount of dragoons that deployed on large field missions for Connecticut during 1675-1676.

New England’s colonial forces carried out large-scale maneuvers, focused on disrupting the hostile groups’ ability to produce food, which were tactics similar in nature to the type of warfare that Parliamentary forces carried out in Ireland during the English Civil Wars. Although research has not uncovered a direct link to Connecticut colonists’ participation in Cromwell’s Irish campaign, undoubtedly New Englanders were familiar with the methods used in attempting to deny the Irish sustenance. The New Model Army’s extirpative warfare in Ireland sought to break the population’s will to resist in a way similar to the New England colonists’ targeting of Native American food supplies: “Elsewhere [in Ireland] the inhabitants ate grass and green corn. A year later widespread starvation was reported in Wexford. The effects of starvation were compounded by the plague which swept across the country in 1652. The new settlers were dismayed to discover the drawbacks of occupying a graveyard.”

Although there were similarities in the type of tactics used to subdue resistance in both New England and Ireland, the link


386 Roberts, *Cromwell’s War Machine*, 92. See the next chapter for a further discussion on Connecticut’s employment of dragoons.

to the English Civil Wars can be taken too far. Ian Gentles argues that Parliamentarian policy was to eradicate the Irish Catholic population and supplant it with English Protestants. This genocidal policy of eradicating the native population to make way for ethnic English settlers reeks of an early lebenraum concept, similar to the one that Nazi Germany later carried out on the Eastern Front during the Second World War. The Jennings school, as discussed above, would see Parliamentarian policy towards native groups in the New World as equivalent to this brutal policy in Ireland, but Native American groups played a key role in the colonists’ victory and unlike in Ireland, the neutral native groups of Connecticut and Rhode Island remained unharmed.

Colonial settlers employed European military engineering techniques that they had learned on the continent and in European schools as well. In addition to Gardiner’s engineering acumen, Richard S. Dunn in Puritans and Yankees claims that the design of England’s Fort Harwich influenced John Winthrop Jr.’s fortification building, once he was commissioned chief fortifications officer at Boston and later at the mouth of the Connecticut River at Saybrook. A letter survives from Winthrop to his father concerning the fortifications at “Langer Point” England, which he visited with a “Kinges workman” and copied: “I have now a perfect plot thereof, wth the dementions of the whole & parts. I will have it read sgt you come downe.” The fort at Langer Point was

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388 Gentles, The New Model Army, 382-384.
390 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 23.
“pentagonal structure with angle bastions and adry ditch,” and supposedly meant to compliment the Harwich fortification.  

A vibrant discussion of military affairs also was carried out between America and Europe, such as this letter sent from Winthrop Jr. then in London to his father in Massachusetts Bay concerning the Thirty Years War: “The Spaniard hath a mighty fleete prepared to goe agt the Dutch at Parnambuco…. The King of Sweden prvaileth in Germany, he hath lately given Tilly an overthrow wth a small army agt his mighty army.”  

Given the great distances concerned and the slow travel between the Americas and Europe, the English colonists surprisingly remained well informed of political and military events around the world. Winthrop’s letter was not an anomaly as the Reverend John Russell at Hadley, even on the besieged New England frontier during King Philip’s War, received information from Europe that he subsequently forwarded to Connecticut with a touch of humor intact: “The Emperor demanding all of the ffrench interest in Alsatia the greater and lesse. The Duke of Larrenes Territories wth two cities of Concern in fflanders The answer is that is to aske one of his eyes. The Emperors Reply is yt he will have more than that viz all yt he holds in fflanders. This the kg of ffrance saith is to demand both his eyes and therefore if they would have it they shall win it by inches to eeke great prparacons For war on both hands.”

392 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 30.
Winthrop also maintained the largest personal library in the New World by the mid-seventeenth century, possibly consisting of over one thousand tracts, some of which concerned military affairs, such as Robert Ward’s *Animadversions of Warre; or a Militarie Magazine of the Truest Rules and Ablest Instructions for the Managing of Warre* (London, 1639). The complete title for Ward’s text, still maintained on the University of Cambridge Newton Library’s catalogue website, includes information about the Thirty Years Wars and, specifically, fortifications:

Anima’dversions of vvarre; or, A militarie magazine of the truest rules, and ablest instructions, for the managing of warre: composed, of the most refined discipline, and choice experiments that these late Netherlandish, and Swedish warres have produced. With divers new inventions, both of fortifications and stratagems. As also sundry collections taken out of the most approved authors, ancient and moderne, either in Greeke, Latine, Italian, French, Spanish, Dutch, or English. In two bookes / By Robert Ward, gentleman and commander.

John Winthrop Jr. was not the only Connecticut leader with access to military texts, which should not be entirely surprising given the literate state of New England’s

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394 The New York State Library maintains Winthrop’s surviving library collection of 270 books and pamphlets: “A Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the New-York Society Library” (New York: C.S Van Winkle, 1813). Ward’s book was the one specific military text in the remaining collection. There has been some debate over the authenticity of the library. Some of the texts were originally and probably correctly attributed to Winthrop Sr. Also, as Herbert Greenberg argues in “The Authenticity of the Library of John Winthrop the Younger,” *American Literature* 8, no. 4 (January 1937), 448-452, at least 20 volumes were printed after the date of Winthrop Jr.’s death (April 1676), proving these tracts were added to the collection at a later date, if they were even part of the original library. See also John Winthrop, Geo Starkey and C.A. Browne “Notes from the Books and Letters of John Winthrop, Jr., (1606-1676),” *Isis* 11, no. 2 (December 1928), 325-342. Ward’s book was published in 1639, and the copy in the collection was assuredly in New England, most likely Connecticut, during King Philip’s War.

white-male population. Veteran Captain Nathaniel Merriman, town leader of
Wallingford, bequeathed his military texts to his son: “I give to my son Caleb my military
books, my cutlash & sash, my best gun & all other accoutrements belonging to military
affairs.” Merriman chose to highlight “military books” first in his 1692 will, indicating
perhaps that military texts were more valued and important than weapon systems, even at
a time when the New England lacked weapons-production capability. This was the
opposite case than the U.S. Army military culture of today, where a weapon system is
more valued than a field manual, which might also have something to do with availability
of texts over weapons, a reversal of affairs in seventeenth-century New England. With an
emphasis on military texts, it was likely that Connecticut’s military leaders actually read
them and attempted to employ in combat what they read when it was applicable.
European-style warfare had indeed made inroads in the New World, particularly in
Connecticut, through a variety of means such as imported texts, military experience
abroad, and written communication with the Old World.

Connecticut’s settlers in fact had prepared to confront the Old World threat of
other European powers. Connecticut was more directly threatened with matters of war
than the other colonies because it was on the New England frontier with the Dutch and
astride two potential invasion routes from French Canada, with the Hudson and
Connecticut River valleys. As Plymouth Colony and most of Massachusetts Bay Colony
became more removed as the frontier advanced westwards, Connecticut remained on the

396 Nathaniel Merriman’s will and final testament copied from original of 1692, “Reunion
of descendants of Nathaniel Merriman at Wallingford, CT June 4 1913; with a Merriman
genealogy for five generations,”
www.archive.org/stream/reunionofdescend00merriala/reunionofdescend00merriala_djvu.txt
(accessed 1 Jan 2011).
frontier and the threat in fact grew as the Dutch and French became hostile to the English as the seventeenth century progressed. The Indian threat also affected Connecticut more from a supra-regional perspective than the other New England colonies with the Narragansetts on its eastern flank, the Nipmuck and River tribes to the north and the Delaware and Iroquois leagues to the west.

The evidence of fortifications in Connecticut’s colonial records enables an expansion of Geoffrey Parker assertion that “[i]n America as in Asia, however, isolated fortresses proved of limited use. They served to create a safe environment for trade and a defense against low-intensity threats, but they could not resist a major assault.”

Although European forces did not attack the Connecticut Colony’s defenses directly during the seventeenth century, the colony implemented European-new-style artillery fortress to deter European forces and prepare for potential attacks. The colonial fort at Saybrook, at the strategic mouth of the Connecticut River, deterred the higher-intensity threat of New York Governor Andros’ invading force, and the earliest garrison there, prior to the Pequot War, fired cannon at a Dutch ship to prevent a landing.

The Dutch also threatened Connecticut in the Eastern Niantic-Dutch conspiracy of the early-1650s, and the colony was in an especially precarious position because it bordered New Netherlands. In 1665, 1667 and 1673, Winthrop believed that the Dutch

397 Parker, “The Artillery Fortress As An engine of European Overseas Expansion, 1480-1750;” also Lee, “Using the Natives Against the Natives: Indigenes as ‘Counterinsurgents’ in the British Atlantic, 1500-1800.”

398 General Court Records, CCR, 334-335.

399 Cave, The Pequot War, 92.
would raid the colony’s coast, and Connecticut leaders assisted the English colonists on Long Island against an invading Dutch force from Manhattan in 1673-74. The Dutch force consisted of a “small vessel of six guns wth 300 men,” a considerable force of European infantry for the New World at the time, justifying Winthrop’s fears. Militia forces led by Connecticut’s Fitz-Winthrop defeated the Dutch forces in battle, and the English colonists won a number of other skirmishes. As part of the war settlement, England soon regained Manhattan from the Dutch.

The French, the English colonists’ greatest threat in the decades following the war, were a threat to Connecticut Colony’s security as early as the mid-1660s, when the French and Dutch were temporarily allies. Governor Winthrop was suspicious of French interaction with the Algonquin tribes to the north of Connecticut, worrying that France’s Indian allies, with or without French forces, would use the war against the Mohawks as an excuse to attack the settlements of their English allies. Winthrop regarded this threat grave enough on one occasion to ready the Connecticut militia. He

400 Governor Winthrop mentioned the threat of the Dutch fleet to Connecticut’s coastline in 1665 and 1667, Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 97, 118. During the English-Dutch war of 1673-74, Winthrop sent intelligence to his son Fitz-John on Long Island when the Dutch fleet sailed from New York (Winthrop Papers VIII, 152). The fleet’s destination was unknown, and it easily could have raided the Connecticut coast.

401 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 158.

402 CCR, 556-557; Schenk, History of Fairfield, 170-71.

403 Selesky, War and Society in Colonial Connecticut, 14, mentions the temporary French-Dutch alliance.

404 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 98, 100, 102, 118.

405 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 100.
sent Connecticut cavalry in a joint expedition with Massachusetts forces “to discover the
way toward Canada, whether passable for horse, as also to get good intelligence of the
motion of the French Army … [which was] pretending against the Mohaques.” 406
Winthrop also noted “the strange march of a French army in the very depth of winter fro
Canad, wch alarmed all our inland plantations.” 407 England considered the French in
Canada a serious enough threat to order its invasion, although Winthrop ultimately
avoided committing Connecticut troops in a Canadian expedition and a proposed attack
on the French Caribbean islands. 408

In 1669, Mason Sr., believed strongly enough that the French were attempting to
ally with the southern New England tribes, including the Mohegans, Pequots, Niantics
and Narragansetts, that he ordered Owaneco to bring in some of his followers’
muskets. 409 During King Philip’s War, some colonists believed that the French were
supplying Philip’s forces, and reportedly French agents at Pocumtuck (Deerfield)
couraged attacks during the conflict. 410 King Philip reportedly met with a Monsieur

406 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 102. Bodge, Soldiers in King Philip’s War, Appendix, 466-
467, cites that Major Mason “organized a troop of horse of thirty-seven members” in 1658 and
that it had increased in size to sixty members by 1672. This unit of regular cavalry (not
dragoons) was known as the First Connecticut Cavalry, and was most likely the one sent by
Governor Winthrop to reconnoiter the route to Canada.

407 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 104.

408 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 103, 119.

409 As described in an earlier chapter, Connecticut leadership rarely demanded the
surrendering of firearms. That Mason, the patron of the Mohegans made some of the tribe
surrender weapons testifies to the colonists’ perception of the seriousness of the plot. Other
Connecticut leaders believed strongly in the plot such as Indian agent Thomas Stanton and
Colony Secretary Richard Allyn, IS, 1:1:1, 4, 10, 12-22.
Normanville outside of Boston, and the Frenchmen told Philip to spare the best English houses because a 300 man French army, with extra ammunition for the Indians, would arrive in the spring to reinforce the uprising. Normanville’s role in the war seems complicated as he later tipped off the English of the Connecticut River that local tribes were massing against them, perhaps playing both sides.

Monsieur Normanville’s original boast partially materialized as intelligence arrived at Connecticut’s War Council in the fall of 1675, indicating French influence in the war: “From such a common enemie, whoe are sayd to be encouraged by the French who supply them with ammunition great store, some have been seen amongst them lately as we are Informed, & promise them in the Spring great assistance of men & ammunition.” Although this attack never occurred, and the French were technically allied to the English in 1675, the English colonists’ fears proved justified when Indian-French forces attacked New England a decade later and repeatedly during the French and Indian wars.

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410 Hubbard ultimately concludes that the French were not actively aiding Philip, The History of the Indian Wars in New England, 266, and 203 for the French at Pocumtuck. Certainly Hubbard did not have all of the evidence in 1677, and the best place to discover possible French assistance to Philip is the French colonial records, if they still exist. The French did not send an army to aid Philip, but historians cannot conclusively rule out that the French did not provide material assistance such as weapons and ammunition.

411 Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 187, from the testimony of a James Quanapohit, CWS 1:355. This meeting likely transpired before the war’s outbreak because it would have been too dangerous for a white man to travel into Indian country, and too suspicious for a Frenchman to travel into the countryside to confer with the leader of an Indian uprising, 6 Oct 1675 Letter from Deputy Governor and Council to Andros, Wyllis Papers, 226-267.
Unsurprisingly, Connecticut settlements responded to the threat of other Europeans by building fortresses with elements of European design. During the Early Modern Era, engineers designed fortresses to absorb artillery fire and provide defenders with overlapping fields of fire. These forts, unlike the tall, vertical stone walls of the Middle Ages, boasted “thick [sloping] walls, broad moats, and geometrical bastions.”\textsuperscript{412} The Council of War directed that Connecticut adopt the geometrical pattern with the

\textsuperscript{412} Parker, “The Artillery Fortress As An Engine of European Overseas Expansion, 1480-1750.”
“flanker” design. Connecticut designed its fortifications during King Philip’s War with moat-like ditches; mutually supporting “flankers” with interlocking fields of fire; wooden palisades reinforced with earthen mounds; sally-ports; ramparts lined with platforms, where the garrisoning forces could fire down upon the enemy; and fields of fire cleared for observation around the entire work out to effective musket range.

Artillery augmented key positions within the fortifications in major towns such as Hartford and New Haven, and at the strategic mouth of the Connecticut River at Saybrook. Fort Saybrook had bastions and the original Windsor fortification boasted “an irregular parallelogram” and ditches, both forts thus featured components of Early Modern Europe’s geometric military fortification design. The fort at Saybrook had always been a major fortification, and Connecticut forces improved it over time. The original fort had burned down in the mid-1640s, and was rebuilt closer to the water’s edge from its original location. This was likely due to the elimination of the Pequot threat after the Pequot War. The fort’s original location likely controlled the narrow causeway to Saybrook Point, and after the Pequot War, English settlers developed the area, eliminating the need for the fort to control the causeway. Thus the English

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413 The War Journal has at least two notations for “flankers” (CCR, 375, 413), and one for “forelorns” (CCR, 444) that would have been defenses out front of the main works, serving the same purpose as the forelorn body of musketeers in front of the main line of infantry and were thus a “forelorn hope.”

414 Roberts, Encyclopedia of Historic Forts, 122, 125.
relocated the fort to achieve greater range and accuracy for controlling the mouth of the Connecticut River.\(^{415}\)

By the onset of the Great Narragansett War, the fort had deteriorated. Shortly after Governor Andros’ return to New York after threatening Saybrook Fort, the War Council on 19 July 1675 ordered Captain Bull to Hartford “To receive some Instructions about renewing the fortifications upon the place.” He was to leave only 16-20 men in garrison there, yet the fort still depended on local towns to provide for the garrison as Bull was “to give notice to Lime & Kennelsworth to be in all readynes to assist Seabrooke upon Call …”\(^{416}\) This meant that the fort was so small that it lacked sufficient storage for provisioning even a tiny garrison. A few years after the war, the crown ordered a survey of the English colonies, and Connecticut’s report in fact reveals that the local towns still provided for the fort:

6Q: what castles and forts are within your corporation and how situated and fortified and what stoares and provisions they are furnished with.

Answ: we have one small fort with our colony which is at the mouth of the Conecticutt River; at a place called Saybrooke, and our stores of provision are but slender we having townes about it that can carry provision to it upon all occasions.\(^{417}\)

\(^{415}\) Having walked the terrain of Saybrook Point, I believe that the original fort was on the 10 meter high hillock approximately 75 meters to the northeast of the current display for the original fortress, which in my estimate, is located in the wrong place. The Park’s Service has established a grant for the Foxwoods’ Museum staff to locate the original fort, and their initial archaeological survey confirms that my analysis likely is correct.

\(^{416}\) 19 July 1675 letter to seaside towns from Deputy Governor Leete and Secretary Allyn (letter written in two scripts), Wyllis Papers, 215-216.

Fort Saybrook continued to exist as a key fortification in the colony through the nineteenth century.

There were other heavily fortified areas of Connecticut in addition to Saybrook. Although the records do not explicitly mention the structure of New Haven’s fortifications during King Philip’s War, there was scattered evidence that fortifications did in fact exist there that were rebuilt during the conflict. The fifth clause of New Haven Colony’s laws, before the colony was incorporated into Connecticut in the early 1660s, required that elected officials maintain “Works and Fortifications” within the colony.\(^{418}\)

New Haven’s leadership also warned against rebellion, specifically a scenario where the rebels would seize the fortification, platform or “great Guns.”\(^{419}\) The term fortification likely referred to palisades and a ditch as well as the structure in its totality, while the platform referred to the blockhouse or similar strong point within the walls that sometimes served as a firing platform for the cannon. The following was a useful description of what some of New Haven’s defenses supposedly consisted of based on an “outline” from the Colonial Records of New Haven Colony:

> The fortifications consisted of a palisade line of wooden posts of timber that would square twelve (12) inches set close together five (5) feet in the ground and several thicknesses and ten (10) feet above and at the top pointed; which were properly braced and filled in between with earth and clay excavated from the ditch dug on the outside ten (10) feet deep and fifty (50) feet wide which was flooded with water from the harbor, and


perhaps from the Beaver Ponds. This Palisade was built wide enough for a soldier to march on top and may have had also a platform on the inside low enough for a sentinel to walk, with body protected by the works, with loopholes for observation. On the sea side in full view were the king’s arms cut in wood and great guns mounted, also at the meeting house in the Market Place, which was protected by flankers and palisades (with a “watch tower” on top).  

Colonists sometimes referred to strong points within defenses that were more than wooden palisades as “castles.” John Winthrop, writing in 1673 about New Haven’s fortifications, described a “captaine Manig,” who “fell downe fro the wall of the castle there 16 foot high.” The use of the term ‘castle’ as opposed to ‘palisadoes’ signified that at least a portion of a more robust European-style of the defense was in place as late as a year and a half before the outbreak of the Great Narragansett War.

