

APPENDIX A
CHARLESTOWN: A CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING
HISTORIC RESOURCES
R.I. HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION
and
NARRAGANSETT TRIBE OF INDIANS COURT TESTIMONY
HISTORY OF TRIBE



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Old State House
150 Benefit Street
Providence, R.I. 02903
(401) 277-2678

CHARLESTOWN: A CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING HISTORIC RESOURCES

Charlestown is a town of diverse topography, rich cultural resources, divergent development and significant historical sites. Because of the distinct landscape, the area has been endowed by nearly four hundred years of buildings, structures and sites spanning archaic indian encampments to contemporary beach houses. The range of this architectural history is unique to Charlestown.

Charlestown occupies forty-one square miles in Washington County, in southern Rhode Island, along Block Island Sound. The town lies between Westerly on the west and South Kingston on east. The Pawcatuck River forms the northern and northwestern borders.

Topographically, Charlestown is divided into two areas. From the south, a coastal plain extends one mile inland from a sandy barrier beach dominated by Ninigret Pond, the largest salt pond in Rhode Island. Vegetation in this area tends to be low and sparse. North of the coastal plain is varied terrain--once predominately farmland but now been reclaimed

by forest--its topography the product of glacial activity. Appreciation of Charlestown's land forms is essential to understanding the development of the town. The town's cultural, historical and architectural resources are intimately bound to its natural resources.

Charlestown has a remarkably rich and living Native American heritage which extends some 10,000 years into the past to nomadics who migrated seasonally between the coast and inland. Because of their constant movement, Indians of the region left many sites: burial grounds, campsites, and villages are scattered throughout the region leaving a wealth of archaeological artifacts and remains. Key among these is Fort Ningret, a fortification which became an important trading post with the Europeans.

European contact with the Indians had begun by 1614, when Dutch traders were exchanging arms and cloth for fur. Tensions between the Indians and Europeans erupted in King Phillip's War, 1675-76. The Niantics remained neutral during this confrontation, and they were afterward awarded a large tract of land in Charlestown. These tribal lands became a haven for other Indian groups.

During the eighteenth century agriculture dominated the New England economy. In Charlestown, there was a clear division between the inland and coastal farms. The farming industry in the shore region of Charlestown was not unlike the plantation system which coexisted in the southern states.

These large estates however could not withstand the disruptions caused by the Revolutionary War. Because of the substantial development of the coastal plain, there are no visible remnants of these once great properties.

In contrast, the farms of the interior of Charlestown were family run on the subsistence level. The interior area has remained sparsely settled and many fine examples of 18th century farmhouses survive today. Burdick Farm and the J.P. Green House are typical of the one-and-half-story residences, centered around a stone chimney. A less common gambrel roof design is found in the Jeffrey and Sheffield house at Quonochontaug. The Wilcox farmhouse is an excellent and rare illustration of the "saltbox" type characterized by its gabled roof which sweeps down at the back portion of the structure.

Linking these farmhouses was the Old Post Road, the major commercial route of Charlestown. It was supplemented by a network of lesser interior roads like the Biscuit City Road.

Early industry was small in scale and limited to support the existing agriculture economy. The Indian Sawmill established in 1709 operated for nearly two hundred years. There was a sprinkling of other mills, mostly sawmills and gristmills, along the Pawcatuck River at this period, but industry as a whole in Charlestown was insignificant until the 1830s.

The mill industry did not prosper until the completion in 1837 of the New York-Providence-Boston Railroad, which menadered along the Pawcatuck River. There were four principal textile-mill villages, Kenyon, Shannock, Carolina, and Burdickville. The villages enjoyed relative economic success and were also important social and activity centers. Shannock and Carolina are the most intact; only a bridge and a few houses remain at Burdickville, and most of Kenyon is on the Richmond side of the Pawcatuck River. These villages represent a significant legacy from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Like most of the towns on Rhode Island's southwestern shore during the late nineteenth century, Charlestown witnessed the beginnings of a summer colony. Ocean House (1848, demolished) was the first summer hotel built in the town. Day visitors frequented the town's beaches, and by 1880 a few summer houses had been built on Quonochontaug Beach. Because of Charlestown's relative isolation and the lack of good transportation, the town did not see extensive development in the nineteenth century.

Charlestown grew more briskly in the twentieth century. Widespread use of the automobile increased accessibility to the shore regions and encouraged extensive recreational and residential development as well as construction of new roads, highways, and bridges. Along these new thoroughfares, businesses catered to the swelling number of tourists.

Summer colony development gradually transformed Charlestown from a declining agricultural and mill town to booming, affluent suburban, year-round community after 1960.

