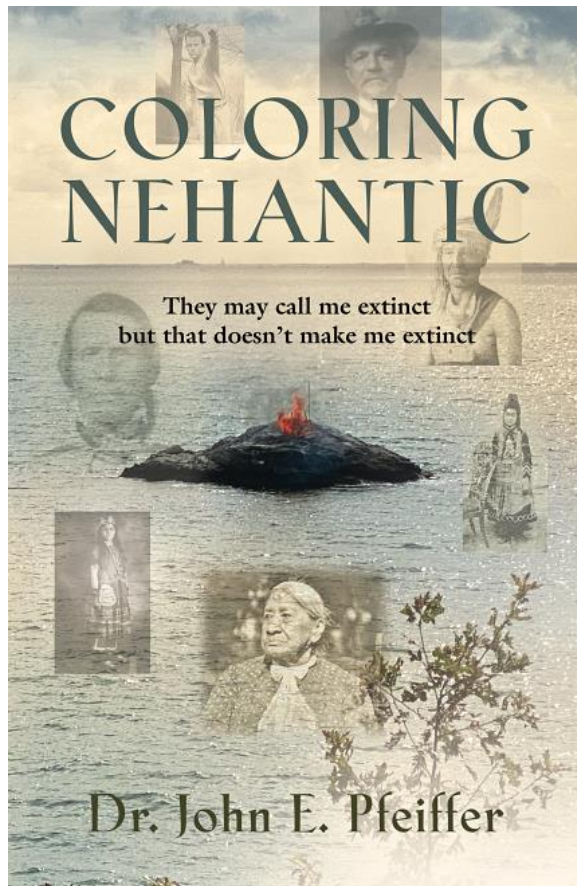




Nehantics are remembered for their work towards achieving equality for people of color. The Nehantic were centrally involved in the fight for human justice, equality, and civil rights.

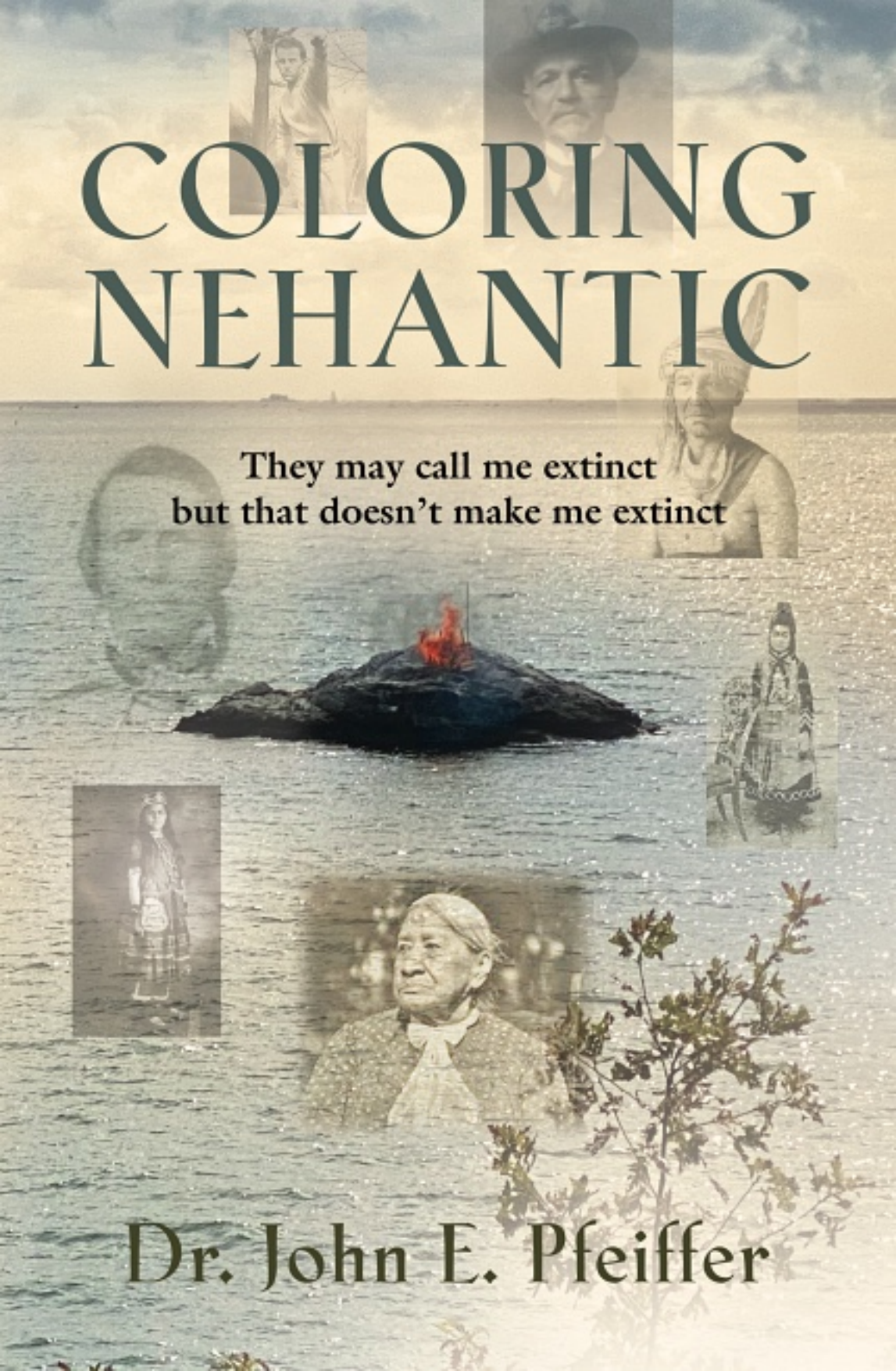
Coloring Nehantic

By Dr. John E. Pfeiffer

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COLORING NEHANTIC

They may call me extinct
but that doesn't make me extinct

Dr. John E. Pfeiffer

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Section 5.