The colonists used the term ‘castle’ to refer to the main defenses at Boston harbor and Plymouth proper. In the case of Massachusetts Bay, the colonists constructed the castle-fortress in the harbor as an artillery fortress meant to combat other European powers from entering the bay. Massachusetts Bay’s court used the term ‘castle’ and ‘castle soldiers’ during the Great Narragansett War, ordering garrison troops there to pay taxes at the same rate as its cavalry troopers, probably because the court considered garrison duty in Boston Harbor to be of a safer and more elite nature than service in its

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420 Townshend, “The Quinipiack Indians And Their Reservation,” 180-256. The New Haven Colony records never referenced a similar description of a fortress there.

421 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 149.
colony’s infantry or dragoon forces. The colonists erected the fortresses at Saybrook, Plymouth and New Haven, which colonists also described as “castles,” to combat and deter European forces, though in the latter two, there was a measure of deterrence against local native groups as well. Saybrook Fort’s rebuilding after the Pequot War and Boston fortifications were designed exclusively to combat Europeans, commanding key water approaches that only European naval forces could exploit.

New Englanders allowed their fortifications to slip into a state of disrepair, anticipating the trend in American history, where the enervation of military forces occurs during times of peace, only to have to rebuild military infrastructure during crises. This fact revealed the colonists inherent fear about the oppressive nature of standing forces, which occurred in the Stuart period of England, as well as an inherent dislike of high taxes used to pay for unused military apparatuses during peacetime. The European-artillery fortresses at Boston, Plymouth, Saybrook, and perhaps New Haven, repeatedly fell into disrepair and disuse, only to be reconstituted when threats of invasion or uprising surfaced. The use of the traces of these fortresses gave the New Englanders a head-start, however, instead of having to build fortifications from scratch. This was especially the case in Connecticut, where settlers originally built more fortresses because of the colony’s tenuous position on the New England frontier with the Dutch, French, and the Pequot (until 1637), Narragansett, Delaware, and Iroquois native groups. The Dutch threat was especially dangerous to the colony’s settlers as the skirmishes on Long Island

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confirm, though the colonists constructed fortifications along Connecticut’s coast to combat it.423

The trace of fortresses at Saybrook, New Haven, Hartford, and Windsor—where evidence exists of original fortresses—translated into a military advantage for the Connecticut colonists during King Philip’s War. This advantage was redoubled because of the generally contiguous nature of Connecticut’s population density along the shoreline and Connecticut and Thames Rivers. Connecticut was not originally the hostile coalition’s primary target, allowing the colonists’ to rebuild their fortresses from the trace of these from the previous generation.424 The delay in targeting Connecticut was a significant factor in the colonies success, as Hubbard presents the counterfactual of the Narragansetts joining with Philip earlier in the conflict: “However the good hand of God has see in so ordering things that the Narragansetts were for the present restrained from breaking out into open Hostility against the English … when Philip began; which if they had then done … it would have been difficult, if possible for the English to have saved any of their inland plantations from being utterly destroyed.”425

423 Samuel Orcutt, History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1886), 143-144.

424 Plymouth rebuilt its original fortification at least four times along the original trace in 1632, 1635, 1642, and 1675, while Massachusetts Bay Colony rebuilt its “castle” a number of times. See Robert Arthur, “Coast Forts of Colonial Massachusetts” in The Coastal Artillery Journal 58, no. 2 (23 Feb 1923); 106, 108-121, http://books.google.com/books (accessed 17 June, 2009).

425 Hubbard, A Narrative of Troubles with the Indians (Boston: John Foster, 1677), 29.
Although scant primary-source evidence exists, Hartford’s defenses probably were rebuilt along an original trace described by Noah Webster in an early history of the town:

When Hartford was first settled...the main street was laid out very wide, and nearly a mile in length. At each end a fort was built: that at the north end was near the house now occupied by the descendents of Col. Talcott; that at the south was on or near the side of the late south school house, at the forks of the road—one leading to Wethersfield, the other to Farmington. The Garrison could see from one fort to the other.426

Hartford’s original defenses would thus have corresponded to Plymouth’s defenses, with the main avenue of that town roughly the maximum range of an artillery piece of the time period. Most black powder weapons of the early modern time period, regardless of how large the caliber, the amount of charge, or training of the cannon crew, did not fire accurately at over one thousand yards.427 Thus Hartford’s guns could traverse the town from one end to the other though at maximum effective range, should a portion of the town fall into enemy hands. The developed nature of Hartford’s original defenses corresponded to the Dutch threat there, as they maintained a fortress in Hartford as well for over a decade after the arrival of the English there! Hartford likely revived some of its defenses along the old trace during the Great Narragansett War, at least the strong points, as the war council headquartered in the town demanded advanced works for all of the major towns in the colony.

426 John W. Barner, Connecticut Historical Collections (New Haven: Durrie & Peck and J.W. Barber, 1836), 49.

It is difficult to determine, as in the case of Hartford, the fortifications at Windsor during the Great Narragansett War. The Windsor colonists from Plymouth Colony constructed palisades around the town in the irregular pattern described above. The name of the main thoroughfare—Palisado Avenue—which crosses the Farmington River near its confluence with the Connecticut River, reflects the defensive posture of the first settlement. Having observed a portion of the original town trace, the terrain falls down to the Farmington River on the south and meadow on the east, creating the affect of a ditch, and the settlers constructed the outer palisades on the top of this high ground. It was efficient for the original settlers to use the natural terrain instead of placing the original town in an area where they would have had to dig a defensive ditch. The colonists realized the strategic importance of fortifying the area that controlled the confluence of two significant rivers in central Connecticut. They probably borrowed the general concept of the defenses that they observed while inhabiting Plymouth, and built a castle-strong-point defense, complemented by an encompassing wooden palisade, and the ditch-like structure of the natural terrain.
Figure 6.2. Windsor Fortification Plan of the 1630s, in Henry R. Stiles, *Ancient History of Windsor* (New York: Charles B. Norton, 1859).

With the outbreak of King Philip’s War, Windsor had long out-grown the restrictive Palisado-model, but perhaps the colonists revived the old trace as an inner defense and refuge. Henry Stiles related that the local colonists worked on a ‘stone fort,’
which was really a garrison house with a flanker. Town leaders excused Windsor men from training to work on the garrison house. \(^{428}\) There was also reference to a large gun on a carriage that the Windsor men repaired during the war. \(^{429}\) Colonists often mounted such guns on strong-point castle defenses, likely the kind that the colonists of Windsor reconstituted after the outbreak of the Great Narragansett War. Whatever constituted Windsor’s defenses, the hostile tribes did not attempt an all-out assault, even though they burned the outlying portions of what was then Springfield, now Suffield, Connecticut, a mere 6 miles from the Windsor settlement. The Springfield colonists did abandon their settlement, however, prior to its destruction and sought to resettle it after the cessation of hostilities: “The Settling of suffield having been some Time obstructed by the War with the Indians; which necessitated such as were there to remove the last year, and put a stop to many others that were coming to that Place, And Whereas, Thro the favor of God in scattering the Heathen, and giving us some Quiet, there is hope of resettling there.” \(^{430}\)

The town of Stratford in Fairfield County also relied on past traces. On the coast and nearby a sometimes hostile Dutch colony, Stratford probably relied on more than the traditional “palisadoe” defense. Like New Haven and other towns along the coast, Stratford built a castle-like structure to mount its few guns within the wooden palisades. Palisades alone would not be able to mount cannon, and local tradition states that the


\(^{429}\) Stiles, *Ancient History of Windsor*, 162.

\(^{430}\) 20 Dec 1676 meeting notes of the Committee for Suffield consisting of John Pynchon, George Colton, Benjamin Cooley, Rowland Thomas, in Hezekiah Spencer Sheldon, *Documentary History of Suffield: In the Colony and Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1660 to 1749* (Springfield: The Clark W. Bryan Company, 1879).
town’s guns were one of the first items that town leaders considered.\textsuperscript{431} Stratford was on the frontier with the unsettled bounds of western-southwestern Connecticut at the time of King Philip’s War and reconstituted its defenses during the conflict,\textsuperscript{432} utilizing perhaps the original trace.

The Stonington settlement also had a significant fortress, boasting a strong point within the palisades on the property of Captain George Denison. The fort was 25 rods in length at its longest point, over 410 feet total. This was a significant fortification, located on a spur commanding the surrounding low-lying farm land and a crossing point of the Pequotsepus Creek. Denison’s farmstead abutted the fortress, but no other settlements were located within the palisades. Besides for defense and intimidation, the colonists utilized the Denison fortress as a rallying point for offensive operations in the same way as the Pequot’s Mohantic Fort described below.\textsuperscript{433}

The towns’ execution of the War Council’s orders varied by locale. As with Wethersfield and other towns, New Haven’s fortifications were “still incomplete when the war ended.”\textsuperscript{434} Into March 1676, the “fortification” at Milford for instance, was only one-third complete and the town’s leadership complained of the citizens’ unwillingness to build it. Thomas Topping, one of the leaders actually confiscated town-members’

\textsuperscript{431} Orcutt, \textit{History of Stratford}, 139.

\textsuperscript{432} Orcutt, \textit{History of Stratford}, 169.

\textsuperscript{433} I completed a terrain analysis of the likely site of the Denison fortress on the actual grounds, and interviewed the Denison Homestead staff, who provided this information. Also see Richard A. Wheeler, \textit{History of Stonington, County of New London Connecticut from its First Settlement in 1649 to 1900} (New London: Press Of The Day Publishing Company, 1900), 22.

\textsuperscript{434} Selesky, \textit{War and Society in Colonial Connecticut}, 18.
goods, who failed to turn-out for fortification detail, using the War Council’s previous order as justification. Topping also mentioned that the “stockadoe line” was under dispute by members of the town committee, and others complained that the Indians would simply cut through it.435

Figure 6.3 Connecticut Transition To Fortifications Map, March 1676. Based on my original research, William Keegan, Heritage Consultants, LLC, prepared this Map specifically for this Dissertation.

Even with unfinished defenses, Connecticut towns were still more defensible than they had been before the war, complete with some elements of European-fortress design elements such as flankers and ditches. By the end of the war, the forts at Saybrook, Hartford, New Haven, Stonington and possibly Windsor and Stratford had extensive works similar to European artillery fortresses, while Wethersfield, Milford, Farmington, Simsbury, Fairfield and other towns erected palisades to some degree of completion. Still other towns relied only on fortified garrison houses, such as Haddam, New London, Norwich, Rye and Wallingford, where Nathaniel Merriman’s barn was chosen for flankers. In the cases of New London and Norwich, multiple garrison houses created interlocking fields of fire, as these were in supporting positions around the outer perimeter of the towns. Many towns that still relied on garrison-house defense alone, however, risked destruction of property by not fortifying more extensively. Given its


437 Merriman’s barn was chosen for flankers as noted on 5 October in a Town Record entry, Wallingford: “Reunion of descendants of Nathaniel Merriman at Wallingford, CT, June 4 1913; with a Merriman genealogy for five generations,” www.archive.org/stream/reunionofdescend00merriala/reunionofdescend00merriala_djvu.txt (accessed 1 Jan 2011), 72; CCR, 425 (Haddam);

relatively small population, the colonists heavily fortified the colony by mid-conflict. At Connecticut had become virtually an armed camp, and the number of fortifications per density of population certainly was comparable to some areas of Europe.

Sometimes advised by Connecticut’s leadership as in the cases of Derby and Simsbury, colonists abandoned frontier settlements to consolidate defensive operations within the colony.\textsuperscript{439} The colonists of Simsbury, Woodbury, Derby, Mattatuck (later Waterbury) and perhaps other outlying settlements abandoned all or portions of their towns during the war.\textsuperscript{440} Abandoning towns had a net-positive defensive effect, similar to fortifying them. Not only did this practice protect lives and removable property, but it allowed Connecticut to concentrate its resources on towns that were more defensible. It also enhanced the contiguous pattern of the colony’s settlements, which was a major security problem for the other New England colonies. The desertion of these settlements essentially meant that Connecticut’s western and northwestern frontier had been abandoned. Perhaps in some small measure this was a victory for the hostile coalition, but the military operational effect was to consolidate defenses, increasing the colony’s overall security.


Though the other New England colonies relied more on garrison-house-strong-point defense than Connecticut, in scattered instances, these colonies also employed robust elements of European defenses. The main fortification at Plymouth and the Castle in Boston Harbor retained elements of European-artillery fortresses, while other scattered references suggest that there were a few other advanced constructions. Captain Henchman wrote to Governor Leverett discussing the completion of a southeast flanker of the fort at Pocasset swanp. ⁴⁴¹ Outside of Connecticut, however, advanced fortifications were an exception. Rhode Island used garrison houses and many of its residents evacuated to Newport on Aquidneck Island. ⁴⁴² A Rhode Island War Council’s order to abandon Warwick and Providence and remove to Newport during the spring offensive epitomized the ineffective nature of Rhode Island’s garrison-style defense. ⁴⁴³

**Connecticut’s Conflict Management**

Connecticut’s deliberate moderate policy towards the local Indians and adequate defenses based on the European model were inseparable; one was ineffective without the

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⁴⁴¹ 31 July 1675 letter from Captain Henchman to Governor Leverett, Massachusetts Manuscript (MSS) Collections, vol. 67, Dorchester, Massachusetts, Doc. 232, describes the flankers, while Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 80, elaborate on the fort’s purpose.

⁴⁴² 10 July 1675 letter from War Council to Winthrop Jr., stating Rhode Islanders had fled to Aquidneck Island (Newport and other towns there) or were fortifying their houses on the mainland and asking Connecticut to engage the hostiles, vol. 67, Massachusetts MSS, Doc. 209 ¾.

⁴⁴³ 13 March letter from Rhode Island General Assembly to Warwick and Providence advising them to abandon their towns and move to Aquidneck Island, Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, 533.
other. Connecticut enacted a number of self-defense measures and incrementally increased them as it became apparent that Philip’s rising spread from a local conflict to a New England-wide war. One of the first measures that the Connecticut General Court took was to ensure proper leadership for the colony with the creation of the War Council, which first convened on July 14th, 1675.444 Facing the hostile threats of King Philip and Royal New York Governor Andros, the Court granted the Council wide powers, pre-authorizing all of the Council’s decisions that were consistent with the colony’s charter. The Council originally consisted of the Governor, Deputy Governor, and “Assistants” (other colony leaders), as well as Captains Benjamin Newbery and Samuel Wells, and Mr. John Wadsworth and Mr. Richard Lords, although additional members were later added. The Council needed a quorum of at least five members to vote with the Governor or Deputy Governor always present to convene the Council.445 The War Council’s ability to make effective and timely decisions especially was impressive given the slow movement of information by messenger.

All of the New England colonies faced the seventeenth-century systemic problems of poor communications’ technology and lack of infrastructure. The New England colonies also lacked strategic and campaign military experience at the deliberative-body level of the general courts and war councils, which were responsible for implementing military policy and command and control. New England’s United

444 General Court Records, CCR, 331. Connecticut relied on a committee somewhat akin to the War Council during the Pequot War, and another very similar to it during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 10, 17.

445 General Court Records, CCR, 261. The “Assistants” were advisors to the Governor and Deputy Governor rather than clerical staff.
Colonies, with representatives from each colony except apostate Rhode Island, attempted to coordinated policy and strategy, while each colony maintained its individual general court and war councils that also attempted to coordinate these issues. Differences such as population density, settlement pattern and geography affected each colony’s war effort and its council’s ability to manage the conflict. With the exception of Connecticut, all failed effectively to manage the war effort, and the Great Narragansett War doomed the United Colonies. Connecticut’s War Council and General Court performed adequately compared to similar bodies in the other New England colonies, although there were more factors involved in the colony’s success than command and control.

Connecticut’s War Council had an easier task managing the war effort than Massachusetts Bay’s War Council. Besides the fact that Connecticut was not a primary target early in the conflict for the hostile coalition, which allowed its decision-making body more time for sorting out its defenses, its population had settled more densely along rivers and Long Island Sound. This increased the Council’s ability to manage military affairs and stay abreast of the military situation through more rapid communication. In fact, Connecticut’s major offensive focus was the upper Connecticut River valley until the entry of the Narragansetts into the war with the Great Swamp Fight of December 19th 1675. Connecticut’s primary line-of-communication with these Massachusetts Bay towns thus corresponded to the Connecticut River’s north-south course, and facilitated rapid communication on or along the river. As is often the case with terrain features, the Connecticut River valley could serve either as a rapid communication concourse or as discussed above, an invasion highway for the hostile groups. Rivers at this time served
as the super-highways of today, and the proximity to the Connecticut River aided the speed of transmitting and receiving orders from the colony’s headquarters at Hartford.

The other New England colonies lacked such a neat strategic corridor. Massachusetts Bay’s Council had to administer far-flung settlements along the Connecticut River and elsewhere that were not geographically contiguous with the main population centers surrounding Boston like an arc. It also lacked a solid east-west-line-of-communication centered on a terrain feature that would allow it to manage its war efforts in its western theater in the same fashion that the Connecticut River Valley allowed Connecticut to command and control its seat of the conflict to the north. With population estimates placing Massachusetts Bay Colony at about three times the size of Connecticut’s population of around 11,000, managing the latter population was a simpler task for councils of roughly equivalent size. The war councils of New England all suffered from a limited ability to communicate with field forces, analyze intelligence, and transmit orders. Although a historical lack of a military orders-process for the time period would have rendered a larger council less effective than more modern times, simply having more leaders to communicate with field leaders and transmit orders would have assisted Massachusetts’ conflict management.

Massachusetts Bay’s War Council had the most difficult task of all the New England colonies, as it was roughly the same size as other councils yet had to manage and lead a much larger population across a disparate settlement pattern. Given the limitations of communication, lack of infrastructure such as road networks and rivers running east-west, the council was unable to manage effectively its war effort. In turn,
this burdened Massachusetts field commanders with higher level decision-making, requiring experienced subordinates that could have translated the unclear or absent intent of the council all the way back in Boston into the lower realm of campaign and battlefield decision-making. Massachusetts, like the other colonies, lacked senior experienced field leaders, and two of the colony’s experienced “Indian fighters”—Captains Beers and Lathrop—failed miserably and were killed in ambushes at Beers’ Defeat and Bloody Brook.

Evidence indicates that there were cultural differences between the different war councils as well. Plymouth’s Council was loath to direct its overall war effort and therefore authorized town councils to prosecute the war as they deemed fit. Shirking its conflict-management duty, Plymouth concerned itself only with Indian policy and military personnel issues. Plymouth’s self-imposed command and control restriction created a campaign-guidance vacuum for its field commanders. It was not until late in the conflict on June 7th, 1676, after the hostile coalition already had devastated Plymouth Colony that Plymouth’s government sought to streamline its War Council procedures by authorizing a small group of leaders to make emergency decisions for the colony without a full assembly deliberation. Large decision-making bodies are useful for representative politics, but can act as a retardant for military decisions that demand

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decisive action. Plymouth’s relative lack of military success reflected, in part, this failure at the highest levels of command.