The most impressive summer development was created by New Yorker Thomas Arnold on the west side of Ninigret Pond. There Arnold maintained after 1905 a summer residence in an old farmhouse, and soon after friends from Brooklyn built summer cottages there. The community, which became known as Arnolda, now counts some thirty houses.

The Narragansett Indian Church is the focal point of Native American population in Rhode Island. The Tribal Land Management Corporation deeded to the Narragansetts nineteen hundred acres of property around the School House Pond. Present on the tribal land is the Narragansett Longhouse.

The richness and continuity of Charlestown's Native heritage is unique to Rhode Island. The presence of the Narragansetts and their many sites gives Charlestown a unique and important place in the history and culture of the state.

Charlestown's wealth of historic properties, structures and sites are a significant resource. The town's cultural legacy, perhaps the oldest in Rhode Island, must be safeguarded. Like most coastal towns, Charlestown must be especially wary of its coastal development to ensure that only appropriate, environmentally conscious growth occurs. Preservation activity should look to these precedents as a design for future growth.

1. The Narragansett Indians were led by two "kings" or sachems when the first European explorers came to Narragansett Bay in 1524.
2. The Narragansett Indians were led by their chief sachem Canonicus when they first dealt with the colonists of New Plymouth in 1621-1622, and by their two chief sachems, Canonicus and his nephew Miantinomy, when they began to treat with the colonists of Massachusetts Bay approximately 1632.
3. Between the time of the first European settlement of New England and 1769, when the tribe established a ruling council, the Narragansett Indians were led by a group of sachems, of whom one or two at any given time were pre-eminent and styled chief sachems, together with other principal men of the tribe who acted as their counsellors; but these men ruled subject to the ultimate authority of the tribal membership in a quasi-consensual form of organization.
4. Between the time of the first European settlement of New England and 1769, when the tribe established a ruling council, the sachems of the Narragansett Indians had the authority to dispose of tribal land, and did convey many portions of the tribal territory, subject to their obligation to provide land for the support of the members of the tribe and to respect the interests of the members of the tribe actually occupying any given land.
5. Between the time of the first European settlement of New England and 1769, when the tribe established a ruling council, the sachems of the Narragansett Indians had the power to and did provide portions of the tribal territory for the use and cultivation of various members of the tribe, and to provide portions of the land for the common use of the tribe, and to reserve other portions of the tribal territory for their own personal benefit; and when the land became insufficient for the support of all members of the tribe, they were responsible for support of the poor members.
6. Between the time of the first permanent European settlement of New England and 1769, when the tribe established a ruling council, the sachems of the Narragansett tribe conducted the internal affairs of the tribe in matters relating to membership rights in the tribe, structure of tribal organization, education, spiritual and ceremonial life of the tribe, and similar matters.

7. Between the time of the first permanent European settlement of New England and 1769, when the tribe established a ruling council, the sachems of the Narragansett tribe led the tribe in its relations with the European settlers and with other tribes, in both diplomatic and military affairs, including leadership in war while the Narragansetts retained the military power to resist colonial expansion, and in dealings with the colonial authorities.
8. In 1636 the Narragansett sachems signed a formal peace treaty with the English which pledged them to continued warfare with their traditional enemies, the Pequot tribe, and in the following year the Narragansett Indians, led by their sachem Miantinomy, defeated the Pequot tribe with the help of the English.
9. In 1638 the Narragansett sachems signed a new peace treaty with the English and the Mohegan Indians, who were an offshoot of the Pequots, permitting the colonists to arbitrate Narragansett-Mohegan disputes and pledging tribute in wampum for the Pequot captives assigned to the Narragansetts and Mohegans after the war.
10. The Narragansett sachems sold the areas of Providence and Aquedneck, or Rhode Island, to the first Rhode Island settlers during 1635 and 1637, and made their first treaty or agreement governing the conduct of individual Narragansetts while on the land sold to the English in 1640, agreeing to English trials in some matters.
11. In 1643, the continued tensions between the Narragansetts and Mohegans erupted into warfare and the Narragansetts were led in war by their chief sachem Miantinomy; but Miantinomy was captured by Uncas and put to death with the support of the United Colonies of New England, a confederation of Massachusetts Bay, New Plymouth, and the settlers of Connecticut.
12. In April 1644, Miantinomy's brother and successor as chief sachem, Pessicus, together with Canonicus and Mixan, the son of Canonicus, signed a formal submission to the authority of the King of England through the help of the settlers of Rhode Island.
13. In May, 1644, the Narragansett sachems rejected Massachusetts' summons to appear there in part on the ground that they had submitted to royal jurisdiction, and threatened revenge upon the Mohegans, and the Narragansetts' intention to assert their rights through war were confirmed to Massachusetts by the Rhode Island settlers in the following month.