Divide and Conquer: Native Alliances and the Pequot War

The negotiations held aboard ship on the Pequot River (Thames) went poorly and the Dutch killed Tantotem. From this point onward, the Pequot were hostile towards Europeans. The event that led to Tantotem's death must be considered part of the misunderstandings between two very different cultures and economic viewpoints. As capitalists, Europeans worked to produce surpluses. From the European viewpoint, respect and power were the result of amassed goods and wealth. Surplus goods were to be exchanged with the idea of making a profit or fulfilling the financial obligations made with investors.

Natives' understanding of goods or resources was entirely different. Goods were to be equally distributed. Amassed wealth was incomprehensible. One's respect and power within the group was based upon giving away goods. If someone in the group wanted something you had, you were obligated to pass it on.

With this in mind, it is highly likely that Tantotem saw something aboard the Dutch ship that he wanted. He fully expected that it would be given to him.

It wasn't "passed on" as he expected. He may have grabbed it. There probably was a scuffle and the result was the hanging of the Sachem from the yardarm.

A very similar circumstance occurred a century and a half later in the Hawaiian Islands. Captain James Cook went to shore to retrieve a "stolen" item that was taken by an islander when visiting the English

captain's ship. When Cook went to the island village he was killed in the process of attempting to take the item back.

Upon Tantotem's death, Sassacus and Uncas, brothers or possibly cousins, vied for leadership of Pequot.^{25 26} After some deliberation by the group council, Sassacus was chosen leader. Uncas was angered by the decision and in the native custom, withdrew with his supporters to Mohegan, a village located about 10 miles upstream. He chose to turn away from potential confrontation. Such was the long established native cultural behavior that attempted to regulate aggression and lessen the potential of tribal hostilities. (The assertion here is that Mohegan and Pequot were the same political group prior to the demise of Tantotem. Stiles, Barber, and Speck all have suggested this as well.)

Uncas, now the leader of Mohegan, subsequently aligned himself with the English. In doing so he positioned himself against his rival, Sassacus. This political relationship with the English eventually led to the Mohegan as having a pivotal position during the 17th century throughout southern New England.

From 1632 to 1637, the local Native groups and the Dutch and the English all had strained and tentative relations. The Dutch and English competed for economic position and distrust between all three groups permeated relations. Prior to the establishment of the Saybrooke settlement at the mouth of the Connecticut River two incidents soured native and European relations.

The first was Captain John Stone's kidnapping of Native American women and children near the mouth of the Connecticut River in plain view of the native village on the east bank (see Griswold Point site Chapter 1 section 4 and Chapter 7 section 4). These people were undoubtedly Nehantics. This hostile act infuriated the native people

of the adjacent settlement and placed them on a hostile footing. With the captives aboard ship, Stone's plan had been to sell these native people in Virginia or the West Indies. It is unknown what happened to the captives. It is likely that Stone's initial slaving operation succeeded and he returned in August of 1634 for another profitable venture.²⁷

John Stone's actions represented some of the worst human characteristics witnessed in the New World during the 17th century. He was more a pirate than a trader. His connection to the slave trade cannot be over stated. He was part of a maritime sub-culture that preyed on whatever could be found to bring profit. The Caribbean and western Atlantic offered great opportunity for those without a conscience or an ounce of moral standards.

There were the Spanish treasure ships returning from Central and South America. There were Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish and English slave ships that could be taken. Such business was dangerous and often required some level of partnership among marauding captains and crews.

The safest and still profitable undertaking was to capture unsuspecting natives who thought they were invited aboard ship to get trade goods. These natives could easily be kidnapped for ransom or sold in various markets as slaves. An operation like this needed little in the way of partnership with other ships' captains and crews. Sharing profits was therefore limited to the captain and his own men. This slaving business flourished throughout the Caribbean and east coast of the New World for much of the 16th and 17th century. Natives became increasingly wary.

Regarding the Stone kidnapping incident, the Nehantics probably did not know what had happened to their family members. They

recognized that the ship that took them away was again anchored in view of their village. There was surely a recognition that there was present danger and the probability that the ship was there to take more of their people.

As a result, under darkness of the August night in 1634, Nehantic warriors stealthily attacked the ship and killed Stone and crew. The ship was set ablaze. The deck exploded when the stored gunpowder ignited and the ship subsequently burned to the waterline. (The wreckage of Stone's ship was a landmark for the next 150 years and was harvested during the Revolution for its iron to help in the building of the Oliver Cromwell.)²⁸

While the response to Stone's kidnapping of the women and children came from the Nehantic village, the English blamed warriors from the settlement of Pequot for the murder of Stone.

A second incident occurred near the shore of Block Island. This involved the attack and killing of John Oldham. John Oldham came to Plimouth in 1623 and was a noted "adventurer" both by "nature and experience". Over the course of the following decade, He resided in the Massachusetts towns of Plimouth, Nantasket and Watertown. His trading activities were focused in Virginia.²⁹ Later, he invested in the beaver trade and first visited Connecticut in 1633. He traded with the natives at what was to become Wethersfield (Pyquag). In that initial trip down the Connecticut River, he acquired both beaver pelts as well as Indian hemp. He returned the following summer with nine other adventurers to establish a settlement. There he built a house and farmed the expansive meadow along the river. He continued to sail up and down the river into Long Island Sound and to various island and shore destinations.

His move to the Connecticut Valley was not a disappointment to the Massachusetts settlements as it appears that he was hot tempered and had been expelled on several occasions. He was criticized for being too ambitious and self-centered. When he was residing in Plimouth he was considered a dangerous man and was labelled “smirched and discredited”.³⁰

Yet there were those who respected him and afforded him some level of prestige. This was probably due to his financial prowess in making his investors a profit. Clearly, Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay Colony was one of these investors. (Upon Oldham’s death, Winthrop quickly seized Oldham’s estate to pay off personal debt.)³¹

Oldham’s demise came in 1636. His pinnacle was spotted adrift off of the coast of Block Island by another trader, John Gallup, who was sailing to Long Island but blown off course by an unfavorable wind. On the deck of Oldham’s vessel were 14 “Indians” and a canoe loaded with Oldham’s trade goods. The natives were attempting to pull away.

