



## NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

## The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon

*By Kevin McBride, University of Connecticut*

Oil painting, believed to be of Robin Cassacinamon c. 1676.  
From the collections of the Rhode Island Institute of Design Museum.

By the end of the Pequot War (1636-1637) the Pequot tribe lost almost half of their pre-war population of 4,000. Fifteen hundred Pequot were killed during the war and hundreds more were sold into slavery in New England and the Caribbean. The 1638 Treaty of Hartford stipulated that the remaining Pequot were to be divided among the Mohegan and Narragansett and never to be called Pequot again and were never to be allowed to return to their homeland. The goal of the English to eliminate the Pequot as a viable political and social entity was all but achieved. Led by the Pequot sachem Robin Cassacinamon the Mashantucket Pequots managed to reestablish themselves in Noank (and later Mashantucket) as self-governing people only twelve years after the Treaty of Hartford. Cassacinamon achieved this by pursuing a strategy of accommodation and negotiation and by building lasting personal and political relationships with colonial leaders such as John Winthrop Jr. Cassacinamon was one of the most successful Native leaders of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and his legacy is the thriving Mashantucket Pequot community at Mashantucket.

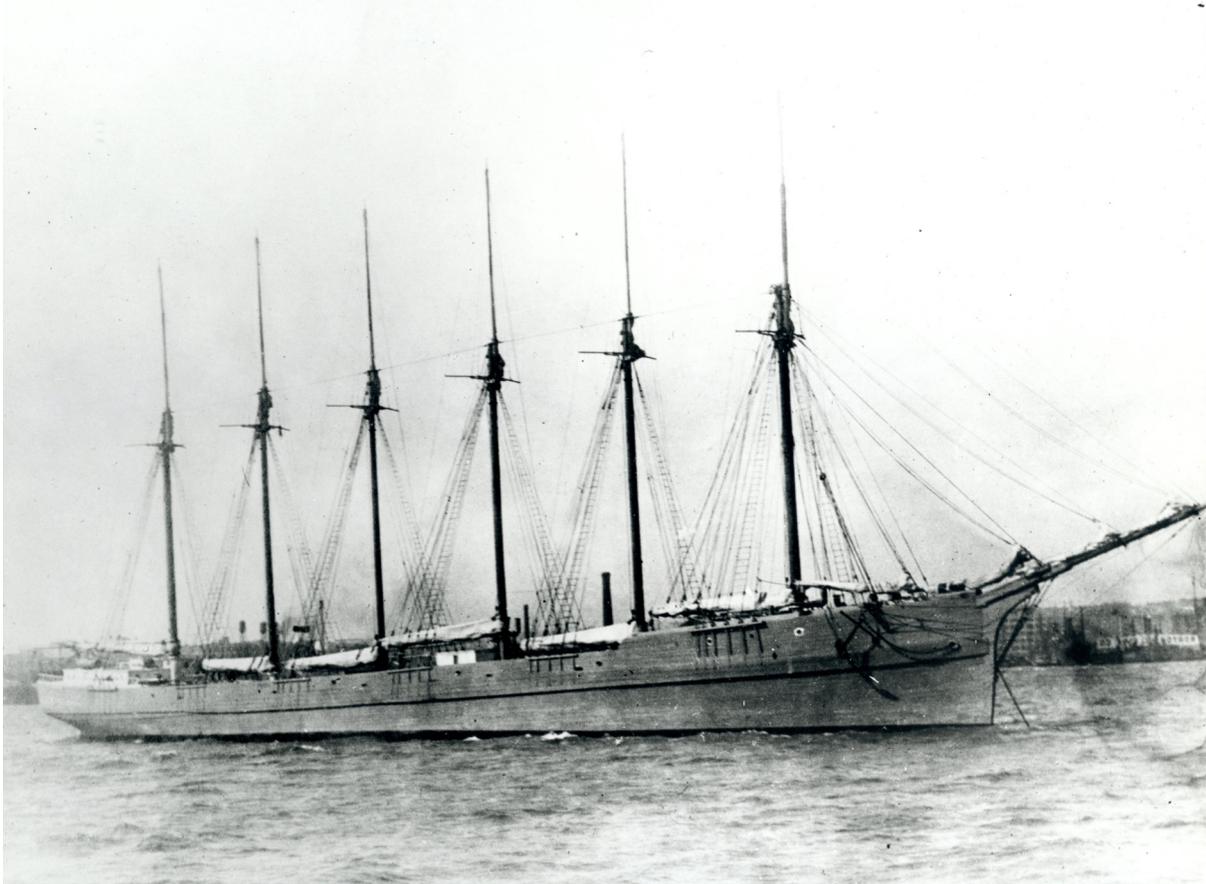
Kevin McBride is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at UCONN and the former Director of Research at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center. McBride's research on Colonial & Native American archaeology in the northeastern United States has been published in numerous academic journals that focus on historical archaeology and indigenous studies.

