

Thomas Durfee and Ann Hill

Portsmouth, Rhode Island

(Robert Sheldon Ward's 8th great grandparents)

About 1660, a young Thomas Durfee (around 17 years old) left England for America and arrived in Rhode Island. He became an indentured servant in the Peter Tallman household. Tom was first documented witnessing a land deed for Tallman in 1661, where Tallman purchased land from the famous Indian chief Wamsutta.

Tallman launched legal proceedings against Tom starting June 12, 1664 for "breach of his bond". This would likely be a breaking of the indenture, possibly by Tom's leaving the household.

The Court found Tom guilty. Records of October 19, 1664 document a "bill of indictment" by Tallman against Tom Durfee, with an apparent "discharge" of the "redemption" bond by Durfee paying £10 to Tallman. In addition to the legal "breach", the underlying cause of the falling out between the two was much deeper. Tallman in the same month of Oct 1664 started legal proceedings against Tom for attentions paid to his wife Ann. Tom Durfee quite clearly was having an affair with his employer's wife, who was about ten years, his senior.

We don't know when the affair started, but by the time of the legal suit it was public. Tallman's petition emphasized Tom's "insolent carriage" toward Ann. The court sent for Durfee and he was admonished for this behavior.

On May 3, 1665 Tallman petitioned the court "to be released from his wife", and the court asked the governor to issue a warrant to bring her in the next day by 8 am. She re-confirmed what she had apparently written her husband, that her most recent "child was none of his begetting, and that the child was begotten by another man". (Circumstantial evidence all points to the child as being Tom Durfee's eldest son Robert, whose birth date is given as March 10, 1665.)

Ann requested mercy, and the Court asked whether she was willing to reconcile with her husband, "to which her answer was, that she would rather cast herself on the mercy of God if he takes away her life, than to return". The Court declared her an adulteress and sentenced her to be whipped twice, first with 15 stripes in Portsmouth on May 22, 1665,

and a second time on May 29, 1665 in Newport. They also fined her £10, and granted the divorce to Peter Tallman. She was to remain in prison until punishment was rendered.

Tom Durfee was also brought in to the Court of Trials and found guilty by a jury on May 8, 1665. He was sentenced to pay fines and receive 15 lashes.

While Tom presumably endured his punishment, Ann fled the colony before her punishment could be administered. While it was said she went to her brother in Virginia, other evidence indicates she went to the nearby Plymouth Colony, at least initially, where a certain John Arthur was charged on August 1, 1665 with "entertaining the wife of one Tallman and the wife of William Tubbs."

In any case, Ann remained away from Aquidneck for about two years. If she had remained in nearby Plymouth this whole time, certainly Durfee could have visited her. He could possibly have left the colony with her for all or part of that period, for we can find no documentation that Durfee was in Rhode Island for that period. On the other hand, the fact that no additional children were born until "around" 1667 might imply they were apart that entire time.

In 1667 Ann had returned to Aquidneck and resumed the relationship with Tom Durfee. By 1668 they were again "apprehended" by the authorities for their relationship.

Court records of May 1, 1667 state that because Ann Tallman, late wife (i.e. "ex-wife") of Peter Tallman, escaped her punishment in 1665 and had now returned to the colony, a warrant for her arrest was issued to Constable Anthony Emery. Because she had petitioned the Court for mercy (apparently knowing she had to face apprehension on return to Rhode Island), the punishment was halved to 15 stripes in Newport only, and the fine was remitted.

A year later, however, Ann and Tom Durfee were brought to court again. On May 11, 1668 Tom was charged with fornication and pleaded guilty, being sentenced to either be whipped with "15 stripes" in Portsmouth", or pay a fine of 40 shillings. Ann was charged with the same (not adultery since she was no longer married) and was found guilty although she did not appear in court. She was sentenced to be twice whipped or to pay a fine of £4.

It would appear that things "settled down" and somehow they were "tolerated" as a couple. As the guilty party in her divorce from Tallman, Ann would not have been allowed to re-marry, and thus their relationship was in essence a "common-law" marriage. While there is no direct evidence, Ann must have been the mother of his children, born between 1667 and 1679.

Thomas was made a freeman of Portsmouth in 1673, implying possibly he had been "forgiven" as normally he would have been eligible at age 21.

Documentation from November 3, 1682 records two 50-acre lots at Flushing, Long Island deeded from "Ann Dorfee" of Rhode Island to her son John Tallman, with the deed signed by Thomas Dorfee and Ann A. Dorfee, "his wife". Ann possibly had inherited this land from her mother. The fact that Thomas and Ann appear here as husband and wife is still not proof that they were legally married, but does indicate their relationship survived to this time. John Tallman also mentioned in his will of 1709 the 100-acre plantation on which he lived, which may have been this same land.