14. In September of 1644 delegates from the Narragansett sachems signed an agreement with the United Colonies for a truce with the Mohegans, but the following February the Narragansetts, led by their sachem Pessicus, issued an ultimatum and then resumed their war with the Mohegans.
15. Early in 1645 the Narragansett sachems signed formal neutralities with the settlers at Providence and Aquedneck, or Rhode Island, and later that year the United Colonies decided to join the war on Uncas' side and summoned Pessicus and Canonicus for a peace meeting before fielding their army.
16. In August of 1645 the Narragansett sachems signed a new peace treaty with the United Colonies promising among other things a new tribute of wampum.
17. Between 1645 and 1653, the sachems of the Narragansett Indians, including Pessicus, together with Mixam, son of Canonicus, and Ninigret, nephew of Canonicus, both of whom became principal sachems following Canonicus' death in 1647, dealt repeatedly with the United Colonies regarding disputes over the terms of the 1638 and 1645 treaties, payment of the Wampum, hostilities with the Mohegans, and the Narragansetts' possible alliance with the Dutch and Mohawk Indians of New York.
18. Between 1653 and 1656 Ninigret led the Narragansett Indians into a new war with the Montauk Indians of Long Island which soon became complicated with the old disputes with Uncas and the United Colonies. An armed expedition sent by the United Colonies forced a partial agreement with Ninigret regarding Wampum tribute in 1654 but failed to end the Indian war. At the same time the Rhode Island settlers, who were not generally in hostilities with the Narragansett Indians during this era, treated with the Narragansett sachems over certain territorial disputes.
19. In 1657 the Narragansett sachems led new attacks against Uncas and protested through the Rhode Island colonists, against interference by some Connecticut settlers. The United Colonies again treated with Ninigret and the other sachems to settle this conflict.

20. Ninigret and Pessicus, now styling himself as Quissuckquansh, or Mosup, emerged as chief sachems after Mixam died, leaving his widow as a lesser squaw sachem. In 1662 and 1663 the two chief sachems treated with the United Colonies regarding territorial disputes and property taken by Ninigret's subjects and, through the Rhode Island colonists, renewed their submission to the English Crown in the jurisdiction of Rhode Island.
21. In 1667 rumors of Indian conspiracies under Philip, hostile sachem of the Wampanoag or Pokanoket tribe, became more strident and the Rhode Island colonists treated with Mosup and Ninigret as the Narragansett sachems to resolve these rumors.
22. During 1667 and 1668 the Narragansett Indians, led by the squaw sachem, widow of Mixam, attached the Nipmuc Indians to enforce their claim of sovereignty over the Nipmucs, but the Narragansett sachems treated with the United Colonies over this matter in 1668 and agreed to release the Nipmucs into the jurisdiction of Massachusetts.
23. In 1669 and 1670 Mosup and Ninigret dealt with the Colony of Rhode Island over rumored conspiracies against the English and escaped prisoners who had taken refuge among the Narragansetts.
24. In 1673 Mosup and Ninigret were the Narragansett sachems with whom the Colony of Rhode Island treated concerning the problem of Indian drunkenness.
25. In 1675 the Narragansett sachems treated repeatedly with the United Colonies and the Rhode Island settlers about the impending war with the Wampanoags, and in October of 1675 they signed a new treaty with the English pledging loyalty to the English and promising to deliver hostile Indians to the English.
26. Late in 1675 the United Colonies decided to attack the Narragansetts chiefly because of the latters' reluctance to surrender the Wampanoag refugees, and a portion of the Narragansett including one of their chief sachems, Mosup, became involved in the war against the United Colonies led by Philip, the Wampanoag sachem, and known as King Philip's War.
27. The rest of the Narragansett Indians, led by their chief sachem Ninigret, remained loyal to the English and assisted them in the capture of some of the hostile Indians.

