

# THE DATING OF THE PROVIDENCE CIVIL COMPACT

*By Ian Watson*

The Great Migration Study Project organizes New England immigrants by arrival year (or latest possible arrival year), so determining that year is an important step in completing each sketch. Work is underway on the third series of Great Migration volumes, covering immigrants who arrived from 1636 through 1638. Prominent among the records of these immigrants is an undated agreement in the town records of Providence, Rhode Island, somewhat grandly called the “Providence Civil Compact.” Thirteen of the early settlers of Providence signed it, and for some of them this signature seems to be the earliest trace that they left on the American side of the Atlantic.

But when was the Compact signed? Reputable scholars have put its date at anywhere from 1636 to 1639. I hoped that the technique of list analysis,<sup>1</sup> considering the movements of the thirteen signers, would straightforwardly allow a more definitive dating of the Compact. This was not an easy case, though. Pursuing this strategy for the Compact leads into a thicket of logical dependencies, uncertain interpretations, misattributed handwriting, doubtful personal identifications, and shaky datings for the other events of the signers’ careers. But an extended study of the question has allowed most of the uncertainties to be wrestled into submission.

This analysis has led to several new conclusions beyond the dating of the Compact. One by-product has been progress in the dating or interpretation of a few of Roger Williams’s letters to John Winthrop. Digitization has improved access to many original documents, and thus made it easier to figure out whose handwriting they are in, and to be more certain of their dating. Additional observations have been made about the English origins of six of the signers of the Compact: John Field, George Rickards, John Warner, Edward Cope, Joshua Winsor, and William Wickenden (or Wigginton). In each case, new conclusions are drawn from already-published clues that have not been followed up, or new relevant records are presented that have never been published.

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<sup>1</sup> On list analysis, see Robert Charles Anderson, *Elements of Genealogical Analysis* (Boston 2014), 14–15.

This article can be seen as a revisit of sections of the first volume of Howard M. Chapin's 1916 *Documentary History of Rhode Island*,<sup>2</sup> with a narrower scope (focused only on the Compact and related documents) and with the benefit of a century's progress in Rhode Island history and genealogy. Not least among these advances is the Great Migration Study Project, which now includes accurate information on many of these people, which was never available to Howard Chapin.

I hope that further close study of these documents and the people mentioned in them will allow yet more progress in our understanding of Providence's first few years.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Roger Williams left Salem, Massachusetts, secretly in January 1635/6.<sup>3</sup> He reported having taken four companions along with him: William Harris, John Smith, Francis Weekes, and "a lad of Rich[ard] Waterman's."<sup>4</sup> After wintering in an Indian community, and experimenting with a settlement on the east side of the Seekonk River, he and his party set up a "plantation" at the current site of downtown Providence in the early summer of 1636.<sup>5</sup> By 27 July 1640, Providence was well enough populated that almost forty townsmen signed a document called the Providence Combination, which laid down a set of rules for town governance.<sup>6</sup>

These two events—Williams's arrival at Providence and the signing of the Combination—bookend the period at issue in this article. During these years home lots were laid out and Providence's first families built their houses. Meanwhile, New England was occupied with the Pequot War and the Antinomian Controversy. Roger Williams and John Winthrop carried on

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<sup>2</sup> Howard M. Chapin, *Documentary History of Rhode Island*, 2 vols. (Providence, 1916–19). Vol. 1 was subtitled *Being The History of the Towns of Providence and Warwick to 1649 and of the Colony to 1647*.

<sup>3</sup> John Winthrop, *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, ed. James Savage, 2 vols. (Boston, 1853), 1:204, 209–10; *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1628–1688*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, 5 vols. in 6 (Boston, 1853–54), 1:160–61; Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, [1629–1682]*, ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie, 2 vols. (Providence, 1988), 1:22; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:1–10.

<sup>4</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 2:750; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:5; see also Dean Crawford Smith, *The Ancestry of Emily Jane Angell, 1844–1910*, ed. Melinde Lutz Sanborn (Boston, 1992), 109.

<sup>5</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 2:610; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:11–23; "When Was Providence Founded?" *Narragansett Historical Register* 5(1886–87):27–42; James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Roger Williams, the Founder of the State of Rhode-Island* (Boston, 1834), 102–5.

<sup>6</sup> *The Early Records of the Town of Providence*, 21 vols. (Providence 1892–1915), 15:2–5.

a lively correspondence. Winthrop, though officially at odds with the Providence settlement, had a soft spot for Williams, and the two men did much for each other. Winthrop perhaps saw Providence as a useful outlet for those discontented with the atmosphere at Massachusetts Bay.

### TRANSCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDENCE CIVIL COMPACT

This study is based on a high-resolution facsimile photograph of the original leaf provided by the Providence City Archives.<sup>7</sup> The Compact reads:

We whose names are here[*under*]  
 desirous to inhabitt in this towne [*of*]  
 Providence do promise to subject [*ourselves*]  
 in active or passive obedience to al[*l*]  
 such orders or agreements as shall [*be*]  
     for publick good of o[u]r body in an orderly w[*ay*]  
 made ^ by the major consent of the [*present*]  
 inhabitants maisters of families in[*corporated*]  
 together into a towne fellowship a[*nd*]  
 others whome they shall admitt [*unto them*]  
 only in civill things

Richard Scott

mark

William × Renolds

mark

John × Feild

Chad Browne

John Warner

George Ricka[*rd*]

Edwarde Cope

Thomas Angell × [*mark*]

Thomas H[*arris*]

Francis Weekes × marke

Benedict Arnold

Josua Winsor

W[*illiam Wickenden*]<sup>8</sup>

The main text is in the handwriting of Thomas James (as discussed below). The indented line beginning “for publick good” is a supralinear addition in the same hand, marked to insert between the words *made* and *by* in the next line.

<sup>7</sup> By permission of the Providence City Archives, this image has been placed online at [americangenealogist.com/the-providence-civil-compact](http://americangenealogist.com/the-providence-civil-compact).

<sup>8</sup> Text in brackets reflects losses to the right side of the leaf of text abraded or faded to illegibility; such text is restored from previous transcriptions. The subscribers’ marks are standardized here.

The signatures divide into two groups. Those from Richard Scott to George Rickard appear in a brown ink which is at least similar, and probably identical, to the ink of the main text. Two of these men signed by mark (“William Renolds” and “John Feild”); their names are also in Thomas James’s hand. The remaining names, from Edward Cope to William Wickenden, are in a different ink, now grayish and faded, and appear to have been written with a broader quill. Two of these latter men signed by mark. Thomas Angell’s name looks to have been written by Thomas Harris. It is difficult to say who wrote the name “Francis Weekes.” William Wickenden’s name is fainter than the preceding six, and almost fully illegible now. Its transcription here is based on previous transcriptions. The quill and ink used for it appear similar to those of the signatures in the second group, and Wickenden’s name is thus deemed to belong with those signatures, though there may be some difference.

### TEXTUAL HISTORY

For a long time the Compact formed the first page of the first book of Providence town records. In 1800 the first three manuscript books of Providence town meeting records were transcribed. These 1800 copies are not readily accessible, but a description of the copy of the first volume was published in 1895. This description says that the Compact text appears on the first page of the 1800 copy, and that the transcriber wrote the date “August the 20th, 1637” above the Compact text, at the top of the page. Opposite this date, “apparently at a different time,” someone wrote “N. B. this date is on the left hand page of the following.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1836 John Pitman described the first book of town records in a pamphlet about the settlement of Providence: “The oldest record that now remains, is August 20, 1637. An old book, with a parchment cover, has this date on the inside of the cover, and its first record is the following: ‘We whose names are here under’ . . . .”<sup>10</sup>

In 1843 Providence historian William Read Staples gave a more detailed report. He said that the Compact was in “the first book of the records of the town,” but was “there without date.” Staples added: “When the early rec-

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<sup>9</sup> *Fourth Report of the Record Commissioners Relative to the Early Town Records* (Providence, 1895), 11.

<sup>10</sup> John Pitman, *A Discourse Delivered at Providence, August 5, 1836: In Commemoration of the First Settlement of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence, 1836), 25. Pitman, who styled himself a “member of the Rhode-Island Historical Society” on the pamphlet, was also a federal judge for the district of Rhode Island (“Death of Judge Pitman,” [Providence] *Evening Bulletin*, 18 Nov. 1864, p. 2, cols. 1–2).

We whose names are set  
 below to inhabit in the town  
 Providence do promise to submit  
 in actual or passive obedience to all  
 such orders or agreements as shall  
 be made for the public good of our colony  
 by the major consent of the  
 Inhabitants many of families  
 together into a towne for the  
 others whom we shall admit  
 only in civil things.

Richard Smith.  
 William B. Rensselaer.  
 John D. Smith.  
 Adam Brown.  
 John D. Smith.  
 George Rensselaer.  
 Edward Rensselaer.  
 Thomas Rensselaer.  
 Francis Rensselaer.  
 Benedict Rensselaer.  
 John Rensselaer.

The Providence Civil Compact.  
 Image courtesy of City Archives, Providence, R.I.

ords of the town were copied [i.e., in 1800], the transcriber added to his copy the date of August 20, 1637, from the inside of the cover of the same book. This date evidently refers to another matter which follows it [i.e., the Compact], and is in a different hand writing from the agreement itself.”<sup>11</sup>

These three reports make it clear that by the early nineteenth century, the sheet of paper that the Compact was written on formed the first leaf of the oldest bound book of Providence town records. Also, they convince us that the book had a parchment cover, on the inside of which was written “August the 20th, 1637.” But there is no sign that this date had anything to do with the Compact.

On 2 May 1881, the Library Committee of the Rhode Island Historical Society, headed by Sidney S. Rider, described the Compact’s condition in a letter to the mayor of Providence. Confusingly, this letter seems to switch back and forth between describing the Compact and describing the entire first book of records:

This document, written by the hand of Roger Williams . . . stands at the top of the first page of this book. . . . As to its present condition, it is entirely removed from its binding, it now having no covers whatever. Its leaves are misplaced, ragged and torn. Its first and most valuable leaf is torn entirely asunder. The name of one of the signers has been torn apart, and is now illegible, and some words have been torn from the edges in sundry places.

The committee recommended that the book be preserved forthwith, that the “precious leaves be inlaid in paper of the strongest and most durable texture,” and that “the volume be strongly, even elegantly bound.”<sup>12</sup>

This conservation work was apparently carried out and the book was rebound. Decades later, Sidney S. Rider reported that during that process, a “blank leaf, two pages,” which followed the Compact, “was removed and destroyed by the person who inlaid the book, Albert V. Jenckes.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1892 this first volume of Providence town records was transcribed and printed by the city as volume one of *The Early Records of the Town of Providence*. In this edition, the sheet that the Compact is written on is labeled as page one of the original manuscript volume. The words “August the 20th, 1637,” allegedly on the inside front cover of the original volume, were not included in this edition.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> William Read Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence* . . . (Providence, 1843), 38.

<sup>12</sup> “Report of the Committee on the Library,” *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1881–1882* (Providence, 1882), 40–41.

<sup>13</sup> Sidney S. Rider, “Annihilation of the Claim for Richard Scott to Be the Author of the First Compact of Government for Providence,” *Book Notes, Historical, Literary, and Critical* 22(1905):105–11, at 107.

<sup>14</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:1.

The compilers of the 1892 edition noted that the 1800 copy “enabled the commissioners in many cases to supply defects in the original caused by the fading of the ink and by the abrasion of the edges of the leaves.”<sup>15</sup> In particular, much text was missing from the right edge of the page. Text so added was printed in italics,<sup>16</sup> and is so rendered here as well.

In 1906 a facsimile of the Compact was published in *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* to accompany an article by Stephen F. Peckham about Compact signer Richard Scott.<sup>17</sup> This facsimile is not completely genuine. The latter, fainter signatures were retouched to make them more distinct. In 1916 Howard M. Chapin published an apparently unretouched facsimile of the Compact in his *Documentary History of Rhode Island*.<sup>18</sup> In 1972 the entire first book of Providence records was microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah.<sup>19</sup> At some point after 1972, the book was unbound for conservation; the Compact is now an individual loose leaf. The Providence City Archives made a high-resolution image available to the author and to TAG for the preparation of this article.

### WHO WROTE THE COMPACT?

As Roger Williams had sent a draft of the Compact text to John Winthrop before its actual signing (see discussion below), there is little question that Williams originally composed its wording. But was he the one who wrote it out on paper, in slightly revised form, for the signers to sign? For many decades most scholars thought that he was.<sup>20</sup> A minority, though, opined that the handwriting of the Compact “has no more resemblance to the . . . writing of Roger Williams . . . than black letter has to modern English,” and argued that the scribe was Richard Scott, the first signer.<sup>21</sup> In 1905 Sidney S. Rider convincingly refuted the idea of Richard Scott’s involvement,<sup>22</sup> but

<sup>15</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:v.