No records are known mentioning Ann after this date, and she may have died soon after. Thomas "remarried" sometime after 1684 (probably by 1685) to Deliverance Hall, who became the widow of Abiel Tripp in 1684. Thomas and Deliverance had two children: Patience, born about 1685-1688 and Deliverance, born about 1690.

Patience notably married Benjamin Tallman, son of Peter Tallman and his second wife Joan Briggs, just months after Peter Tallman died in 1708.

(Lineage to Robert Sheldon Ward)

Thomas Durfee 1643-1712 "married" Ann Hill 1628-1687
son Thomas Durfee 1669-1729 m. Ann Freeborn 1669-1729
dau Ann Durfee 1691-1734 m. Robert Estes 1694-1780
son Richard Estes 1717-1793 m. Mary Peirce 1724-1782
son James Estes 1766-1828 m. Catherine Pearce 1767-1807
son John Estes 1789-? m. Urania Lum 1791-?
dau Charlotte Estes 1819-1881 m. John Sheldon 1807-1888
son John Harrison Sheldon 1840-1925 m. Sarah Charlotte Van Slyke 1847-1928
son Edwin Earl Sheldon 1872-1948 m. Maude Manora Muchler 1884-1973
dau Mildred Lenora Sheldon 1913-1972 m. George Washington Ward 1906-2000
son Robert Sheldon Ward 1945- m. Barbara Jean Delamarter 1943-

Peter Tallman

A Footnote In History

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Historians, with good reason, usually focus on the newsmakers, the movers and shakers of the past. Less celebrated people are seldom mentioned except in an occasional footnote. We should remember, though, that our world was not shaped by great men alone. The common men, the footnote men, provided the stage for their dramas. Without the footnote men, the boldest words would have faded without an echo. **Peter Tallman of Rhode Island** was a footnote man; if he ever moved or shook anything it was just his family. Still he is worth remembering because his life reflects his society and its values.

Peter was born around 1622 near **Hamburg**.¹ His formative years were spent in a world torn apart by religious conflict. The **Thirty Years War** did not end until the year after he left Hamburg. In 1647, he left Hamburg for **Barbados**.² In 1648 the **Treaty of Westphalia** was signed. Although Peter Tallman left no record to substantiate this conclusion, it seems this would have a profound influence on his life. It is reasonable to assume that is why he chose Rhode Island to make his home. In 1647, the year he left Hamburg, the Province of Providence Plantations, or Rhode Island, passed laws guaranteeing freedom of conscience. Such laws would be welcoming to a man coming from a world shaped by religious war.

Peter Tallman spent two years in Barbados. It was there he met and married his first wife, **Ann Hill**, the daughter of **Phillip** and Ann Hill.³ Shortly after their marriage, Peter made arrangements for the transportation of his family. He signed a contract with **Nathaniel Maverick**, captain of the **Golden Dolphin**, on June 2, 1648. This contract included the shipping of at least ten tons of cargo, including rum, cotton and tobacco. Peter agreed to pay Captain Maverick three pounds sterling for each ton of rum, five farthings per pound for the cotton, and one penny per pound for shipping the tobacco. Peter also agreed to provide provisions for his passengers who included an English bondsman and three slaves.⁴ According to his affidavit, his brother-in-law and mother-in-law also came

with Peter and Ann Tallman.⁵

Peter Tallman settled in **Newport, Rhode Island**, where he set up business as an apothecary. In 1650, he gave power of attorney to Mr. **John Elton** "for good causes and considerations."⁶ Mr. Elton was empowered to collect a bad debt from **Samuel Maverick** of Noddles Island or else imprison him. Mr. Elton would then keep the money he collected. In effect, Tallman sold the debt. He also sold a runaway slave to Elton, if he caught him. Describing the slave, Tallman said, "The Negro is named **Mingoe** & but a yong man & hath the marke of I:P: on his left shoulder: & did unlawfully depart from my house in Newport about six months since."⁷ Since the document was signed on September 18, 1650, it can be inferred that Tallman had settled in Newport no later than March of that year.