28. Following King Philip's War Ninigret and his successors were recognized by the Colony or Rhode Island and Providence Plantations as the legitimate heirs and successors to the chief sachems of the Narragansett tribe and to the remaining territory of the Narragansett tribe.
29. Ninigret died shortly after King Philip's War and his heir, also named Ninigret, was still a child; Ninigret's daughter helped lead the Narragansett Indians, treating with both Rhode Island and Connecticut colonies while they both claimed jurisdiction over the Narragansett territory, until Ninigret came of age before 1692 and assumed the powers of chief sachem, including the control and disposition of tribal lands.
30. In 1708 and 1709 Ninigret negotiated with the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations over the remaining Narragansett territory, and agreed to cede remaining Narragansett claims while reserving a portion of the Narragansett territory in Charlestown.
31. Ninigret was succeeded as chief sachem of the Narragansett tribe around 1722 by his son Charles Ninigret, who was succeeded in 1735 by his brother George Ninigret, who was succeeded in 1745 by his minor son, Thomas Ninigret, who ruled until 1769.
32. The sachems Ninigret (2nd), Charles Ninigret, George Ninigret and Thomas Ninigret dealt continuously on behalf of the tribe with the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations and the trustees appointed by the said Colony to oversee the affairs of the tribe, regarding disposition of tribal lands and money, the selection of trustees, and the maintenance of public worship, the provision of facilities for schooling, and the maintenance of the means of support and livelihood on tribal lands for the members of the tribe.
33. The succession to the office of chief sachem after Ninigret was confirmed by vote of the tribal members and resolved by such vote when the matter was disputed.
34. In 1769, the members of the Narragansett tribe, to avoid the further loss of their lands by the enticement of their sachems into debt by the colonists, voted at a general meeting to be governed there after by a council of nine men, later reduced to five, who were empowered to transact all public affairs of the tribe spiritual and temporal.

35. Between 1769 and 1880 the Narragansett tribe was led by a council chosen by the tribe.
36. Between 1769 and 1880 the Council of the Narragansett tribe was responsible for the use and disposition of tribal lands and funds, including the conveyance and leasing of tribal land, the allocation of tribal land to members of the tribe for their use and cultivation, and the preservation and management of lands used for the common purposes of the tribe.
37. Between 1769 and 1880 the council of the Narragansett tribe was responsible for the maintenance of a school for the tribe and for the maintenance of public worship.
38. Between 1769 and 1880 the council of the Narragansett tribe was responsible for conducting the relations between the tribe and external authorities, including the colony and state of Rhode Island.
39. Between 1769 and 1880 the council of the Narragansett tribe was responsible for supervising the estates of deceased members of the Narragansett tribe and adjudging the disposition of the same.
40. Between 1769 and 1880 the council of the Narragansett tribe was responsible for the conduct of the internal affairs of the tribe, including matters relating to tribal membership, tribal organization, tribal customs and usages, the spiritual and ceremonial life of the tribe, and similar matters.
41. In 1769 the tribe, in creating the governing council, empowered the council to act and transact in behalf of said tribe all public affairs relating to said tribe both spiritual and temporal.
42. In 1779 the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations acknowledged additional specific powers in the council of the Narragansett tribe with respect to control of the leasing of lands set off to the possession of members of the tribe.
43. In 1792 a committee appointed by the State of Rhode Island drafted a set of written regulations for the use of the Narragansett tribe specifying certain of its powers with respect to dispositions of tribal land and regulation of individual members' estates.

44. In 1849 the State of Rhode Island reconfirmed certain powers of the council of the Narragansett tribe with respect to management of Narragansett lands.
45. In 1850 the council of the Narragansett tribe began to operate under a written constitution stating its authority to manage all tribal affairs.
46. In 1880 the State of Rhode island purported to terminate the tribal relations of the Narragansett tribe.
47. Since 1880 the Narragansett tribe has been led by the principal members of the tribe as councilmen and chiefs, who have been responsible for the management of all temporal and spiritual affairs of the tribe.
48. Since 1880 the council and chiefs of the tribe have been responsible for the conduct of the internal affairs of the tribe, including matters relating to tribal membership, tribal organization, tribal customs and usages, teaching of tribal members, the spiritual and ceremonial life of the tribe, and similar matters.
49. Since 1880 the council and chiefs of the tribe have been responsible for management and use of the land and funds of the tribe and for the preservation of tribal lands unlawfully claimed or detained.
50. Since 1880 the council and chiefs of the tribe have been responsible for maintenance of public worship in the tribe, and for maintenance of traditional tribal customs and ceremonies including the annual August Meeting assembly and ceremonial.
51. Since 1880 the council and chiefs of the tribe have been responsible for conducting the relations between the tribe and external authorities including the State of Rhode island.
52. In 1934, the tribe, assembled in August Meeting, authorized the principal chief of the tribe to act as tribal commissioner for the reorganization of tribal affairs; and pursuant to said authority the tribe incorporated itself under state law and clarified its structure of leadership, providing for the present system of nine council members and a single chief.

53. Since time immemorial, long prior to the first European settlement of New England, the Narragansett tribe has owned and inhabited a portion of southwestern Rhode Island including the land which is the subject matter of this action.
54. Since time immemorial, long prior to the first European settlement of New England, the members of the Narragansett tribe and their ancestors have constituted a cohesive Indian community in and around Charlestown, Rhode Island.