<sup>16</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:vi.

<sup>17</sup> Stephan F. Peckham, “Richard Scott and His Wife Catherine Marbury, and Some of Their Descendants,” *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* [NEHGR] 60 (1906):168–75, plate between pages 168 and 169.

<sup>18</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], plate opposite 1:96.

<sup>19</sup> Family History Library [FHL], Salt Lake City, film #7548756. The Compact is at frame 6.

<sup>20</sup> Knowles, *Memoir of Roger Williams* [note 5], 120; William Gammell, *Life of Roger Williams, Founder of the State of Rhode Island* (Boston, 1846), 74; “Report of the Committee on the Library” [note 12], 40; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:97.

<sup>21</sup> Martin B. Scott, “False History Corrected,” *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries* [Morrisania, N.Y.], 2nd ser., 5(1869):143–44, 227–28; Peckham, “Richard Scott” [note 17], NEHGR 60(1906):169.

<sup>22</sup> Rider, “Annihilation of the Claim for Richard Scott to Be the Author” [note 13].

did not establish Roger Williams as the scribe either. In 1963 Bradford F. Swan published a pamphlet demonstrating conclusively that neither Williams nor Scott was the scribe. The Compact text is, instead, in the handwriting of Thomas James.<sup>23</sup>

James's handwriting is in some ways similar to that of Roger Williams, particularly in the use of a Greek *e*, though also clearly different. And as only two extended, straightforwardly attributable examples of James's hand survive in New England records, it is understandable that a long time passed before any scholar recognized the Compact's handwriting as his. The best example of James's handwriting is a letter that he wrote to John Winthrop (discussed below). Swan included a facsimile of this letter in his pamphlet and highlighted the similarities between its letterforms and those of the Compact. Swan also recognized something else that had not been previously noticed: Thomas James also wrote most of the entries on the second and third original pages of the first book of Providence records. This insight will be considered below.

#### PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE COMPACT'S DATING

At some point after the rebinding of the first book of Providence town records in the 1880s, it came to the attention of the local record commissioners that the inside front cover of the original binding had carried the date "August the 20th, 1637." As this original cover had apparently been discarded, their source was the 1800 transcription of the record book, referred to above. They also noticed that in a land title dispute sometime between 1677 and 1681, Daniel Abbott, then Providence town clerk, had noted that Providence "in the year 1637, became a town incorporated August the 20th." On this basis, the record commissioners stated in 1895 that "it may be concluded that the Compact . . . was signed on the 20th of August, 1637."<sup>24</sup> Also underlying this conclusion was, it seems, a mistaken belief that the signing of the Compact marked the founding of the town of Providence.

In 1902 Edward Field repeated the commissioners' tentative conclusion much more forcefully, writing that "there should be no hesitancy in assigning this date" of 20 August 1637 to the Compact.<sup>25</sup> Neither Field nor the

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<sup>23</sup> Bradford F. Swan, *The Rev. Thomas James, the Civil Compact, and the Town Evidence*, R.I. Society of Colonial Wars Pubs., 48 (Providence, 1963).

<sup>24</sup> *Fourth Report of the Record Commissioners* [note 9], 11–12, including a fold-out facsimile of Abbott's comment, citing Rhode Island Historical Society [RIHS], MSS 808, "Providence Town Papers," #16627.

<sup>25</sup> *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*, 2 vols. (Boston 1902), 1:33.



1895 commissioners engaged with Staples's 1843 report that the 20 August 1637 date "refer[red] to another matter . . . and is in a different handwriting from the agreement itself."<sup>26</sup> Neither did they consider the possibility that the date could have been written in the original book at a later time, perhaps even based on a reading of Abbott's memorandum.

In 1916 Howard M. Chapin took up the question of the date of the Compact as part of his study of the early documents of Providence. His opinion was that the Compact could not have been signed on 20 August 1637, as Richard Scott, its first signer, was not yet there then, and in any case the Compact was "a petition to join an already 'incorporated' town, not an act to incorporate a town."<sup>27</sup> In a subsequent chapter, Chapin attempted to determine the possible range of dates for the Compact, using essentially the same method now called list analysis.<sup>28</sup> He concluded that it was signed between October 1638 and 27 July 1640. His efforts, though, were hampered by a limited knowledge of the movements of the thirteen signers, and by not knowing that Thomas James had engrossed the Compact text.

Field's and Chapin's differing conclusions about the dating of the Compact live on in competition in recent genealogical and historical literature. For example, Field's date of 20 August 1637 appears in a recent article on Thomas and William Harris by Helen Schatvet Ullmann and L. Randall Harris<sup>29</sup> and, at last viewing, in the Wikipedia articles titled "Richard Scott (settler)" and "List of early settlers of Rhode Island."

Chapin's estimate of 1638 to 1640 is noted in the Great Migration sketch of Richard Scott.<sup>30</sup> In 1992 Dean Crawford Smith and Melinde Lutz Sanborn followed Chapin's reasoning in their profile of Thomas Angell.<sup>31</sup>

Another Great Migration sketch, that of Francis Weekes, dates the Compact in a third way, as "probably of late 1636 or early 1637," without explanation.<sup>32</sup> The printed edition of the synthetic Rhode Island "colony" records, published in 1856 and still widely cited today, dates the Compact at 20 August 1636.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence* [note 11], 38.

<sup>27</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:44-46.

<sup>28</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:96-98.

<sup>29</sup> Helen S. Ullmann and L. Randall Harris, "The Origins of Thomas<sup>1</sup> Harris and William<sup>1</sup> Harris of Providence, Rhode Island," *NEHGR* 167(2013):98-104, at 100.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Charles Anderson et al., *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England, 1634-1635*, 7 vols. (Boston, 1999-2011), 6:206.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Ancestry of Emily Jane Angell* [note 4], 110.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 7:274.

<sup>33</sup> John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, 10 vols. (Providence, 1856-65), 1:14.

Meanwhile, in 1957 John Hutchins Cady, who painstakingly mapped the early Providence home lots, voiced the opinion that the Compact was “executed” at “some time in 1639.”<sup>34</sup>

### EVIDENCE BEARING ON THE DATE OF THE COMPACT

A combination of several approaches can lead to a more exact and solidly grounded proposal for the dating of the Compact. One is the technique of list analysis—examining the lives of all the people on a list to narrow the range of dates when all of them could have been at the place where that list was created. For the Compact, the list consists of the thirteen signatories plus the Compact’s scribe, Thomas James. Other methods involve historical and textual analysis of evidence relating to the Compact. Roger Williams’s correspondence with John Winthrop about the Compact places an earlier bound on its signing, the Providence Combination of 1640 arguably sets a later bound, and the apparent sequence of the earliest Providence home-lot grants serves as evidence, too. As will be seen, the career of another early settler, Joshua Veren, is also relevant.

To complicate matters, many of the documentary sources that bear on the dating of the Compact are themselves of uncertain date or have other problems of interpretation. It is therefore necessary, as a first step, to consider several of these documents in detail:

1. Several letters from Roger Williams to John Winthrop, especially an undated letter in which Williams asked Winthrop to critique his draft of the Compact, and two partially dated letters referring to a “Joshua” who some have identified as Compact signer Joshua Winsor.
2. The second and third original pages of the first Providence town book, particularly the first entry on the third original page, here called the “Payments List.”
3. A page of accounts, on a loose leaf of paper, partly in Roger Williams’s handwriting and partly in that of Thomas James, here called the “Williams-James Account.”
4. Three documents listing the names of Providence’s first (pre-Compact) landholders. One of these is an entry dated 10 June [1638] at the bottom of the third original page of the first Providence town book; it is here called the “Grass & Meadow List.” The other two, which survive only as later copies, are both dated 8 October 1638; they are here called the “Meadow Agreement” and the “Memorandum.”

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<sup>34</sup> John Hutchins Cady, *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636–1950* (Providence, 1957), 5.

5. A list of the first Providence landowners in geographical order made in 1660, printed with an accompanying map in 1886, analyzed in detail by Howard M. Chapin, and mapped again in 1957 by John Hutchins Cady.

After a review of these documents and the careers of the individuals who signed the Compact, it becomes possible to propose a more precise range of dates for the Compact itself.

### ROGER WILLIAMS'S DRAFT OF THE COMPACT

A special aspect of the Compact's history is that Roger Williams sent a draft of its text for comment to John Winthrop at some point before its actual signing. The letter in which he did so is one of several from Williams to John Winthrop that bear on the dating of the Compact. Typically, Roger Williams dated his letters to Winthrop with only the day and month, or did not date them at all. The editors of the several published editions of the Williams-Winthrop correspondence have assigned presumptive years or estimated dates to the letters. The different editors have sometimes varied in their date assignments and interpretations.

In this completely undated letter, Roger Williams spoke of the need for some written "compact" between the residents of "this town of New Providence." He noted that "we have no patent" and that "of late some young men single persons (of whom we had much need) being admitted to freedom of inhabitation . . . seek the freedom of vote also," and he cited "our dangers (in the midst of these dens of lions) now especially." He explained that "hitherto, the masters of families have ordinarily met once a fortnight" and "mutual consent hath finished all matters with speed and peace," but evidently he felt the need for a more formal arrangement. He proposed a two-level approach, the first for "our selves, the masters of families" and the second for "those few young men, and any who shall hereafter (by your favorable connivance) desire to plant with us."<sup>35</sup>

Williams drafted a text for each group to sign and asked for Winthrop's "private advice" on these drafts. The text proposed for the "few young men" is mostly identical with the Compact text and is obviously its forerunner. Seemingly in some consternation at finding himself the governor of a colony he perhaps did not fully intend to start, Williams asked for Winthrop's response "with the soonest convenience, if it may be, by this messenger." Evidently he intended to use the texts soon.

The letter is addressed to Winthrop as "deputy governor." Winthrop assumed this post on 25 May 1636 and held it until 17 May 1637, when he

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<sup>35</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 1:53-55.

was made governor again.<sup>36</sup> The letter must have been written roughly between these two dates.

These bounds have been recognized since 1863 and 1874, when the letter was published in the first editions of the Winthrop family papers and of Roger Williams's correspondence. In footnotes, the editors of both publications attempted to date the letter more precisely, based on a particular passage in the letter. In this passage, Williams said that "The Pequets hear of your preparations etc. and comfort themselves in this that a witch amongst them will sink the pinnaces by diving under water and making holes etc." Both editors proposed that Williams was referring to John Endicott's expedition to Block Island and Saybrook at the end of August 1636, and in 1874 editor John Russell Bartlett suggested that the letter "was probably written in August or September" of that year.<sup>37</sup> Subsequent editors have followed this line of reasoning. The editor of the *Winthrop Papers* dated this letter without comment at "circa September, 1636."<sup>38</sup> Bradford Swan dated it as from "the late summer or early autumn of 1636."<sup>39</sup> The editors of the *Correspondence of Roger Williams* gave a "conjectured date" of "before 25 August 1636" and explained their reasoning briefly.<sup>40</sup>

There are three reasons to question this dating. First, in August or September 1636, Providence had only been settled for a few weeks, and few if any families lived there yet. The letter seems to describe a more advanced settlement with more residents and, hence, more need for governance. Second, the best fit with the passages about the Pequot War, including the one quoted above, appears to be the state of hostilities between Massachusetts and the Pequots in the spring of 1637, shortly before the expedition that resulted in the massacre at Mystic. The Massachusetts Bay General Court session of 18 April 1637, "assembled for the special occasion of prosecuting the war against the Pecoits,"<sup>41</sup> seems a better candidate to be part of the "preparations" the Pequots had "hear[d] of" than the preparations for the expedition of late summer 1636. Third, as Bartlett conceded in his footnote,

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<sup>36</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:174, 194-95; Robert Charles Anderson, *The Winthrop Fleet: Massachusetts Bay Company Immigrants to New England 1629-1630* (Boston, 2012), 687.

<sup>37</sup> *Letters of Roger Williams, 1632-1682*, ed. John Russell Bartlett (Providence, 1874), 4; *Collections of the Mass. Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., 6(1863):188.

<sup>38</sup> *Winthrop Papers*, 6 vols. (Boston, 1925-92), 3:298.

<sup>39</sup> Swan, *The Rev. Thomas James* [note 23], 1-2.

<sup>40</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 55, note 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:192.

in July and August 1636 Winthrop described correspondence from Roger Williams in his diary but did not refer to any of the themes in this letter.<sup>42</sup>

Whether the letter was written in 1636 or 1637 will ultimately have no bearing on the dating of the Compact, as other evidence will set a later *terminus post quem*. But the letter forms an important part of the Compact's context. It illustrates the complex judgments involved in dating Williams's letters, and reminds us that editorially assigned dates for correspondence cannot be taken as givens.