In 1680, **Peter Sanford**, governor of the colony of Rhode Island, wrote a letter to the lords of the committees of the colonies describing the state of the colony. He described Newport as "the principal for trade...where the generality of the buildings are of wood and fmall."⁸ He said that the colony was well-provided with harbors for shipping. He mourned the lack of merchants and men with large estates. He said their principal export was horses and provisions and their provisions usually came from Barbados. They were probably the same sort of goods that Peter Tallman brought with him: tobacco, cotton and rum. He recommended fishing as a good industry but complained that few were interested in it.⁹ Though this letter was written after Peter Tallman had left Newport, it should describe well enough the town in which he had first settled.

In 1655, Peter Tallman was accepted as a freeman of **Portsmouth**.¹⁰ This allowed him to vote in town meetings. It also meant that Peter Tallman owned land, since only landowners could be freemen. This also meant that in the future Peter Tallman would be called Mr. Peter Tallman. It implies that Tallman had been accepted by his fellow citizens. This is particularly noteworthy since he was

not an Englishman. This illustrates well the relative openness of Rhode Island colony. In the 1670's this openness was rewarded by the immigration of **Sephardic Jews** from Spain and Portugal. Although the British Navigation laws forbade foreigners to become merchants, several did in the 1660's. In a test case, the General Assembly voted that they should receive full protection under the law as resident strangers.¹¹

Peter Tallman also engaged in trade in **New Amsterdam**. There is no evidence that he ever lived there, but absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The first record of Peter Tallman in New Amsterdam is in a probate court. He owed 201 florins to the estate and was ordered to pay it.¹² It is unlikely that he moved to New Amsterdam since this was 1656, only one year after being established as a freeman in Newport. That same year, 1656, he was plaintiff in a case, suing **Rutger Jansen** for defaulting on a debt.¹³ In 1658, he was again in court to collect on a debt. This time he sued the defendant for fl. 60:6. The court awarded him two-thirds, the other thirds awaiting better proof. Debt was not taken lightly. The defendant, **Tomas Yongh**, was ordered to pay within twenty-four hours or face imprisonment.¹⁴ When Peter brought in his accounts the court decided they were unsatisfactory. He was ordered to prove each item.¹⁵ In March, 1659, his full account was finally approved.¹⁶

Peter Tallman also served as interpreter for the court between the Dutch and the English.¹⁷ Also in 1658, he appeared with **Jan Denman**; it isn't clear what his role was, but interpreter seems likely. The case was over Denman's losing his license to sell beer. He lost it because "there is so great a noise and racket, that the whole neighborhood is kept awake."¹⁸ He was given his license for a trial period since he promised to better control the noise level in the future. It would be interesting to know if Peter Tallman was there as a friend, partner, or merely as an interpreter. Unfortunately, the records are not that complete.

There were two other court cases in 1658 that were particularly interesting. In the first, Tallman was sued for withholding 297 pounds of tobacco that he had agreed to trade for Spanish wine and stockings. After receiving the wine and stockings, he defaulted on the payment. He did not show

up for the first hearing, sending a letter of protest and filing a countersuit for "all costs, damages and wrongs."¹⁹ It seems that this country has been a litigious country from its beginnings. His case must have been poorly supported by the evidence because he lost at the first hearing.²⁰

The other case involved an arrest Tallman made. He arrested the surgeon of the ship **Sphera Mundi**, claiming this surgeon was acting as an attorney for Tallman's skipper, making his responsible for the skipper's debts and duties. Peter claimed that he was owed for an "anker of brandy... and 400 pounds of tobacco."²¹ The attorney of the skipper (in court) said the surgeon was merely a messenger; that the skipper had met Tallman ; that Tallman had thanked the skipper, that the skipper had sent Tallman a letter and that Peter Tallman had also written the skipper a letter. Tallman asked for a continuance because he needed time to prove that the surgeon was the attorney. Unfortunately, the case in not continued in the records. Either Tallman realized his error and declined to press his claim any further or the records were not included in the collection. This entry raises more questions than it answers. In does indicate, though, that Peter Tallman was engaged in commerce. The evidence from the New Amsterdam records reveal that he was a merchant. Taken with his definition of his occupation in the **Aspinwall Notarial Records** when he gave Mr. Elton his power of attorney, it seems likely that he sold Barbadian imports from his apothecary shop to the residents of Newport in exchange for grains and livestock which he could resell in Barbados for rum, cotton and tobacco. In New Amsterdam, he could sell some of what he obtained in Barbados diversifying his stock with wine, brandy and clothing. The book, *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, describes this triangular trade pattern as fairly typical.²² Trade was usually within a correspondence group. What this means is that Tallman probably had a friend in Barbados upon whom he depended to represent his interests. The trading partner would expect the same in return. This would work to each person's mutual benefit. There is no conclusive evidence as to whom the Barbadian trading partner may have been, but a relative of Ann Hill, Tallman's wife, seems likely.