Connecticut utilized a smaller war council than Plymouth from the beginning of the war, leading to a more cogent and efficient command process. Connecticut’s War Council also made more invasive lower-level decisions, for instance detailing even which roads Connecticut troops would patrol and where many of the field forces would concentrate their specific efforts. Certainly more experienced leadership would have chaffed under such micro-management, but Majors Treat and Talcott both appear to have lacked combat experience, though both were savvy military administrators and politicians. Political acumen and military organization cannot be underestimated in New England militia culture, where members of the trainbands (militia) had a voice in unit affairs. Both leaders tolerated the War Council’s meddling, tacitly acknowledging their lack of campaign-level military experience. Whereas Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies delegated responsibility to inexperienced field leaders (in the latter case even very inexperienced town committees) contributing to their forces’ defeat in the field, Connecticut’s War Council attempted to overcome its higher commanders’ lack of operational experience by issuing detailed directives. The lack of campaign-level field leaders across the colonies should not be confused with Connecticut’s experienced junior field commanders, who performed well at the tactical level of war, managing those issues directly concerning fighting battles. Connecticut also had considerably less forces in the field, rarely over one hundred colonists at any one time, while Massachusetts had well
over that number operating across its more geographically expansive colony.\footnote{449} At the outset of the conflict in late June 1675, Massachusetts already had 300 infantry and 80 cavalry in action.\footnote{450} Connecticut’s denser population settlement pattern, its smaller forces, and the willingness of the War Council to direct forces at the lowest levels translated into a benefit to the colony’s defenses.

**The Defense of Connecticut**

Connecticut’s General Court prior to the formation of the War Council acted at the onset of hostilities by sending military reinforcements to the border nearest the conflict. This force consisted of 30 dragoons and 10 “troopers.”\footnote{451} In addition to bolstering the local militia in southeastern Connecticut, the court warned other Connecticut towns to prepare for their own defense and soon after repositioned troops in the southern coastal towns, where suspicious Indians were thought to be marauding.\footnote{452} On 16 July 1675, Uncas sent the warning to Connecticut’s leaders that the Narragansetts would imminently join Philip.\footnote{453} The War Council, now formed and in session, reacted

\footnote{449} See below for numbers deployed on offensive operations.


\footnote{451} General Court Records, CCR, 331.

\footnote{452} General Court Records, CCR, 331, 333. This might have been in part a response to a report from Uncas that suspicious Indians were lurking in the woods, *Winthrop Papers*, vol. 8, 402.

\footnote{453} CCR, 336.
by dispatching Captain Bull to “secure the borders” along the southeastern frontier. After
the threat of a Narragansett uprising dissipated for the time being, the Council disbanded
these forces. Unsurprisingly given Connecticut’s history of cooperation with the
Mohegans, he was directed to enlist that tribe to support his mission.454

In defensive operations, the allied tribes were effective in disrupting hostile forces
within the colony: “Likewise the Pequods and Mohegins … proved a good Guard to New
London, Norwich, and the River’s Mouth,” related a contemporary writer of the
conflict.455 The Mohegans-Pequots contributed their unique tactical skills to the active
defense of Connecticut. The enemy can thwart the best-laid defensive plans without an
active defense that maintains the initiative and keeps the enemy off balance, especially
when the enemy utilizes guerilla tactics and can strike virtually anywhere at any moment.
The mainstay of the Connecticut war effort was the alliance with the Mohegans and
Pequots, and as detailed below, these tribes maintained the best military skills of any of
the tribes in southern New England. Connecticut’s friendly natives conducted
reconnaissance and search-and-attack missions. These forces operated in much the same
way as colonial scouts during later colonial wars with the French and their native allies:
“defensive scouts operated ‘on the backs of the towns’… first, they had to look for signs
of enemy raiding parties, usually revealed by their tracks or campsites, and warn the
towns; second, they protected the inhabitants while they performed their labors; third
they pursued the enemy after they had struck; and finally, they ambushed known trails

454 CCR, 337.

455 Drake, The Old Indian Chronicle, 229.
and fords used by enemy raiding parties and Indian fishing sites." Allied Indians scouted the passes through difficult terrain where the hostile groups infiltrated the colony, such as passes through ridges and the fords over Connecticut’s numerous rivers and creeks. The allied Indians would have also reconnoitered places that offered enemy bands protection from the elements, such as the leeward side of hills and ridges.

Attacking forces usually consolidate for an assault near their objective, and Connecticut’s allies would have attempted to prevent the consolidation of enemy forces or at least alert the colonists to the enemy’s presence. The Mohegans, Pequots and Western Niantics conducted these active-defensive operations in the same ways that they conducted offensive operations in Narragansett country and in western Massachusetts. The allied Indians proved adept at locating enemy war parties on the enemy’s home turf, which was partially a result of women, children, and the elderly impeding their mobility. Locating small bands of warriors unimpeded by non-combatants, however, proved more difficult as enemy bands ranged Connecticut.

By 5 August an emergency meeting of the Council—it was annotated that they met close to one o’clock in the early morning—determined to put the colony on full alert by calling up significant forces of dragoons in all of the counties. Intelligence from Major Pynchon at Springfield, Massachusetts, precipitated this decision. The conflict had spread to the western Massachusetts Bay Colony settlements, some of which bordered

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457 CCR, 345; Robert Black also concludes that it was an emergency meeting because of the unusual time of the session. Black, The Younger John Winthrop, 350.
Connecticut. The new dragoon forces could be termed ‘hourmen,’ having been ordered to muster in an hour’s time after an alarm, as opposed to the minutes required of the minutemen of American Revolutionary War lore. These troops were used both for the active defense of the colony and offensive operations in the other colonies. The soldiers from this call-up remained on duty through the Great Swamp Fight against the Narragansetts, and the council utilized various elements of this force throughout the war.

The War Council, in addition to raising troops, determined to increase the security of Connecticut’s towns and highways as it became apparent that enemy forces were within the colony itself. There was clear-cut intelligence of the enemy’s presence, more so than the initial warnings about local Indians acting suspiciously in early July and the warning by Uncas that the Narragansetts living north and south of the Hockanum River should not be trusted.458 Fearful of Philip’s rumored advance on Norwich, the Council on 24 August commissioned sachem Joshua (Attawamhood) of the western Niantics to intercept them.459 In response to other hostile threats, the council ordered Major Treat back to Connecticut, when on 31 August 1675, the hostile band fired at Christover Crow, between Simsbury and Hartford, and the following day at John Coalt near the “North meadow” of Hartford.460 Treat had been dispatched with a large combined force to the settlements along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Council

458 General Court Records, CCR, 333; CCR, 336; Podunk now encompasses portions of South Windsor and East Hartford. Winthrop described the area of Podunk as “a place between ys towne & Windsor,” meaning Hartford and Windsor, Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 100.

459 CCR, 353.

460 CCR, 358-359.
commanded his dragoons to reconnoiter along both sides of the river and from Windsor to Hartford.\textsuperscript{461} With Treat’s recall, Philip was thus able to achieve temporary success without directly attacking Connecticut’s settlements, isolating the Massachusetts towns on the Connecticut River through the execution of feints and demonstrations in the rear of Connecticut forces deployed up river.\textsuperscript{462} Although this forced the temporary withdrawal of Connecticut forces it was never decisive, as the colony’s forces always returned to offensive operations. Ultimately, this was the hostile tribe’s dilemma. Philip’s confederacy needed to prevent Connecticut’s offensive operations by attacking the colony itself, but the colony’s defenses proved too strong by spring 1676, when the hostile coalition was at its strongest within the colony.

On the first of September, the Council ordered each plantation to maintain a night watch in addition to the quarter of each town’s militia that stood guard during the day. The Council then dictated that parties working in the fields must consist of at least six armed men, and stipulated that the colonists conserve their ammunition for combat.\textsuperscript{463} With hostilities increasing upriver in Massachusetts Bay, on September 4\textsuperscript{th}, the Council arranged a system of patrolling the main roads in Hartford County, where each major settlement sent out a two-man patrol on reconnaissance operations along major routes of

\textsuperscript{461} CCR, 359-360.

\textsuperscript{462} A feint is a military maneuver that involves actual combat and distracts the enemy from the friendly forces’ main objective. A demonstration is a maneuver without fighting for the same purposes as a feint. Philip’s forces seem to have employed both techniques in Connecticut, killing lone colonists at times or making their presence known without actual combat in other instances.

\textsuperscript{463} CCR, 361.
travel to the next major settlement. The towns would alternate each day and hence the patrols were sent out from opposite directions in turn; “[t]hese men to be taken out of the guard of each towne, and to be upon thereire worke by sun an hower high in each day.”

After Major Treat led the army back up the Connecticut River to assist beleaguered Massachusetts, and with the hostile coalition nearly destroying Springfield, the Council ordered on 5 October that each town designate safe areas for the women and children, and to identify sufficiently fortified garrison houses. At the same meeting, the Council ordered the inhabitants of central and north Hartford County to deposit their Indian corn east of the Connecticut River. Four days later, colonists sighted hostile Indians on that side of the river, but it is unclear if the colonists had already transported their Indian corn as the Council had directed. Again employing Mohegans in a defensive role, Joshua and Tomsquash were sent “beyond the mountaines” in eastern Connecticut to search for “strange” Indians that had been spotted. On 11 October 1675, the Court ordered “Flankers placed in or neer the outside houses of the towne, so as they might be able to command from Flanker to Flanker round the towne.” Here, the War Council directed the colonists to utilize their European militarily strengths.

By early November 1675, with Philip’s forces ranging in all of the New England colonies, the War Council began to direct the establishment or improvement of

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464 CCR, 362.

465 CCR, 372-373.

466 CCR, 374.

467 CCR, 375.
fortifications. Connecticut’s War Council thus increased the defense of the colony based on its perception of the hostile Indian threat. Although incomplete in some instances, elements of European-style fortifications were the end result of this incremental increase, when it became apparent that Philip’s forces were able to devastate the other New England colonies utilizing garrison defense, if not always the garrisons themselves. When the Narragansetts entered the conflict, the hostile threat became greater to Connecticut. Indeed, the colony began to transition from garrison houses to a system of fortifications during November, while planning for the preventative attack on Great Swamp. The colony’s white population immediately following the conflict (October 1676) only numbered 2,303 landowning men.\textsuperscript{468} Probably less than two thousand additional males were capable of bearing arms in an emergency, essentially the old, the young, and the marginally incapacitated. The high proportion of fortifications to population made the colony a more difficult target for the hostile coalition.

Connecticut’s defensive success can be partly attributed to the deterrence factor of fortifications with elements of European-style defenses because the Indian’s “cutting off way of war” did not normally include assaulting positions that would cause high casualties. Lee recounts the case of a Creek war party, lurking outside of a fortified Cherokee town waiting for an opportunity to attack, but ultimately the sound defenses deterred the attack.\textsuperscript{469} As in this instance, native war parties usually waited for softer

\textsuperscript{468} General Court Records, CCR, 290. I have estimated Connecticut's total population at 11,000 colonists in 1675 based on the total population of 12,535 in 1679 (Greene and Harrington, \textit{American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790}, 48. An estimate of 11,000 colonists also is consistent with the accepted 5-1 ratio of militia to total population discussed above.

\textsuperscript{469} Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 43.
targets or situations that they could exploit to their advantage. This was the case in Connecticut, with war parties ‘skulking’ around the colony’s towns, committing random acts of violence on the periphery, but never opting for a major attack on a population center. Such an attack would have been too costly for Philip’s confederates without local intelligence or a colonial mishap that would have tipped the odds in their favor.

The pace of construction of the colonial fortifications was not what Connecticut’s War Council had anticipated. By 22 November 1675, the Council authorized the creation of town-fortification-committees to impress citizens, if volunteers were not forthcoming, along with beasts of burden. The Council’s failure to supervise the construction of fortifications until three months after Philip’s confederates were active on the northern frontier and harassing colonists in Connecticut proper can be attributed to the fact that the English were farmers first and soldiers second. During the months that the Council largely ignored fortifications it was harvest season in southern New England, and the harvest was needed to maintain the colony during the long winter months, as well as to supply the field forces during winter campaigning. Viewed from this perspective, the Council’s priorities seem reasonable. The Council can also be credited with not overreacting to the threat, and it had done something, namely ensuring that the colony’s inhabitants employed a strong-point garrison defense throughout the colony.

When the threat to the colony increased as spring approached, Governor Andros sent intelligence to Connecticut obtained from two freed English prisoners “affirm[ing]

\[470\] CCR, 382.
that the said North Indians, at the said Rendezvous, in a vapouring Manner, declared, that
their Intent was, first to destroy Connecticut this Spring …” These Indians were not
Philip’s immediate confederates, but Mahicans, French Indians and other tribes from the
north such as the Abenaki. The Connecticut authorities also received intelligence that the
coalition was planning to strike the colony once the rebel Indians had broken their winter
encampments. After Major Treat led Connecticut’s forces into Narragansett country as
part of the joint-colonial effort to subdue that tribe, the Council ordered on 28 December
that the inhabitants of Hartford, Wethersfield and the Windsor plantations east of the
River repair to their garrison houses, take in their provisions, maintain a vigorous guard,
and scout the nearby woods. As part of a “vigorous” guard, Connecticut utilized
natural terrain features such as hill tops to augment town watches and to pass messages
between settlements. Towns named local hilltops and ridges after these guard posts, such
as Guard Hill and Watch-house Hill in Stratford and Sentry Hill in Norwich. Lamentation Mountain on the then Wallingford town boundary, in present day Berlin,
also served as a look out near the Belcher garrison house, although it was unclear if it
were utilized as such during the war. Unlike today, the colonists deforested the terrain
surrounding New England’s towns for grazing and firewood, and this allowed the guard
posts on the high ground to keep watch on the surrounding countryside.

471 Drake, The Old Indian Chronicle, 226-227.

472 CCR, 389.

473 Orcutt, History of Stratford,139; Caulkins, History of New London, 183.

474 North, History of Berlin, 9.
The War Council’s advice to repair to garrison houses was prescient because at the end of January, Major Palms then relayed the intelligence that the hostile forces had split into smaller groups and were laying in wait “downwards” from Nipmuck country. The Council ordered friendly Indians to scout the eastern side of the Connecticut River from Hartford to Springfield, along with two Englishmen on 10 February 1676. This was the Council’s reaction to continued intelligence that hostile tribes would attempt large-scale attacks on Connecticut, as well as to the killing of the two men on the Shetucket days earlier. A few days after Cohas’ band mortally wounded Hill on February 18th at Hoccanum, the Council ordered the inhabitants on the east side of the Connecticut River into their garrison houses, each with a guard of at least six men. A short time later, an unknown number of friendly Indians with 100 colonial soldiers were enlisted to “clear” the eastern side of the Connecticut River.

Reacting to additional threats, especially against Hartford, the Council ordered Hartford and New Haven and other towns “to compeat and lyne their stockades and flanckers with a ditch and brast worke.” The colony was now facing the gravest danger to its existence since the Pequot War and reacted by commanding that the towns erect more formidable defenses boasting elements of European-style fortresses. On

475 CCR, 403.
476 CCR, 408.
477 CCR, 409-410.
478 CCR, 411.
479 CCR, 413.
March 16th, the Council ordered towns to increase the amount of night-watch guards around daybreak and to scout the nearby woods on horseback. The Council also advised Mr. Fitch to convince the Mohegans and Pequots to “draw off as many of the enemie as may be” near Norwich. Four days after the burning of Simsbury (27 March), the Council took the extraordinary step of disbanding some of its forces in the face of this extreme danger, when it sent the New Haven and Fairfield county soldiers back to their towns. The Council ordered that these troops conduct reconnaissance along the route-of-march back to their respective counties. The Council thus opted for a defense of fortifications, instead of maintaining a large standing army to systematically hunt down the enemy war parties.

After the burning of Simsbury, the War Council ordered the leaders at Norwich to “endeavour to send our the Mowheags and Pequots in a sculking manner to suppress the enemie.” By using the term “skulking,” the Council believed that the allied Indians would be able to defeat the enemy war parties operating in Connecticut with the enemy’s same tactics. The records do not indicate if the leaders at Norwich succeeded in convincing the allied Indians to attack Philip’s forces, and if they did, whether the Mohegans and Pequots were successful.

480 CCR, 417.
481 CCR, 423.
482 CCR, 426.
483 CCR, 423.
The absence of recorded War Journal entries for almost two months, confirmed
that the significant threat to the colony during the early spring dissipated soon after the
killing of Canonchet in early April, and dropped off almost entirely by the late summer.
In June, the council advised the training of men and boys in the handling of firearms.
Interestingly, the Council advocated training boys under the age of 16. This expanded
the pool of soldiers, considering that Connecticut forces were operating in the multiple
western Massachusetts, Narragansett and Nipmuck countries. The Council also advised
that the training consist of marksmanship training.\footnote{CCR, 451-452.} This was an important change from
standard English tactical training. Through the American Revolutionary War, British and
colonial forces did not have a command for “take aim,” instead relying on “level.”\footnote{David H. Fischer, \textit{Washington’s Crossing} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).} In
this instance, the New England colonists adapted to their new military environment,
particularly one where opponents rarely faced each other in organized ranks. Without
taking aim, it would have been difficult for the colonists to engage the hostile Indians.
These were the final entries concerning the defense of Connecticut. On 19 August 1676,
Hartford disbanded its forces all together after it became apparent that New England
forces had largely defeated the hostile Indian confederacy.\footnote{CCR, 469.} Combined allied Indian
and colonial forces continued, however, to carry out mopping-up operations.\footnote{CCR, 420.}
Indian *trace italienne* in New England

Native Americans also adopted, or built separately, European new-style fortifications. The Narragansett fort at Great Swamp had characteristics of European-style fortifications. This elaborate fort, deep in the heart of a swamp outside of what is now West Kingston, Rhode Island, was equipped with a flanker and blockhouse.488 Hubbard describes the European-like design as “a Kind of Block-house right over against the said Tree, from whence they sorely galled our Men that first entred … [the colonial soldiers] presently beat the Enemy out of a Flanker on the left Hand.”489 Another contemporary account claimed that “the Indians had built a Kind of Fort, being Palisado’d round, and within that a Clay Wall.”490 The clay wall was either a supporting structure for the palisades or an inner defensive structure common in European fortifications at the time. The fort was so well designed that a combined-colonial army sustained the worst colonial casualties of the war during the battle.491 Only after repeated sallies across a fallen piece of timber at an unfinished portion of the fortification were the

488 Parker, “The Artillery Fortress As An Engine of European Overseas Expansion, 1480-1750.”


490 Drake, *The Old Indian Chronicle*, 181.

491 Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, 152, states that the Narragansetts killed more than 80 colonists. Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 154, reports that 82 officers and soldiers died at the Great Swamp and immediately following the battle. I have encountered instances of wounded who died months later so the final tally then was probably closer to 100 ‘killed in action’ and ‘died of wounds.’
colonists able to gain entry. The colonists had been fortunate during the battle. A
renegade Indian had deserted his comrades and guided the English army to the Great
Swamp. The swamp was frozen and the colonists were able to maneuver, where they
normally would have been channeled onto a narrow trail. In addition, the portion of
the fortification that they happened upon was unfinished. Finally, the Narragansetts at
Great Swamp were unaware of the colonial army’s march through their country, most
likely because the terrible winter weather afforded them a false sense of security and also
made communication difficult. Even with good fortune, the colonial army achieved only
a pyrrhic victory at Great Swamp because the Narragansetts employed a modern
fortification.