### “YOUR DEBTOR JOSHUA”

A “Joshua,” last name not mentioned but living near Roger Williams, is mentioned in a letter by Williams to John Winthrop, which is dated only “20th of the 9th,” i.e., 20 November.<sup>43</sup> In the letter, Williams refers to Joshua as “your debtor” and makes it clear that Winthrop was acquainted with Joshua and was due money from him:

S[i]r I have often called upon your debtour Joshua, but his ill advisednes of refusing my service & spending of his time upon a howse & ground hath disabled him. Upon this occasion of your loving proffer of the halfe of the debt (8 *li.*) to my selfe I shall be urgent with him to seeke some course of payment of the whole to your selfe from whome in recompence of any paines &c. I desire no other satisfaction but your loving and wonted acceptation, yea although the busines had bene effected. S[i]r I had almost bene bold to say my thoughts what I would doe in this case were the runnaways mine, but I will not more at present.<sup>44</sup>

In 1874 John Russell Bartlett stated his opinion that this “Joshua” was “probably Joshua Verin,” an early settler of Providence.<sup>45</sup> In 1988 the editors of *The Correspondence of Roger Williams* repeated this identification.<sup>46</sup> It has also been followed by other authors.<sup>47</sup>

### JOSHUA VEREN WAS NOT “YOUR DEBTOR JOSHUA”

In fact, as will be shown here, “your debtor Joshua” was not Joshua Veren. The key piece of evidence against this identification is another letter from Williams to Winthrop dated “22 of 3rd mon.” [of an unstated year]. In it, Williams wrote about Joshua Veren's disenfranchisement, calling him “a

<sup>42</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:227, 230.

<sup>43</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 137–38.

<sup>44</sup> The crucial passage is given here in literal transcription based on the original (Winthrop Family Papers, “Microfilm Edition,” Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. N-262).

<sup>45</sup> *Letters of Roger Williams, 1632–1682* [note 37], 82.

<sup>46</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 139.

<sup>47</sup> For example, Emily Easton, *Roger Williams: Prophet and Pioneer* (Boston, 1930), 200.

young man, boisterous and desperate, Philip Verens son of Salem” who had been present at Providence for at least “this twelve month.”<sup>48</sup>

The vote of disenfranchisement itself is recorded in the Providence town records as having taken place on “the 21 day of the 3 month” [also of an unstated year]. One can confidently assume that Williams’s “22 of 3rd mon.” letter was written on the day following the vote, rather than a year and a day later. The next entry in the town records, dated the “10th of 4th month” and in Roger Williams’s hand, listed the names of seventeen Providence landowners and prefaced all names except Joshua Veren’s with the word “neighbour.”<sup>49</sup> Howard Chapin thought that the absence of the “neighbour” appellation reflects that Joshua Veren had left Providence by then<sup>50</sup>—a likely inference.

No year is given on the “22 of 3rd mon.” letter or the town record of Joshua Veren’s disenfranchisement. But several factors have convinced almost all other observers, including me, that the town record and the letter date from 21 and 22 May 1638, respectively—and that they could not date from 1637 or 1639.<sup>51</sup> These factors are:

1. Joshua Veren had been present in Providence for a “twelve month” at the time of the “22 of 3rd mon.” letter, so if the letter was written on 22 May 1637, Joshua Veren would have had to have come to Providence with Roger Williams’s initial party. But he is not mentioned in Roger Williams’s account of the initial settlement in 1636.<sup>52</sup> Veren himself, in a letter written in 1650 aimed at asserting his rights to land at Providence, did refer to “we six which came first.”<sup>53</sup> But he was probably thinking of himself as among the first six Providence land grantees—the six, including Veren, whose “former portions appropriated” are mentioned in the Grass & Meadow List<sup>54</sup>—and not as among those who accompanied Roger Williams in the spring of 1636, who, with Williams included, numbered only five.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 155–56.

<sup>49</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:4–5 [original, FHL film #7548756, image 8].

<sup>50</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:74, 75–76.

<sup>51</sup> An exception is that the town record is dated to 1637 by the editors of *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island* [note 33], 1:16.

<sup>52</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 750.

<sup>53</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 15:37; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:29.

<sup>54</sup> See *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:4–5.

<sup>55</sup> Understandably, some observers have taken Veren’s statement as evidence that he was among those who settled Providence in 1636, such as John Osborne Austin (*The Genealogical*

2. The Providence town record page with the entry about Joshua Veren's disenfranchisement is headed "Agreements & orders the second year of the plantation" [the italicized text was restored using the 1800 transcription]. Providence Plantation was founded in summer 1636, suggesting that the second year of the plantation stretched from summer 1637 to summer 1638.
3. In a letter to John Winthrop uncontroversially dated to the fall of 1638, Roger Williams described Joshua Veren as having already left Providence.<sup>56</sup> In December 1638, John Winthrop wrote about the case of Joshua Veren in his diary.<sup>57</sup>
4. Joshua Veren asked for a grant of land in Salem on 29 October 1638,<sup>58</sup> and a case involving his wife was at the Massachusetts General Court on 4 December 1638.<sup>59</sup>

Together these points show that Joshua Veren's disenfranchisement could not have taken place in 1637 or 1639. The "22 of 3rd mon." letter must have been written on 22 May 1638.

Reasoning further, in two stages one can logically exclude the possibility that the "your debtor Joshua" letter referred to Joshua Veren. In his letter of 22 May 1638, Williams called Joshua Veren "a young man . . . Philip Verens son of Salem." Williams would not have used this wording if John Winthrop already knew who Joshua Veren was.<sup>60</sup> John Winthrop was clearly unacquainted with Joshua Veren in May 1638, and was owed no debt by him.

Therefore, if the "your debtor Joshua" letter was written on 20 November 1637, its "debtor Joshua" could not have been Joshua Veren. And further, if the "your debtor Joshua" letter was written on 20 November 1638 or later, the "debtor Joshua" could not have been Joshua Veren, because he had left Providence and asked for a grant of land at Salem well before 20 November 1638. After he left Providence, Joshua Veren could not have been

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*Dictionary of Rhode Island* [Albany, 1887], 212), William B. Weeden (*Early Rhode Island: A Social History of the People* [New York, 910], 28), and the editors of the *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 2], 139, note 8). If Veren had come in 1636, either Williams's letter would have to have been written in 1637, or his use of the word "twelvemonth" would have to be very inaccurate. Neither of these alternatives is likely.

<sup>56</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 182–85.

<sup>57</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:340–41.

<sup>58</sup> *Town Records of Salem, Massachusetts*, 3 vols. (Salem 1868–1934), 1:73.

<sup>59</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:247.

<sup>60</sup> This applies regardless of whether one proposes that Winthrop knew of Veren because Veren was Winthrop's "debtor Joshua," or because Williams had already written to Winthrop about Veren before.

the man who Roger Williams had “often called upon” and who was spending “his time upon a house and ground.”

The conclusion is that the “your debtor Joshua” letter does not refer to Joshua Veren.<sup>61</sup> Winthrop’s “debtor Joshua” must have been another man. The name *Joshua* was fairly uncommon in New England at the time. Was there another Joshua in John Winthrop’s and Roger Williams’s lives? There was, and he was one of the signers of the Compact.

### JOSHUA WINSOR WAS THE “SERVANT OF YOURS, JOSHUA”

On 28 June 1636, John Winthrop took on Joshua Winsor as a servant at Boston. Joshua Winsor then still had “four years and nine months” of service “due to his master Will. Lomice of Redrife near London” (who is identified and discussed in more detail below). “Will[iam] Peirce” and “Benjamyn Gillham” were appointed to appraise the value of Winsor’s remaining service time, which they placed at £5.<sup>62</sup> The record does not show that Joshua Winsor traveled to New England with Pierce and Gillam, but easily allows this supposition. William Pierce was a mariner originally from

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<sup>61</sup> Joshua Veren later moved from Salem to Barbados. A sketch of him, by John B. Threlfall, was published in 1977 (“The Verin Family of Salem, Massachusetts,” *NEHGR* 131(1977):100–12, at 103–4). Threlfall was unaware that Joshua Veren witnessed the 1654 will of Thomas “Whitehed” of Barbados, which shows that his move to the island took place by that year (Joanne McRee Sanders, *Barbados Wills, 1639–1725*, 3 vols. [Baltimore, 1979–81], 1:383). A century ago, Howard Chapin asserted a maiden surname and parentage for Jane (—) Veren (“The Lands and Houses of the First Settlers in Providence,” *R.I. Historical Society Collections* 12[1919]:3, 6). Chapin’s assertion has not been followed by more recent observers (Threlfall [cited above], 103; Dean Crawford Smith, *The Ancestry of Eva Belle Kempton, 1878–1908*, ed. Melinde Lutz Sanborn, 4 vols. [Boston 1996–2008], 1:390; Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634–1635* [note 30], 7:174; Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Directory* [Boston, 2015], 281), and appears to lack documentary support, although it has not been investigated in detail. Recently, Margaret Manchester has written at length on Joshua Veren and his wife Jane, but her work does not add genealogical detail or critically review the facts of the first Providence settlers’ lives (Margaret Manchester, “A Family ‘Much Afflicted with Conscience’: The Verins and the Puritan Order,” *Journal of Family History* 42[2017]:211–35; see also Margaret Murányi Manchester, *Puritan Family and Community in the English Atlantic World: Being “Much Afflicted with Conscience”* [New York, 2019]).

<sup>62</sup> Original on reel 2 of the Massachusetts Historical Society microfilm edition of the “Winthrop Family Papers” [note 44]; transcription at *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 3:267–68. In the published Winthrop papers, “Redrife” was mistranscribed as “Redrise,” and in the index the name “Lomice” was mistakenly normalized to “Loomis.”



Ratcliffe, on the north bank of the Thames,<sup>63</sup> and Benjamin Gillam was a shipwright and merchant originally from nearby Wapping.<sup>64</sup>

Joshua Winsor was possibly the “Joshua” whose “suit” was mentioned on an undated bill for tailoring for the Winthrop household.<sup>65</sup>

In a letter bearing no date at all—referred to hereafter as the “servant of yours” letter—Roger Williams wrote to John Winthrop:

I understand that a servant of yours Joshua —is some trouble to your self, as also to others and consequently can not (if he desire to fear the Lord) but himself be troubled and grieved in his condition, though otherwise I know not where under heaven he could be better.

If it may seem good in your eyes (wanting a servant) I shall desire him (not simply from you) but for your peace and his. I shall desire your best and full satisfaction in payment, and what sum you pitch on, to accept it either from this bill, or if you better like from that debt of Mr. Ludlow. . . .<sup>66</sup>

The meaning of the dash after “Joshua” is uncertain. In the original, it runs [as typeset here] into the *i* of “is.” The dash looks almost like a flourish, but could be a kind of punctuation, or could signify that Williams could not remember Joshua’s last name.

This “servant of yours” letter includes several details which help date it. The letter opens with the statement that

Some while since I wrote to you a short narration of the issue of my voyage to Qunnih-ticut & Plymmouth. I desire only to know whether it came to hand. I have been carefully searching into that rumour of the Plymmouth man slain 4 years since.

This passage clearly refers to another undated letter to Winthrop, in which Williams reported on his “double journey to Qunnih-ticut and Plymouth” and mentioned that at Plymouth “they have requested me to inquire out a murder five years since committed upon a Plymouth man.”<sup>67</sup> This “double journey” letter also includes a report of the execution at Plymouth of Arthur Peach, Thomas Jackson, and Richard Stinnings for the murder of Penowyanquis, an Indian, whose wounds Roger Williams had tended to.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1633*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1995), 3:1472–78.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634–1635* [note 30], 3:60–65.

<sup>65</sup> *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 3:220.

<sup>66</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 189–90; original also examined from the microfilm ed. of the “Winthrop Family Papers” [note 44].

<sup>67</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 182–85.

<sup>68</sup> In the “double journey” letter, Williams did not give the murderers’ names, but the details are unmistakable. Williams had told Winthrop the whole story in a yet earlier letter, which has been dated at about 1 Aug. 1638 (*Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 2], 170–73). The three men, along with one other, had attacked their victim not far from Providence. Roger Williams and Thomas James had tried to save Penowyanquis’ life.