In December, 1658, Peter Tallman moved to **Portsmouth, Rhode Island**. Portsmouth was the other major merchant town in Rhode Island, second only to Newport. In Portsmouth, he bought land from **Richard and Mary Morris** and from **William Willbore**. Both properties were connected and together totaled fifteen acres, for which he paid thirty-five shillings per acre.²³ In the seventeenth century, land was still identified with social status. Merchants in England in the colonies would buy land to improve their social standing, trying to turn their children, if not themselves, into landed gentry. It is possible this was what Tallman was thinking when he purchased the land. Certainly with his apothecary and his commercial enterprises, he didn't need an additional source of income. It is also likely that with the number of children he had, he decided to secure their future by investing in real estate. Whatever his motive, after 1658 he continued to add to his land holdings, joining other colonials who enriched themselves with land speculation. Of course, many also impoverished themselves.

The deeds from the Morris land that Tallman bought are startling to those who are unaware of the privileged position of the women of Rhode Island. Both Richard and Mary Morris filed separate deeds.²⁴ Obviously, the land could not be sold without the approbation of both the husband and the wife. This was at the same time that women in England and Massachusetts could not own property if they were married. Upon marriage, a woman's property became her husband's. Requiring the validation of the wife as well as the husband illustrates the improved position of women in Rhode Island. Of course, this is only proper in Portsmouth, a town founded by **Ann Hutchinson** and her followers.

When Peter moved to Portsmouth, he and his wife has two daughters, **Mary** and **Elizabeth**, and a son born the previous March. His first son's name was **Peter**. Peter followed his father's trade and became a physician as an adult.²⁵ Little is known about any of Peter and Ann's children, except for the son, Peter. They had six children in all; **Mary**, **Elizabeth**, **Peter**, **Ann**, **Joseph**, **Susanna**, and a girl whose name is unknown. That youngest of Ann and Peter's children married **William Willbur**, the son of the same William Willbore who sold Peter

his land.²⁶ The marriages of these children tended to be with the children of the people with whom Peter Tallman traded and joined business venture. This is also quite typical of the merchants of that time. Romantic love was not a factor in marriage decisions. Marriages were basically economic alliances among families. In that, Tallman's children seem to have been brought up the same as most of New England's children were. They learned a trade, usually their father's trade, married the person chosen by their parents, usually from the same socio-economic class, and settle down to repeat the cycle.

An interesting conflict that Tallman got into in Portsmouth reveals a stubborn streak in his character with which few could compete. In December, 1660, Peter was ordered to put up a fence along the road that separated his property from that belonging to **Lot Strange**.²⁷ He didn't. Eleven years later, Strange protested to the meeting of the freemen of Portsmouth. Strange was granted permission to fence in the highway for one year and told to take Tallman to court or "otherwise to cause the Sayd Talman to maintain his part of the fence against him."²⁸ Lot Strange must have been an extraordinarily patient man to have waited until 1671.

Peter Tallman finally fenced the land between the two properties. That was not the end of the conflict, though. In July 1675, a complaint was filed by several people against Tallman. He had fenced in the highway.²⁹ Lot Strange and two others were chosen by the town to plead the town's case against Tallman. They were also given the power to choose an attorney.³⁰ Eight days later, October 20, 1675, Tallman brought suit against **Rebecca Sadler**, the daughter-in-law of one of the men. He charged her with "breach of the peace and threatening [his] family."³¹ Clearly, they must have argued over this fence.

This small series of events reveals a lot about Peter Tallman's character. He could be exceedingly obstinate. It took them eleven years to force him to fence the road. When finally admitted defeat and fenced, he fenced it in the wrong place, closing the road to through-traffic and renewing the controversy. He did not give in gracefully and seems to have been a very poor loser. There are no records indicating whether or not he ever re-

moved his fence from the road. He certainly must have held out as long as possible. His disagreement with Rebecca Sadler shows he, as well as she, had a choleric temperament. It takes two to make an argument where threats are made. In many ways this also typifies the problems in the colonial government of Rhode Island. It was a colony people with those who could not remain in peace under the Puritan government of Massachusetts. The people were independent in thought and action. They defended their individual rights with more ardor than the situation sometimes required. In the first decades of Rhode Island's settlement, people would refuse to recognize the government's power over them and would ignore its decisions, just as Peter Tallman did.