The Narragansetts also utilized a European-style fortification known as “The
Queen’s Fort,” named for a “squaw sachem” of the tribe. This fort was so well hidden in
the remote wilderness of Narragansett country that the complete works were not
discovered until sometime after the conflict. The exact specifications of the fort remain
unknown and the debate surrounding its purpose continues. Nineteenth-century
writers, however, concluded that “[t]he builders taking advantage of huge bowlders, laid

492 Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, 152. The Indian’s name
was Peter.

493 Drake, *The Old Indian Chronicle*, 181; Hubbard, *The History of the Indian Wars in


495 For a recent account of the debate see Marilyn, Bellemore, Townnews.com 1995-
2008, Zwire.com, NKStandardTimes.com, 
4&rfi=6 (accessed 27 April 2008).
rough stone walls between them, making a continuous line. ‘There is a round bastion or half moon on the northeast corner of the fort, and a salient or V-shaped point, or flanker, on the west side.’”\textsuperscript{496} The Narragansetts briefly fired on colonial forces on their way to Great Swamp from this fort.\textsuperscript{497}

A firsthand account details how the Narragansetts from Great Swamp regrouped “twenty Miles farther into the Country, to some Rocks where we could not get at them without much Danger,” although the English army eventually “beat the Indians from the foresaid rocks” some weeks later.\textsuperscript{498} This is undoubtedly the Queen’s Fort, which is in fact approximately 15 miles from Great Swamp using straight-line distance.\textsuperscript{499} In the early colonial era, distances were measured by the windy trails without reliable maps, accounting here for the difference in distance.

A third European-style Indian fortress existed in Narragansett country during the war, only 7 miles from Great Swamp in what is now Charlestown.\textsuperscript{500} When compared to the other two forts, the design of this fortress was the most obviously geometric in construction, and mystery has shrouded its origins and utility during King Philip’s

\textsuperscript{496} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War} n. 2 146 continued from 145, and quote from Sidney S. Rider, \textit{The Lands of Rhode Island}, 236, as cited in Ellis and Morris.

\textsuperscript{497} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, n. 1, 147.

\textsuperscript{498} Drake, \textit{The Old Indian Chronicle}, 194, 197.

\textsuperscript{499} The following website calculated the distance from Exeter to Kingston RI, the two forts were at a slightly greater distance as Queen’s Fort was north of Exeter and Great Swamp west of South Kingston, City Distance Tool, Geobytes, \url{http://www.geobytes.com/CityDistanceTool.htm?loadpage} (accessed 31 May 2008).

\textsuperscript{500} \url{http://www.geobytes.com/CityDistanceTool.htm?loadpage} (accessed 21 June 2008).
War. Recent archaeology, however, indicates that the Eastern Niantic or Narragansett groups constructed the fort and had occupied the site pre-contact. Archeologists view the fort as less military in nature and more of a means to control the wampum trade and house wampum and other goods. This seems at odds with the archaeologists’ own findings that demonstrate that the defensive nature of the fort increased during the conflicts of the seventeenth century. It is likely that Ninigret’s Fort was part of an earlier chain of fortresses meant to protect both the Narragansetts and the Eastern Niantics from attack, though protecting wampum and other goods certainly would have played a role in defensive considerations. Generally, historians have considered the fortress to be Ninigret’s main eastern Niantic fort at the time, and this was supposedly where Captain John Mason (the elder John Mason’s son) confirmed the sachem’s neutrality during King Philip’s War. The English gave approval for Ninigret’s men to bury the dead the day after the attack on Great Swamp, indicating that the Eastern Niantics were located in force in the area, and may have come from this fortress. Although the Narragansetts did not control this fort, the Eastern Niantics have often been


505 Drake, The Old Indian Chronicle, 193.
considered Narragansetts and were, in any case, closely related. Ninigret exercised power over certain elements of the Narragansetts during the interwar years, further clouding the tribal issue.

The Narragansetts thus fortified their villages earlier than Connecticut transitioned from garrison to full-scale fortification defense, and had more advanced defenses than nearby Rhode Island settlements employed throughout the entire war. In proportion to its population and size of its territory, the Narragansetts employed a defense in depth not dissimilar to many European states of the time period. Other Indian defensive systems indicated that the case of the Narragansetts was not unprecedented in the New World. Lee’s relation of the Tuscarora’s and Cherokee’s use of fortifications, with or without knowledge of European military techniques, was an additional case of Native Americans utilizing European-like fortresses: “the Tuscaroras … were using bastioned palisades and partially squared walls.”506 When the European threat increased, the Tuscarora increased their fortifications building “generally one per village.… Some of these were more sophisticated than others … a larger [European] threat would require a more concentrated defense.”507

The Narragansetts and Tuscaroras thus employed a defense-in-depth, where there were alternate positions—or forts—to fall back on if enemies captured the others. These

506 Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 728-730; Steele reports that the Susquehannocks also employed European-style fortifications with an “earthen fort, complete with cannon, bastions, and ditch, to which they added a strong exterior stockade.” Warpaths, 53. Subsequent research has shown that the cannons were a myth. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815, 24, discusses how the Indians “undermined the wall by tunneling” at Fort Presu’Isle in 1763.

507 Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 734.
tribes forced invaders to move deeper and deeper into enemy territory, extending its forces’ supply lines and making them more vulnerable to attack. Similar to some of the Tuscarora fortifications, the fort at Great Swamp was incomplete when the English invaded Narragansett country.\textsuperscript{508} Even with incomplete fortifications, the Narragansetts understood how to integrate modern defenses with the local terrain. When the Narragansetts from Queen’s Fort fired on the English during their march to Great Swamp, the fortification thus commanded the trail, and at Charlestown, the fortress was strategically situated to command the landing at the harbor there.

The fortification at Great Swamp also utilized local terrain with its position inside a dense swamp. One wonders what additional fortifications were never found that were part of the Narragansett’s defensive posture. A contemporary report in fact claims that the Narragansetts from Great Swamp sheltered 5 miles away after the attack before reaching the Queen’s Fort.\textsuperscript{509} Another claims that “fresh” Narragansett warriors “out of an adjoining swamp” nearly turned the tide of the battle, when they arrived to reinforce Great Swamp.\textsuperscript{510} The Narragansetts and Niantics constructed the forts themselves, although it remains unknown if they were assisted by Europeans.

\textsuperscript{508} Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 734. The colonists in New England and the southeastern colonies similarly blamed English fugitives for assisting the natives in building their fortresses, a further parallel between the two cases. In the Narragansett case, there was the additional anecdote of ‘Stonewall John,’ an English-trained mason, who purportedly designed the Indian forts, Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 146 n. 1.

\textsuperscript{509} Drake, \textit{The Old Indian Chronicle}, 193.

\textsuperscript{510} Drake, \textit{The Old Indian Chronicle}, 300. Drake, 300, n. 367, agrees with Benjamin Church’s assertion that the reinforcements were from “Pumham’s town,” another Narragansett sachem. This also indicates that the forts were in mutually supporting positions of each other.
The tribes of Connecticut also employed fortresses with elements of European design. The Pequot fort of Mohantic on the current day Foxwoods Reservation consisted of such elements, though it was more of an offensive fort as discussed below. Although the design of some Indian forts remains uncertain, what is clear was that the Native Americans in Narragansett country, as elsewhere in on the eastern seaboard, were utilizing European-style defenses.

Chapter Conclusion

While difficult to judge the effectiveness of Connecticut’s fortifications and the success of allied Indians operating inside Connecticut given the role of chance and the original remote threat of the hostile groups, the colony remained free from major attack. Hostile tribes devastated the other New England colonies not far from the Connecticut border. Contemporary colonial commentators willingly attributed some success to the allied Indians in an active-defense role, while their known achievements outside the colony reflected martial prowess: “with their simultaneous objectives of warning, protection, pursuit and ambush,” allied Indians were very useful in the active defense. Fortifications complemented by active scouting also proved invaluable.

Unconventional forces, such as those employed by the hostile coalition, normally attack less well-defended areas to inflict maximum damage without a corresponding risk to their own men. These tactics in fact corresponded with the Indian’s “cutting off way of war.” The level of enemy activity never increased because the colony became more

prepared by the time the Narragansettts entered the war and for the number of other
unique characteristics of the colony discussed here. Connecticut’s leaders ordered
measures for self-defense after learning of the outbreak of hostilities in Plymouth colony,
and took measured steps thereafter to ensure the colony’s safety. Once the enemy
disbanded into smaller war parties after breaking winter quarters, it would have been
difficult for them to attack at the time Connecticut transitioned from a garrison-strong-
point defense to a defensive posture based on elements of European-style fortifications.

Bands of seven to nine Indians harassed lone or small groups of settlers, but could
not carry out large-scale attacks on the colony’s well-fortified towns. At least one large
war party operated in Connecticut and likely others did as well, but their presence
remains lost to history. Certainly bands could have joined together for major attacks, a
tactic employed by guerilla forces throughout history. Combined war parties of hundreds
of warriors could have devastated Connecticut towns, largely unfortified until the mid-
autumn 1675, but the hostile coalition lacked the support of local Connecticut tribes and
also targeted other areas of New England instead. Had large scale attacks occurred from
the period June-November 1675, judging from the other colonies’ experience, most of
Connecticut’s garrison strong points would have survived, but the hostile forces would
have destroyed the non-garrisoned portions of the towns. The threat of major attacks on
Connecticut was very real because of the geographic proximity of the Massachusetts Bay
towns on the Connecticut River, which large numbers of Philip’s confederates
devastated. Early in the conflict, Philip or other hostile leaders may have easily
maneuvered forces into Connecticut to deliver a significant blow to the colony.
Although the Connecticut War Council seems to have acted more quickly than the other colonies’ leadership, and the Connecticut’s defensive operations were probably better during the stage of garrison defense, there were two more influential factors that combined with these relative advantages that accounted for Connecticut’s success. The colony possessed two ‘super weapons’ that the other New England colonies lacked: the policy of moderation towards the local Indians that neutralized them and the utilization of Mohegan, Pequot, and Western Niantic warriors for both defensive and offensive operations. An active defense augmented the other colony’s advantages of contiguous settlement pattern and concentrated population, command and control, military know-how passed on to the King Philip’s War generation, the military experience of its leadership, and advanced fortifications built upon former traces. The colony’s unique policy of moderation towards local native groups cemented all of these factors into a viable defensive apparatus. Even with a strong defensive system and happenstance that worked in the colony’s favor, offensive operations played a decisive role in Connecticut’s success. Without offensive and defensive operations complementing each other, the hostile coalition would have ultimately penetrated Connecticut’s defenses. Connecticut’s offensive operations kept the hostile native groups off-balance, and maintained the colony’s initiative during the war.
Chapter 7: “To Prosecute the Enemie Wth All Vigor” – Connecticut’s Offensive Operations

Pushing forward with all speed they came upon two Narragansett sentinels, on the crest of a small hill, who fled in panic down the further slope, past the place where Canonchet and a few of his men, were lying at ease. The English, following close at their heels, were almost upon the camp when another sentinel, rushing among the startled Narragansetts, called out that the English were upon them…. Canonchet himself ran swiftly around the back of the hill to get out of sight on the opposite side, but, seeing the Niantics and Mohegans in close pursuit, he threw off his royal belt of wampum. Recognizing immediately from these articles that the fugitive “was the right bird” the friendly Indians and a few of the English followed with renewed zeal. Forced by his pursuers toward the river, through which his only way to safety lay, he rushed into the stream, but his foot slipped, and falling heavily into the water he wet the priming of his gun. His pursuers were upon him before he could recover himself.512

A large part of Connecticut’s success during the Great Narragansett War hinged on the colony’s offensive operations against the hostile tribes, such as this raid carried out in early April, 1676, against the hostile coalition’s primary war leader Canonchet. The success of Connecticut’s field forces proved an effective combination with Connecticut’s defensive efforts as the colony’s moderate Indian policy set the stage for both offensive and defensive operations. Connecticut’s English-native field forces remained undefeated

512 Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 202.
in the field and suffered far fewer casualties than those of the three other New England colonies, between 50-60 soldiers killed in action or later dying of wounds.  

As Michael Howard argues, the military historian can make judgments more readily than other historians because their subject matter often identifies clear-cut winners and losers. Applying Howard’s concept to Connecticut, the colony’s numerous battlefield victories and the absence of defeats indicated that its forces performed more effectively than its New England counterparts. Connecticut conducted successful offensive operations primarily because its allied Indians were more numerous and tactically superior to the Indian allies of the other colonies. Connecticut’s dragoon-heavy English forces also overcame some of the limitations inherent in the military organizations of not only the other New England colonies, but Early Modern European armies in general. Comparatively, Connecticut employed better led mobile forces, mustering more volunteers who appear to have represented a greater-cross section of society. As a result of these factors, the colony’s English forces were relatively more combat effective than the other New England colonies, demonstrating that Old World

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513 The one exception was that Connecticut sustained heavy casualties at the Great Swamp Fight; 40 appear to have been killed during the battle or later died of wounds. Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut Civil and Ecclesiastical: From the Emigration of the First Planters, from England, in the Year 1630 to the Year 1764; and to the Close of the Indian Wars, vol. 1 (New London: U.D. Hutley, 1898, originally published 1818), n. 286. The heavy casualties had less to do with incompetence than the unique situation of that one battle.


515 My “metrics” to quantify competence include the number of successful engagements that the allied Indians assisted in facilitating as well as the fact that Connecticut forces were never ambushed. The latter is certainly a negative way to measure success, but significant in light of the failures of the other colonies.
military skills were useful in certain circumstances in the New World. These skills were not useful, however, for bringing the hostile Indian forces to battle. By accomplishing this mission, Connecticut’s Indian allies actually rendered useful the Old World military skills of the colony’s English dragoons that otherwise would not have been tested. A small number of mainly Connecticut colonists—Plymouth’s Benjamin Church was a rare non-Connecticut exception—adopted irregular Indian warfare to a degree of effectiveness, which allowed them to conduct successful raiding in conjunction with native forces. Even with the success of these joint war parties operating in Indian fashion, the tactical division of labor, where Indian and colonist both performed tasks that he did best, solidified military cooperation. These factors led to victories in the field and disruption of the hostile forces’ war effort. The moderate treatment of the colony’s native groups also served as the foundation for offensive operations—it otherwise would have been difficult to recruit trustworthy Indian allies. Connecticut maintained the initiative with offensive operations by forcing Philip’s coalition to protect its non-combatant population and logistics base.

Sound military doctrine dictates that wars are not won on the defensive. This held true for Connecticut during the Great Narragansett War. The success of the colony’s active defense would not have been enough to keep the hostile coalition at bay, if not for effective offensive operations. The colonists and their Indian allies never would have defeated the hostile tribes if the latter remained unmolested in their territory. Hostile groups also would have ultimately found a weak point to exploit in Connecticut, in accordance with the Indian’s “cutting off way of war.” Based on Philip’s success in the other colonies, hostiles would have successfully attacked a Connecticut town that did not
transition to a more robust defense as ordered by the General Court session of October, 1675.

Connecticut Colony ultimately avoided defeat at home and achieved success abroad by attacking the hostile native groups in their own country. Connecticut forced the hostile coalition to react to its operations. Connecticut’s field forces, ably assisted and in many times led by its Indian allies, disrupted Philip’s operations and forced the confederate tribes to guard against Connecticut’s search and destroy missions to protect their non-combatant population and logistics base. Stephen Eames, although writing about a later period in colonial history, describes the utility of the kind of offensive operations employed by Connecticut during the period 1675-1676 as “threefold: to disrupt the economy of the Indians, to intimidate Indian raiding parties with the presence of provincial soldiers on their invasion routes, and to destroy warriors through ambush and battle.”

The other New England colonies also understood the necessity of offensive operations, but they had less success locating the enemy and often suffered terrible defeats from the hostile coalition. Near Northfield in western Massachusetts Bay, hostile forces ambushed and nearly wiped-out Captain Beer’s command. A large hostile war-party ambushed Captain Lathrop’s force at Bloody Brook outside of Deerfield Massachusetts, as they sallied out to harvest much needed crops. Captain Moseley’s company, riding to the sound of the guns, almost was destroyed in-turn, but for the arrival

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516 Stephen C. Eames “Scout” in Colonial Wars of North America, 679. Eames here is discussing the French and Indian wars, but the same held true during King Philip’s War.
of Major Treat’s mixed Connecticut force. Cape Cod Indians aided the colonists at Pierce’s fight, but even their presence did not prevent defeat. At the Sudbury Fight, Philip’s coalition annihilated Captain Wadsworth’s men. During the return march from Turner’s Falls in spring 1676, Massachusetts Bay forces were all but wiped-out. Even with a shared English-Protestant culture and military background, there was a qualitative difference between Connecticut’s forces and the other New England colonies’ contingents.

These defeats shocked New England’s colonists after decades of perceived military superiority over native groups. What went wrong? Most historians agree with Patrick Malone’s assessment in The Skulking War of War that the colonists’ martial ineptitude for most of the conflict derived from a failure to adopt the Indians’ “skulking” tactics. Too few colonists beside Connecticut’s Captains Denison and Avery and Plymouth’s Benjamin Church, however, adopted Indian tactics for this explanation to be plausible. Chet attributes Wadsworth’s and Pierce’s defeats and the costly colonial victory at Great Swamp, not on the failure to adopt skulking tactics, but on the

517 Hubbard, The History of the Indian Wars in New England, n. 275 173, 175-178; Drake, The Old Indian Chronicle, 307-308. Towards the end of the war, Philip’s men ambushed one of Church’s expeditions in another case of Plymouth’s allied Indians not discovering the hostile Indians, although only one colonist was killed, Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 264. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815, 77, indicates that Pierce was ambushed even with friendly Indian support, but does not compare this with the Mohegan-Pequot success. Perhaps the Praying Indians’ “cutting off way of war” military skills had degenerated from living among the English.

518 Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 105-108, 111-114, 190-192, 210-211, 232-234.

519 See historiography.
abandonment of the European-style “tactical defensive.”\textsuperscript{520} The initial failure of the colonists, however, had less to do with adopting Indian tactics or abandoning European methods, and more to do with the lack of competent allied Indian support and the fighting prowess of Philip’s coalition.

