

Basic Context and Timeline of Contextual Events of the Falls Fight of May 19, 1676
Extracts from the Technical Report of the Battle of Great Falls/ Wissatinnewag-Peskeompskut
Compiled by D. Brule, Montague Historical Commission

Auspices of the Department of the Interior
Research by Dr. Kevin McBride, David Naumec, Ashley Bissonnette
and Noah Feldman April 2016
Pequot Museum and Research Center

Full texts of Battlefield study reports (2014-2020) available on Town of Montague website

“King Philip’s War (June 1675-August 1676) was an armed conflict between dozens of Native American tribes and bands who inhabited (and still do) present-day southern New England fighting against the United Colonies of Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay and Plimoth. Dozens of frontier towns in central Massachusetts and the Connecticut River Valley were attacked and burned during the war, as were settlements in Providence Plantations, Plimoth colony and eastern Massachusetts.

Colonial authorities estimated that 600 English were killed and 1,200 houses burned during the conflict. A minimum of 3000 Native men, women and children were battle casualties, and thousands more died from battle, disease, starvation, and exposure, or were sold into slavery. The conflict is often referred to as the deadliest in American history based on English and Native civilian and military casualties relative to population.” --p.18 April 2016 Technical Report

“King Philip’s War began on June 25, 1675 when a group of Metacom’s men attacked and killed several English at Swansea, Massachusetts as a result of rising tensions between Philip’s Pokanoket and Plimoth following the execution of three Pokanoket men hanged by the English several months earlier.

This action initiated a sequence of events that engulfed all of New England in a full-scale war within six months. Once Metacom and his followers escaped English forces at Mount Hope and fled to central Massachusetts in late August, the Nipmuc of central Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut, as well as the Pocumtuck and other tribes of the middle Connecticut Valley, joined the war against the English.

Through the summer of 1675 until the early winter of 1676 several Wampanoag bands, Narragansett, Nipmuc, and tribes from the Connecticut Valley, including the Pocumtuck, Nonotucks, Agawam, Quabaug, Nashaway, Norwottock, and Sokokis launched dozens of highly successful attacks against English towns throughout Massachusetts Bay colony and Plimoth colony settlements...and along the Connecticut River Valley between Springfield and Northfield.” --p. 19 April 2016 Technical Report

“By April (1676), the Great Falls area, commonly referred to as “Peskeompskut” by the Native peoples of the region and “Deerfield Falls” by some English, had become a center of multi-tribal refugee villages and encampments. This immediate area consisted of two flat plains along the north and south banks of the Connecticut River immediately east of the falls, as well as adjacent hills and terraces. The natural rock dam at Peskeompskut forms one of the largest waterfalls along the entire river where anadromous fish such as shad, alewife, salmon, and eels are easily

caught as they make their way upriver to spawn. Native peoples from all over the region gathered at Peskeompskut for thousands of years during the spring to take advantage of the tremendous quantities of fish, to plant, to renew ties with other communities, and for ritual ceremonies.” --p. 21-22 April 2016 Technical Report

Timeline of Contextual Events pertinent to the Falls Fight of 1676

Extracts form Appendix IV Technical Report April 2016

1675

August 25	Fight at Hopewell Swamp (Sugarloaf); Captains Lathrop and Beers vs. Norwotocks and Pocumtucks
September 3-4	Captain Beers is ambushed on the trail to Squakheag/ Northfield. 36 English are killed, including Beers.
September 5-6	Major Treat’s rescue of Northfield settlers following the Beers ambush.
September 12	Pocumtuck soldiers attack Deerfield; village abandoned.
September 18	Bloody Brook Ambush. Capt. Lathrop sent to move supplies from Deerfield to Hatfield. 64 English killed. Capt. Moseley, Major Treat and allied Mohegans counter-attack.
September 26	Farm of Major John Pynchon of Springfield is burned.
October 5	Destruction of Springfield
October 19	700-800 Indians attack Hatfield
October 20	Northampton attacked, 8 structures burned.
October 30	200 + Christian Nipmuc “praying Indians” sent to Deer Island in Boston harbor and abandoned
November	Sancumanchu, Hadley sachem (Norwotock) ready to turn over Philip: “he has brought all the trouble on us”
December 26	Great Swamp Fight and massacre of 400+ Narragansett in Rhode Island. Survivors move north to seek sanctuary in Squakheag/ Northfield.

1676

February-March	Tribal leaders meet at Northfield/Squakheag Council Fires site to determine strategies for continuing war or seeking peace. Several thousand multi-tribal refugees wintering there
March 4	Captain William Turner arrives in Northampton from Marlborough
March 14	Northampton attacked by 2000 Native soldiers; Turner's troops repel attack.
April 1	Thomas Reed taken captive. Will become a prisoner with John Gilbert in the Native camp at Peskeompskut. Reed, Gilbert, Stebbins will escape to warn Hatfield in May.
April 25	Captain Turner writes to Massachusetts Bay, expressing wish to be relieved of duty: <i>" I should be glad if some better person might be found for this employment, for my weakness of body and often infirmities will hardly suffer me to do my duty as I ought"</i>
April 27	Lt Holyoke writes of 1000 Native fighting men camped upriver, and three forts established south of Squakheag
May 15	Reed escapes/is released from Peskeompskut and reports to Turner.
May 17	Other captives Gilbert and Stebbins come in to Hatfield.
May 18-19	<p><i>" For not having much above an hundred and fifty fighting men in their company, they marched in the dead of night, May 18 and came upon the said Indians a little before break of day...so marching up they fired amain into their very wigwams, killing many upon the place...made them run into the River , where they perished in the waters...others of them creeping for shelter under the banks of the great river, were espied by our men and killed with their swords; Capt. Holioke killing five, young and old with his own hands from under a bank.." Hubbard, 1677</i></p> <p><i>...yea to the great dishonor of the English, a few Indians pursued our souldiers four or five miles, who were in number near as twice as many as the Enemy. In this Disorder, he that was at this time the chief Captain whose name was Turner received his fatal stroke as he passed through that which is called the Green River & as he came out of the Water he fell into the hands of the (Enemy)..and between thirty and forty more men were lost in this Retreat..." Mather, 1676</i></p> <p><i>" ...I am informed that diverse Indians who were in that battle, but since come in to the English at Norwich, say that there were three hundred killed at that time, which is also confirmed by an Indian called Ponham, who saith that of the three hundred were an hundred and seventy fighting men" Mather, 1676</i></p>
21 May	Jonathan Wells, 16 year- old survivor of the counter-attack, returns to Hatfield.

22 May	Rev. Hope Atherton, survivor of the counter-attack arrives in Hatfield.
30 May	Major attack by 250 Peskeompskut soldiers on Hatfield.
18 June	Scouts find the body of Turner at the Green River Ford; Turner buried nearby.
28 June	30 men reach the falls “Burn wigwams on Smead Island, ruin an Indian fort...”
12 August	Philip killed at Mount Hope in R.I.
24 August	Trials and executions at Newport—Natives give eye-witness accounts of the battle and Turner’s death, before they are executed.

1824

Reverend Edward Hitchcock in the *American Journal of Science and Arts Vol VIII*, gives Peskeompskut the name of “Turner’s Falls”

1868

William Crocker publishes his plans for the industrial village of “Turner’s Falls” in the Town of Montague.