After a prolonged confrontation, Oldham’s pinnacle was boarded only to discover his body had been mutilated and covered by a net. The body was still warm and partially dismembered. The goods as well as two boys who had accompanied him were saved. Over a hundred fathoms of wampum were also recovered.

The exact circumstances surrounding the attack on Oldham and the identity of the native perpetrators are unknown. The nature of Oldham’s trade material sent to Virginia was unspecified; however, the return cargo which was eventually sent to London was likely tobacco.³² In these business affairs, John Winthrop Sr. had an interest and upon Oldham’s death was quick to recover his investment.

Had Oldham's "business" been similar to Stone's ventures? Was Oldham also attaining human cargo, kidnapping Native Americans to sell as slaves? It appears that at the time, it was happening all up and down the east coast of North America. As a result, it is not all that surprising that the native people along the Connecticut shore were on their guard, suspicious, and ready to protect kinfolk.

The relationship between the English and the southern New England natives continued to be tentative. Neither group understood or trusted the other. In this backdrop, Uncas maneuvered himself to become the trusted native ally of the English. His motivation for this was probably revenge because of his having been denied the leadership of Pequot. He took advantage of the situation to lay blame upon his rival. Any hostile Native incident that befell the English, Uncas laid at Sassacus' feet. The English readily accepted their ally's information and guidance.

As a result, the English had specific reason to interpret the attacks upon Stone and Oldham as coming from the Pequot. They saw the deaths of the two traders as an imminent threat toward securing settlement within New England and sought to eliminate any Native challenge. They were directed by Uncas's subterfuge to fear those at Pequot above all other natives.

The deaths of Stone and Oldham became a rallying point for an extreme and merciless military action against the supposed perpetrators. The Massachusetts Bay colony sent an expeditionary force under Endicott with 90 men to Block Island. They killed 14 warriors, burned the village and fields, and took women and children as slaves to compensate for the losses of Oldham's goods. Some of the English documents indicated that the village at Block Island was Narragansett while others suggested that the people were Nehantic.

Hostilities continued for the next year and a half. The Massachusetts Bay Colony sent Endicott once again and this time he burned a Pequot village. The result of this was that the Saybrooke fort was periodically besieged by native (Pequot) forces. The English settlers in Saybrooke were not pleased that the Bay Colony had sent a military expedition to their colony and to the gates of the fort. George Fenwick, the governor of the colony, complained of the Massachusetts Bay Colony to John Winthrop that he had raised up the local natives “like hornets in a hive,” and then left the fort to fend for itself.

It is very unclear if the Stone and Oldham incidents were related. The English were aware of what Stone had done, but did very little to discourage his kidnapping and slaving activity. The Oldham killing, from the native point of view, may well have been connected to Stone. Their local experience indicated that European ships and their crews took their people away, never to be seen again. If the Block Island attack upon Oldham was undertaken by Nehantics, as some sources suggested to the Massachusetts authorities, the connection was very close indeed.

In this backdrop of cultural bias and ignorance, as well as the failure to understand language and effectively communicate, it is no wonder warfare was the result.

What can be gleaned from the sources regarding this period between 1632 and 1637 is that the English had no idea who the perpetrators of the murders were.

From the initial days of settlement at Saybrooke, the English knew that the Pequot were hostile towards the white killers of their leader Tantotem. They also knew that those at the Pequot village had been stirred up by Endicott’s raid at Block Island and later Mistik. They readily experienced the natives’ hostilities as they were being

periodically attacked at the Saybrooke fort as well as when they ventured out beyond the walls and the range of the protective cannon and guns. The danger to the English was all too clear while their men were being injured and killed at the hands of the nearby “Indians”. What was not clear was which Native group to rightfully blame and which if any to trust. The Native ally and informer, Uncas, likely helped direct their fear and alarm.

Uncas had everything to gain by pitting the English against his rival, Sassacus and his Pequot village. He too, found it to his advantage, to get help from the English to eliminate any potential competition to his sole authority. This certainly included possible competition from the Nehantic. It is also a strong possibility that Uncas had some part to play in undermining the reputation of the Nehantic, especially in regard to the Stone and Oldham incidents. The stage was set for a showdown, and the Pequot were in the sights of the English.

Days before the Pequot War, the Nehantic offered to their “brothers and cousins” – the Pequots – a safe haven within the Nehantic village. The Nehantic settlement maintained a position of neutrality and took in fifty residents from the Pequot village. (This granting of safe haven *to kin* is significant to our understanding of southern New England Native social organization and early Europeans’ mistaken interpretation of the relationship between Native villages: The villages were related and not separate tribal entities when initially encountered).

The Mohegan and Narragansett villages aligned with the English for the eventual battle that was to come in 1637. Both native groups probably sought a position that would strengthen their relationship with a trading partner – the English - and weaken the position of a competitor - the Pequots. From the English perspective, they were capitalizing on internal struggles or bad feelings and effectively

dividing the Native population into smaller – more manageable -- units. This policy was inherent to colonialism.

The number of native warriors amassed due to the alliance greatly increased the English force. Their success was clearly the result of the Mohegan and Narragansett alliance and their warriors. It was not due to English military prowess.

During the Pequot War, English and allied native Mohegan and Narragansett forces destroyed the Pequot fort in Mistik. The English went on to slaughter over 500 women and children. The Narragansett warriors were horrified at the English soldiers' wanton killing of women and children. In their entire experience, they had never seen such a massacre and total disregard for life. The Mohegan warriors, on the other hand, were avenging their leader's dishonor and punishing Sassacus and his followers.

As in most of, if not all of western history, the application of the principle of the "Right of Conquest" was a driving force. Any remaining captive men, women, and children were immediately put into slavery. Some were sent off to local English farms to work. Others were taken and sold at slave markets in the Caribbean.