Tallman may have ignored the town government, but he became actively involved in the colonial government. In 1661, the freemen of Portsmouth elected him to the **Court of Commissioners**.³² This was the legislative branch of colonial government. Citizens retained an active voice even though the government had become representative. Most lawmaking was done by initiative and referendum. The Court of Commissioners also handled civil cases and matters that affected the colony as a whole, such as negotiating with other New England colonies.

Tallman's first term was not his last. He served on the Court of Commissioners in May, 1661; August, 1661; and May, 1662.³³ Each term had a separate election. In May, 1661, he was also elected to the General Court as General Solicitor of the colony.³⁴ The General Court included the President, four Assistants, a General Recorder, a General Treasurer, a General Attorney, and a General Solicitor. This General Court had three main functions. They served as the Council of War, the bench of the Court of Trials, and an advisory committee for the governor. Their judiciary function was the most important. Although this may give the impression of a bicameral government, the colony's government was actually unicameral. Every one of the men chosen for the General Court was also a member of the Court of Commissioners. Since the Court of Commissioners only met in May and August, the General Court had to be there to handle what happened in between. Tallman served only one term as General Solicitor.

Rhode Island was awarded her charter on July 8, 1663. This charter outlined a new government with the approbation of the king. Again the government was unicameral. The Court of Commissioners was disbanded and replaced by the General Assembly. The Charter was a very liberal document, allowing the Rhode Islanders a great amount of freedom for self-government. They liked their charter so much they retained it after the American Revolution. Under the charter they were given the right to meet and make "such laws, ordinances and constitutions, so as not to be contrary and repugnant unto... the laws of this our realm of England."³⁵ From 1662 to 1665, Tallman continued as one of the ten Deputies to the General Assembly of the colony. In all there were twenty-two men in the General Assembly, ten Deputies, ten Assistants, the Governor and the Deputy Governor.

During his time as Commissioner, he became involved in the most important struggle of early colonial Rhode Island. Some Rhode Islanders had purchased land from the Indians that had also been purchased by men from Connecticut and Massachusetts. The three colonies squabbled over that land for more than a decade. The Massachusetts purchasers were known as the **Narragansett Proprietors**, giving this dispute their name. The Rhode Island General Assembly received a letter from the Massachusetts Commissioners of the United Colonies dated September 13, 1661, warning them not to allow their citizens to settle in the **Pawtucket** or **Pequot** regions. The letter contained the gently worded threat to discontinue these actions "which may draw vpon youer selues [yourselves] and vs vncomfortable consequences."³⁶

Tallman was appointed to the twelve men committed chosen to reply to that letter.³⁷ The letter from this committee informed the Massachusetts contingent of documents they may have forgotten about, "that may happily be lost, or in some custody so obscure, as that you have not had the least hint thereof."³⁸ The letter continued to explain why Rhode Islanders had every right to settle in the Narragansett region and why that region was in Rhode Island's jurisdiction. Letters continued to be exchanged between the two colonies, with Connecticut also joining in from time to time until a Royal Commission settle the ques-

tion in Rhode Island's favor in 1674. By then Tallman had retired from politics.

It is interesting to note that the letter from Massachusetts begins with the salutation "Louing Friends and Naighbours"³⁹, and ends with the same; while the letter from Rhode Island merely begins with the phrase, "Honored Gentlemen" and ends with "Your very loueing and respected friends and neighbours."⁴⁰ Note that it says respected, not respectful. They must have enjoyed sending that letter. Much of the letter from Rhode Island is unfriendly in tone, despite the courtesy of the language. It well underscored the inter-colonial conflict that typified the American colonies even after the Revolution.

Tallman ended his political involvement after 1665, but he was still active; after all he was only forty-three. He was divorced in 1665 and that certainly would have dampened any political career at that time.

In 1664, Peter Tallman brought suit against **Thomas Durfee**, complaining that Durfee's attitude toward Tallman's wife, Ann, was disrespectful. Tallman said that Durfee's insolent carriage placed him in danger. The court sent for Durfee and advised him to behave.⁴¹ They were too discreet to reveal whether Durfee was gossiping about Ann Tallman, saying rude things to her or courting her attention. The last is doubtful as Peter's son Benjamin married **Patience Durfee**, Tom Durfee's daughter, in 1708.⁴² Tallman would never have permitted the marriage of his son to the daughter of a man who seduced his wife. Of course, that was the year that Peter Tallman dies so the possibility cannot be ruled out completely.⁴³