JOIN US: 7:30 PM—WEDNESDAY,  
November 20, 2024

*The Latham/Chester Store,  
108 Main Street, Noank*

The public is cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.  
<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>

Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection:  
 The Unfortunate Schooner *Doverfeld*  
 By John Wilbur, NHS Historian



This photograph of the homely six-masted schooner *Doverfeld* at anchor was probably taken in New York in 1917. Her ties to Noank, however, are long and strong. She was originally built as the side-wheel steamship *Rhode Island* for the Providence and Stonington Steamship Company by Robert Palmer Shipyard in 1881 at a time when the shipyard employed approximately 147 men. Typically, the Palmer shipyard built such vessels as “hull only,” and so built the hull, as well as the immense hogging beams (a truss system to maintain the vessel’s shape throughout her 300-foot length), and gallows frame. Machinery and cabins would be completed elsewhere, in this case New York. One of the largest vessels built in Noank up to that time, pedestrians and horse teams had to pass under her keel to enter the shipyard.

*Rhode Island* was built to replace a vessel of the same name lost the year before, and was even fitted with that ship’s engine and boiler. The steamer entered service

on the Providence-New York run, and frequently substituted for other boats on the Stonington route. Throughout her thirty year career in service she experienced no fewer than five collisions, five groundings, two minor fires, numerous mechanical breakages, suffered damage from running in ice, was struck by lightning, and had two people attempt suicide by jumping overboard. In 1911, after an extensive lay-up period she was bought by T.A. Scott who scrapped the metal in her and reduced her to a barge. Scott sold the vessel to Atlantic Fertilizer & Oil Company for conversion to a floating refinery in the menhaden fishery. That ignominious career lasted a short while and by July 1912 she was employed as a coal barge. There then followed a period when the vessel was out of public scrutiny other than spending time anchored in New London harbor off the Pequot House.

World War One brought with it a ravenous appetite for “bottoms” — just about anything that could float was

pressed into service, *Rhode Island* included. In late summer of 1916, Captain C.S. Juell bought the *Rhode Island* from Scott with the intention of converting her into a six-masted schooner at an estimated cost of \$75,000. Work was started in New London and in late September the vessel was brought to Noank for completion. Renamed *Doverffeld* by her new Norwegian owners, her time in Noank was punctuated by numerous labor squabbles in the shipyard. Nevertheless, for the next few months wire and fittings poured into Noank by train and trolley to get the old hull into an ocean-going configuration. In February 1917 she left Noank at the end of a towing hawser bound for Hoboken, New Jersey.

Word reached Noank in late April 1917 of *Doverffeld's* arrival in Liverpool after a difficult crossing. Her return to New York elicited no comment from the press, but her next departure certainly did. While outbound, the ship sank off Stapleton, Staten Island. Merritt-Chapman and Scott raised the vessel, repairs were hastily made and the ship sailed again. Her return to port days later, leaking badly, prompted the comment "The world's shipping has sustained no great loss in the abandonment as a constructive total loss of the schooner *Doverffeld*..." as well as the observation that "...the owners forgot the simple formality of obtaining the approval of a classification society..." As a result, this must have made underwriting the vessel difficult or impossible. At any rate, *Doverffeld* slipped without fuss into obscurity for nearly a year and a half. During that time the schooner was towed to Newport News and repaired there.