Plymouth Colony records show that the three men were hanged on 4 September 1638,<sup>69</sup> and descriptions in William Bradford's and John Winthrop's personal records confirm this date.<sup>70</sup>

Thus the "double journey" letter clearly dates from not long after 4 September 1638.<sup>71</sup> In turn, the "servant of yours" letter containing Williams's suggestion that Joshua Winsor leave Winthrop's service for Williams's must date from "some while" later. The editors of the Winthrop Papers and the *Correspondence of Roger Williams* assigned a date of "circa October, 1638" to the "servant of yours" letter.

In a postscript to the "servant of yours" letter, Williams tells Winthrop that "my wife . . . to Mrs. Wint[h]rop requests her acceptance of an handful of chestnuts, intending her (if Mrs. Winthrop love them) a bigger basket of them at the return of Gigles." As chestnuts ripen in August or September and have a short shelf life, this adds to the impression that the letter was written in the early fall, perhaps in late September rather than October. "Gigles" was William Jeggles, shipwright and mariner of Salem,<sup>72</sup> as shown in other letters of Roger Williams's.<sup>73</sup>

In any case, Roger Williams's suggestion to John Winthrop that Joshua Winsor come to Providence was clearly made after mid-September 1638 and no later than, say, the end of October.

Joshua Winsor did establish a home and family at Providence, with a wife whose name is lost. In 1655 Williams sent news to John Winthrop Junior of Joshua Winsor's wife's death in childbirth, referring to Joshua as "once a servant to your dear father."<sup>74</sup> In 1660 Roger Williams asked the younger John Winthrop to help mediate a land dispute involving Joshua Winsor "in which, I am apt to think, he hath suffered some wrong"; he again referred to Winsor "a former servant of your father's."<sup>75</sup> In 1677, when both men were aged, Joshua Winsor's son married Roger Williams's widowed daughter.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, 12 vols. in 10 (Boston 1855-61), 1:96-97.

<sup>70</sup> William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York, 1952), 299-301; *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 1:321-23.

<sup>71</sup> The editors of the *Winthrop Papers* date the "double journey" letter at between 10 and 21 September. The editors of the *Correspondence of Roger Williams* placed it "after 21 September 1638," the date of the Treaty of Hartford, at whose signing, they claim, Roger Williams was present (*Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 185, note 1). This question has not been explored in detail.

<sup>72</sup> Sidney Perley, *The History of Salem, Massachusetts*, 3 vols. (Salem, 1924-28), 1:390-91.

<sup>73</sup> For example, the letter published at *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 86-87.

<sup>74</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 425-29.

<sup>75</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 499-501.

<sup>76</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 63], 3:2009.

It is not clear why Joshua Winsor caused trouble in Winthrop's service. That he may have showed sympathy for Hutchinson and Wheelwright's side during the Antinomian Controversy comes easily to mind, but other explanations are equally possible.

### WAS JOSHUA WINSOR "YOUR DEBTOR JOSHUA"?

With Joshua Winsor established as the "servant of yours," it is time to return to the "your debtor Joshua" letter, repeated for convenience:

S[i]r I have often called upon your debtour Joshua, but his ill advisednes of refusing my service & spending of his time upon a howse & ground hath disabled him. Upon this occasion of your loving proffer of the halfe of the debt (8 *li.*) to my selfe I shall be urgent with him to seeke some course of payment of the whole to your selfe from whome in recompence of any paines &c. I desire no other satisfaction but your loving and wanted acceptation, yea although the busines had bene effected. S[i]r I had almost bene bold to say my thoughts what I would doe in this case were the runnaways mine, but I will not more at present.<sup>77</sup>

When this passage is read in the light of the "servant of yours" letter, a hypothesis emerges that can be summarized thus: "Your debtor Joshua" was Joshua Winsor. The "your debtor Joshua" letter was written after the "servant of yours" letter—after September or October 1638. Between the times of the two letters, John Winthrop had agreed to Roger Williams's suggestion that the troublesome Joshua Winsor would leave Winthrop's service at Boston and enter Williams's service at Providence. In the "servant of yours" letter, Williams had given Winthrop *carte blanche* to set a price on Winsor's remaining service. The "your debtor Joshua" letter shows that Winthrop valued it at £8. It also shows that Joshua Winsor had come to Providence but obstinately decided that he neither wanted to be in Williams's service nor return to Winthrop. Winthrop was owed £8 for Joshua Winsor's lost service, which he might have demanded from Williams alone. But, perhaps because Winthrop considered the responsibility for the muck-up shared, he suggested to Williams that Williams pay half. Williams considered, quite logically, that the £8 was really Joshua Winsor's debt to Winthrop and himself, and thus he tried to "seek some course" by which Winsor could pay the debt. Eventually, though, the matter was patched up, and by 1655 Roger Williams and Joshua Winsor were on good terms.

There is, however, one obvious problem with this interpretation: Winthrop had paid £5 for the remainder of Winsor's contract in 1636, but according to this hypothesis, he would have had to value it at £8 in his

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<sup>77</sup> See note 44.

subsequent dealings with Williams. This discrepancy, though, seems like it might have a reasonable explanation.

The last quoted sentence of the “your debtor Joshua” letter, where Williams mentions “runaways” apparently belonging to Winthrop, might be taken to refer to Joshua Winsor. However, an earlier part of the letter, not quoted above, discusses Reprieve, an Indian servant of Winthrop who had overstayed a leave that Winthrop had granted him to visit his native region. John Russell Bartlett suggested that Reprieve and his wife were the “runaways.”<sup>78</sup> This seems likely, especially since Williams, in another letter, also used the term “runaways” to refer to Indian servants who had escaped from Winthrop’s household.<sup>79</sup>

Alternatively, one could hypothesize that with the term “runaways,” Williams was referring to *both* Joshua Winsor (who was in some sense a runaway from Winthrop’s service) *and* the Indian servants. This interpretation seems less far-fetched after reading the closing of the “your debtor Joshua” letter, where Williams prays that “the Lord Jesus return us all (poor runaways) . . . to seek him that was nailed to the gallows.”

Regardless of who the “runaways” were, a reasonable case could be made that “your debtor Joshua” was Joshua Winsor. John Osborne Austin in fact reached the same conclusion in 1887.<sup>80</sup>

#### THE YEAR OF THE “YOUR DEBTOR JOSHUA” LETTER

Before letting the case rest, though, it is vital to resolve one last unknown, namely what year to assign to the “your debtor Joshua” letter, which is dated only “20th of 9th.” Solving for this variable leads to a surprising new conclusion.

The hypothesis that Joshua Winsor was “your debtor Joshua” depends on the assumption that the “your debtor Joshua” letter was written after the “servant of yours” letter. Since the “servant of yours” letter was written in September or October 1638, and the “your debtor Joshua” letter was written on “20th of 9th,” the most likely date for the “your debtor Joshua” letter would then be 20 November 1638. This dating would presuppose that Joshua Winsor moved to Providence swiftly after John Winthrop’s receipt

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<sup>78</sup> *Letters of Roger Williams* [note 45], 83.

<sup>79</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 168–69. The editors of the *Correspondence of Roger Williams* note that “the problem of runaways after the Pequot War was particularly acute” (134, note 11). Margaret Ellen Newell writes that Williams “fielded constant requests” to “track down runaways” of this type (*Brethren By Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* [Ithaca, 2015], 36–37).

<sup>80</sup> Austin, *Gen. Dict. of R.I.* [note 55], 434.

of the “servant of yours” letter. Alternatively, the “your debtor Joshua” letter could have been written a year later, on 20 November 1639.

Is there any other evidence in the “your debtor Joshua” letter that argues for a particular year assignment? There is. The letter gives several other handholds for dating:

1. Williams thanks Winthrop for “your propounding of my motion to the court, and the answer.”
2. He mentions that Miantonomo had recently been at Massachusetts Bay with Winthrop.
3. He says he had recently traveled to “Nayantaquit” (in search of Winthrop’s servant Reprieve) and to “Monhegan.”
4. He tells Winthrop that Miantonomo “promiseth to send forth word to all natives to cease from Prudence trees etc.”
5. He acknowledges receipt of “6 fathom of beads from Mr. Throcmorton, which though I will not return, yet I account them yours in my keeping.”

Taking these five clues one by one:

1. No entry has been found in the published records of the Massachusetts Bay General Court or the indexed sections of the Massachusetts Archives (the General Court’s loose papers) that mentions any motion originating with Roger Williams.
2. Miantonomo visited John Winthrop in Boston on 1 November 1637.<sup>81</sup> This fact is suggestive but not probative, as Miantonomo also visited Massachusetts Bay in October 1636,<sup>82</sup> November 1640,<sup>83</sup> October 1642,<sup>84</sup> and in 1643,<sup>85</sup> and nothing has been seen that rules out the possibility that he made visits in 1638 or 1639 which were not recorded in Winthrop’s diary.
3. No independent reports of Roger Williams’s travels to Nayantaquit and Monhegan are known.<sup>86</sup> But the “your debtor Joshua” letter was part of a series of three letters between Winthrop and Williams mentioning Reprieve. These are dated at most by month and day. Their chronology is not evident to the casual reader, but the *Winthrop Papers* and *Correspond-*

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<sup>81</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:291; letter by Williams to Winthrop dated “10th of the 9th” at *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 131–33.

<sup>82</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:236–37.

<sup>83</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 2:9, 18–19.

<sup>84</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 2:99.

<sup>85</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 2:145.

<sup>86</sup> Nayantaquit was “between Pawcatuck River and Point Judith” and Monhegan was an area near what is now New London (R. A. Douglas-Lithgow, *Dictionary of American-Indian Place and Proper Names in New England* [Salem, 1909], 257, 262).

ence of Roger Williams editors agree that they all date from October and November 1637.<sup>87</sup>

4. The Prudence Island comment almost certainly dates from after Williams and Winthrop's purchase of the island, and from before they sold it to John Throckmorton. Williams proposed the joint purchase to Winthrop in a letter dated the "28th of the 8th."<sup>88</sup> The deed of transfer was dated "the 10th of the 9th month & the first year the Pequets were subdued." The deed also indicates that Winthrop was "at present governor of the Massachusetts," and it was witnessed by John Throckmorton.<sup>89</sup> In Williams's letter dated "10th of the 9th," he told Winthrop that "I have bought and paid for the island."<sup>90</sup> Roger Williams sold his share of the island to Throckmorton by deed dated the "22th of 2d month in the 14th year of . . . King Charles" [22 April 1638], and witnessed by Richard Scott and Thomas Olney.<sup>91</sup> The "28th of the 8th" and "10th of the 9th" letters must, then, date from 1637, a conclusion with which Chapin concurs.<sup>92</sup> Assuming that Williams's comment about "Prudence trees" in the "your debtor Joshua" letter must have followed those letters and predated the sale of the island, the "your debtor Joshua" letter must have been written on 20 November 1637.
5. Williams's discussion of the beads brought from Winthrop by John Throckmorton plausibly relates to a passage in his "10th of the 9th" letter where he told Winthrop "the 10 fathom of beads and one coat you may please at leisure to deliver to Mr. Throckmorton, who will also be serviceable in the conveyance of swine this way."<sup>93</sup> The evidence cited in the previous point shows that the "10th of the 9th" letter was written in 1637.

Summing up, all of this other evidence in the "your debtor Joshua" letter points to its having been written on 20 November 1637. And indeed, this is how all editors of Roger Williams's letters have dated it hitherto. The Prudence Island comment makes the case for 1637 almost airtight.

But this conclusion leads to a conundrum. If the passage about "your debtor Joshua" was composed in 1637, then it cannot relate to Joshua

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<sup>87</sup> *Letters of Roger Williams* [note 45], 66–69, 78–81, 82–83; *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 3:500–2, 508–10, 511–12; *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 130, 131–33, 137–38.

<sup>88</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 130–31.

<sup>89</sup> *Rhode Island Land Evidences, Volume I, 1648–1696* (Providence, 1921), 162.

<sup>90</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 131–33.

<sup>91</sup> *Rhode Island Land Evidences* [note 89], 163.

<sup>92</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:47.

<sup>93</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 131–33.

Winsor, because a careful dating of the “servant of yours” letter, above, shows that Joshua Winsor was still in Boston in the fall of 1638.

This conundrum can be distilled into four hypotheses:

1. “Your debtor Joshua” was Joshua Winsor. The dating of the “servant of yours” letter at 1638 is incorrect; it was written in 1637. The “your debtor Joshua” letter was written a few weeks later, also in 1637.
2. “Your debtor Joshua” was Joshua Winsor. The dating of the “your debtor Joshua” letter at 1637 is incorrect; it was actually written in 1638 or 1639.
3. “Your debtor Joshua” was Joshua Veren. The “your debtor Joshua” letter was written in 1637.
4. “Your debtor Joshua” was neither Joshua Winsor nor Joshua Veren.