The reason the situation with Durfee seems significant is that about seven months later, in May 1665, Peter filed for divorce from his wife, accusing her of adultery.⁴⁴ In the Puritan colonies, adultery was a capital offense, though seldom punished to the full degree of the law. In Rhode Island, as well, adultery was a serious offense, but it was not punishable by death. According to the testimony in court, Ann Tallman wrote a letter to Peter Tallman informing him that her youngest daughter was not his. After hearing the letter read to her, Ann confessed to adultery. The court sentenced her to a fine of ten pounds and ordered

that she be whipped. She was to receive fifteen lashes in Portsmouth, and the following week, fifteen lashes in Newport.⁴⁵ She requested mercy of the court. In considering her petition, the Assembly asked if she was willing to reconcile with her husband, "to which her answer was, that she would rather cast herself on the mercy of God if he take away her life, than to returne"⁴⁶ That certainly makes Tallman sound as though he were hard to live with. With Tallman's frequent travel to New Amsterdam for business and the other host cities of colonial government, Newport, **Warwick** and Providence; it is clear that Ann Tallman was home alone a good portion of the year. This may have loosened her marriage bonds enough to risk the significant dangers of adultery.

Ann Tallman was sent to jail to await the carrying out of her sentence, but she escaped and fled to her brother in **Virginia**. In 1667, she returned to the colony and a warrant was issued for her arrest. Rather than being punished for her escape, she was rewarded. Her fine was forgiven and her sentence was cut in half. Instead of fifteen lashes in Portsmouth and Newport, she would only be whipped in Newport.⁴⁷ This must have reduced her humiliation. The people of Portsmouth had been her friends and neighbors for the seven years before her divorce. Although she had lived in Newport for eight years, time had passed. It had to be better to receive her punishment in front of relative strangers. The decision of the Assembly may have been made out of consideration for Peter Tallman. It is unlikely that he wanted a public reminder of his unhappy marriage.

This experience certainly didn't sour Tallman on marriage as an institution. Two months after his divorce, on July 24, 1665, he filed a pre-marriage contract with **Joan Briggs**. He signed over his house and the property he had purchased from **Richard Morris**, **William Willbore**, and **Daniel Wilcox**.⁴⁸ The Wilcox deed is not available in the remaining records, but the marriage contract said that it bordered on the other property. He also gave her one-half his household goods, his best bed and its linens, three cows and a breeding mare. Joan Briggs must have learned from Ann Hill's experience because the contract said that Tallman gave these things to her freely, "Euer Quiatly and peacably to injoye.. with out any trouble incom-

burance or disquietness from [him]."⁴⁹

Peter Tallman did not sign away all his property. He was buying property all over. It is impossible to be certain that contemporary research could locate the title transfers for all the property he purchased. For example, he had to give up the deed to some property he had received as a gift from an Indian. Plymouth colony laws forbade receiving lands from Indians as a gift. In 1674, he was imprisoned and forced to relinquish the land or stay in prison. He agreed.⁵⁰ There is no record indicating where or what land was in question.

Another unlucky purchase of land ended in the same way. In 1663, he bought Indian lands in **Holmes' Hole, Martha's Vineyard**. Today it is known as **Tisbury**. This land he bought without the consent of all the Indians involved. He bought the land in partnership with **Thomas Lawton**; they were both sued for trespass and lost the case.⁵¹ Interestingly, Tallman's daughter, **Elizabeth**, married **Isaac Lawton**, Thomas Lawton's son.⁵²

In January, 1661, Peter Tallman purchased the land that earned him a footnote in history.⁵³ **Wamsetta**, the chief sachem of the **Wapanoag Indians**, sold him a large piece of land. Wamsetta was the older brother of the sachem **Metacomet**.⁵⁴ Wamsetta and Metacomet were both renamed by the Plymouth government. There were named **Alexander** and **Phillip**, respectively. Phillip was the Indian chief that led the Indians in **King Philip's War**.⁵⁵

Wamsetta was told by the Plymouth government that couldn't sell land to people outside of the colony. This was a response to his sale to Peter Tallman, **Thomas Olney** and **William Staples**. They spoke to him after he sold the land, warning him not to repeat the mistake. He sold more land within eight days. The Plymouth government sent someone to arrest him. He was sick, but their agent didn't care. Wamsetta became seriously ill on the march. The agent sent him home and he died on the way. He was then succeeded by Metacomet, or King Phillip.⁵⁶

Roger Williams was able to establish the colony of Rhode Island because of his good relationship with the Indians. It was a relationship based on mutual respect and friendship. Williams was one of the few New Englanders to learn the Indian language. When he first went to England to

petition for the colony's patent in 1643, he published a book about their language, **Key Into the Language of America**. This gave him a favorable reception in London and he received the patent in 1644.