In February 1919 *Doverffeld* sailed from Norfolk, bound for Jacksonville, Florida to load lumber for South America. She was afire and taking on water southeast of Cape Hatteras when the destroyer *USS Trippe*, responding to distress calls, took the crew off the vessel. The crew apparently set fire to the ship in a state of mutiny. *Trippe* landed them (in irons) in Newport News, Virginia on or about 19 February. The Registry of Merchant Vessels lists the vessel as having foundered on 28 February 1919, thus finally putting the old ship out of her misery.

## A Recent Find/Buried Treasure



Recent municipal works on Potter Court briefly became an archeological dig as the project unearthed a cast iron pipe, a short section of which was saved as an artifact for and by the Noank Historical Society. The pipe was the water main that Deacon Robert Palmer had installed in 1902. The shipyard required fresh water, lots of it —turned to steam for steaming planks, powering tools, or hauling a ship up on the ways. Wells in Noank occasionally ran dry in summer, and that could bring business to a standstill at the shipyard. To alleviate the problem, Palmer had a well dug and a water tower built behind what is now the Noank firehouse. Water from the well was pumped by windmill up into the tower, thus ensuring sufficient pressure in the shipyard. The town benefited from this water main as well. Three or four hydrants were established on Main and Pearl Street, two of which survive to this day — one in front of Carson's Store and the other at 44 Pearl Street. A more detailed description of the water problem at the shipyard may appear in a future issue of *The Ledger*.



Photographs and write-up by John Wilbur

Excerpts from the Oral History Collection:  
Robert Anderson Recalls the False Armistice of 1918

“Yesterday was Veteran’s Day, formerly Armistice Day, and I suppose you may remember the false alarm that came before the real Armistice on November 11, 1918. For this I have to lapse into my own personal experience.

In those days for some odd reasons that I soon got over, I used to get up early in the morning to do school work. Eloise Ross was our teacher and she wanted to commandeer about every spare minute we had to promote the cause of education. She certainly gave the school district its money’s worth in getting us educated, and I guess perhaps it didn’t do us any harm. I used to get up around 5:00 and 5:30. I was working at the desk there in my father’s and mother’s living room, and I guess around 6 o’clock, I heard the horns blowing. I could hear them from over in Groton and Mystic, and at that time, the silk mill was running down here, down where the University of Connecticut has a laboratory now [this building is now the Oyster Co-op]. And promptly I heard hurrying steps on the front walk out in front of our house.

So I left the desk, and looked down, and there came Deacon Fraser, trying to hold onto his derby and his Prince Albert coat he always wore, a black coat with the tails flapping. And as he came up, I rushed and opened the door, and I ultimately interpreted that what he said was that the war was over, but every time he opened his mouth to say it, his uppers came down. He had to make three or four tries before he got his message across.

Of course, he was delirious with joy because his boy, his only child, was mate in Texas of the Scapa Flow. And the poor Deacon’s wife was scared to death that they would never see him again. So then he thought the prospects had improved and he was very, very happy. So he finally got it out. He said that the “w-w-war is over” and “after that he said, “get-get-get your father. We want him to make a speech.”

So I ran upstairs. My father and mother were sound

asleep. I said to my father, “Get up, get up. Deacon Fraser is downstairs, he wants you to make a speech.” I forgot to tell him what it was about. “Tell Deacon Fraser to make his own speech,” he said, and he went back to sleep.

I was off like a rocket then. I went down and Fraser had left. I got my jacket and went down to the front walk and there was a truck down there with five kids and four or five adults, and Deacon Fraser was there. I said, “Well, he’s asleep, and I couldn’t get him up.” And he said, “Well, come on and we’ll get Mr. McCabe.” Well, Mr. McCabe was superintendent of the shipyard then. And he had come here from Glen’s Falls, NY. He was a good, faithful party member and he contributed well, but his main business and knowledge was in manufacturing wallpaper. So he was picked out as just the man to send down here and build ships. That’s what he came for.