None of the first three alternatives are attractive. Hypothesis (1) seems impossible, since the “servant of yours” letter refers to the execution at Plymouth, whose dating in 1638 is secure. Hypothesis (2) is equally hard to believe, among other reasons because Williams owned Prudence Island on 20 November 1637, but had sold it long before 20 November 1638. Hypothesis (3) looks no better than it did before. It is extremely difficult to believe that Roger Williams would have introduced Joshua Veren to John Winthrop as “Philip Verins son of Salem” in May 1638 had he already had correspondence with Winthrop about debts from Joshua Veren to John Winthrop a few months before. And what is known of Joshua Veren squares poorly with what is known of Winthrop’s “debtor Joshua.”

All that is left now is the unexpected hypothesis that “your debtor Joshua” was neither Joshua Veren nor Joshua Winsor.

#### “YOUR DEBTOR JOSHUA” WAS A NATIVE AMERICAN

The largest part of the “your debtor Joshua” letter concerns Winthrop’s servant Reprieve. According to Roger Williams’s “10th of the 9th” letter, “at Nayantaquit Juanemo said he [Reprieve] was a spy from Mr. Governor and threatened to kill him” and “denied that there was Pequets saying (though Reprive saw many himself) that they were all gone to Monahigan-ick.” Thereafter, Reprieve “came back in fear of his life to Wepiteam-mock,” who helped him get to Block Island. Williams also reported that Reprieve said Winthrop “gave him leave for 28 days” of travel.<sup>94</sup> Margaret Ellen Newell characterized the purpose of Reprieve’s journey as “gathering

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<sup>94</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 131–33.

intelligence on Pequot survivors,”<sup>95</sup> and although Williams’s letter does not use such terms, Newell’s inference seems reasonable.

This detail about Reprieve sounds irrelevant to the identity of “Joshua” until one considers the following Biblical text from the Book of Numbers (*emphasis added*):

These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun *Jehoshua*. And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes. So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. . . . And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.<sup>96</sup>

Roger Williams enjoyed using Biblical allusions and metaphor in his letters, and obviously appreciated the chance to correspond with an intellectual equal like John Winthrop. So the idea that Williams framed Reprieve’s journey using the Biblical story of Joshua, or Jehoshua, is not surprising at all. This hypothesis also explains why Williams said that Reprieve [i.e., Joshua] was “spending his *time* upon a house and ground” — a formulation which felt slightly odd when applied to Joshua Winsor. This phrasing makes more sense for Reprieve, because Winthrop had set a time limit on the length of Reprieve’s trip.<sup>97</sup>

This hypothesis also eliminates the need to explain the discrepancy between the value to John Winthrop of Joshua Winsor’s remaining service in 1636 and the value to Winthrop and Williams of “Joshua’s” service in 1637. Exactly how Winthrop calculated the monetary debt owed him by Reprieve, a captured Indian, is not completely clear, but one may imagine that he reckoned it in a similar way to that of other servants. Perhaps Winthrop was effectively offering Williams, as debt collector, a commission that covered Williams’s expenses. Finally, this hypothesis also eliminates the oddity of how Roger Williams switched subjects from “Joshua” to “runaways” in mid-paragraph. If Joshua was the runaway, there was no switch.

So the fourth hypothesis about “your debtor Joshua” is the one that explains the facts and fits with the chronology with the least difficulty. The

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<sup>95</sup> Newell, *Brethren By Nature* [note 79], 101.

<sup>96</sup> *Holy Bible*, Authorized [King James] ed. (1611), Numbers 13:16–25.

<sup>97</sup> That Reprieve was spending “time on a house and ground” may also imply that he was responsible for land and buildings that he wished to improve and planned to come back to. There is no information on where Reprieve was living in the fall of 1637. Williams says he “often called upon your debtor Joshua,” so it cannot have been too far from Providence.



“your debtor Joshua” letter was written in 1637, and the “Joshua” that it mentions was not Joshua Veren, not Compact signer Joshua Winsor, and not even named Joshua. He was a Native American known to Williams and Winthrop as Reprive. The identity of “your debtor Joshua” therefore loses any relevance to the dating of the Providence Compact, though examination of the Joshua letters has brought helpful clarity to this period in the lives of the candidate Joshuas.

In the second half of this article, it will be seen that the additional relevant documents, as well as external information on the signers, do permit a definite narrowing of the date of the Compact.

*(to be continued)*

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## FEMALE SERVANTS, LIBERTINES, AND DIRE INFLUENCES

*Contributed by David L. Greene, FASG†*

TEMPTATIONS OF OUR FEMALE SERVANTS. The temptations to which female servants are exposed, especially in cities and large towns, are very numerous. The thief, the pedlar, the fortune-teller, and the libertine, alike reckon upon them as their prey. Nor is their danger exclusively from without. The love of dress—the lax state of morals which exists among the great majority of female domestics, and the unrestrained and unrestricted communication which commonly occurs with their fellow-servants of the opposite sex, with the irregular and dissipated habits of many of their employers—are temptations great and powerful, before which many female servants fall, and make shipwreck of character and of a good conscience. From inquiries at our various penitentiaries, it has been ascertained that three-fourths of their inmates have been domestic servants. When the position of female servants in our household is regarded, how alarming do these considerations become! How vast is the amount of property entrusted to their care! To how great an extent is the safety, the health, and the character of a family in their power! What influence do they often acquire over an excellent master! What control do they frequently exert over an amiable mistress! How great is the authority in connexion with the children and younger branches of the family! These are constantly witnessing their example, listening to their conversation, and receiving their instruction; consequently, their power over them is such as to operate, either as an invaluable blessing, or as an evil of the direst kind.<sup>1</sup>

*Cleveland, Georgia. Deceased 20 November 2020.*

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<sup>1</sup> “The Gleaner,” *Banner of the Cross* 5(18 March 1843):87. The *Banner of the Cross* was an ante-bellum weekly published in Philadelphia for the Episcopal dioceses of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Maryland.

# THE DATING OF THE PROVIDENCE CIVIL COMPACT

*By Ian Watson*

*(concluded from p. 189)*

## THOMAS JAMES'S MOVEMENTS

Since the Compact text is in the handwriting of Thomas James, and two of the first signers' names were written in James's hand as well, at least the first signatures must date from the time when Thomas James was living in Providence.

Rev. Thomas James was a Cambridge-educated minister who by 11 March 1635/6 had run into difficulties with his congregation at Charlestown in Massachusetts Bay.<sup>98</sup> On 10 November 1637, Roger Williams referred to Thomas James as still in Charlestown and, as he guessed, "inclining" to come to Providence.<sup>99</sup> Once James came to Providence, he was evidently given the task of keeping the town records. The surviving page of Providence town records from "the second year of the plantation" is in his hand; the first entry on this page is undated, and the second is dated 28 February [1637/8].<sup>100</sup> So his move to Providence probably took place before 28 February 1637/8 (the qualification "probably" here allows for the technical possibility that the existing town record entry is his later copy of an entry that someone else had made).

On "3 mon 9 die" of an unstated year, Thomas James added a memorandum to the bottom of the so-called "Town Evidence," a deed in Roger Williams's hand signed by Canonicus and Miantonomo confirming their conveyance of Providence lands to Williams. This deed was dated 24 March 1637/8, so James's annotation was made probably on 9 May 1638, or possibly on 9 May 1639.<sup>101</sup> An undated letter from Roger Williams, possibly from

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<sup>98</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:217; Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 63], 3:1072–76.

<sup>99</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 131–33; see also p. 147.

<sup>100</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:3 [orig.: FHL film #7548756, image 8].

<sup>101</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:61–69; Swan, *The Rev. Thomas James* [note 23], 6–9; Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence* [note 11], 27; 17th-century copy at *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 4:70–71; original ms. at RIHS MSS 808, folder 04. The deed can be viewed at the Carter Roger Williams Initiative website, [findingrogerwilliams.com/maps/original\\_deed.html](http://findingrogerwilliams.com/maps/original_deed.html).

early May 1638, mentions “Mr. James” and gives the impression that James was assisting Williams with the governance of the Providence settlement.<sup>102</sup>

On 10 June 1638, “neighbor James” was one of the later group whose “portions of grass & meadow” in Providence were confirmed.<sup>103</sup> In July or August 1638, according to Roger Williams, “Mr. James” helped tend to the mortal wound of Penowyanquis, for whose killing three men were executed at Plymouth on 4 September.<sup>104</sup> On 8 October 1638, Thomas James’s name appeared on the Meadow Agreement and the Memorandum (discussed further below).

James added a few lines to what can be called the Williams–James Account (see below), a single-page document whose initial sections are in Roger Williams’s hand. His last notation on this account is dated 13 May 1639. Rather than a debit or credit, it is an entry recording an agreement “by the consent of the town that by the last of the month aforesaid the rams should be sen[t] away to the island.”

Thomas James was evidently not satisfied with living in Providence. In an undated letter to John Winthrop, he wrote: “I humbly beg at your feet . . . if a place called Seaconke be in your patent (which I can not say) but only hear by report I may have liberty . . . to have your favorable allowance and sit under your gracious protection.”<sup>105</sup> It seems that he hoped to stay in the vicinity but outside Providence’s jurisdiction. Another location worked out for him: New Haven. He received land there on 3 November 1639.<sup>106</sup> On 9 December 1639, William Coddington, writing from Aquidneck to John Winthrop, noted that “Mr. James” had “returned lately from Quinepage [New Haven].”<sup>107</sup> James was still called “of Providence” when he sold all his land there to William Field on 20 March 1639/40. Among the provisions for payment were that William Field was to pay James £30 “at the dwelling house of the said Thomas James in Quinnepiuck [New Haven] the first day

<sup>102</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 153–54.

<sup>103</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:4. This “Grass and Meadow List” is discussed further below; its date is given mistakenly as 10 June 1637 in the Thomas James sketch at Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 63], 1073.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Roger Williams, *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 170–73; also, Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* [note 70], 299–301; *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth* [note 69], 1:96–97; and see above in this article, 181 and note 68.

<sup>105</sup> *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 4:90. A facsimile is published in Swan, *The Rev. Thomas James* [note 23].

<sup>106</sup> *Records of the Colony . . . of New Haven, [1638–1664]*, ed. Charles J. Hoadly, 2 vols. (Hartford, 1857–58), 1:24.

<sup>107</sup> *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 4:160–61.

of the 4th month called June next ensuing in the year 1640.”<sup>108</sup> On 11 June 1640, Thomas James became a freeman of New Haven.<sup>109</sup>

The conclusion is that Thomas James was in Charlestown on 10 November 1637, he was very probably in Providence by 28 February 1637/8, and he was definitely in Providence by 10 June 1638. He was still in Providence on 13 May 1639, but traveled to New Haven at some point before 3 November 1639, then returned to Providence, staying at least until 20 March 1639/40, before resettling at New Haven by 11 June 1640. From these dates it can be concluded that the initial signatures on the Compact could not have been made before 10 November 1637 or after 11 June 1640, and also that they were probably made before fall 1639, when Thomas James was preparing to depart from Providence.

### THE SECOND “ORIGINAL” PAGE OF THE PROVIDENCE TOWN RECORDS

An interesting problem of textual interpretation besets attempts at fixing the time period during which Thomas James kept the Providence town records. His entries appear on two pages, the second and third original pages of the town record book.<sup>110</sup> On the third original page, headed “the second year of the plantation,” the entries are dated 28 February, 21 May, and 10 June, with the last entry in Roger Williams’s hand. It is certain, as explained above in the discussion of Joshua Veren, that these third-page entries record decisions made from 28 February 1637/8 to 10 June 1638. The *second* original page contains entries dated 16 June, 13 August, and 3 December, all in Thomas James’s hand. These second-page entries are less colorful (they mostly concern incentives for town meeting attendance) and most scholars have passed over them quickly. The only name among them is that of “Thomas O[l]n[e]y,” who was appointed Providence treasurer, perhaps on 16 June.

Scholars as far back as William Staples in 1843<sup>111</sup> understandably assumed that the second-page entries precede the third-page entries chronologically, and thus that the second page dates from 1637, or even 1636. But Howard Chapin saw that 1636 was too early an assignment, and suspected that 1637

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<sup>108</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:109; original, with Thomas James’s original signature, RIHS MSS 808, Folder 06; viewable at [rihs.org/collection\\_item/deed-thomas-james-to-william-field-1639-witnessed-by-roger-williams-in-his-hand](http://rihs.org/collection_item/deed-thomas-james-to-william-field-1639-witnessed-by-roger-williams-in-his-hand).

<sup>109</sup> *Records of the Colony . . . of New Haven* [note 106], 9, 35

<sup>110</sup> FHL film #7548756, images 7–8, printed in *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:2–5.