Rhode Islanders usually followed Williams' example., Relations with the Indians there were usually friendly. Wamsetta referred to Peter Tallman as his "well-beloved friend" in the deed.⁵⁷ Although, this may have just been proper form, it is likely they were friends. One of Tallman's grandchildren, also named **Peter Tallman**, married an Indian woman.⁵⁸ They were married before Tallman's death and lived at **Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard**.⁵⁹

Tallman served on two inquests investigating mysterious deaths while he lived in Portsmouth. Whether intentional or not, half the jurors selected were freemen and half were not. In the first inquest, they found that the victim "was drowned by stres of wethar Axedentially."⁶⁰ The other, in April, 1684, was a suicide. The victim, **John Crage**, a tailor, hung himself from a cherry tree.⁶¹

Peter Tallman disappears from public activity after that inquest in 1683. He probably retired around then. He was sixty-one. Two years later, in 1685, his wife Joan died. She had borne him six children during their marriage. They had two daughters and four sons. Their names were (in order of birth): **Jonathan**, **James**, a daughter (name unknown), **John**, **Ruth**, and **Benjamin**. The youngest, Benjamin, was just a year when his mother died. Perhaps that is why Tallman married again in 1686. He married a woman named **Esther**, whose last name is unknown. She bore him one son, **Samuel**, in 1688. Tallman was sixty-six years old.⁶²

The next time Tallman appears in the records is in 1703, when he swore an affidavit for **Joseph Sheffield**.⁶³ The affidavit is an invaluable aid in researching Tallman's life, in particular his early life. Five years later, in 1708, Tallman's son, James, presented an inventory of Tallman's estate.⁶⁴ Thus we know he died in 1708, but not which date. On May 3, 1709, the estate was probated. Tallman and Joan Briggs' son, Jonathan, was the administrator. Acquittances were signed by his brothers, sisters, and brothers-in-law. Those signing were: **William Wilbur**, **Israel Shaw**, **Jonathan Tallman**, **James**

Tallman, Benjamin Tallman, Mary Pearce, Susanna Beckett, Peter Tallman, Isaac Lawton, William Potter, John Tallman. Joseph Tallman, and Samuel Tallman.⁶⁵

It may seem from this account that Peter Tallman was a typical New England merchant. He traded following the common triangular route along the coast. Like many, he made his money by trade and then purchased land and gentrified himself. Like many, he began to speculate in land, experiencing many of the successes and failures that they did. He had several children by three wives. It was common, until this century, for men to outlive their wives since many died in childbed. Like many, he was fiercely protective of his rights and opinions. He also owned slaves, a practice common among wealthier New England families during the colonial period. Also, like most of those who became successful merchants, he came to New England with money and trade goods. He, like most of the successful colonists, did not start from scratch.

In many ways, this portrait of Peter Tallman lacks depth. No letters to or from Tallman to his wives or children have survived. There is nothing to reveal the warm, compassionate side of this man and much to reveal the harder, less sympathetic characteristics he had. There are only clues. His descendants have continued to name their children Peter, unto this generation. Likewise, he has been remembered unto this generation. One of the Tallman descendants' most cherished heirlooms is a large conch shell that Peter Tallman picked up on the beach in Barbados. It passed to the **Boorman family** when **Harriet Tallman** married **William Henry Boorman**.⁶⁶ His descendent, **Gary Boorman** has it now and will pass it on to his eldest son, and with it, the memory of Peter Tallman will pass on to yet another generation.