For their part in harboring refugees, the Nehantic settlements were levied a heavy fine by the English for giving aid to the enemy. For their act of kindness, Nehantics fell further out of favor with the English. The Mohegan were placed in a position of power and made spokesmen for most "Indian" matters. Uncas had craftily manipulated the situation between competing Native groups and the English. He thus worked himself into a place of considerable power and authority. From an historical perspective, Uncas was the real winner of the Pequot war.

Any position of power that the Pequot or Nehantic previously had was thus shifted over to the Mohegan. Furthermore, the English prospered by eliminating the Pequot's power and position in the region and found a lucrative source of slaves to either work for them or sell at foreign markets. Finally, the English found a validated and politically aligned signature for subsequent native to English land transactions.

Following the Pequot war of 1637, Roger Williams' quotation illustrated the principle of Right of Conquest and the benefit of enslaving those that lost. *"It having again pleased the most high (God) to put into your hands another miserable drove of Adam's degenerate seeds, ...they ought not be set free."*³³ This commentary by Roger Williams, a very close friend and frequent guest of George Fenwick to the Saybrooke Colony exemplifies the English attitude towards the Pequots as subdued enemies and how they viewed natives in general. They were lesser beings and were destined to be slaves.

Section 6.

King Phillip's War: A Last-Ditch Effort

The Right of Conquest and the advantages to be gained through war with the Native American populations became an important strategy in the ensuing decades. In Rhode Island, in 1645 Emanuel Downing suggested that:

*"A war with the Narragannsett is verie considerable to this plantation ... if upon a Juste Warr the Lord shall deliver them into our hands, we might easily have men, women, children enough to exchange for Moores ... for I doe not see how wee can thrive until wee gett into a flock of slaves sufficient to doe all our business."*³⁴

This demonstrates a very pragmatic approach to dealing with the native population while also getting the necessary work done in the colony. Downing was plotting war that would provide native captives that Puritans would trade away for African slaves coming in on slave ships and sold at the various slave auctions.

By the 1640s Puritans had decided that Native slaves were just too familiar with the region of southern New England and had too great an advantage over their masters. Native slaves easily slipped away and just as elusively reappeared. This demonstrated to the English their own inability to control native slaves and thus led to their preference for African slaves who knew the region no better than themselves. As a result, in 1650 the Connecticut Codes were passed that allowed for the trade of native slaves for African slaves.

War again raised its head in southern New England. The English had been continually encroaching upon native lands, taking it for their

own, while oppressing the indigenous peoples. The natives decided to fight back. In many ways this was a last-ditch effort to expel the white invaders.

The battles between native and Colonial forces occurred in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut during 1675 and 1676. Mohegan forces and the remaining vestiges of the Pequot, now bound through servitude, as well as hundreds of troops raised at the direction of the colonial governors took action against the Wampanoag of eastern Massachusetts. The Wampanoag were at the lead of the native alliance to end English settlement and send them back home.

Colonial forces initially suffered setbacks throughout southern New England. The Wampanoag leader Metacom (also known as King Phillip) and his men began attacking and destroying English settlements and kidnapping and killing English settlers. King Phillip attempted to bring in Native allies from as far away as New York and northern New England. Clearly in his mind, this was an all-out attempt to turn back European settlement. While many of the southern New England Native groups were directly enlisted in the effort, some individuals from more neutral groups may well have joined the rebellion. There is evidence of Nehantic participation.

During late 1675 and well into 1676, native forces were having success. The frontier regions of English settlement were greatly threatened and could have been lost. However, with the Great Swamp Fight near South Kingston, Rhode Island, in December 1675 the native forces suffered a tactical defeat. The threat of a significant hostile Narragansett contingent joining with the Wampanoag was averted by the colonial forces with a preemptive strike against the then neutral Narragansetts. This was a surprise “sneak” attack against

a neutral native village that was nothing short of a massacre by English and allied Native forces.

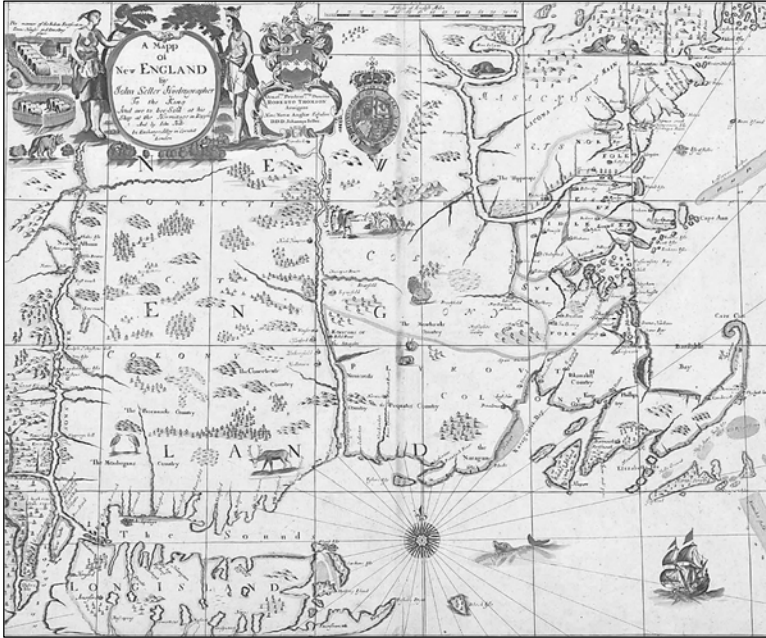
The strike against the Narragansett once again was aided by Mohegan allies. At the end of the battle, a captive Narragansett warrior was given over to the Mohegan for torture because he was responsible for the death of a Mohegan warrior. This was acceptable in both European and native contexts. The captive never showed his suffering while his fingers and toes and hands were individually severed. He sang and danced, gaining inspiration from the spirits of his fallen warriors and family. When asked by the Mohegan how he liked the war, he noted that it was as sweet as the “English sugar”.³⁵ His actions demonstrated to his family, his ancestors, and his victorious Mohegan adversary the honor that tradition required.