<sup>111</sup> Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence* [note 11], 21–22.

was also probably too early, given Olney's presence at Salem as late as 12 March 1637/8.<sup>112</sup>

Bradford Swan's additional recognition that the second- and third-page entries are mostly in Thomas James's hand is consistent with Chapin's suspicions and allows a secure dating of the second page. Since Thomas James could not have reached Providence before 10 November 1637, the second page cannot date from 1637. It must date from 1638, and the order of the second and third pages must have been reversed at some point before the first book was transcribed in 1800. In turn, this conclusion suggests that the binding of the book that existed in 1800 was not original, and that the sheet with the Compact may not originally have formed the first page of the book. Also, 1638 must have been the year of Thomas Olney's appointment as Providence treasurer.

### THE PAYMENTS LIST

The "Payments List"<sup>113</sup> is a record of the names of eleven men and women who, it seems, owed money for the land they had been allotted in Providence. The list is as follows (with normalized text, and restored text lost from the right-hand margin in brackets):

it is agreed that Willia[m] Carpenter Benidict A[rnold]  
Francis Weekes Willia[m] Renolds Thomas Angel  
Mrs. Daniell Mary Sweete should pay in consi[der-]  
ation of ground at present granted unto them 2s [apiece]  
Also Edward Cope 5s.

Item. Mr. Cole Francis Weston Rich. Waterma[n]  
should pay for each person — — — — jv s.  
i.e. for damage in case they do not improv[e]  
their ground at present granted to them vid. by  
preparing to fence to plant to build etc.

The list itself bears no date, but it is part of the first entry on the third original page of the first Providence town record book, which is headed "Agreements & orders the second year of the plantation," in Thomas James's handwriting. As discussed above, the subsequent entries on the page are dated 28 February [1637/8], 21 May [1638], and 10 June [1638]. The Payments List therefore must have been created sometime after summer 1637 (the beginning of the "second year"), and very probably before 28 Feb-

<sup>112</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:41; on Olney see *Town Records of Salem* [note 58], 1:103; *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:223.

<sup>113</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:3-5; original, FHL film #7548756, image 8; previous analysis by Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:42-44.

ruary 1637/8 (the date of the next entry on the page). As Mary Sweet's husband, John Sweet, was still living on 6 June 1637,<sup>114</sup> one could alternatively give that date as the earlier bound for the Payments List.

A closer analysis of the names on the Payments List supports this dating. The list is divided into two groups separated by a space (as shown above). With the three people in Group 2 (as it is convenient to call it), the author of the record seems to have some doubt as to whether they planned to improve their land in Providence. The commitment to the settlement by the people in Group 1 seems more certain.

Indeed, the author's doubt about the people in Group 2 is consistent with the fact that Cole, Weston, and Waterman were granted land in Salem in December 1637,<sup>115</sup> and Weston and Waterman were still there on 12 March 1637/8.<sup>116</sup> Of the names in Group 1, there is independent evidence that Carpenter, Arnold, and Weekes were already in Providence by 1637,<sup>117</sup> and no known evidence against the presumption that Renolds, Angell, and Cope were there then, too. Alice (Daniel) (Beggary) Greene and Mary (—) (Sweet) Holliman are more complicated cases, which cannot be explored here. They were granted land at Salem in December 1637, as "Mrs. Daniell" and "widow Sweet."<sup>118</sup>

Even if the Payments List was created close to the later bound of 28 February 1637/8, it can be presumed that the people named in it had come to New England by 1 January 1637/8, as voyages from England to New England normally took place in late spring and early summer.<sup>119</sup> One can therefore take the Payments List as evidence to support an arrival year in New England of no later than 1637 for both Groups 1 and Group 2. This is relevant for Angell, Renolds, and Cope, for each of whom this Payments List is the earliest solid evidence of presence in New England.

### THE WILLIAMS-JAMES ACCOUNT

The undated loose leaf of paper here called the "Williams-James Account" also bears on the arrival dates of some of the Compact signers.

<sup>114</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:198.

<sup>115</sup> *Town Records of Salem* [note 58], 1:101-4.

<sup>116</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:223.

<sup>117</sup> Summarized at Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:43.

<sup>118</sup> *Town Records of Salem* [note 58], 1:104; Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 36], 105-7; Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 63], 3:1789-90.

<sup>119</sup> Seasonal sailings and arrival patterns are discussed in the introductions to the *Great Migration* volumes, for example at Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 7:xviii, xlix; also Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation* (Cambridge, 1991), 66, 225.

Mostly it contains accounting records, but one entry is a town order. Parts of it are in Roger Williams's hand and other parts are in Thomas James's hand. The text confirms these handwriting identifications: one of the lines written by Williams begins "R[eeive]d by me Roger Williams of John Greene," while James refers to 46s. "received from Mr. Throgmorton for the use of the towns p[er] me Tho[mas] James."<sup>120</sup>

When the Williams–James Account was first published in 1893, the Providence record commissioners said they found it in "Rhode Island Manuscripts, Vol. I, 1635–1687" at the Rhode Island Historical Society.<sup>121</sup> They considered that the account was "once a part of the First Book" of Providence records, particularly because of the "reference to a town order" transcribed in it by Thomas James.<sup>122</sup> (The commissioners saw that the handwriting of this reference was identical with the handwriting on the second and third original pages of the town book, but they did not know that Thomas James was the scribe.) It seems doubtful, however, that the Williams–James Account was originally part of the first book of town records. Among other reasons, the account is written on paper with a height-to-width ratio of about 1.7 to 1, while the paper in the record book has a very different height-to-width ratio of about 2.7 to 1.

The section of the document most relevant to the dating of the Compact is an account in Roger Williams's hand noting money "p[ai]d to Ed. Cope, Bened. Arnold & Geo. Riccards" and also mentioning "Joshua Winsor" and "Wm. Wigghingten." The whole document contains only two dates. One date forms the top line, and is in Roger Williams's handwriting: "the Last of 10th mon. [blotted] yeare so called 1635." Because Roger Williams was still in Salem on 31 December 1635, the subsequent lines appear to refer to transactions in Providence, and the year "1635" looks like it could have been added later by someone trying to restore the original, Chapin considered the year to be spurious.<sup>123</sup> Further down, heading one of the entries added by Thomas James, appears the year "1639" and the words "third

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<sup>120</sup> It is *possible* that a couple of lines on this leaf are in yet a third hand, but that does not affect discussions of date.

<sup>121</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 2:xi–xii, 154. Today, the account is marked with a red stamp labeling it as "Providence Town Papers, no. 1." It is kept under the RIHS call number MSS 808, Folder 02, and is viewable at [rihs.org/collection\\_item/received-by-me-roger-williams-of-john-green-31-december-1635](http://rihs.org/collection_item/received-by-me-roger-williams-of-john-green-31-december-1635). It has been published in *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 2:155, also at 15:1, and (with a tentative analysis) in Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:92–94.

<sup>122</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 2:xi–xii, 154.

<sup>123</sup> Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:94.

month 13 die,” which seem to belong together and thus to refer to 13 May 1639.

The names of Cope, Arnold, Rickards, Winsor, and Wickenden are found below the 1635 date and above the 1639 date. Since the document is an account, there is little guarantee that all the names were added at the same time. The only real conclusion that the document permits, with fair but not full certainty, is that the Compact signers’ names were added to the account before Thomas James added his entries, thus before 13 May 1639. It can be concluded that these five Compact signers came to Providence no later than 13 May 1639.

### THE MEADOW AGREEMENT, THE MEMORANDUM, AND THE GRASS & MEADOW LIST

On 8 October 1638, “several inhabitants of the town of Providence” made an “agreement” about the division of “the meadow ground at Patuxett,” which was to be “impropriated unto those 13 persons being now incorporated together in our town of Providence.” These men were “Ezekiell Holliman, Frances Weston, Richard Waterman, Thomas Olney, Robert Coles, William Carpenter, William Harris, John Throckmorton, Roger Williams, John Greene, Thomas James, William Arnold, Stuckley Westcott.”<sup>124</sup> This document may be called the “Meadow Agreement.” (It survives only in the form of a copy made in 1650.)

On the same day, almost exactly in reverse order, the names of the same thirteen men were included on a “memorandum” confirming that Roger Williams sold to these men the rights to the lands he had purchased from the Indian sachems Canonicus and Miantonomo. This document also survives only in copies, one of which reduces the names to their initials.<sup>125</sup> This document will be called simply the “Memorandum,” although it has also gone under the name “Initial Deed.”

Four months earlier, on 10 June 1638, the surnames of almost the same set of men (omitting Westcott and adding Veren) were entered in the first

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<sup>124</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 15:31; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:78–79; the original is RIHS, MSS 808, “Providence Town Papers,” no. 03.

<sup>125</sup> Copy made in 1666 by Roger Williams held as “Memorandum of original deed for Providence,” Rhode Island Department of State, accessible at [sosri.access.preservica.com](http://sosri.access.preservica.com), copied at [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prov-deed-1666-c-00232\\_4607fab275.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prov-deed-1666-c-00232_4607fab275.jpg); registered copy of 1666 copy at *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 3:90–91; *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 15:86, transcribing Providence Town Paper no. 120, which is a copy with the names given as initials only, made by John Sanford in 1661; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:76–78; *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island* [note 33], 1:19–24.



Providence record book in Roger Williams's hand confirming "portions of grass & meadow" laid out to them.<sup>126</sup> This entry can be called the "Grass & Meadow List."

It is striking that the fourteen names on these three documents are completely disjunct from the thirteen names on the Compact. Benedict Arnold signed the Compact, but his father, William Arnold, is listed on the three documents. Thomas Harris signed the Compact, but his brother William Harris (an earlier arrival) is listed on the three documents. The complete lack of overlap implies some kind of complementarity between the group whose names are on the Meadow Agreement, Memorandum, and Grass & Meadow List on the one hand, and the group who signed the Compact on the other. Scholars of early Providence have often used the terms "first comers" and "second comers" to contrast the two groups.<sup>127</sup> Roger Williams, recalling the settlement's early years in 1677, opposed the "first twelve" and the "after comers."<sup>128</sup>

But the difference between "first comers" and "second comers" was not a simple matter of arrival date. By June 1638, Francis Weekes had been in Providence for more than two years, and Benedict Arnold for as long as his father. They signed the Compact, but are not named on the three "first-comer" lists. William Renolds, Edward Cope, and Thomas Angell had been in Providence for at least a few months. They also signed the Compact, but are not on the "first-comer" lists. There must have been other reasons, partially correlated with arrival date but ultimately involving age, family status, and social status, for why some Providence inhabitants signed the Compact while others appeared on the "first-comer" lists.

A logical hypothesis—floated as early as 1836<sup>129</sup>—runs something like this. At some point prior to 8 October 1638, a document, now lost, may have been created to record the incorporation of the town of Providence. On it were the names of (more or less) the fourteen men of the three "first-comer" documents as townsmen. This incorporation document probably used a version of the text "concerning our selves, the masters of families" that Roger Williams had asked John Winthrop to comment on in 1636 or 1637 (see discussion above).

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<sup>126</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:4-5; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:75-76; original, FHL film #7548756, image 8.

<sup>127</sup> This exact pair of terms dates back at least as far as 1836, when it was used by Pitman in *A Discourse Delivered at Providence* [note 10], 25, 65.

<sup>128</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 752.

<sup>129</sup> Pitman, *A Discourse Delivered at Providence* [note 10], 25. Chapin's version of this hypothesis appears in his *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:44-46.

Williams also had a text ready for the other group in his two-pronged strategy, namely for those “young men” who were not yet “masters of families” and for “any who shall hereafter desire to plant with us.” He had received Winthrop’s comments on that text at the same time. It evolved into the Compact.

The men listed on the three first-comer documents (or in a couple cases, their widows or heirs) were heads of households at the time of incorporation and had each paid for a share of the land in Providence that Roger Williams had secured from Canonicus and Miantonomo, and for full proprietary rights in the town.

In contrast, the men who signed the Compact were, at the time of incorporation, either living in Providence but young and single, or not yet present in Providence. The Compact is not the founding covenant of Providence’s first inhabitants—that record is lost (though Roger Williams’s draft of it survives). Rather, the Compact is a statement by young men and newcomers willing to submit to the authority of the established townsmen. Soon after, though, these newcomers received land grants of their own.