For the colonists to remain on the tactical defensive the hostile tribes would have had to decide to stand and fight, otherwise they could refuse battle as they often did when confronted in this manner. Hostile war parties demonstrated a selectivity of targets associated with their “cutting off way of war,” choosing to fight pitched battles against Captains Wadsworth and Pierce after identifying that their commands were at a tactical disadvantage. In the Pierce fight, the hostile band led by Canonchet, “above 500 Indians, who in very good Order, attacqued [Pierce’s command]…. The Indians were as thick as they could stand, thirty deep.” Once surrounded, Pierce arranged his men in either a circle or two lines back-to-back, presumably to maximize volley fire. Another contemporary account from \textit{The Old Indian Chronicle} remarks that the Indians “upon [Pierce’s] Approach … drew into Order, and received his Onset with much Difficulty.”\textsuperscript{521} At Sudbury, Wadsworth’s men actually kept the Indians at bay with European tactics and only broke formation after the Indians forced them to by setting fire to the battlefield. Pierce also did not abandon a linear European tactical defense, but misinterpreted the

\textsuperscript{520} Chet, \textit{Conquering the American Wilderness} 40, 46, 47, 52. Chet’s argues that the colonists won the war through the disruption of the Indians’ supply base alone (63). This disruption was a decisive factor in Philip’s defeat, but it was \textit{offensive} operations that caused this situation, as well as offensive operations that killed and captured key hostile Indian leaders, throwing the hostile tribes into disarray and making their supply base vulnerable.

\textsuperscript{521} Drake, \textit{The Old Indian Chronicle}, 221, 307; Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 191.
local terrain. Both colonial defeats resulted from superior Indian tactical performance and the failure to employ competent allied Indians. Chet also misses the mark by arguing that “one has to condemn General Winslow and his officers for criminal optimism” in their decision to abandon the defensive and attack the Narragansetts at Great Swamp, with a less than desirable logistics base, potentially outnumbered “deep in enemy territory,” and in the dead of winter.522 Conversely, Winslow could be praised for maintaining the initiative, utilizing the element of surprise (poor weather can be an advantage as well as a disadvantage), taking advantage of intelligence from a renegade, and understanding the strategic necessity of employing the combined colonial army before it disintegrated due to colonial infighting.

Surprisingly, historians have ignored Connecticut forces’ success in the field. Selesky argues that “Connecticut soldiers were cautious and unskilled, and were never able to trap the enemy.”523 Even without a culminating victory to end the war, the combined Connecticut-allied-Indian forces did have notable successes. These included rescuing the settlers and garrison of Northfield and Moseley’s command at Bloody Brook, defending successfully Northampton and Hadley (operational offensive though tactical defensive), sharing in the pyrrhic victory at Great Swamp, capturing Canonchet, defeating the Narragansett Sunk Squaw, and defeating the fleeing remnants of Philip’s coalition on the Massachusetts’ stretches of the Housatonic River.524 Connecticut’s

522 Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, 52; Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815, also argues that the Great Swamp fight was “a failure,” 77.

English soldiers were not as poor fighters as Selesky claims, particularly in the more traditional forms of European warfare of garrison defense and assault, and when operating in unison with allied Indians. Contemporary writers like Hubbard and Mather along with historians like Selesky, Malone and Chet, although lamenting the fighting skills of the English colonists from different perspectives, misinterpret the purpose of the New England militias. The only fair measure of a unit is actual battlefield performance viewed through the lens of the unit’s expected missions and quality of training. Perhaps New England militia units simply had a limited scope of missions and trained accordingly.

The New England militias trained to fight like Europeans against a foe that would accept battle, exchange volley fire, and maneuver in a like manner; in other words, European forces or colonists. With three Anglo-Dutch wars and hostilities against the Catholic monarchies during the period of Atlantic settlement, the English colonists practiced for battle within the same frame of reference that they had employed in fortification-building: against other Europeans in the New World. The colonists forecasted a limited conflict, however, as the significant logistical problems that would face a European invader, even from a bordering colony, entailed challenges that only the rare commander overcame in America. This was the era that many historians have termed “limited war” even in a much more developed Europe because of the effect that Vaubanian fortresses and logistical challenges associated with maintaining increasingly larger state-armies had on offensive operations. It is debatable if the colonial leaders

524 Many historians consider the colonial attack on the Sunk Squaw’s band a massacre because over one hundred non-combatants were killed, Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 249-250.
planned to fight limited conflicts or simply benefited from the formidable geography and lack of infrastructure in the New World. During times of conflict, however, New England’s leaders did temporarily increase military readiness.\textsuperscript{525} New England colonists found standing armies anathema given recent European experience, and there was the timeless argument about the cost-prohibitive nature of a larger military apparatus.

Force projection from across oceans remains problematic even with this century’s technology, let alone for those carrying out such operations with the military capabilities of 1675. Even if the neighboring Dutch in New Amsterdam had invaded Connecticut—the most likely military threat to Connecticut and the one that the colonists feared most before the Great Narragansett War—their forces would have had to occupy a harbor or seize, build and garrison roads and other strong points, all with a force that ultimately would have been provided for a few thousands of miles away in Holland.\textsuperscript{526} The manpower needed to garrison a line of communication from the captured port of New Haven, for example, to the enemy Connecticut capital of Hartford, and having to fight the Connecticut militia and its Indian allies along the way, simply would not have existed without a sizeable commitment from the Dutch Republic’s far-flung empire. The logistics required to feed and clothe men in the field for a prolonged campaign would have been problematic for the Dutch. Provisioning the horses that pulled the wagon trains and the siege artillery alone would have been a logistical challenge. A decade after

\textsuperscript{525} Connecticut called up the militia to thwart perceived Dutch and French threats, as discussed above.

\textsuperscript{526} The inhabitants of Fairfield County, Connecticut’s nearest county to New Amsterdam feared a Dutch invasion by land and sea, Schenck, \textit{The History of Fairfield}, 171.
the Third Anglo-Dutch War, a single horse in William III’s army digested 18-30 kilos of fodder daily during operations in the Netherlands, a similar intake of calories for horses in an invasion of Connecticut would have crippled the effort.\textsuperscript{527} The benefit of defeating, subduing, and occupying a hostile Puritan-English and native population with little tangible political and economic benefit simply did not justify the cost. A large-scale invasion of New England never occurred from any quarter during the seventeenth century.

The development of the New England militia also reflected a striking lack of offensive capability. Trainbands were mainly for self-defense and during times of crisis the colonies formed special field forces in addition to the town militia. These forces lacked the numbers and field artillery necessary to reduce Dutch or French strongholds in the New World, and New Englanders had lived with a tenuous peace with local native groups for the vast majority of the seventeenth century. The Puritans and Separatists exhibited a penchant for non-violent arbitration, submitting competing land claims between English colonies, Indians, and other Europeans colonists to London or establishing local agreements usually acceptable to all parties.\textsuperscript{528} In terms of colonial competition, land in the New World was abundant and the population was sparse. When flash points occurred it was local population pressures on traditional Indian or European territory or competition over dwindling economic resources (for example wampum or


\textsuperscript{528} Colonists and Indians appealed to arbitration and usually accepted the outcome. European affairs often precipitated other crises in the New World, such as English wars with the Dutch, French and Spanish. These issues are examined above. King Philip’s War was a bloody exception to this rule.
fur), which could not readily have been abandoned without real or perceived political, economic and cultural loss. Weather, terrain, and the lack of infrastructure and resources limited offensive options in the New World, consuming armies of limited manpower.

The reality of “strategic consumption,” where the attacking force is consumed by losses due to disease and combat as well as garrisoning lines of communication, was at play throughout the military history of colonial America.529 Strategic consumption, often exacerbated by military incompetence, inflicted its campaign-terminating calculus during Anglo-French-Indian wars on the operations of Fitz-John Winthrop (1690), Nicholson (1709), Braddock (1755), and Abercromby (1758). Montcalm’s campaign for Fort William Henry (1757) might have gone further if not for the unfortunate massacre of some of the Fort’s inhabitants by the native allies of the French.530 Additionally, strategic consumption afflicted the American Revolutionary War campaigns of Howe (1776), Burgoyne (1777) and Cornwallis (1780-81). The rare successful offensive campaigns of Amherst-Wolfe (1759) and Washington-Rochambeau (1781) depended on significant naval power from Europe, as well as unique local circumstances.531

529 The definition of strategic consumption from the Course Notebook for the History of the Military Art, West Point, New York, 2010, Glossary of Terms, 15: “STRATEGIC CONSUMPTION: A term not used by Clausewitz but derived from his observation that attacking forces diminish in strength as they advance into enemy territory due to the diversions of manpower imposed by the expansion of one's area of operations. The many causes of strategic consumption include the need to defend of lines of communications, disease, desertion, and battle casualties (see On War, 527).”

530 Anderson, The War that Made America, 114.

531 Fitz-John Winthrop attempted to invade Canada via the Lake Champlain corridor during King William’s War as did Colonel Nicholson during Queen Anne’s War and Abercromby during the French and Indian War. Carleton and Burgoyne failed on the same route in reverse. Braddock failed to capture Ft. Duquesne, Howe failed to gain the colonial capital of
Montcalm’s defense of Quebec, reflecting the belief of other North American military leaders in weather and terrain as defensive force-multipliers, reasoned that French forces would hold-off the British invaders long enough to allow for the Canadian winter to do the rest.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{The War That Made America}, 195.} If not for Wolfe’s daring assault, greatly aided by the British navy and perfect weather conditions, New France’s best ally—winter—would have won the day. These two successful operations were exceptions as most European-supported ventures failed, and the local circumstances of weather and temporary naval advantage were the key ingredients for Washington and Wolfe. Generally, Europeans and North American colonists failed to project sufficient military power to overcome natural conditions in the New World during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A full century before the British victory in Canada, the New England militia of the mid-1600s needed only to maintain a capability to oppose a threat even less technologically advanced than Wolfe’s state-of-the-art armada and well-trained regular infantry. Standing ground and delaying an invader would have been sufficient to allow for casualties, distance, terrain, and weather, to terminate the invader’s campaign. There was no need to train extensively to fight European-length conflicts because a war against Europeans—the primary threat identified by the colonists before the Great Narragansett War—in seventeenth century New England would have been inherently limited.

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\footnote{Anderson, \textit{The War That Made America}, 195.}
This was the actual threat that English colonists faced against the Dutch, when a 300-man contingent of marines from New Amsterdam attempted to capture Connecticut’s towns on eastern Long Island in early 1674, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War. Fitz-John Winthrop led the local militia forces in defeating the Dutch in one skirmish, and though not well documented, the English seem to have defeated the Dutch in others skirmishes as well. Connecticut’s militia had served its purpose and were trained enough to succeed in this type of more limited operation, even against regular Dutch soldiers. The limited threat also suited a population, who were only part-time soldiers, lacking the time to train to a higher degree of military proficiency because of the time required by their primary occupations.

Military unpreparedness to combat a non-European threat was a significant weakness in New England’s militia system. This was magnified by an over-confidence about potential conflicts with Native Americans. In some circles, the Pequot War reinforced perceptions of English military dominance over the native population. Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies exhibited overconfidence because they had only limited experience in the Pequot War, yet enough to foster misconceptions about the lack of Indian martial prowess and their ability to fight native groups. The native populations’ adoption of the flintlock and their subsequent incorporation of the weapon

533 As happened often in colonial operations around the world, this skirmish occurred after the English and Dutch had already agreed upon a peace accord.

534 Letter from Major Fitz-John Winthrop to Connecticut Court or War Council, CCR, Appendix XIV, 566-567.

535 Schenk, History of Fairfield, 170-171.
into their tactical system took the English by surprise. Viewing history backwards it seems obvious that the Native Americans would transition to firearms during the interwar years of New England, but this was not a given. The Choctaw of the American southeast maintained the bow and arrow and used it with greater effect than those local tribes armed with muskets.\(^{536}\) At the battle of Nipsachuck early in the war, about a quarter of Philip’s warriors armed themselves with bows and arrows, indicating that a significant portion of Indians did not begin the war armed with flintlocks.\(^{537}\) Without allied Indian support, English colonists of New England were unprepared to fight an Indian adversary armed with the latest military technology, and their overconfidence in their own ability to fight such a war magnified the danger posed by an Indian adversary.

The replacement of the matchlock with the flintlock and the gradual disappearance of the pike without the introduction of the socket bayonet (until the turn of the century) also left European-style armies in a state of tactical flux during the period 1675-1676. Pikes, primarily a defensive weapon, had little utility against an Indian foe that did not field cavalry, and thus the militia did not employ them in King Philip’s War. From the limited evidence available, the English predominantly used swords to close with the hostile Indians. Connecticut’s General Court armed the dragoons raised to fight the Dutch with swords and a belt among other weapon systems less than two years prior


\(^{537}\) Published testimony of George Memicho, an allied Indian, in Temple and Adams, *A History of the Town of North Brookfield Massachusetts*, 100.
to the Great Narragansett War. The English at Turner’s Falls dispatched with swords, Indians hiding in the river bank, while Connecticut ordered every tenth man marching against the Narragansetts armed with axes instead of swords, indicating most were armed with the latter. Europeans utilized swords in battle especially with the cavalry arm, but also with dismounted infantry, as one captain wrote about his experience in the English Civil War at the Battle of Naseby: “The Foot on either side hardly saw each other until they were within Carabine Shot, and so only made on Volley; ours falling in with Sword and butt end of the Musquet did notable Execution, so much as I saw their Colours fall, and their Foot in great Disorder.” Similar to these battles in the mother country, swords played an important role in New England as well.

Many European militias and some armies throughout the Early Modern Era were no better trained than New England militias. The poor military readiness in Europe accounted for the multiple military reforms of the period from the Dutch reforms to Cromwell’s New Model Army. As one colonist quipped in the American South, a “Planter who keeps his Body fit for service, by Action, and a regular Life, is doubtless a better Soldier, upon Occasion, than a Company of raw Fellows raised in England.” This colonist had a point, when considered against the backdrop of the especially limited type of warfare in America during the early colonial period. This argument can be taken


540 CCR, 385.


542 As quoted in Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 167.
too far, however, for to employ American part-timers on European battlefields, would have led to the utter destruction of their units.

Although less well-trained than some European counterparts, the New England militias could conduct the basic military tactics of the time period: volley fire and simple maneuver to a more advantageous position on the battlefield in the face of the enemy. It was not a matter of not employing European tactics as Chet would have, or Malone’s theory of slow adaptation, rather the New England militia’s lack of early success was a case of Philip’s coalition refusing to accept battle on European terms. The only tactical countermeasure in field operations (not garrison defense or storming garrisons where the colonists held the advantage), barring a mistake on the part of hostile warriors, was to employ competent allied Indians in sufficient numbers in an attempt to force the Indians to battle. This was the very countermeasure that Connecticut employed from the beginning of the Great Narragansett War. The addition of competent native allies made relevant traditional European tactics in the New World. This in combination with those few colonists, who did adopt the “cutting off way of war,” led to Connecticut’s offensive operations.

Mobility also played a critical role in the colony’s success. Connecticut soldiers were almost always mounted during field operations, a significant difference between the colony and other New England soldiers. Connecticut answered a little known “account” or survey of the King’s colonies from 1679, noting that “For the present in our last warres with the Indians we found drageones to be most usefull, and therefore Improved about
300 of them in the service to good success."\textsuperscript{543} Connecticut employed a smaller numbers of troops compared to Massachusetts Bay, allowing the force to be almost all dragoons. At the outset of the conflict, Massachusetts already had 300 infantry and 80 cavalry deployed towards Philip’s territory.\textsuperscript{544} Massachusetts went on to raise many more forces to defend its far-flung colony and search for hostile parties. In Connecticut, enough mounts were available because the colony’s campaigning force was relatively small.

The Connecticut court at various times mandated that the dragoons either arm themselves with long arms or return to the local dismounted militia companies.\textsuperscript{545} This indicated that the colonists considered the dragoons to be a more elite arm of the service, while holding the trainbands in comparatively lower esteem. Dragoons were most likely drawn from at least the middle-class segment of the colony’s population. The lower classes would have been less likely to know how to ride horses, and like the outcasts of some of the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s field forces, would have been unable to afford to arm themselves. This is in fact what Kyle Zelner demonstrates for Connecticut’s rival Massachusetts Bay colony, where local militia committees usually drafted those in the lower segments of society, including criminals and drifters. Even those Essex County towns in Massachusetts Bay colony that employed a force more representative of their

\textsuperscript{543} John Talcott Record Book, Connecticut Historical Society Manuscript Collections, Hartford, Connecticut, 43.

\textsuperscript{544} 28 or 29 June Massachusetts Council entry “Necessitated to Meet Daily in Councill,” vol. 67, Massachusetts MSS, Document 210.

\textsuperscript{545} CCR, 270.
population sent their less desirable members on dangerous field missions outside of the
towns, keeping those connected with the town leadership safely at home.\textsuperscript{546}

Connecticut pressed at least some of its soldiers, including dragoons, but there
were many volunteers as well.\textsuperscript{547} Volunteers outnumbered pressed troops on at least
some occasions such as the raid into Narragansett country that captured Canonchet,\textsuperscript{548}
and it was volunteers who were later lauded by Massachusetts Bay leadership.\textsuperscript{549}
Standing in stark contrast to the muster roles of the Essex County militia, leading families
in Connecticut communities came forward for the common defense, even in offensive
operations. The Merriman’s of Wallingford and the Mason’s of Norwich lost sons at the
Great Swamp Fight, and the son of Lieutenant Minors of Stonington’s served on field
duty.\textsuperscript{550} Connecticut, encouraged by the success of its volunteers, urged Massachusetts
Bay also to raise volunteers and to offer them plunder as an incentive.\textsuperscript{551} Connecticut

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\textsuperscript{546} Zelner, \textit{A Rabble in Arms}, 214.

\textsuperscript{547} See CCR, 346, for an example of a press order for dragoons; also entry 16 February
1676 Thomas Minor, “The Diary of Thomas Minor” in \textit{The Minor Diaries}, eds. Sidney H. Minor

\textsuperscript{548} Radune, \textit{Pequot Plantation}, 221.

\textsuperscript{549} Please see MA Governor Hutchinson quote below.

\textsuperscript{550} Entry 24 June 1676, Thomas Minor, “The Diary of Thomas Minor,” 136. Minor’s
entry referred to his son coming home from the army; Merriman’s son was killed in combat
during the war, “Reunion of descendants of Nathaniel Merriman at Wallingford, CT, June 4
1913; with a Merriman genealogy for five generations,”
www.archive.org/stream/reunionofdescend00merrial/reunionofdescend00merrial_djvu.txt
(accessed 1 Jan 2011); payment request from Surgeon Simon Cooper of Newport for, among
others, Mason Jr. who was mortally wounded: “Capt: Mason of Norrodg his scull brocke I did for
him & tooke out many peeses not Cured & accomidated him,” CWS, 1:72a.

\textsuperscript{551} CCR, 437.

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worked out a more equitable means of reimbursing the service of both pressed troops and volunteers, but the colony’s forces originally experienced indiscipline with rivalry over payment and spoils.°° Undoubtedly, Connecticut’s volunteers—whether for duty or monetary reward or both—provided the colony with a force that was at least somewhat qualitatively superior to the colonies employing mainly pressed soldiers.