For those Narragansetts who lived through the attack, Emanuel Downing’s prediction came to reality and hundreds of men, women, and children were placed into slavery. Some of the Narragansetts that fled and survived, joined King Phillip after the Great Swamp fight. Others went over to Nehantic to take refuge. Again, the Nehantic played a significant role in preserving native lives and culture.

For another several months, into 1676, King Phillip attacked Plimouth and Longmeadow, along with Springfield, Brookfield, Deerfield and Lancaster. The northern-most town in the Connecticut valley, Northfield, was also burned and destroyed by allied Nipmuck, Pocumtuck, Pennacook forces. Elsewhere, they burned Providence, Rhode Island and Simsbury, Connecticut.

By late Spring of 1676, King Phillip’s forces began to suffer from lack of provisions and his forces began to dwindle. His attack upon Hadley, Massachusetts was turned back and the Connecticut troops under

Major John Talcott of Simsbury began capturing large numbers of Native American fighters.



John Seller "A Mapp of New England" ³⁶



From John Seller's 1676 Map: a depiction of the Attack at Hadley

The last vestiges of the native uprising and attempt to stop the white invasion ended at Peskeompskut - Wissatinnewag in the vicinity of current-day Turners Falls, Massachusetts. On May 19th, 1676 more than 150 Colonial militia under the command of Captain Turner attacked a village of several hundred native people, consisting mostly of elders, women and children. As there were ongoing peace talks, the hostilities had stopped and the colonial militia had been told to stand down. Under a cease fire, native families had come together at the Falls to recoup from the war and replenish food stores, taking advantage of the spring run of migratory fish. The native male warriors were several miles upstream in separate encampments.

The Colonial forces seized the advantage and swooped in on the unsuspecting elders, women and children, massacring more than two hundred in less than an hour. The nearby warriors immediately organized and repeatedly attacked the colonial forces as they withdrew 20 miles south to Deerfield. During their retreat, nearly 40 white soldiers were killed, including Captain Turner.

The native counter- attack was a big success. However, the damage was done to the native cause. The massacre at Wissatinnewag broke the back of the native effort.³⁷

King Phillip retreated to Mount Hope, Rhode Island and was subsequently killed on August 12. The remaining 50 warriors and their families surrendered. Their English captors promised them leniency. However, the natives were imprisoned, sold into slavery, or put to death. Those that were sentenced to death had their body parts displayed for the victors to gaze upon and rejoice. The promise of leniency was broken. The last hope of ending the English invasion was lost.^{38 39}

The lesson learned from the beginning of the war to its end was quite clear-- the English could not be trusted. They were dishonorable and ruthless. (Unfortunately, the lesson has gone unheeded by Native Americans for centuries and white betrayal has been the rule.)

By the late 1670s the principle of "Right of Conquest" was once again put into practice. King Phillip's War opened the door to wholesale Native American slavery. The following accounts show the harsh custom of the times, and reveal a source of colonial revenue generated through the Right of Conquest. This is just an excerpt of a much longer ledger.⁴⁰

ACCOUNT OF CAPTIVES SOLD BY MASS. COLONY

From John Hull's Journal, August 24th, 1676, "Captives Cr. by Sundry"

		£. B. d. £. 6. d.
<i>Isaac Valdron</i>	<i>1 Boy</i>	<i>03 00 00</i>
<i>Ephraim Savage</i>	<i>2 girles</i>	<i>04 10 00</i>
<i>Samuel Shrimpton</i>	<i>4 Squawes, 3 girls, 2 infants</i>	<i>30 00 00</i>
	<i>1 old man</i>	<i>09 00 00</i>
	<i>1 man</i>	<i>02 12 00</i>
<i>Samuel Lynd</i>	<i>1 maid</i>	<i>03 10 00</i>
<i>Tobias Smith</i>	<i>1 girl and 2 men</i>	<i>09 10 00</i>
	<i>10 Squawes, 5 papooses, &</i>	<i>25 00 00</i>
	<i>1 man</i>	
	<i>2 Lads Pumham Oc</i>	<i>07 00 00</i>
	<i>Matoonas</i>	
	<i>1 Woman, 4 little children</i>	<i>05 12 00</i>

The above account referenced a Nehantic with the family name Pumham sold into slavery to owner Tobias Smith.

The Pumham family were Nehantics. They show up in both Lyme (western Nehantic) as well as Charlestown (eastern Nehantic) settlements. During the war there was also a reference to a Jeffrey

who was captured and imprisoned after the Great Swamp fight. His elderly wife sought to join him in prison. The Jeffrey family was prominent in both Lyme and Charlestown as well. (This once again demonstrates the Native cultural pattern of flexibility of residence. As primary documents indicate, it was quite natural for members of the Pumham and Jeffrey families to have moved back and forth between the villages.)

The enslavement of Native Americans after King Phillip's War offered two very significant means of profit for the English. As Emanuel Downing had suggested, there was need of slaves to work in southern New England. There was a local market. A second source of revenue came from selling native slaves in the West Indies and further. Bermuda, Barbados, and Jamaica saw southern New England native slaves sold at their island markets. There was also evidence of southern New England native slaves ending up in Tangiers in western Africa.⁴¹

While the initial native slave market in the Indies was vibrant, it soon became clear that these slaves were uncontrollable. The island slaveowners discovered that beating had no effect upon their "Indian" slaves, and that the slaves only sang and danced as they were being whipped. The slaves never screamed or moaned, choosing to bear their torment unconventionally. Even as death neared, they never broke. As a result, the West Indies market for Native American slaves dissolved and captains ended up getting rid of their native slave cargo any way they could.⁴² By 1677 Barbados no longer permitted the sale of "Indian" slaves.

This problem was not just a West Indies issue. The ideological foundation under which southern New England Native Americans existed was based upon honor, integrity, and respect of who they were and their relationship to the ancestors. Showing weakness, such

as caving in to personal anguish, brought dishonor not only to themselves but to all the ancestors before them. For natives brought up within a traditional environment, succumbing to external torment was not possible. In war, as slaves, or as the oppressed, Native Americans never gave way. Therefore, as household and farm slaves, they were difficult to handle. The situation was slightly better for owners with the next generation of Native American slaves, especially if they had access to young children whose upbringing was not fully native.