#### THE LIST OF HOME LOTS

In 1660 “a revised list of lands and meadows, as they were originally lotted, from the beginning of the Plantation of Providence,” was compiled with the goal of “avoiding (so much as may be) future contention.” A geographical peculiarity of the first home lots in Providence is that narrow lots running east-west were laid out along a single north-south axis. The first lots were near the town spring, and subsequent lots were laid out to the north and south of the initial ones. In 1886, using the 1660 list as well as land transfer records, Charles Wyman Hopkins created and published a fine map of these home lots, along with a transcription of the list and the beginnings of an analysis of it.<sup>130</sup> In 1919 Howard Chapin published a thorough analysis of the position of these lots. Although there is no contemporary record of the lots’ distribution, Chapin plausibly reconstructed the rough sequence of allotments and some of the procedures used.<sup>131</sup> In 1957 John Hutchins Cady drew an improved version of Hopkins’s 1886 map.<sup>132</sup>

Looking at Hopkins and Cady’s maps and focusing on the names from the “first-comer” lists, it is easy to see that they cluster close to the town spring and that their holders must have been allotted land relatively early.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Wyman Hopkins, *The Home Lots of the Early Settlers of the Providence Plantations* (Providence, 1886), map between pp. 20 and 21, 19–55 (analysis), 59–70 (list).

<sup>131</sup> Chapin, “The Lands and Houses” [note 61], *RIHS Coll.* 12(1919):1–9.

<sup>132</sup> Cady, *Civic and Architectural Development of Providence* [note 34], 10.

Looking then at the Compact signers, the lots given to the first group (the six men who signed in the same ink that Thomas James used) cluster just to the south of the first-comer lots. The lots given to the second group (the seven men who signed in gray ink) are further out, both to the north and the south, with two exceptions: Thomas Angell and Edward Cope.

Thus, the lots granted to the three groups form fairly distinct clusters. The “first comers” were central, the first group of Compact signers further south, and the second group of Compact signers yet further out in both directions. Clearly, the original heads of families (whose names appear on the first-comer lists) were allotted land first, the first group of Compact signers somewhat later, and the second group of Compact signers (mostly, at least) yet later. This in turn reaffirms that there was a genuine difference between the Compact signers and the names on the first-comer lists, and that the division of the Compact signers into two groups based on ink color correlates with some actual fact about the way the town was settled.

Chapin proposed a somewhat more exact sequence of lot assignments. Some of his proposals, made a century ago, seem speculative and would probably benefit from review. One element of precision to note here concerns Joshua Winsor’s lot, since it is known that he was still in Boston in September 1638. Winsor was part of the second group of Compact signers, but his lot was just south of that of John Field, who was in the first group. Thomas Harris, also a member of the second group, received the next lot south beyond Winsor’s. This sequence could reflect that when Joshua Winsor arrived at Providence—or perhaps when he exited Roger Williams’s service, if he ever did take on that role—the first group of Compact settlers had already been granted land.

#### NEW DISCOVERIES ABOUT ORIGINS OF THE SIGNERS

For each of the Compact signers, the current state of knowledge about their English origin and immigration has been reviewed. In six cases, important new information is available that has not yet been incorporated into accessible standard genealogical literature. These cases are John Field, John Warner, George Rickards, Edward Cope, Joshua Winsor, and William Wickenden. Here is information on these Compact signers not found in the sources cited in their entries in the *Great Migration Directory*. This is not the product of full-scale research; the clues and starting points noted here may inspire further work.

**JOHN FIELD:** In 1897 Edward Field reported that during conservation work on the Providence town records, a pasted-in page was removed, and on its

back side a partial draft of a document was discovered in the handwriting of Providence town clerk Thomas Olney, showing that John Field was the brother of “James Field of St. Albans in Hartfordshire” who had left him £100 “& if he were dead then the said moneys to be divided amongst his children.”<sup>133</sup> A century ago, Louise Lewis Lovell found the will of James Field, lath vender of St. Albans, obviously brother of John of Providence.<sup>134</sup> This James Field married Susan How at St. Albans Abbey on 24 January 1640/1; his sister Anne Field married John Peirce there on 15 April 1632.<sup>135</sup> There are further clues in the will which might lead to the identification of the parents of the three siblings.

The name of John Field’s wife is never mentioned in Providence records. A John Field married Mary Weeden at Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (five miles from St. Albans), on 12 December 1636. He does not seem to be the father of children baptized in that parish (a different John Field, tailor, married Joan Penney at Hemel Hempstead on 4 September 1638, and did have children baptized). That James Weeden from Chesham, Buckinghamshire—fourteen miles from St. Albans—sailed to New England with Chad Browne on the *Martin* in 1638<sup>136</sup> makes this Field-Weeden marriage more intriguing. The surname *Field*, however, is very common, and none of John Field’s known children or grandchildren was named Mary.<sup>137</sup>

This compelling evidence of a Hertfordshire origin contradicts the origin at Thurnscoe, Yorkshire, suggested for John and William Field by Frederick Clifton Pierce in his 1901 *Field Genealogy*.<sup>138</sup>

JOHN WARNER: It has long been well known that John Warner married Priscilla Holliman, daughter of Ezekiel Holliman.<sup>139</sup> But their marriage rec-

<sup>133</sup> “Notes and Queries” [Field], NEHGR 51(1897):359; G. A. Moriarty, “Additions and Corrections to Austin’s *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*,” TAG 20(1943):181.

<sup>134</sup> Louise Lewis Lovell, *Israel Angell: Colonel of the 2nd Rhode Island Regiment* (New York 1921), 200. Not initially aware of any published follow-up on the Providence record book clue, I searched for and found the 1684 will of James Field, lath vender of St. Albans (Prerogative Court of Canterbury [PCC] wills, 2 Lloyd [1685], f. 23r, TNA PROB 11/382/9). He also left an inventory [TNA PROB 4/5159] which has not been digitized. Details in it match Olney’s note. An internet search of the rare term “lath vender” then led to Lovell’s 1921 book.

<sup>135</sup> *The Parish Registers of St. Albans Abbey, 1558–1689*, transcribed by William Brigg (Harpenden, 1897), 149, 152.

<sup>136</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration Directory* [note 61], and same sources as for Chad Browne arrival cited later.

<sup>137</sup> Austin, *Gen. Dict. of R.I.* [note 55], 75–76.

<sup>138</sup> Frederick Clifton Pierce, *Field Genealogy* (Chicago 1901), 101. The *Field* surname project at FamilyTreeDNA includes results for (self-reported) descendants of John but not descendants of William.

ord at St. Albans Abbey on 6 June 1637 has been noted apparently only on some internet genealogy sites, and not connected in print to John of Providence, though the record itself has long been in print.<sup>140</sup> Priscilla was baptized at Wigginton, Hertfordshire, 18 June 1618.<sup>141</sup> The Warners at St. Albans were not numerous, and it is hard to argue against the possibility that the baptism of “[J]ohn the son of John Warner” at St. Albans Abbey on 6 January 1638/9<sup>142</sup> refers to a son of this couple. This in turn raises two possibilities: that John Warner came to New England alone no earlier than April 1638, sending for his wife Priscilla later; or that John and Priscilla came together, but after 6 January 1638/9. A possible baptismal record for this John Warner is that of John who was baptized at St. Albans Abbey, 20 August 1615, son of Timothy Warner.<sup>143</sup> Timothy Warner, innholder of St. Michael, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, in his will dated 21 October 1625 and proved 17 May 1627, named his son John and set aside money for John’s education.<sup>144</sup> Timothy, who left a considerable estate, signed his will with his mark. Only circumstantial evidence supports this equation, but the two Johns are a good fit for each other.

John and Priscilla (Holliman) Warner of Providence returned to England in 1652 after a stormy career in New England.<sup>145</sup> They may possibly be the Priscilla Warner who witnessed a marriage at St. Albans in 1658,<sup>146</sup> and the John Warner who was buried at St. Michael, St. Albans, on 16 March 1661/2.<sup>147</sup>

**GEORGE RICKARDS:** George Rickards is the only one of the thirteen Compact signers who did not sign the Providence Combination of 27 July 1640,<sup>148</sup> which suggests he had left town by that date. Later records of his property in Providence confirm that he had received land in the town, and even refer to him as “formerly inhabiting in this town about the space of twenty years,” but give little evidence that he ever actually spent time there. Land

<sup>139</sup> Austin, *Gen. Dict. of R.I.* [note 55], 102, 408.

<sup>140</sup> *Parish Registers of St. Albans Abbey* [note 135], 151.

<sup>141</sup> Wigginton, Herts., parish register, Hertfordshire Archives DP/124/1/1 [index and images, findmypast.com; also familysearch.org].

<sup>142</sup> *Parish Registers of St. Albans Abbey* [note 135], 73; original at Hertfordshire Archives, DP/90/1/1 [index and images, findmypast.com].

<sup>143</sup> *Parish Registers of St. Albans Abbey* [note 135], 50.

<sup>144</sup> PCC wills, 55 Skyunner, f. 458r, TNA PROB 11/151/700.

<sup>145</sup> Austin, *Gen. Dict. of R.I.* [note 55], 408; James Savage, *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1860–62), 4:420.

<sup>146</sup> *Parish Registers of St. Albans Abbey* [note 135], 167.

<sup>147</sup> St. Michael, St. Albans, parish register, Hertfordshire Archives, DP/92/1/1 [index and images, findmypast.com].

<sup>148</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 15:5.

records indicate that he was dead by 1663, but give no hint of where he may have died, nor evidence of any wife or children. His tax rate in 1650 was low, suggesting that he owned little of value. But he did buy and sell land, and the town took notice of his will, later lost, by which his “house and land” passed to George Kendrick.<sup>149</sup> Possibly he remained no more than an absentee property owner, in a manner similar to Joshua Veren.<sup>150</sup>

The following two entries appear in sequence in the record of the Boston quarterly court session of 4 December 1638:

The wife of Josua Verin was referred to Salem.  
An attachment to be sent out for George Richards.<sup>151</sup>

As no one named George *Richards* has been seen in early New England, and as George *Rickards* and the Verens had definitely been in Providence at the same time, it is likely that the second entry refers to George Rickards. On 12 March 1637/8, the Massachusetts Bay government had ordered the apprehension of “any . . . of the inhabitants of the said plantation of Pr[o]vidence” who “shall come within this jurisdiction” and their imprisonment if they failed to “disclaim” their “corrupt judgement & practice.”<sup>152</sup> A reasonable hypothesis is that George Rickards had left Providence and gone to Massachusetts Bay by 4 December 1638 and that the attachment was made pursuant to this order. It is also fair to assume that the target of the attachment was in Massachusetts. In 1638, even if midwinter were not approaching, the Massachusetts Bay government would not have considered itself authorized to arrest anyone in Providence.

Joshua Veren, meanwhile, had been back in Salem since at least October 1638.<sup>153</sup> Perhaps the Massachusetts Bay government did not pursue him because his very public differences with Roger Williams amounted to a disclaimer of his “corrupt judgement & practice.” His wife, Jane, whose religious orientation conflicted with his, was indeed “referred to Salem”: she was presented to Salem court for absence from religious worship on 25 December 1638.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 1:49–51, 8:24, 66, 14:19–24, 15:33, 173, 201; Hopkins, *Home Lots of the Early Settlers* [note 130], 41–42, 60.

<sup>150</sup> Veren’s later land claims are reviewed in Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:28–30.

<sup>151</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:247.

<sup>152</sup> *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:224; Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:307–8; Chapin, *Documentary History* [note 2], 1:56–59.

<sup>153</sup> *Town Records of Salem* [note 58], 1:73.

<sup>154</sup> *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts*, 9 vols. (Salem, 1911–75), 1:10; Threlfall, “The Verin Family” [note 61], NEHGR 131(1977):104.

Given that these court records hint at an association between George Rickards and the Verens, the following records at St. Edmund, Salisbury, Wiltshire, become significant:

George Rickards and Alice Barling, m. 15 May 1609  
 George, son of George Rickards, bp. 30 Sept. 1611  
 Alice, daughter of George Rickards, bp. 18 Jan. 1612/3  
 George Rickards, bur. 3 May 1614  
 John Westlake and Alice Rickards, m. 7 Oct. 1614<sup>155</sup>

The records of this family seem to continue at Bishops Waltham, Hampshire, about thirty miles from Salisbury:

Mary, daughter of John Westlake, bp. 2 March 1615[/6?]  
 Alice Westlake, bur. 3 March 1615[/6?]  
 Mary Westlake, bur. 12 May 1619<sup>156</sup>

Seven of Joshua Veren's nine siblings were baptized at St. Edmund, Salisbury, between 1606 and 1623. For Joshua himself, who was born say 1612, no baptism has been found.<sup>157</sup> It seems quite possible that young George Rickards of St. Edmund, Salisbury, grew up to be George Rickards of Providence. If so, Joshua Veren and George Rickards may have known each other since childhood, and the parallels in Rickards's and Veren's departures from Providence might have something to do with this association.