Well, there was always a lot of fun about him because he talked about going upstairs and downstairs on the ship, and he had a great lot of folklore, some of it, I suppose, exaggerated. But he was quite a genial fellow and he got along very well. So as the truck moved on down the street, there were three or four more kids that showed up, and maybe one or two more adults. He’d heard the horn so he got up and dressed and came on down the bank, and he stepped down from the retaining wall onto the truck, and then he started making an oration. Well now that was 50 years ago, but I can remember it, as I was so impressed by that speech that I can repeat what he said.

And he said: “Ladies and gentlemen” (there weren’t any ladies there, but it didn’t matter, because I guess Mrs. McCabe could hear from inside the house). He said, “I tell you, be on your guard. This is a German trick.” He said, “Stay on your guard because we may have to go on fighting them,” and he says “We’ll fight until Hell freezes and then we’ll fight on the ice if it’s necessary.” He made a very good point. I made a mental note of this and still have it with me.

Well, after those gyrations, we moved on down in the village here and of course the school house was down here. And so I and some of the other kids got a glorious thought that there wouldn't be any school. So more and more gathered around there and pretty soon Miss Ross came out of her house across the way and we ran over and asked her if there was going to be any school, and she said "Well, I guess not. No school today." So we screamed and yelled great stuff.

Well then, I guess it was around noon time the word filtered around that it was a mistake. That's when I put McCabe down in my mind as a major prophet because it was a false alarm. How it happened I don't know, but negotiations had been put out by the German Command, apparently, and I think a New York Times reporter picked it up, and he sent the message over that the armistice had been reached. And that's how the false alarm got started. But they kept on with the negotiations.

Finally, November 11<sup>th</sup> came and they had the real armistice. Well, that was kind of tough. Miss Ross wasn't going to let school out until she really found out about it, and she kept us in there most of the morning. We got kind of clamorous after awhile and somebody came in and said it really was the armistice. So we went out, three or four of us, Gus Rathbun, Ed Jessen and two or three others, and we thumbed a ride to Mystic because we thought we'd better get out of town as fast as we could because we might be called back to school. So we went up to Mystic.

Well, people were milling around up there and finally they got out a band and all this business, and we went over on the East side. There was a white iron bridge there and Mr. Whitney was the Methodist minister there. He had a wooden leg. He got up on an embankment outside Dr. Myer's office there. There was a house and a retaining wall and Mr. Whitney got up

there. Ed and I got up on the wall. We sat right underneath him, and every now and then he'd lose his balance on his wooden leg. He made a good stirring Victory speech and that's about all there was to that."

*The false armistice was announced on Thursday, November 7, 1918. The official armistice agreement, which ended all fighting by land, sea and air, was signed on November 11 and went into effect at 11 am Central European Time (at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year).*



The Armistice Day Parade through Noank, November 11, 1918. 1995.001.003, gift of Mr. & Mrs. Walter Palmer.

"The celebration of world peace commenced here this morning at an early hour...Men from the Groton Iron Works left the plant and marched to the residence of Supt. McCabe. All the trucks, decorated with flags, were out and the school children joined in the celebration with vim."

-The New London Day, November 11, 1918

### Volunteers Needed for Garden Clean-Up

The Noank Historical Society will be undertaking a fall clean-up of our gardens at the Noank Museum on Sylvan Street this November. If you are willing to lend a hand, please give us a call at (860) 536-3021 or email [noankhist@gmail.com](mailto:noankhist@gmail.com) for more information.

### *In Memoriam*

Neal O'Connell—1927-2024

Gerald "Gerry" Thompson—1928-2024



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*If you have any questions, concerns, and/or articles to share in the Noank Ledger, please contact us at [Noankhist@gmail.com](mailto:Noankhist@gmail.com). If you have any questions or concerns regarding the mailing of the ledger, or address changes, please contact Elizabeth Boucher at P.O. Box 9454, Noank, CT 06340*