Enslavement of natives based upon the right of conquest continued well beyond the later part of the 17th century. These were children and grandchildren of the original enslaved. A court case in the middle of the 18th century involving two prominent families of Lyme serves as an example:

The New London County Court heard the case of Richard Lord v. James Ely, both of Lyme, in June 1757. Lord accused Ely of enticing "Zacheus Molatto, a Slave for Life," to depart Lord's service. Even though a deposition was entered from an elderly man from Southampton, Long Island that Jane, the mother of Zacheus, was "a free wench" captured in the Narragansett Indian war, Richard Lord recovered damages and Zacheus continued to be a slave.⁴³ During this period Lord also had a native slave, Temperance, who was born into slavery as well. Her parents and grandparents were enslaved as a result of King Phillip's War and the English sneak attack.⁴⁴

Section 7.

Encroachment Upon Nehantic Territory

From the beginning of the English settlement at Saybrooke, Wequash, sachem of the Nehantic village, had been friendly with the Colony's Puritan leader, George Fenwick. The relationship between Fenwick and Wequash was so trusting that Wequash left his young son to be cared for by Fenwick. Soon after, the Sachem died. (Wequash's circumstances of death were very suspicious and later historians have suggested that he was poisoned at the hand of Uncas).⁴⁵ On his deathbed in the presence of George Fenwick and Roger Williams, he requested to be buried at the traditional burial ground at Nehantic on Black Point.

During the 17th century, while considered a friendly Native American group, the Nehantics lost most authority over their own territory. They resided in their village at Black Point and moved about carefully in their territory but were feared and untrusted by the neighboring white colonists.

In 1651, the Colonial Assembly rewarded Mason and several of his soldiers for their service during the Pequot War and granted them land on Black Point in East Seabrooke (Lyme) that was adjacent to the Nehantic village. This reward to the soldiers served the colonists in two ways. Men that had fought against the Pequot in 1637 received land as payment for their service. The second benefit was that the assembly placed known fighters between the "Indians" and the colonists. Thus, they established a military presence that would keep the Indians in check and lessen the fears of the colonists.

The 1651 Assembly Act also created a bounded parcel where the Indians were to stay, establishing a one-hundred-acre reserve for

natives' exclusive use. This Black Point Nehantic Reservation was one of the first to be created in North America.

"Thomas Bull and others in the behalf of the rest, having resigned up to the Courte one hundred acres of the grounds laid out at Niantecutt to them, of that part thereof which lies next to Seabrooke, which said hundred acres the Courte grants liberty to the Indians that formerly possessed and planted the same, to possess and plant for the future, so long as they carry peaceably and justly towards the English".⁴⁶

The Nehantic settlement at Black Point had been established prior to English settlement. However, this was the first English documentation of their right to their village. Even so, the right of the Nehantic to speak for themselves and deal on their own behalf was denied. Instead, Uncas and his descendants became the spokespeople and signers of land deeds to various English proprietors of the Saybrooke colony.

Wequash's son, Sannup, was next in line as Nehantic sachem. Instead, the English recognized the Mohegan sachem and ally as the Native representative of the Nehantic. It appears that Uncas and his heirs were more than willing to sell territory that was not theirs. In most instances Nehantics were dealt out of the English - Native power structure of southern New England.

In 1671, James Steele, Hugh Walls, and Ensign White were ordered to go to Lyme and to measure 5 miles eastward from the "Connecticut" River and 4 miles westward by the "Peguit" River, to determine what was in between, and make a report at the next October session of the Colonial Assembly".

Subsequent to this land assay, the Nehantics were provided 300 acres of land. The survey permitted an additional 200 acres to that which was granted in 1651. This was to become the "*western Nehantic*

settlement" and known locally as "*Indiantown*". The same act of the Colonial Assembly also recognized the Nehantic rights to their traditional hunting ground surrounding the Eight Mile River and its tributary, Branch Brook, in what is today Lyme and Salem.

As was the practice during the colonial period, certain tracts of land were set aside for common use. The natives living at the Nehantic village, now reservation, on Black Point were also granted access to a wood lot that was west of the village on high and rocky ground across the Pattagansett River. The region was not fit for agriculture but afforded a good growth of timber and firewood. (This region of East Lyme to this day is referred to as "Indian Woods.")

A series of repeated encroachments on the newly established Indian reservation started soon after its demarcation. In May 1693 for example, an adjacent farmer, Joseph Bull was allowed to lease 100 acres for the planting or "*herbegg*" of the land, but not to hinder the Indians' plowing and planting.

In August 1715, the Nehantic complained to the Connecticut General Assembly that certain Indians, "*induced by drink*," had consented that some Englishmen should enclose a pasture of considerable size out of the 300 acres set aside for the "Niantics."

During the 17th and 18th century, Nehantics went to the Colonial courts seeking legal action to keep English cows and out of native corn fields. Nehantics similarly went to the English authorities complaining about the English practice of letting the swine root in the clam beds. Clams were an important gathered food resource. As time went on, Nehantics had to petition the authorities for maintaining their traditional rights to seaweed as well as salt mulch hay.

These and other incursions led the Assembly to formalize this 300-acre parcel in October 1734, defining quite precisely the boundaries

with adjacent property owners, and stating *"the afore mentioned bounds shall ALWAYS be and remain the bound of said Indian lands."* There was an order that followed the formalization indicating that two prominent Lyme people, the Messrs. John Griswold and Thomas Lee, were to see that the rights of the Indians were upheld and their boundaries maintained. It must be noted that the original boundary lines of the reservation may have been somewhat indefinite, simply because so much land was held in common by the white settlers, in the English manner. By 1734 however, much more land had been distributed, allowing for a definitive survey of the reserved lands – or "the Nehantic Reservation."