The pressed Massachusetts soldiers probably served primarily as dismounted infantry without possessing the skills to ride or the means to arm themselves as dragoons or cavalry. Massachusetts employed many more soldiers than Connecticut and lacked the resources to provide mounts for all of its soldiers, even if Massachusetts wanted to employ a dragoon-heavy force. Zelner makes the case that the poor motivation of these pressed soldiers led to poor unit performance on the battlefield,°° and in fact, the performance of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies’ forces did not improve until later in the war, when both colonies employed more volunteers and allied Indians.

Connecticut’s volunteers appeared to have been better motivated and definitely undertook more successful operations, usually in conjunction with drafted soldiers. This point can only be taken so far, however, as Zelner only has shown a correlation and not causation between pressed troops and poor battlefield performance. There are many factors in war in addition to motivation that achieve victory, and throughout history units

°° CCR, 420.

°°° If the county records exist, a historian would need to analyze Connecticut data as Zelner has done for Essex County Massachusetts in order to posit a more definitive argument for the social make-up of the colony’s dragoon force. This is a significant undertaking beyond the scope of this dissertation.

°°°° Zelner, A Rabble in Arms, 214.

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of drafted soldiers and even malcontents have performed admirably.\textsuperscript{555} It would also be a mistake to assert that the upper classes of New England or any society would make better soldiers, this too failing a consistent test of history.\textsuperscript{556} Connecticut troopers performed better than their Massachusetts Bay counterparts because of a combination of factors discussed here, including higher mobility, superior leadership, and most importantly, the employment of more and better allied Indians.

Performing missions without Indians, however, was not beyond the capabilities of Connecticut’s English forces. Connecticut dragoons, riding to the relief of Springfield, for instance, did not require an Indian escort. The allied Indians moving on foot did not reach the town until early the following morning.\textsuperscript{557} Philip’s coalition never ambushed Connecticut forces even on these occasions without Indian allies, while hostile groups frequently ambushed other New England forces. A contemporary of the war from Rhode Island in the late summer of 1676 detailed: “Recently, however, Connecticut has greatly cleared these coasts of Indians, having this summer slain or captured five hundred Indians, and lately the principal squaw sachem of the Narragansetts.”\textsuperscript{558} Massachusetts

\textsuperscript{555} Prussia and Great Britain sometimes pressed drifters and criminals into their militaries, while maintaining excellent armies during the eighteenth century.

\textsuperscript{556} The British armies of the American Revolution and Napoleonic Wars are examples of soldiers from the lower-middle and lower classes performing well in battle. Frederick the Great’s vaunted Prussian infantry were usually healthy farm boys recruited from the regimental cantons. Dennis E. Showalter, “The Wars of Frederick the Great” in Selected Readings History of the Military Art 1648-1914, ed. Eugenia C. Kiesling (New York, Pearson Learning Solutions, 2010), 31-38.

\textsuperscript{557} 6 Aug 1675 Letter Pynchon to Connecticut leadership (John Winthrop Jr. or Allyn), Wyllis Papers, 215-216.

\textsuperscript{558} William Harris, “The Second William Harris Letter of August, 1676,” 61.
Bay Governor Thomas Hutchinson, the following century, thought that “the brave action of the Connecticut volunteers have not been enough applauded.”

The most important martial difference between Connecticut and the other New England colonies, which also complemented the colonial militia, was the colony’s employment of large numbers of competent allied Indians.

“The Pequot & Monhegen Indians may be of very good use if securely managed, & will be useful to send out in partyes or march at a distance from ye body to clere up any suspitious places.”

Fitz-John Winthrop, the Governor’s son and a veteran of the English Civil Wars and the leader of English militia against the Dutch on Long Island, gave this advice to his younger brother Wait at the outbreak of King Philip’s War. By employing allied warriors in significant numbers, Connecticut leaders like the Winthrops facilitated more effective operations than their counterparts in other colonies. Connecticut employed allied Indian forces to nullify the hostile Indian advantage in “suspitious places,” difficult terrain, where the enemy could ambush the less experienced colonists: “& if you desire & must speke with the Naroganset sachems, it will, I beleive, be best to appoint them a place in some open ground, to prevent yt treachery & surprise


560 Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 280.
wch they use in dark & mountaynous places, & is alwayes to be avoyded, for ye security of yor men, who may easely be cut off by such disadvantages.”

That Connecticut forces were not recorded to have been ambushed in a single episode for the entire conflict was testament to the allied Indians’ ability to “clere up any suspitious places.” This fact cannot be understated as the hostile coalition ambushed other New England colonial forces repeatedly. The hostile Indians surprised the English, sometimes even when the colonists employed Indian allies. This was the case at Brookfield, with the defeats of Beers, Lathrop, and Peirce, and the return march from the attack on Turner’s Falls. Hostile forces ambushed Benjamin Church, Plymouth’s renowned Indian fighter on two occasions and he was fortunate to have Rhode Island boats evacuate his survivors in the first case or his history would never have been written. While lauding the Mohegans and Pequots contribution to the war effort, Rhode Islander William Harris implied that some of the other colonies’ Indian “allies” even acted treacherously. A product of Connecticut’s experience during the Pequot War as well as the moderate disposition of the colony’s leadership towards the local natives, the policy of employing allied Indians proved incredibly effective for offensive operations. While many historians have noted that Connecticut joined with Mohegans and Pequots from the beginning of the conflict, there has been little examination

561 Letter from Fitz-John to Wait Winthrop before the expedition into Narragansett territory, 8 July 1675, Winthrop Papers, vol. 8, 279.

562 Thomas Church, The History of King Philip’s War, ed. Samuel G. Drake (Boston: Howe & Norton Printers, 1825), 30-35.

concerning how they were employed or why they proved qualitatively superior to Indians from the other colonies.

Prior to the tribe’s defeat in 1637, Native Americans feared the Pequots the most of all the native groups inhabiting southern New England, the consequences of which were discussed above. The Mohegans developed the same superior military skills as the closely related Pequots. The Mohegans survived against hostile coalitions during the interwar years with a relatively small tribe because of superior tactical ability complemented by Uncas’ political acumen.

Although the Pequots and Mohegans shared the same Algonquin culture, they had a reputation for being ‘fiercer’ than the other New England tribes. But fierceness does not necessarily translate into competence on the field of battle. Morale certainly is a factor in success, but the ‘spirit of the bayonet’ has been proven throughout history to be less important than sound tactics and superior leadership. The Pequots appear to have been dominant over a long period of time even without a codified system of leadership. A factor that possibly explains the Pequot fighting quality was the tribe’s interaction with the Mohawks of the Iroquois confederacy.

The Pequots sphere of influence adjoined that of the Mohawks, also known as the ‘man-eaters,’ which was not the case with southern New England’s other powerful tribe, the Narragansetts. The territory of the Pequots and the nearby Mohegans virtually formed a barrier, albeit largely uninhabited, between Narragansett country and Mohawk raiding parties. The Pequots relative proximity to the Mohawks might also coincide with western Connecticut’s otherwise inexplicable vacancy.
Between the Farmington and Quinnipiac Rivers, with the Quinnipiac River only inhabited in significant numbers near New Haven, there was an absence of tribes west to the territory of the Wappinger native groups on the Hudson River. The Naugatucks were the closest tribe to this uninhabited area, situated on the banks of the Housatonic to the southwest. Indians inhabited the remainder of Connecticut much more densely, particularly around rivers and on Long Island Sound. There was no geographic or environmental hindrance preventing tribes from settling west of the Farmington and Quinnipiac Rivers, and a renaissance of tribes in fact occurred in the northwestern portion of Connecticut in the following century.\(^{564}\)

De Forest argues that the Mohawks ensured Connecticut’s western regions remained uninhabited, but offers little evidence to support this claim.\(^{565}\) During the Beaver Wars of the mid-seventeenth century, the Iroquois Confederacy conquered huge swaths of territory east of the Mississippi River, destroying, displacing, and subjugating numerous Indian tribes.\(^{566}\) The same may have occurred during the pre-contact epoch in western Connecticut.

The Mohawks also fought against the nearby upper river tribes towards the end of the 1650s, launching a devastating assault against the Pocumtuck main fort at Deerfield, and raiding Indian tribes all the way to Massachusetts’s Merrimack River. A few years later, the Mohawks fended off an assault upon one of its fortresses by a coalition of Massachusetts’ tribes, who were seeking revenge from the earlier Mohawk invasion. The


Mohawks again utterly defeated the hostile coalition, ambushing the force on its retreat back to New England.\textsuperscript{567}

Perhaps the uninhabited region of western Connecticut was a buffer zone or even demilitarized zone, where neither the Pequots nor their Mohawk adversaries sought to antagonize each other. Where historians have failed to offer a viable account of this phenomenon, anthropologists have proposed a feasible explanation. Anthropologist Steven LeBlanc’s \textit{Constant Battles} has proposed that “Farmers, or similarly organized tribal people, develop buffer zones between their territories…. Since crops are vulnerable to destruction by an enemy, and since egalitarian farmers have limited ability to organize boundary defenses, tribes tend to leave areas of unfarmed land between competing groups … these buffer zones are essentially fallow fields.”\textsuperscript{568} Citing the example of the conflict between the Yumans and Maricopas of the American Southwest, LeBlanc argues that Native Americans utilized buffer zones “as a means of survival” by allowing “societies to avoid being constantly in conflict.”\textsuperscript{569} Although much of the western portion of Connecticut was hunting land, the general concept might explain the de facto buffer zone between the Mohawks’ and Pequots’ spheres of influence. It might also explain the Pequot-Mohegan fighting superiority, as frontier peoples bordering a tribe known to be dominant fighters.

\textsuperscript{567} Temple and Sheldon, \textit{History of Northfield}, 28, 29.

\textsuperscript{568} Steven A. LeBlanc, \textit{Constant Battles: The Myth of the Peaceful, Noble Savage} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), 140.

\textsuperscript{569} LeBlanc, \textit{Constant Battles}, 210.
There were other significant tribes in the area to the northwest of Connecticut, such as the Wappinger confederation—closely related to the Delaware nation of tribes—and the Mahicans further to the north of the Wappingers, on the Hudson River to the east of Mohawk territory. Perhaps the Pequots confronted these tribes as well, but it is almost certain that the Mohawks influenced certain areas of Connecticut, where two elder Mohawk statesman made rounds each year, exacting tribute from many Connecticut tribes. Applying the lesson of the Mohawks to the Pequots and Mohegans, the latter tribes may have developed more advanced fighting skills than other New England tribes because of their position on the periphery of the region, just as the Mohawks had as “the keepers of the eastern door” for Iroquois territory. The Pequots and Mohegans also faced the possibility of a two-front war against Mohawks and Narragansetts that the other New England tribes did not. The Pequot nation would not be the first in history to develop dominant military tactical skills, when faced with two potent enemies on its flanks, facing the dangerous Mohawks and heavily-populated Narragansetts. Alan Gallay asserts that geo-political conditions were the primary cause of the military dominance of some tribes in the American South and the same situation seems to be a factor in Pequot-Mohegan qualitative superiority. The Mohegans and Pequots were in an unenviable geographic position, forcing them to become the capable warriors that their reputation reflected.

Whatever the reasons for the Mohegan-Pequot-Western Niantic tactical superiority, Connecticut Colony employed large numbers of allied Indians in field


operations—a significant difference compared to the other colonies. Colonial field forces operating as a single unit rarely numbered more than two to three hundred English soldiers, and then only on rare occasions, such as at Great Swamp. Unlike the other colonies, Connecticut employed large numbers of allied Indians in field operations relative to the number of colonial soldiers. Leaders like the Winthrops maintained confidence in the colony’s Indian allies, whom they believed could win the war alone in its early stages: “I am apt to think that our indians would bring in Philip if we had order to send them out beyond Narrogansett especialy if he be com on this side Seconk River as the report is.”

The Mohegans almost proved Winthrop right, when they assisted Massachusetts Bay troops in temporarilycornering Philip in a swamp at Nipsachuck in present day Rhode Island. The engagement occurred during the Mohegan’s return march frompledging their loyalty to the Massachusetts Court. This is yet another example of the qualitative superiority of Connecticut’s Indian allies over the Indian allies of the other New England colonies. Only Captain Daniel Henchman’s hesitation denied the Mohegans the victory that might have brought an early end to King Philip’s War.

In August 1675, 80 Pequots and 100 Mohegans were searching for Philip’s forces in western Massachusetts Bay Colony, and the War Council soon sent another 30

572 Letter from Wait Winthrop to John Winthrop Jr., 8 Jul 1675, Wyllis Papers, 209-211.

573 Ellis and Morris, _King Philip’s War_, 79-81.

574 8 August, 1675 letter from Sec. Allyn to Major Pynchon at Springfield, CWS, 1:11D, reports 80 Pequots and 100 Mohegans upriver. CCR, 348 seems to indicate that it is a combined total of 80-100 allied Indians, but the letter was likely the more accurate source.
allied Indians under Joshua to join the allied Indians already in the field. On the 5th of September after the Council learned of Beers’ defeat, it sent 100 Mohegans and Pequots to search for Philip’s warriors in the beleaguered western stretches of Massachusetts Bay. An additional combined force of colonists and allied Indians commanded by Captain John Mason Jr. was sent there a day later, to link-up with Connecticut’s field commander Major Treat.575 Major Treat with 60 Mohegans saved Moseley’s command at the Battle of Bloody Brook after the latter attempted unsuccessfully to relieve Lathrop’s command, which was almost completely wiped-out. The Mohegan contingent represented 40% of Treat’s entire force.576 Moseley would have faced a similar fate if not for the timely assistance of Treat and the Mohegans, who were operating within range to relieve his force.

After returning around 24 September, the War Council called the Mohegan-Pequots back to duty on 28 September, and on 7 October claimed to have over 100 allied Indians operating up-river in Massachusetts.577 At Great Swamp, 150 Mohegan and Pequots formed nearly one-third of Major Treat’s Connecticut expeditionary force, accompanying 315 colonial soldiers.578 In January 1676, the Council ordered Major Treat, whose command was regrouping in Connecticut following the Great Swamp Fight,

575 CCR, 348, 363.
576 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 113.
577 CCR, 369, 371; CT War Council letter to United Colony Commissioners, Wyllis Papers, 227-228.
578 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 148.
to ensure that the allied Indians were properly identified with markings in future operations. This was to prevent ‘friendly fire’ incidents, which concerned the War Council throughout the war. In early summer 1676, some 200 allied Connecticut natives joined 240 English commanded by Major Talcott for the infamous ‘Long March’ into Nipmuck country, rounding out 45% of the Connecticut force. In early July 1676, in one of the final major actions of the war, a large expedition under Major Talcott defeated the so-called Sunk Squaw, and her hostile band of Narragansetts. On 8 July 1676, the War Council again ordered Talcott to lead an expedition into Narragansett country for “mopping-up” operations.579 The Mohegans and other allied Indians continued to assist Connecticut Colony, especially in multiple expeditions into Narragansett country, although Connecticut did not record their exact numbers.

Allied Indian numbers influenced Connecticut’s offensive success. Although the allied Indians did not outnumber Philip’s forces by themselves, when combined with Connecticut colonial forces the number of Indian forces made a difference both qualitatively and quantitatively. Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth employed smaller numbers of allied Indians with only twenty, for example, at Pierce’s defeat.580 There were only a handful of allied Indians with the Massachusetts Bay militia at the ambush outside of Brookfield.581 At the war’s outbreak, one of Massachusetts Bay Colony’s initial expeditions included a paltry five or six friendly Indians.582 Even if Connecticut

579 CCR, 400, 450, 458-460.


581 Temple and Adams, A History of the Town of North Brookfield Massachusetts, 89-90.
forces did not achieve a single war-concluding victory, by employing larger numbers of qualitatively better allied Indians, they achieved notable successes in the field, and completely avoided the disasters that plagued the other colonies.

With the most tactically proficient Indian force in New England, and deployed in relatively large numbers, how did Connecticut Colony actually employ the allied Indians on the battlefield? Allied Indians acted primarily as scouts and flankers. As the term suggests, flankers ranged on the flanks when the colonists expected enemy contact during movement. Flankers attempted to prevent ambush, serving to displace the ambushing forces as well as to deny the element of surprise. Scouts moved further afield of the main body than flankers, searching for the enemy as well as a viable route-of-march. Scouts moved well ahead to locate an alternate route if obstacles were encountered in order to prevent unnecessary halts, always a risky proposition in enemy territory. Moving bodies are much more difficult to locate and attack than those that are stationary in unfamiliar terrain. Even with the usual employment of Native Americans in the role of scouts and flankers, Connecticut’s Indian allies brought something more significant to bear on offensive operations.

Wayne Lee describes another role that Connecticut’s Indian allies served during the conflict:

The real value of indigenous aid was a kind of strategic intelligence that informed the English of who the enemy was, where they were, how to get

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582 13 July 1675 Massachusetts council entry, vol. 67, Massachusetts MSS, Doc. 213.

there, what their probable intentions were, and keeping that kind of information up-to-date over time. Despite difficulties in achieving set-piece battles, English military leaders nevertheless often focused on finding and destroying their enemy's military forces, and to do so they sought surprise—while avoiding themselves being surprised. Since the native inhabitants knew the landscape more thoroughly and also usually had more intimate connections among other locals, it was they who were most able to provide the up-to-date information necessary to achieve surprise.\textsuperscript{584}

The Indians’ identification of enemy forces was especially critical given the high-level of inter-marriage between southern New England tribes, and the splintering of sub-tribal groups with varying degrees of loyalty to the colonists. Connecticut’s area of offensive operations essentially covered three ‘theaters’ outside of the colony’s borders—Narragansett Country, the upper Connecticut River valley, and Nipmuck country in central Massachusetts—and the Indians identified the ‘theater’ location of enemy groups, guiding the implementation of Connecticut’s limited military resources.\textsuperscript{585} Connecticut also targeted and eliminated key enemy leaders, such as Canonchet, hampering severely the enemy forces’ ability to conduct operations.

The record is vague concerning how the allied Indians and Connecticut troopers cooperated once battle actually was joined with Philip’s forces, but the methods were successful as they were neither defeated nor suffered an ambush. The surprise and destruction of the Sunk Squaw’s Narragansetts saw the implementation of the allied

\textsuperscript{584} Lee, “Using the Natives Against the Natives: Indigenes as ‘Counterinsurgents’ in the British Atlantic, 1500-1800,” 92.

\textsuperscript{585} Council’s order to Talcott 15 July 1676, Wyllis Papers, 247. Connecticut’s allied Indians determined the theater of operations by locating hostile bands.
Indians as the ‘hammer’ to flush out the Narragansetts from difficult terrain onto the waiting ‘anvil’ of the colonists, undoubtedly in standard linear formation. The Mohegans played a contributing role during the earlier Battle of Nipsachuck. It is interesting to note that Massachusetts Bay failed to learn from this near-victory that the employment of allied Indians contributed to battlefield success. Philip’s forces delayed the English for a few hours, fighting while low on powder, apparently allowing time for their non-combatants to evacuate the area. This fierce delaying action came at a cost, resulting in 23 warriors killed in action in Philip’s command, including some of his primary captains.