Tallman Footnotes

1. Affidavit sworn by Peter Tallman in the presence of Joseph Sheffield, Her Majesty's Assistant on 13 March 1703. Transcribed by James MacCarahan, 18 October 1832. Portsmouth Town Records.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*
4. Shipping contract between Peter Tallman and Nathaniel Maverick, captain of the Golden Dolphin, signed 2 June 1648. Transcribed by James MacCarahan. 28 October, 1832 from Boston Notarial Records (Aspinwall)
5. Sworn Affidavit of Peter Tallman, 13 March 1703.
6. Aspinwall Notarial Records: 1644 to 1651, (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1903), pp. 370-1.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 370-1
8. George Chalmers, ed., *Political Annals of the Present United Colonies From Their Settlement to the Peace of 1762*, (London, 1780: rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), p.283.
9. *ibid.*, pp. 282-284.
10. John Russel Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England: 1636-1663*, (Providence: A. Crawford Greene and Brother, 1856) p.302.
11. William G. McLoughlin, *Rhode Island : A Bicentennial History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), pp. 46-48.
12. Berthold Fernow, *Records of New Amsterdam, Court Minutes, Vol. II*, (New York: Knickerbocker Press, n.d.) pp.192-193.
13. *ibid.*, p. 291.
14. *ibid.*, p. 334.
15. *ibid.*, p. 345.
16. *ibid.*, p. 355.
17. *ibid.*, p. 368.
18. *ibid.*, p. 369.
19. *ibid.*, p. 396.
20. *ibid.*, p. 409.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 406-7.
22. Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1955)
23. Rhode Island Historical Society, *The Early Records of the Town of Portsmouth*, (Providence: E.L. Freeman & Sons, 1901), p. 360-2.
24. *ibid.*, pp. 360-1.
25. Fohn Osborne Austin, *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island Comprising Three Generations of Settlers Who Came Before 1690*, (Albany: 1887, rept. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1978), p. 196.
26. *ibid.*, p. 196.
27. *op. cit.*, *Records of Portsmouth*, p. 97.
28. *ibid.*, p. 159.
29. *ibid.*, p. 185.
30. *ibid.*, p. 187.
31. *ibid.*, p. 190.
32. *ibid.*, p. 107.
33. *op. cit.*, *Colonial Records of Rhode Island*, pp., 437, 447, & 468.
34. *ibid.*, p. 436-7.
35. Ebenezer Hazard, ed, *Historical Collections Consisting of State Papers and Other Authentic Documents; Intended as Materials For An History of the United States of America: Vol. II, "The Charter of Rhode Island"* (Pennsylvania: 1792-4, rept. New York: Books For Libraies Press, 1969), pp. 612-23, quote form p. 616.
36. *ibid.*, "Letter From the United Colonies to Rhode Island", pp. 448-9, quote from p. 449.
37. *op.cit.*, *Colonial Records of Rhode Island*, p. 468.
38. *ibid.*, pp. 469-73, quote from p. 470.
39. *op. cit.*, *State Papers*, pp. 448-9, quote from p. 448.
40. *op. cit.*, *Colonial Records of Rhode Island*, pp. 469-73, quote form p. 473.
41. *ibid.*, p. 85.
42. *op.cit.*, *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island* , p. 197.
43. *ibid.*, p. 196.
44. *op.cit.*, *Colonial Records of Rhode Island*, p. 123.
45. *ibid.*, p. 123.
46. *ibid.*, p. 124.
47. *ibid.*, pp. 187-8.
48. *op.cit.* *Portsmouth Records*, pp. 398-9.
49. *ibid.*, pp. 398-9.
50. *Plymouth Court Orders*, (Boston: Michael Glasier, Inc., n.d.), no page.
51. Charles Edward Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard: The Annals of Tisbury* (Boston: 1911, rpt. Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard: n.p., 1966) pp. 9-12
52. *op.cit.*, *Genealogical Dictionary*, p. 196.
53. Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History and Culture; Chapel Hill, N. Carolina, University of North Carolina, 1975) p. 289, footnote 16.
54. *Rhode Island Land Evidences: Vol. I., Abstracts*, (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1921) pp. 188-9.
55. *ibid.*, p 189.
56. *op. cit.*, *The Invasion of America*, pp. 288-90.
57. *op.cit.*, *Land Evidences*, p. 188.
58. Handwritten deed, Sarah Tallman to H. Norton, 28 October 1756, (copy)

59. Handwritten, Division of Peter Tallman's Estate, 27 March 1744, (copy)
60. op.cit., Portsmouth Records, p. 107.
61. ibid., pp. 299-300
62. op.cit., Genealogical Dictionary, pp. 196-7.
63. op.cit., Affidavit, 13 Mar 1703.
64. op.cit., Genealogical Dictionary, p. 196.
65. ibid., p. 196.
66. Personal Interview with George Henry Boorman, their grandson, 22 April 1984.

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Notes on Style

All of the events in this account occurred before 1752, the year the Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian calendar in Great Britain and the colonies. When the calendar was changed, Parliament changed New Year's Day from March 25 to January 1. Rather than writing the dates between January 1 and March 25 as, for example, March 5, 1656/7, the date would be written as March 5, 1657. As far as the contemporary calendar goes, it was March 5, 1657. Under the Julian calendar it was March 5, 1656. This can cause endless confusion if the reader is unaware that prior to 1752, the new year began on March 25th.

The spellings and handwriting mannerisms of the day have been retained as they are in the original documents. This adds authenticity and also may interest the reader. Thus, many "s'es" will be written with an "f" and "u's" with a "v" or vice-versa.

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