According to Reverend George Griswold, at the time that the reservation was formalized, there were 30 Nehantic families living there. Between 1741 and 1761 he admitted to membership, baptized, and married at least 17 Nehantic individuals, and specifically identified 10 families.

In the October 1762 session of the Connecticut Colonial Assembly, one of the most important decisions involving this Native group was made. It was decided that after many complaints and counter complaints that the "upper 100", the exact land leased almost 70 years earlier to Joseph Bull (son of Thomas Bull who received the land for his service during the Pequot War), be divided equally between the Indians and Edward Champlin, Joseph Smith, and Elijah Beckwith. The Indians received the western portion, which included a section of *"the highway down to Black Point,"* while the three Englishmen got the eastern half. It is here that mention is made of the burying place of the Indians on this eastern section: *"excepting and reserving to the Indians the perpetual use of their burying ground, which is on that part of said tract to bury their dead."* Smith, Champlin, and Beckwith

subsequently subdivided this land. The burying ground ended up being encircled by Mr. Champlin's property.

Fifty miles to the east and twelve years after the Lyme Nehantic reservation was established, the Sachem, Ninigret, in 1663 transferred much of the native territory to the English in exchange for title to eight square miles of land in the region east of the Pawcatuck River in Misquamicut, and Charlestown, Rhode Island. This was to be Ninigret's settlement, established and documented for himself and his heirs. The remaining lands were transferred by him to the King. Thus, the Charlestown Rhode Island, eastern Nehantic settlement was created at the Native's request, promising Nehantic loyalty, and accepting jurisdiction under the authority of the English King.

By the time this land exchange was recognized by the Rhode Island colonial authorities, the remnants of Narragansett, following King Phillip's War, had been brought into Rhode Island as refugees. Over the course of the ensuing hundred years, the refugees had seized control over the eastern Nehantic territory. The Nehantic and Narragansett became one and the same within Rhode Island. The act of kindness by Ninigret giving sanctuary to the few remaining Narragansett survivors of the Great Swamp Fight and King Phillip's War evolved into the Nehantic being overthrown, and their reservation farms, sawmills, and land lost to whom they had given refuge.⁴⁷ Some of the remaining families of the Rhode Island Nehantic removed to Lyme, Connecticut. By the later part of the 18th century many of the original Nehantic inhabitants who shared kin relations with the Nehantic of Black Point in Lyme had left Rhode Island. From that point in time onward most of the native occupants of Charlestown were descendants of the refugee Narragansetts.

The political alignment of Nehantic versus Narragansett families may well demonstrate the cleavage of the Eastern Nehantic settlement.

This is probably evidenced within the two petitions regarding support for Thomas Ninigret to become Sachem at Charlestown. The corresponding signatures noted within the Appendices for Chapter III illustrate the dissatisfaction with Nehantic administration and the shift away from the leadership by the Nehantic Ninigret family line.

Back in Connecticut, Nehantic populations attempted to continue the subsistence strategy of agriculture supplemented by hunting and gathering technologies. However, maintaining fields with a dwindling work force was extremely difficult. The inability to grow enough food within the Lyme tribal lands and territorial encroachment upon both hunting territories and fields caused great duress. Land squabbles between natives, and adjacent white farmers, and the colonial authorities continued well into the ensuing century.

Section 8.

Subsistence and Economy: Entrapped in the Cash Economy

Throughout the 17th and 18th century, faced with the restriction of territory and associated dwindling food supplies, many Nehantics, both men and women, began working for area farmers. They thus turned from self-sufficiency to becoming inadvertently entrapped within an English cash economy. They became part of the colonial system and were tied to the English trading post operated locally in Lyme by Thomas Lee. As time went on, many other English shopkeepers had Nehantics as customers and debtors. Nehantics bartered or purchased salt pork and beef, dried peas, and flour. While not totally giving up on their traditional food sources, they did become reliant upon purchased goods. At this time, they also stopped producing many of their traditional tools and utensils and instead obtained metal pots, kettles, and buckets, pewter spoons, mirrors, needles, drills, as well as cloth at the trading post. In exchange for these items, Nehantics paid or bartered for goods.

They received cash for the furs that they brought to the trading post. Over the winter, small family groups dispersed into the interior to hunt and trap deer, beaver, muskrat, bear, and fox. This was a family endeavor with the women and children processing, stretching and curing the pelts. At the end of the trapping season, furs were brought to the trading post where the Nehantic trappers received payment directly or had their account credited.

Nehantics were also paid for wampum which they manufactured from local quahog or whelk shell. The wampum industry was a long established Nehantic occupation that had prehistoric traditional

roots. (The reparations that Nehantic had to pay for their aid to the Pequot after the massacre at Mystic were assessed by the English in many fathoms of wampum.)

As time went on, Nehantics also took part in various timbering operations. They were required to work for the English who claimed exclusive rights to the forests. In 1641, then Governor Leete ordered that his "*Indian men*" be left alone and unhindered as they cut timber for him in the woods⁴⁸. By 1650 the Colonial authorities adopted the Connecticut Codes. Among these laws was an act forbidding Indians from selling board or plank, logs or candlewood (red cedar). From the earliest days of English settlement, logs, board, plank, and staves became a very important exported resource. The English made certain they alone controlled the resource. Native American wood cutters were at the center of a growing colonial and American industry but they were clearly not realizing any reimbursement for the resource. (This pattern extended well into the 19th century.)

By the mid 1700s Nehantics operated sawmills on streams within the traditional hunting territory off Branch Brook in Lyme. Here George and Joseph Jeffrey ran a sawmill during the middle of the 1700s. Their knowledge of woodcutting and milling undoubtedly came from experience gained from the family sawmill in Charlestown, Rhode Island. Later on in the early 1800s, Samuel Tatsen operated a sawmill in Hadlyme.

Throughout the Colonial period and after the Revolution, there was a growing pattern of Nehantics becoming farmhands and domestic house workers. The contractual arrangements under which they were employed ranged greatly from day workers to fifteen- to twenty-year indenture.