At Bloody Brook, Major Treat’s Connecticut dragoons accompanied by Mohegans saved Moseley’s command. Moseley had been employing his troops in European fashion by maintaining formation, firing volleys, and assaulting the enemy. His volunteers performed somewhat better than the impressed Massachusetts’ militia. Moseley lacked allied Indians, however, and the adequate numbers to drive off the enemy, who were busily stripping Lathrop’s dead from the initial ambush. Where the Massachusetts soldiers had failed, Treat’s Connecticut troopers succeeded in driving off the hostile band. Either Philip’s coalition conducted a fighting withdrawal with Treat’s approach or they were forcibly driven off by Connecticut’s force. There were no reports of friendly-fire of Moseley’s command accidently targeting the allied Mohegans, who

586 Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 249-250.


588 Hubbard, A Narrative of the Indian Wars, 110.
they probably would have failed to recognize so early in the conflict. Perhaps Treat moved his English troopers directly forward to link-up with Moseley. This maneuver would have ensured that the Massachusetts command had visibility of friendly units operating on the battlefield, preventing a friendly-fire incident by keeping the Mohegans out of harms-way on the flanks.

An even better combat employment of Treat’s command would have been to envelop the enemy war party by moving on its flanks and attempting to block its escape. The timing was right for this maneuver because the hostiles were distracted by stripping the dead and with the current fight with Moseley’s command. Treat probably did not attempt this for fear that Moseley did not know his command had arrived and might accidently have engaged them. One can imagine then, the combined force of English delivering volleys and methodically advancing across a battlefield strewn with the obstacles of Lathrop’s and Moseley’s dead, while the Mohegans harassed the enemy from the flanks. That the fresh Connecticut troops did not pursue the enemy was uncharacteristic for Treat, who had been pushing for more aggressive operations. This indicated that the Connecticut forces were engaged in battle at Bloody Brook, and perhaps were too spent to exploit their new-found success. This was the first engagement for many of Connecticut’s troopers, having only operated previously to draw off the garrison from Northfield. There they had first witnessed the aftermath of the horror of battle and atrocity, observing the desecrated colonial bodies from Beers’ defeat.589 Yet they had not experienced combat first-hand, and this perhaps was part of Treat’s

589 Temple and Sheldon, *The History of the Town of Northfield, Massachusetts*, 78.
calculation not to pursue the hostile Indians that he had driven from the field at Bloody Brook. Dusk was also approaching which would have impacted Treat’s decision not to exploit his success.

The English Connecticut troopers at Bloody Brook and other engagements likely would have maneuvered on the battlefield in the same fashion that was standard for mid-seventeenth century European forces. English forces in the English Civil Wars adopted earlier Dutch and Swedish tactics that the Connecticut leaders Denison and Fitz-John Winthrop would have observed and others likely would have read about in military tracts discussed above. The standard maneuver was by battalion, pitting pikes in the middle with ranks of musketeers of varying depths flanking the pikes on both sides. As Connecticut troopers did not employ pikes and were mostly dragoons, they likely dismounted at Bloody Brook and other engagements, effectively becoming infantry, and then methodically marched across the battlefield using standard tactics for the time period. The main basis for maneuver was the countermarch. A standard employment of musketeers had two or more ranks march ten paces in front of the main body. Coming to a halt, the first rank would fire while the second rank made ready. The first rank would then turn to the rear right or left, countermarching in the gaps between the rear ranks, a maneuver that Maurice of Orange first copied around 1600 A.D. from texts describing the Roman legions. The follow-on ranks would then march through those who had just fired, and the infantry would repeat this process across the battlefield. In order to perform this maneuver, officers would have formed their musketeers into ‘open order’ formation, creating the space necessary for countermarching. This required drill and it was likely that this maneuver is what New England militia practiced during drill sessions.
because mistakes would lead to ‘friendly-fire’ incidents as described in the English Civil Wars.\textsuperscript{590}

At Great Swamp in December 1675, the Pequots and Mohegans formed the outer perimeter of the New England force, while the English assaulted into the Narragansett stronghold. Many of the English casualties occurred as they tried to rush across a fallen log into the Narragansett fort. There was a blockhouse concentrating enfilading fire on the English as they moved single file across this treacherous bridge, slaughtering some of the Connecticut command. Once inside the fort, a more conventional battle ensued, with the English and Narragansetts exchanging fire while facing each other European-fashion, merely yards apart. This played to the strength of the colonists’ training in volley fire, though the Narragansetts continued the fight until the English set fire to the wigwams. Many Narragansett warriors and non-combatants appeared to have escaped, which was indicative of an ineffective cordon established by the allied Indians. Great Swamp was a pyrrhic victory for the colonists, resulting in the death of some Narragansetts and the subsequent suffering of the now exposed and hungry survivors.\textsuperscript{591} The English also destroyed a blacksmith’s forge, further limiting the Indians ability to repair weapons and fashion flints.\textsuperscript{592}

\textsuperscript{590} Roberts, \textit{Cromwell’s War Machine}, 88-91, describes these tactics as they took place in England. In the above paragraph using Roberts’ description, I have added my estimation of how these tactics related to warfare in New England.

\textsuperscript{591} Ellis and Morris, \textit{King Philip’s War}, 149-153.

\textsuperscript{592} Malone, \textit{Skulking Way of War}, 74.
In late summer 1676, after the allied Indians and the English had shattered
Philip’s coalition, Connecticut’s Major Talcott led a force of Indians and English against
Philip’s fleeing bands. His force was described as “consisting of some five or six
hundred men, English and Indians…. These are very diligent, hardy, bold, valiant men,
habituated and hardened to that duty, and incensed by the barbarous inhumanity they
have heard of and the evidence of which they have seen in the form of the English bodies
they found in the woods.” Talcott located a refugee group on the Housatonic River,
near what is now Sheffield, Massachusetts. His plan revealed something of the tactical
wherewithal Connecticut forces had developed during the conflict.

Talcott dismissed some of his English troops and all of the horses for lack of
provisions, and proceeded with roughly 60 soldiers and about the same number of
Indians. He divided his force into two bodies: an assaulting force crossed the river to
attack the Indians already on the western side, while a supporting element was to attack
with volleys from across the river, once the assault had commenced. The river must have
been narrow at this juncture because of the limited range of the flintlocks and the fact that
Talcott’s supporting force pursued the enemy after crossing the river. One of this
retreating group’s Indians, who was fishing early in the morning, detected the English
assault force as it approached his camp and gave the alarm. Talcott’s supporting unit
unleashed a volley and then also became the assault element as the original assaulting
force never reached the camp in time to play a significant role in the action. In this
engagement, Connecticut troops were confident enough in their tactical prowess and in
the ability of their allied Indian forces to send a portion of their force home with all of the

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horses in the face of the enemy. Talcott then maneuvered without maintaining contact between his divided command—a very dangerous action with enemy forces in the immediate vicinity. Only a lone Indian fisherman prevented the entire enemy encampment from succumbing to the onslaught.594

Even in light of these engagements, the record for the tactical cooperation between the colonists and allied Indians remains murky. The best employment of the Indians would have been “cutting off way of war” tactics. In battle, this would have been to send them circling around the hostile forces’ flanks, while the main colonial body moved forward in a standard European assault. Lee describes that the “cutting off way of war” often “took the form familiar to us as the ‘Indian way of war’... after the first exchange of fire individual warriors ‘took to the trees,’ firing and moving, while each group tried to surround the other in the classic half-moon style that would negate the cover of a single tree.”595 There are accounts of hostile forces attempting to circle around the colonial forces’ flanks, and it would make sense if Connecticut’s colonial leadership employed allied Indians in the same way. Another employment would have been to use the natives as ‘skirmishers’ in front and on the flanks of the English main body, utilizing Indian marksmanship.596 In typical “cutting off way of war” fashion, set-piece battles

594 Hoyt, “Indian Wars,” 249-250.

595 Lee, “Fortify, Fight, or Flee,” 722. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815, 22, describes this tactic as envelopment with a “horseshoe formation.”

596 The term “skirmishing” had not entered the lexicon of European warfare in the seventeenth century. Military history, however, is replete with instances of military formations employing skirmishing techniques before this time, and both sides utilized skirmishing tactics during King Philip’s War.
rarely occurred between the hostile tribes and Connecticut forces, indicating perhaps that Philip’s confederates knew that the Connecticut forces, employing larger numbers of allied Indians than other colonial units, would be too powerful to confront in open battle. Numerous pitched battles in fact proved unnecessary to win the war.

The English did not rely on allied Indians to assault fortified positions such as at Great Swamp, drawing perhaps on the experience of combined operations in the Pequot War. Oberg claims that the Indians were “unfamiliar with attacking fortified positions,” but it was far more likely that the Indians chose not to attack fortified positions. After all, the allied Indians had accompanied the English at Mystic and Fairfield Swamp during the Pequot War, and Great Swamp during the Great Narragansett War, and clearly would have observed the rather simplistic English tactics of cordoning off the objective, then assaulting it. As Lee points out, the Tuscarora easily adapted to English fortification building and counter-engineering, and the Cherokees drew their own lessons from accompanying colonists during the Tuscarora campaign. The Indians chose not to attack fortified positions as portrayed in the example of a Creek war party that gave up after observing a well-fortified and vigilantly guarded Cherokee village. It was not a matter of skill or courage, but the Indians simply could not replace casualties due to relatively low birth rates. The Indians did play a role, however, in combined operations, where the colonial forces attacked fortified positions. The allied Indians normally led the English forces to the enemy, and then served as an outer perimeter as the

597 Oberg, Uncas First of the Mohegans, 180.

598 Kenneth Chase, Firearms: A Global History to 1700 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22, discusses the impact of low birth and high mortality rates on tactics.
English conducted the assault. Allied Indians also helped defend fortifications by using their marksmanship skills, firing from the parapet at Northampton and Hadley.599

While Indians rarely fought like colonists, a few colonial soldiers did adopt Indian tactics. Plymouth’s Benjamin Church and Connecticut’s Captains Denison and Avery, operating with relatively small Indian-colonial forces, adopted the “cutting off way of war.” One of Denison’s expeditions captured Canonchet and Church’s force killed Philip.600 Complementing the larger expeditions launched by Majors Treat and Talcott, these smaller raiding parties kept Philip’s confederates off balance in their own territory. The raiding forced the hostile bands to maintain constant vigilance and to change locations frequently. This disruption of village life lowered the morale in Philip’s confederacy, particularly with the Narragansett bands, which were the frequent targets of Denison’s and Avery’s raids. The frequent raiding also prevented the Narragansetts from planting new fields and returning to caches of supplies, and the warriors from refitting for future battle in terms of weapons maintenance, ammunition acquisition and supply replenishment. Hutchinson related that the raids “sunk and broke their spirits, and seems to have determined the fate of English and Indians, which until then was doubtful and uncertain.”601

599 Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 184, 243.

600 Drake, The Old Indian Chronicle, 310; Hubbard, The History of the Indian Wars in New England, 182; Ellis and Morris, King Philip’s War, 222-223; Starkey, European and Native American Warfare 1675-1815, 32, 79; Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, 53, 63.

601 Hutchinson quoted in Elroy and Catharine Avery, The Groton Avery Clan (no.3112) vol. 1, 61.
The raiding parties often linked-up at the Pequot stronghold of Mashuntucket, probably at Mohantic fort unearthed at the Pequot reservation. The fort’s dimension of roughly 58 X 52 meters was too small for the entire Pequot population to inhabit, but occupying a hill-top and protected on two sides by a swamp, it clearly offered defense against sudden raids. Mohantic was designed to maximize flanking fire from small-scale bastions on each corner with the length of the walls corresponding to effective musket range. The excavation has revealed a blacksmith’s forge and a large number of flints for muskets, indicating that allied Indians and perhaps colonists as well, refurbished weapons at Mohantic.⁶⁰² It seems that this fort on the frontier with Narragansett country played a role similar to modern-day forward operating bases (FOBs), where the raiding parties coalesced and out-fitted for the expedition in the relative safety of the fort. These raiding parties were shaping operations for the larger expeditions and proved critical to Connecticut’s victory over the hostile tribes.

The militia leader Thomas Minor reported linking-up with allied Indian forces at Mashuntuckett for numerous expeditions into Narragansett country. Sergeant Minor was promoted to lieutenant of dragoons on 3 November, 1675, at the youthful age of 67. His diary indicated that he was at “Meshuntapit” and “Meshuntup” at the end of October and again at the end of November respectively, although this was prior to raiding into Narragansett country. The Narragansetts had not overtly joined Philip’s coalition before the colonial attack at Great Swamp in November. On 7 March 1676, however, Minor recorded meeting at “Meshuntupit” again, this time presumably to raid into Narragansett

country, from which he returned on 13 March. Minor campaigned from 28 March-4 April. Although the starting point for the expedition was unclear, Minor had been at Norwich, Connecticut, the day that the expedition departed. Mashuntuckett was less than 20 miles from Norwich and on a route into Narragansett country, perhaps Mohantic was the rendezvous for Connecticut forces. This was Captain Denison’s expedition that captured the Narragansett leader Canonchet. The Canonchet raid of seventy-nine colonists and a body of Indians was detached from Major Talcott’s larger force that deployed into western Massachusetts Bay.603

Unlike Talcott’s force, Denison’s was only large enough to harass and disrupt smaller enemy groups, like Canonchet’s. Denison and Avery executed a number of successful raids, but this was the most successful of all, capturing perhaps the hostile confederation’s most capable war leader. The capture and execution of Canonchet was the singular victory of the war: “The news of this defeat, when it came, doubtless astonished and troubled them more than anything that had befallen them since the war began.”604

After the Canonchet expedition, the War Council ordered Denison and Avery “to prosecute the enemie wth all vigor,”605 and Minor detailed that the raiding force linked-up at “Meshuntupit.” This expedition returned to New London on 29 April,606 having

603 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 201.
605 7 Apr 1676 letter from Secretary Allyn to Major Palmes, CWS, 1:58b.
606 Minor, “The Diary of Thomas Minor,” 130-137.
killed nearly 80 Narragansetts. 607 Once again on 9 May, a raiding party of English and allied Indians launched an expedition into Narragansett country from “Meshuntuck” and returned from Providence, Rhode Island on 15 May. In July, another army marched out of “Mashantuckset” into Narragansett country, the second major expedition of that month. These two expeditions were larger than the usual small-scale raids. Even though the war in Narragansett country largely ended with these major operations, it was clear that smaller expeditions—mostly launched from Mashuntuckett during the spring—not only weakened the hostile bands through attrition and by neutralizing key leaders, but also disrupted their logistics base. 608

Connecticut’s alliance with the loyal tribes, however, did not rest completely on the English adopting the Indian methods of fighting. The allied Indians did not need the colonists fighting like themselves anymore than the colonists needed the Indians defending garrisons. Connecticut’s military alliance rested on an effective division of labor. This was not lost on the colonists’ “Indian allies who see and say that it is they who overtake the enemy, otherwise how could the English overcome those they cannot catch or come near to kill, who still outrun them whenever they wish.” 609

Both the allied Indians and the English each performed military functions according to their own battlefield strengths. The Indians conducted scouting, flanking, marksmanship, and pursuit, while the English colonists provided more disciplined

607 Ellis and Morris, *King Philip’s War*, 223.
608 Minor, “The Diary of Thomas Minor,” 130-137.
firepower and were willing to assault fortifications. Leaders like Majors Treat and Talcott understood that the key to ultimate success was to employ allied Indians and colonial soldiers to complement each other. If the colonists could fight in the same fashion as their native allies, and the allied Indians had the same willingness to storm fortifications and conduct standard European battle, it is hard to imagine why the alliance would have been sustained. This was especially true given differences over land, religion, and the influence of politics that irritated relations during the inter-war years. Mutual respect for military skills on the battlefield, generated from the hard reality of frontier warfare, cemented the mutually beneficial alliance.

Connecticut’s offensive success reflected the martial skill of its field leaders. From 1675 through the spring of 1676, Major Robert Treat was the colony’s commander-in-chief. Although he reportedly was sought after because he “knew how to fight the Indians,” there is no indication that Treat experienced actual combat before King Philip’s War. He began his military career as “the chiefe military officer [of Milford] for the present to order ye military affaires of that towne.” Respected as both a military and political figure he was instrumental in settling Newark, New Jersey after abandoning Connecticut around the time of Connecticut’s annexation of New Haven Colony’s—a union that he found objectionable. Treat eventually returned to Connecticut and during the Third Anglo-Dutch War served as commander of New Haven County’s forces and

610 C. Alison Scully, Robert Treat 1622-1710 (Philadelphia, no publisher listed, 1959), 177.

second-in-command of Connecticut forces. During the Great Narragansett War, he led expeditions along the Massachusetts Bay stretches of the Connecticut River. He rescued Moseley’s command, and successfully defended Northampton and Hadley. Treat also led Connecticut’s expeditionary force at Great Swamp, where he was nearly killed when a bullet passed through the rim of his hat, and was reportedly the last Englishman to leave the Narragansett Fort as the commander of the rear guard. Although Treat’s tactical employment of allied Indians remains a mystery, he utilized them in large numbers, avoiding the ambushes that repeatedly plagued the other colonies.

When Treat became deputy governor in the spring of 1676, Major John Talcott replaced him and enjoyed even more successful operations than his predecessor. Talcott employed large numbers of allied Indians as well, and his operations finished off the Narragansett tribe as an effective fighting force by mid-July. Weeks later he defeated remnants of the hostile coalition fleeing New England. Although neither Treat nor Talcott appeared to have combat experience prior to the conflict, their general leadership experience, willingness to cooperate with Indian allies, and administrative abilities contributed to the success of the colony’s operations.

Connecticut often called upon certain officers, such as Captains Denison and Avery, to directly lead native forces. Captain John Mason Jr. was one such leader before he was mortally wounded at Great Swamp. Connecticut’s Secretary Allyn related to the

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612 Treat, The Treat Family, 136.

Council of Massachusetts that “Captn John Mason in whome they take greatest content” had to be sent for to lead the Indians because they refused “to move farther without some of our English to conduct & direct their motion.”®614 As Wait Winthrop urged his father, the English leadership understood that the mismanagement of Indian forces could lead to their disillusionment: “they will [not] think much to go so far and com back againe without doing anything.”®615 Indian leaders, such as Uncas also advised Connecticut’s English leadership. Uncas urged offensive operations outside of the colony so that “the enemyes hearts will be weakened or damped, The Indian friends hearts encouraged, to fall in with the English.”®616 Motivated from the beginning by his own policy goals and personal standing within the Mohegan tribe, Uncas certainly could have been advocating a course of action favorable to his objectives. Perhaps this was another attempt in a decade’s long quest to influence English policy for his own benefit and the benefit of his followers, but Uncas’ advice was prescient nonetheless. Without leaders who could straddle both English and native cultures like Mason Jr. and Uncas, the Connecticut alliance would not have generated as much battlefield success. Leadership from both the colonists and allied Indians played a pivotal role in offensive operations.