Few Nehantics or other native individuals prospered much from the colonial and early Federal economic system. Those who were unable to pay their debts were obliged to work off their debts or go to jail. Colonial court cases abound from the earliest days of the 18th century documenting the debt into which Nehantics found themselves. Similarly, Nehantic children were placed into white homes as indentured servants. Nehantic families became destitute as well as separated from their traditional economy. Debt, deprivation, and desperation certainly led to Nehantic families having to make difficult decisions regarding the welfare of their children. As indentured servants the chances for children to survive were better. Therefore, many children were bound out. New London court cases of the time bear witness to Nehantic child indenture and subsequent runaways, broken covenants, and attempts to transfer indenture from one owner to another.⁴⁹

Jobs that Nehantics undertook were predominantly manual labor. Males cleared rocks from the fields and built stone wall systems, and as time went on, worked alongside a growing African slave workforce. They worked at dockside loading and unloading cargo from ships coming in from the West Indies or ones heading to other colonial ports or returning to England. Females were employed in domestic and farm duties. In all these capacities, the opportunity for Nehantics to develop economic advancement and stability was remote. They continued to be a socially and economically oppressed fringe of the local colonial societal structure. They were totally bound to the colonial economic system at the bottom tier. An ongoing sense of desperation filled their existence. Purchasing and consuming alcohol acquired at the trading posts, and later at stores and taverns, provided one of their few opportunities for temporary escape. However, this only exacerbated their situation.

Section 9.

Opportunity of Military Service

For males of the lower classes of New England's population, there was an opportunity to break out of economic bondage. It was through serving in the military. Probably the most significant occupation for Nehantic men during the 17th and 18th centuries was military service. While the potential of economic advancement was at hand for some, it cannot be over-emphasized how serving the King of England in his colonial wars or later in the American War of Independence effectively decimated the remaining Nehantic population of able-bodied men.

The English colonial system required the "enlistment, recruitment, or impressment" of local Native American soldiers. As early as 1676 during King Phillip's War, on two occasions, provincial authorities called for 350 fighting men to be raised. Two thirds of those recruited were local Native Americans.⁵⁰ The first and fifth Connecticut colonial regiments each contained 150 native scouts.⁵¹

The period from the late 17th century well into the 18th century was characterized by an intense competition between England and France for colonial dominance in North America. These wars, known as the French and Indian War here in North America, were known to Europeans as the Seven Years War, preceded by King George's War in 1744-1748, Queen Anne's War in 1702-1713, and King William's War in 1689-1697. In each of these phases, many Nehantic men were signed on to fight for the English monarchy.

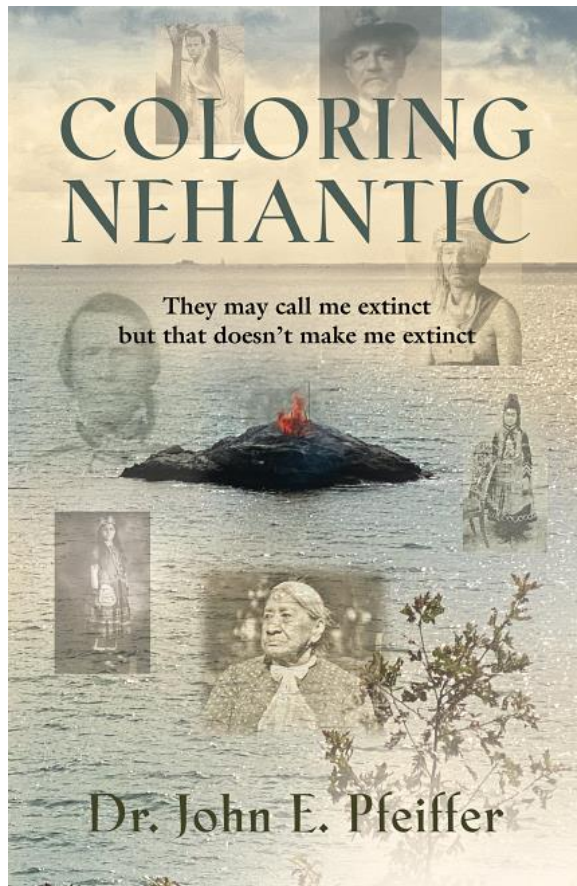
By English law, the recruiting was overseen by the provincial authorities. This "*impressment*" focused upon lower classes and in particular seamen, servants, Negroes, Indians, and others.⁵²

Impressment had a long history in New London County. In 1744-1748 during King George's War, New England troops served and marched to what is now Nova Scotia, bringing the war to Canada. Southeastern Connecticut recruits fought to retake the New England fishing station at Canso and utilize it as a staging area for the successful siege of the French fortress of Louisburg. (Up to that time, Louisburg was considered to be the most secure fortification in North America.)

After a successful siege of the fortress, the English controlled Louisburg until 1748 when it was returned to France under the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Later in 1758, during the Seven Years War, it once again was taken by the English, this time for good.

Muster rolls for the expedition against Canada during King George's War include the August 24th 1746 muster roll of Captain Robert Denison's company from New London. Within Denison's company was the Nehantic man, William Sobuck.⁵³ Major Israel Hewit's company, also from New London, included Nehantics John Leathercoat, and Peter Nonsuch.⁵⁴ William Whiting's company muster roll contained Nehantic men Lewis Tatton and Isaac Tatten.⁵⁵ The muster roll of Robert Denison's company dated April 24th 1747 included John Moheegs, John Moheegs Jr., and William Sobuck—all Nehantic.⁵⁶

The King George's War, which ended in 1748, surely did not end the hostilities between England and France for control of the North American colonies. In 1754 the two countries once again fought for colonial supremacy. Regarding Nehantic participation, Ezra Stiles noted that 18 Nehantic men were recruited in 1755 for fighting in the French and Indian war. Of those that served, 8 died in the campaign. This constituted nearly a 50% mortality rate.⁵⁷



Nehantics are remembered for their work towards achieving equality for people of color. The Nehantic were centrally involved in the fight for human justice, equality, and civil rights.

Coloring Nehantic

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