Connecticut’s English allies failed to employ the same effective leadership. Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth officers who were veterans of the Pequot War, led their commands into ambushes and Philip’s coalition severely defeated others in a number of

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®615 8 July 1675 letter from Wait to John Winthrop Jr., Wyllis Papers, 209-211.

®616 Summer 1675, Wyllis Papers, 228.
battles. Not only failing to employ sufficient Indian allies, some colonial leaders, such as Moseley, committed atrocities and acted undiplomatically, driving friendly or neutral native groups into Philip’s camp. Massachusetts Bay seemed to condone this behavior by not immediately removing Moseley from command. This unethical behavior was counterproductive in a campaign attempting, in part, to coax hostile Indians to surrender. Although by conflict’s end, Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth had adopted Connecticut’s model of volunteer troops aided by enough allied Indians to be of use on the battlefield, the earlier failure to do so and immoral conduct extended the conflict by a number of months.

Connecticut conducted relatively more successful offensive operations than its New England allies. The colony successfully paired sufficient numbers of qualitatively superior allied Indians with its English dragoons. Connecticut’s superior led and mobile forces consisted of more volunteers and were better representative of the colony’s population than the English forces employed by the other New England colonies. Allied Indians assisted in bringing the hostile forces to battle, so the English forces could bring their military assets to bear. Small bodies of colonial-native forces, fighting in irregular warfare-style, also assisted in shaping Connecticut’s offensive operations. These elements in concert created a potent offensive force, allowing the colony to maintain the initiative, and ultimately proved decisive against the hostile coalition. Native and English leaders realized early in the conflict that Connecticut forces would never defeat Philip’s coalition with defensive operations alone.
Capitalizing on the superior tactical ability of allied Indians and employing them sooner and in greater numbers than the other New England colonies, Connecticut enjoyed successes and avoided defeat in the field. Leaders from both Connecticut’s English and Indian ranks stepped forward to serve each other in a time of mutual danger. Although a culminating battle with Philip never occurred, Connecticut forces disrupted the hostile Indian groups’ logistics base, keeping the enemy on the run, and defeating them in battle. Led by experienced officers, Connecticut contributed to the colonial victory at Great Swamp, captured Canonchet, and soundly defeated the remnants of the Narragansetts under the Sunk Squaw. The colony’s combined English-Indian forces also assisted the Massachusetts Bay Colony towns on the upper stretches of the Connecticut River. Connecticut Colony emerged unscathed from New England’s bloodiest war, in large measure due to the effectiveness of its offensive operations.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Connecticut primarily succeeded in this conflict by capitalizing on its relationship with the local tribes, while the other New England colonies sustained devastating loses and achieved only a pyrrhic victory. This unique relationship between settlers and local native groups set the stage for both successful defensive and offensive military operations, but historians have largely ignored or failed to adequately explain this key element in Connecticut’s success or indeed the colony’s success at all. Analyzing Connecticut’s role in the war undermines long-held assumptions about the conflict, including the standard naming convention of King Philip’s War, and places the Great Narragansett War in a century’s long struggle of native groups to adjust to the colonists’ arrival. Connecticut’s military role also highlights the effective use of European military skills in the New World, often in combination with more plentiful and competent Indian allies than the native forces of the other New England colonies. Connecticut’s war council and military leadership more effectively managed the conflict than its sister colonies. Connecticut’s story in the Great Narragansett War establishes a paradigm for historians to consider military operations in the early colonial Atlantic World from the perspective of sound relations with local native groups and the employment of certain European principles of war in combination with allied Indian forces.
The causative factor in Connecticut’s success was the leaders’ identification of good relations with local native groups as an essential element of military success. This relationship—clearly fostered in deliberate fashion by Connecticut’s leadership and accepted by native peoples—demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the nature of the conflict. The war council and the General Court repeatedly admonished local English leaders to observe good and just relations with their Indian neighbors. Connecticut colonists needed local tribal knowledge of the hostile coalition given the difficulty in fighting and even defining the colonists’ adversaries. Philip’s confederates operating in Connecticut were not easily identified according to overly simplistic tribal delineations. By maintaining positive relationships with neighboring native communities, the colonists prevented critical intelligence about the vulnerabilities of their daily lives from falling into the hands of Philip’s confederates. Without the intelligence necessary to formulate military operations, Connecticut’s adversaries, though present in the colony, were unable to execute large-scale attacks on the colony’s settlements. The policy with the local natives thus served as the foundation for Connecticut’s success in the war.

The legacy of the Pequot War in the decision-making of the Connecticut leadership loomed large in its handling of Indian policy. Governor Winthrop and a number of other Pequot War veterans, now town leaders in many settlements, knew firsthand the necessity of maintain positive relations with local native groups, as well as utilizing allied Indians during military operations. Governor John Winthrop Jr. and others had served in Europe and stayed abreast of military developments there. The second generation of Connecticut leaders such as the Winthrop brothers, George Denison and John Mason Jr., inherited these lessons from their predecessors through
correspondence with senior leaders and bequeathed military texts. These men also utilized their own military and diplomatic experiences with both Native Americans and Europeans.

Even with this experience, it was not a given that the Connecticut tribes would support the colony, nor were the years between the Pequot War and the Great Narragansett War a linear progression for good colonial-Indian relations. There were a number of episodes that could have led to war between Connecticut and local tribes, including the Mohegans, and it was never certain that various episodes of infighting between opposing colonists and their Indian supporters would not result in an armed standoff or worse. The non-linear nature of the relationship between individuals and factions, both Indian and colonists, infused the interwar years with uncertainty and increased the chance of war between interest groups. In the end, Connecticut supported Uncas and the Mohegans and the remnants of the Pequots to a degree, against outside Indian threats and during internal-colony feuds. This consistent policy, carried out on the personal and colony levels, set the stage for effective relations during the crisis of 1675-1676, though it was never pre-determined that local native groups would support Connecticut.

Connecticut’s native groups almost exclusively avoided supporting the hostile coalition. Little evidence survives on why this was the case, but for the larger tribes, such as the Mohegan and Pequots, there were economic and political factors that tied them to the English. The Connecticut River tribes, the Tunxis of the Farmington River Valley and the scattered native peoples of west and southwestern Connecticut also chose
largely to support the colonists or remain neutral. Local relations held sway in places like Wethersfield and Middletown, where there were joint colonial-Indian security cooperation spurred by local relationships. Clearly these relationships existed, though the “why” largely has been lost to history. The presence of armed allied Indians might have deterred other tribal groups from joining Philip, when operating in conjunction with a well-led English force of dragoons in carrying out an active defense. Connecticut’s defenses, on average more robust by mid-war than other colonies, perhaps dissuaded local tribes from joining with Philip.

Connecticut Colony remained on the periphery of New England throughout the seventeenth century, facing threats from the Dutch and various Indian groups that the other New England colonies did not face. This partially resulted in the colony’s different viewpoint concerning the primacy of sound local relations with local native groups. The combination of Indian and European threats solidified the policy of maintaining local Indian support and hence denying local intelligence to the enemy, Indian or European. It also led the colony to consider matters of defense in a more salient way, and resulted in more robust frontier defenses early in the colony’s history. Over time, Connecticut allowed these defenses to deteriorate, but the skeleton traces as well as the concept behind such defenses did not erode completely by King Philip’s War, giving the colony an early advantage. The trace of past defenses coupled with the hostile coalition’s initial designation of Connecticut as only a secondary objective bought critical time for Connecticut to reorganize its latent military potential. The devastating preemptive strike against the Narragansetts in late December 1675 had a similar disruptive effect that granted Connecticut respite from the hostile coalition.
When the Narragansetts recovered to enter the fray, the nature of the war changed dramatically. The Narragansetts retained the political and military clout that no other single tribe possessed in the region. This Great Narragansett War had the potential of destroying all English settlements save for a few well-protected strong-points at Boston, Plymouth, Newport, and Ft. Saybrook. Undoubtedly, Narragansett leaders overshadowed Philip, whose role as war-leader remained murky at best even before the English drove this strongest tribe into his coalition. The designation of this conflict as “King Philip’s War” was in hindsight a historical error that confused not only the leadership of the hostile Indian coalition, but also clouded its intended military targets. Connecticut’s primacy in the war as both a potent military force and a primary target for Indian forces becomes evident when viewed as the Great Narragansett War instead of King Philip’s War. This places not only Connecticut in its proper historical context, but also links this conflict to the overall post-contact Native American struggle for adaptation to new cultural, economic, and military structures in the region.

The role of Connecticut in the Great Narragansett War, previously downplayed or ignored, comes to light when the war is named properly because the Narragansetts had a significant and decades-old feud, not only with the Mohegans and remaining Pequots, but their Connecticut supporters. The Narragansetts had repeatedly gone to war during the interwar years in the attempt to thwart burgeoning Mohegan power emboldened by the wily Uncas, and the English colonists in the colony repeatedly disrupted these efforts. The Narragansetts would have desired nothing less than extirpating their mortal enemies and their colonial supporters, once they openly joined the conflict. Unfortunately for the Narragansetts, Connecticut already had reconstituted much of its defenses and had
undertaken field operations for months before the Great Swamp fight, leading to a well prepared joint-military effort between the English and allied Indians. The Narragansetts on the other hand, having their main village surprised, had to adjust its military operations to account for non-combatants—now without shelter and starving in the deep New England winter—and had no choice but to flee for refuge to Nipmuck country.

Any chance of the Narragansetts exacting revenge on Connecticut ended when the colony’s combined Indian-English force ambushed Canonchet in early April 1676—the one Indian leader with the clout and ability to lead a concerted effort against the Narragansetts’ most hated colony. As might be expected with the loss of a competent leader, the hostile coalition now struck at the most exposed settlements in the three other New England colonies. These were less of an operational and logistical challenge for the coalition than Connecticut’s hardened defenses, which were augmented by the underlying relationship with its local tribes. The other colonies had by this time interned peaceful tribes and committed other atrocities, losing the support of friendly and neutral local tribes and suffered the bloody consequences. The Great Narragansett War quickly degenerated into a fight of endurance, in which the Indian coalition had little chance of succeeding by the late spring of 1676. There was no real hope of a restoration of ante-bellum relations and many warriors decided to fight it out, some attempted to flee, and others surrendered and faced execution, slavery in Bermuda, or indentured servitude in New England.

Much of Connecticut’s policy reflected its leaders’ belief in the moderate treatment of native groups, particularly the Winthrops, the Masons, Governor Leete, and Majors Treat, to name a few. Their actions compared favorably to the heavy-handed
treatment and out-right atrocities committed against Indians by other colonies’ leaders such as Captain Moseley. The Massachusetts General Court sanctioned the imprisonment of praying Indians on Deer Island and the Governor of the colony accepted Moseley’s atrocities. Plymouth Colony enacted a similar policy of imprisonment for a local tribe on Clark’s Island in Plymouth harbor. This undoubtedly set a tone within those colonies that this type of behavior was acceptable to the colonial leadership. It is difficult to imagine John Winthrop Jr. sanctioning a field commander’s execution of an Indian woman, particularly in the manner of having her torn apart by dogs. Winthrop even objected to hostage taking from the Narragansetts and the preemptive invasion of the tribe’s territory, even though the tribe was sympathetic to and passively aiding Philip.

The Connecticut colonists, Mohegans, Pequots and other allied bands, drawing on experience from the Pequot War and conflicts in the intervening decades, successfully merged their two dissimilar fighting styles into a formidable complementary frontier military system. Although Connecticut’s leaders would not have referred to its military operations at the time as a “system,” this is in fact a useful way of viewing Connecticut’s operations. The Native Americans performed tasks that best suited their military strengths, while the colonists largely executed those tasks which they were trained to perform. A handful of colonists adopted the “cutting off way of war,” and their joint expeditions with friendly Indians complemented larger search and destroy missions.

Connecticut’s native allies also appear to have been qualitatively superior tactically to the other New England tribes, particularly those employed by the other colonies. The Indians of southern New England feared the Pequots most of all tribes in
that region, and the closely related Mohegans and remaining Pequots after 1637 appear to have continued their successful martial tradition. Perhaps one can attribute Pequot-Mohegan fighting ability to the tribes’ geographic position, located between Mohawk raiding territory to the west and the large and powerful Narragansett nation to the east. A state of constant conflict against formidable tribes likely honed Pequot-Mohegan tactical prowess.

Honing military skills also affected Connecticut’s English leaders such as Fitz Winthrop and George Denison, who had experience in conflicts abroad and against the Dutch; experiences which impacted their decision-making processes and performances in King Philip’s War. Conventional warfare in the British Isles did not always translate into frontier fighting, but the basics of military organization and leading men in battle and difficult circumstances remained a constant. Employed in a complementary way, Connecticut’s native allies performed missions at which they excelled—reconnaissance, flank protection, security and exploitation—while the colonial troops focused on garrison and fortification defense, disciplined volleys, and assaults on fortified Indian villages and encampments. This system worked because this ‘division of labor’ focused on the strengths of the respective military cultures. The tactical failure of the other New England colonies through most of the conflict was not a matter of the colonists failing to adopt the “skulking war of war” or the product of the erosion of European fighting skills. While there is no debating that some colonists developed better wilderness tactics as the war progressed, both sides retained their natural advantage in their traditional fighting fashions. Connecticut’s combination of English troops with competent allied Indians proved a lethal combination against Philip’s forces. While the combined Connecticut
forces sometimes failed to locate the enemy, they were never ambushed in the field and never lost an engagement.

Connecticut’s field forces were not an incompetent rabble, which sometimes characterized the colonial military formations of the other colonies. Connecticut employed more volunteers, who were motivated by principle, bounty, or both, to serve, as well as competent leadership, such as Majors Treat and Talcott. The colony’s offensive field forces were dragoons, riding to battle and then dismounting to fight. This capability translated into a relative mobility advantage over the other colonies’ occasional employment of infantry formations. The New England militia trained to combat a transitory threat, as European powers of the seventeenth century lacked the power-projection capability necessary for prolonged campaigns. The militia needed only to hold out long enough for “time” to take effect in terms of reducing an invaders’ logistics and personnel capability, which would inevitably force them to withdraw. Thus the militia’s training was adequate for the situation that they were expecting, but can be legitimately criticized for failing to prepare for a possible conflict with the Indians. New England forces had dispatched the Pequots in 1637, a tribe similar to other Indians at the time, unarmed with gun powder technology. This victory created a false sense of security among the English, who largely failed to anticipate Indian adaptation of firearms into traditional Native American tactics by the 1670s. The cooperation of Connecticut’s tribal allies with the colony’s colonial forces negated the general lack of preparation for Indian warfare.
Employing the techniques of the European ‘Military Revolution,’ Connecticut employed elements of European-style fortifications in a more widespread fashion than the other New England colonies. Settled on the frontier with a hostile Dutch colony and confronted with more numerous Indian neighbors of dubious loyalty, Connecticut had arranged for its own defense in a more systematic way than the other New England colonies. Original fortifications at Saybrook, New Haven, Hartford, and Windsor, and perhaps other towns, boasted defenses with elements of European design. The settlements retained the trace of European-style fortifications, even if the original fortifications were allowed to fall into a state of disrepair during the interwar years. During the Great Narragansett War, after the colony’s leadership ordered the move to serious defenses in October, 1675, the towns with dilapidated structures had a base to work from in reconstituting its defenses. This was not uncommon in early American history, as exemplified by “The Castle” in Boston Harbor, which repeatedly lapsed into a state of disuse, only to be resurrected again during times of military crisis. Emerging here also, perhaps, was American unwillingness to maintain standing military forces and structures during periods of peace. This theme continued on and off in American history through the emergence of the United States as a superpower post-1945. In addition to fortifications, the colony also employed both colonial and Indian scouts to augment defenses, and on some occasions combined these forces to patrol the colony. This active defense helped keep Philip’s confederates from coalescing to attack Connecticut settlements.

Connecticut’s successful defense relied upon the military decision-making ability of the colony’s war council. This body issued more detailed orders than other colonies,
demonstrating a willingness to dictate operations and tactics to the colony’s field leaders. Although experienced at the diplomatic and military-administrative levels, Majors Treat and Talcott, the primary war leaders, lacked campaign and battle combat experience. They obeyed the council’s orders and perhaps needed this detailed military guidance. Connecticut’s contiguous population settlement pattern, the relative density of its population in these areas, and its smaller population numbers, all contributed to the council’s ability to manage the conflict, while aiding the defensive operations of its military forces. The other New England colonies’ war councils lacked either the willingness to direct military affairs for inexperienced field leaders or the settlement pattern and population density that aided defensive military operations and eased conflict-management.

By utilizing an active defense with rebuilt elements of European-style fortifications, both rendered effective by the colony’s moderate policy towards the local native groups, Connecticut prevented the bloody attacks that occurred in the other New England colonies. Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth and Rhode Island all suffered devastating losses, primarily by losing the support of their local tribes. Once Philip’s forces won the allegiance of native groups located near English settlements, they received the local intelligence necessary to plan and conduct offensive military operations. This was the situation at Swansea, Brookfield, Northfield, Deerfield, Northampton and Springfield. The hostility of local Indians towards these towns largely surprised the settlers, who were unprepared militarily to deal with Philip’s coalition. The settlers’ incredulity resulted from poor policy towards native groups from their respective
colony’s leadership, as well as cultural deafness to the underlying issues of land and sovereignty that angered the Indian population.

The colonists’ difficulty in identifying friend from enemy in this situation was compounded by the fact that traditional tribal political breakdowns, largely an English creation based on European standards of grouping peoples, did not readily apply to early colonial American tribal delineations of southern New England. Native communities reflected a high degree of intermarriage and joint-tribal communities, perhaps established after contact with European economic and cultural factors and exacerbated by military conflict. Connecticut avoided these issues by maintaining solid local relations, denying local support to Philip’s forces, without which they were unable to carry out large-scale attacks. By taking into account not only what the colonists and allied Indians contributed militarily as well as Connecticut’s moderate policy towards the natives, an explanation becomes possible for why the colony remained unscathed at home, and suffered less than the other New England colonies on the battlefield.

The cooperation between the Connecticut Colony and its Indian allies and mutual respect in military affairs did not exist in the other colonies, especially at the outbreak of the Great Narragansett War. Considering old and new evidence through the lens of local relations and its effect on colonial policy and joint-military capability, anticipates a new methodology for examining warfare during the early colonial era. Forged during the Pequot War and the inter-war years, the synergy of the native “cutting off way of war” with traditional European tactics into an effective military system proved vital to Connecticut’s success during the conflict and the enduring nature of the Connecticut-
Mohegan-Pequot alliance. The colony’s moderate policy, however, made this system possible, and became the critical factor in the colony’s success. This policy, largely disseminated and obeyed by Connecticut’s English communities, though unshared by the other Puritan colonies, created the framework for successful military operations during the war.
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