Both parents of George Rickards of Salisbury died before his fifth birthday, possibly leaving him in the care of his stepfather, John Westlake. The appearance of the somewhat unusual surname *Westlake* is intriguing. It is historically concentrated in Devon, and is known to New England scholars because when Alice Endacott administered the intestate estate of her late husband "Thomas Endacott" of Stokeinteignhead, Devon, in 1621, her surety was "William Westlake, gentleman, of Combe-in-Teignhead." About 1902 Roper Lethbridge, who viewed this administration record before its destruction in World War II, proposed that *Westlake* was Alice Endecott's maiden surname and, on other grounds, that she and her husband Thomas Endecott were the parents of Governor John Endicott of Massa-

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<sup>155</sup> St. Edmund, Salisbury, Wilts., parish register (Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 1901/1) [index and images, ancestry.com], paraphrased.

<sup>156</sup> Hampshire Genealogical Society parish register index [findmypast.com]; Bishops Waltham parish register [FHL film #7908683].

<sup>157</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 7:174-75.

chusetts Bay Colony.<sup>158</sup> Other observers, though, have considered this parcentage a possibility at best.<sup>159</sup>

If John Westlake of Salisbury and Bishops Waltham happened to be related to John Endicott, it is not difficult to imagine a scenario under which that connection helped bring about a passage to New England for the orphaned George Rickards of Salisbury. There were, however, other Endicott couples in Devon, and other Westlake families, too. No connection between George Rickards and Gov. John Endicott can be claimed based only on these Salisbury and Hampshire records.

EDWARD COPE: Edward Cope moved to Long Island and was dead by 28 October 1645.<sup>160</sup> As far as is known, he died unmarried and without issue; like many such Great Migration immigrants, he has been too little studied.

Fortunately, a 1645 deed shows that Edward Cope, along with his first cousin Theophilus Bailey of Lynn, Massachusetts, was a grandson of Sir Edward Cope of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.<sup>161</sup> The grandfather, Sir Edward Cope, was a first cousin of Bridget (Dryden) Marbury, mother of Anne (Marbury) Hutchinson and Katherine (Marbury) Scott, making the immigrant Edward a second cousin once removed of these well-known women.<sup>162</sup> Sir Edward Cope named five sons in his will.<sup>163</sup>

In Providence in January 1646[/7], “the house and [l]ands of Edward Cope deceased lieth in confusion because no man hath orderly administered thereupon.”<sup>164</sup> Eventually, the town of Providence “ordered that Mr. [John] Throckmorton shall have the house and land that was Edward Cope’s” and was to pay Cope’s outstanding debts.<sup>165</sup> This raises the question of why Throckmorton was chosen for this role, and whether he had some family connection to Cope.

It turns out that Sir Edward Cope’s eldest son, Erasmus, baptized at Farnborough, Warwickshire, in February 1574/5, married by 1601, Anne

<sup>158</sup> Roper Lethbridge, *The Devonshire Ancestry and the Early Homes of the Family of John Endecott* (Exeter, n.d.), 23–24; *Calendars of Wills and Administrations Relating to the Counties of Devon and Cornwall*, ed. Edward Alexander Fry (Plymouth, 1908), 338.

<sup>159</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 63], 643–44; Lawrence Shaw Mayo, *John Endecott: A Biography* (Cambridge, 1936), 6–7.

<sup>160</sup> *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 5:47.

<sup>161</sup> *Winthrop Papers* [note 38], 5:46.

<sup>162</sup> Meredith B. Colket Jr., *The English Ancestry of Anne Marbury Hutchinson and Katherine Marbury Scott* (Philadelphia, 1936), 4; William Betham, *The Baronetage of England*, 5 vols. (Ipswich, 1801), 1:87–88.

<sup>163</sup> PCC wills, 84 Soame (1620), f. 155r, TNA PROB 11/136/227.

<sup>164</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 15:8.

<sup>165</sup> *Early Records of the Town of Providence* [note 6], 2:146.



Throckmorton, daughter of George Throckmorton of Fulbrook, Buckinghamshire.<sup>166</sup> This marriage may well explain the Cope–Throckmorton associations in Providence, and may help clarify the hitherto murky ancestry of John Throckmorton. Whether Edward Cope the immigrant was the son or nephew of Erasmus, and whether (and if so how) John Throckmorton the immigrant was related to George Throckmorton of Fulbrook, are questions under active study at the moment.

JOSHUA WINSOR: As noted above, Joshua Winsor’s master before emigration was “Will. Lomice of Redrife near London.” “Will. Lomice” was almost certainly the “William Lamas of Debtford shipwright” who married “Elizabeth Biggs of Wapping” at St. Dunstan, Stepney, on 2 February 1614/5.<sup>167</sup> “William Lammas of Woolwich in the county of Kent shipwright,” in his will dated 22 February 1657[/8] and proved 4 December 1658, named no wife, a son Job, a daughter Mary (wife of William Watkins), and a range of other minor legatees.<sup>168</sup> “Job the son of William Lammas” was baptized at St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, on the south bank of the Thames, on 9 May 1630. Three Lammas children (no father named) were buried in this same parish in 1630, 1630, and 1635, and were possibly also William’s offspring, although there were other Lammases in the parish at the time.<sup>169</sup> Bermondsey was adjacent to Redriffe [now called Rotherhithe].

The surname *Win(d)sor* was common around St. Albans, and consulting the major English parish register indexes turns up two potentially relevant Joshua Winsors in the area. One was baptized at St. Stephen, St. Albans, in 1606, a son of John Winsor, and was mentioned in the wills of his father John and brother Samuel, who were both buried at St. Stephen in November 1624.<sup>170</sup> Another (or perhaps the same) Joshua Winsor was the father of children baptized at Abbots Langley from 1639 to 1649[/50?]. Given the other Providence settlers who came from St. Albans and the nearby region,

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<sup>166</sup> Farnborough, Warwickshire, parish register [index and images, ancestry.com]. “Indenture tripartite” between Edward Cope of Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire, and Erasmus Cope his eldest son; George Raughleigh of Farnborough, Warwickshire; and George Throckmorton of Fulbrook, Buckinghamshire, and his son Michael Throckmorton, 1 Nov. 1601, Northamptonshire Archives, D (CA)/599 [abstract, TNA Discovery Catalogue, discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk].

<sup>167</sup> St. Dunstan, Stepney, parish register [FHL film #7570852, image 84]; Thomas Colyer-Ferguson, ed., *The Marriage Registers of St. Dunstan’s Stepney*, 3 vols. (Canterbury, 1898–1901), 1:94.

<sup>168</sup> PCC wills, 706 Wootton (1658), f. 261r, TNA PROB 11/285/157.

<sup>169</sup> St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, Surrey, parish register [images, ancestry.com].

<sup>170</sup> Archdeaconry of St. Albans, registered wills (Dainty), Hertfordshire Archives, ASA/8AR/145–46.

Roger Williams's own close family ties to the town,<sup>171</sup> and the fact that Joshua Winsor's only known son was named Samuel, it would not be surprising if he belonged to these St. Albans Winsors in some way. An origin around St. Albans would also suggest plausible explanations for how Roger Williams, in Providence, might have heard of Joshua Winsor's dissatisfaction in John Winthrop's service at Boston. So far, though, no Hertfordshire records have been found that can be securely identified with Joshua Winsor. More research is warranted.

WILLIAM WICKENDEN: In 1656, when William "Wickendam" was arrested by the New Netherlands authorities for officiating at conventicles at Flushing, he was called "a native of Oxfordshire" and his age was given as forty-two.<sup>172</sup> This record was not known to nineteenth-century genealogists and it seems never to have been seriously followed up as a clue to his origin. In 1961 John G. Hunt, apparently trying to reconcile this record with the fact that the surname *Wickenden* is concentrated in Kent, suggested that it was "just possible" that "Oxfordshire" was an error for Otford, Kent.<sup>173</sup> Hunt's hypothesis is unlikely. The English origin of Wickenden's fellow arrestee William Hallett was also given as a county, not a parish.<sup>174</sup>

In one of the first records of William Wickenden in Providence (the Williams-James Account discussed above), his surname is rendered as "Wigghingten." This spelling, which also recurs in later records,<sup>175</sup> encourages a search for him under the surname *Wigginton*, which has a different distribution and whose holders included Giles Wigginton, a notable Puritan and suspect in the 1588 publication of the Martin Marprelate pamphlets.<sup>176</sup> Intriguingly, the surname "Wygynton" appears in the list of debts owed to John Holyman of Chesham, Buckinghamshire, in 1597,<sup>177</sup> and there was a Weeden-Wigginton marriage at Chesham in 1631.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> On Williams's connection to St. Albans, see Winifred Lovering Holman, "Roger Williams," TAG 28(1952):197-209.

<sup>172</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 15 vols. (Albany, 1853-1887), 14:370.

<sup>173</sup> John G. Hunt, "Clues as to Origin of the Steere, Wickenden and Balcombe Families of Providence, R.I.," TAG 37(1961):140.

<sup>174</sup> *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of N.Y.* [note 172], 14:369.

<sup>175</sup> Such as *Rhode Island Court Records: Records of the Court of Trials of the Colony of Providence Plantations*, 2 vols. (Providence, 1920-22), 1:27.

<sup>176</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, 63 vols. (London 1885-1900), 61:193.

<sup>177</sup> G. A. Moriarty, "The Holymans," NEHGR 108(1954):203.

<sup>178</sup> H. F. Waters, "Genealogical Research in England," NEHGR 76(1922):127.

Dating at least as far back as 1887,<sup>179</sup> there have been assertions that William Wickenden was at Salem before coming to Providence, but no documentary evidence for this has been found.

### REVIEW OF THE COMPACT SIGNERS

Synthesizing the above discussions, it is now time to review the thirteen Compact signers one by one and summarize their origin and immigration dates, with special attention to the earliest and latest possible dates for their arrival in, and (if relevant) departure from Providence. No discussion of their *departure* from Providence in this section indicates that they signed the Providence Combination of 27 July 1640.

1. RICHARD SCOTT. Born in Glemsford, Suffolk, he married in Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, in 1632, and came to New England in 1634.<sup>180</sup> He was in Boston at the trial of his wife's sister Anne Hutchinson on 15 March 1637/8.<sup>181</sup> He was in Providence on 22 April 1638, when he witnessed the sale of Roger Williams's interest in Prudence Island,<sup>182</sup> and also in August 1638, when he accompanied Roger Williams on a trip to Connecticut.<sup>183</sup>
2. WILLIAM RENOLDS. His origin is unknown. He appears in Group 1 of the Payments List, so was probably in Providence by 28 February 1637/8.
3. JOHN FIELD. He was probably from St. Albans, Hertfordshire, where his sister and brother married (see above). The Compact is the first record of him in New England.
4. CHAD BROWNE. He married in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, on 11 September 1626.<sup>184</sup> His movements from that date until emigration are unknown. He came to New England on the *Martin*, which arrived at Massachusetts Bay shortly before 13 July 1638. On that day in Boston, he swore to the shipboard will of Sylvester Baldwin.<sup>185</sup> Even if he left for

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<sup>179</sup> Austin, *Gen. Dict. of R.I.* [note 55], 224.

<sup>180</sup> Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 6:202-9.

<sup>181</sup> David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Durham, N.C., 1990), 386.

<sup>182</sup> *Rhode Island Land Evidences* [note 89], 163.

<sup>183</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 183.

<sup>184</sup> W. P. W. Phillimore and Thomas Gurney, ed., *Buckinghamshire Parish Registers: Marriages*, vol. 6 (London, 1910), 11; NEHGR 65(1911):84.

<sup>185</sup> Winthrop, *History of New England* [note 3], 1:321; Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary* [note 145], 1:105; Frances Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut* (New London,

- Providence directly afterwards, and traveled with all haste, he could not have signed a document in Providence before 15 July 1638. The Compact is the first record of him in Rhode Island.
5. JOHN WARNER. He married in St. Albans Abbey, Hertfordshire, 6 June 1637, and was very likely the John Warner whose son John was baptized in St. Albans Abbey, 6 January 1638/9. The Compact is the first record of him in New England.
  6. GEORGE RICKARDS. He was possibly from St. Edmund, Salisbury, Wiltshire. He signed the Compact and appears on the Williams-James Account, but did not sign the Combination. Probably he had left Providence and gone to Massachusetts by 4 December 1638, when the quarterly court at Boston issued an attachment for him.
  7. EDWARD COPE. He was a grandson of Sir Edward Cope and a first cousin of Theophilus Bailey of Lynn. He appears in Group 1 of the Payments List, so was probably in Providence by 28 February 1637/8.
  8. THOMAS ANGELL. His English origin, despite much research, is unknown. He appears in Group 1 of the Payments List, so was probably in Providence by 28 February 1637/8. No earlier record of him in New England has been noted. Smith and Sanborn dismiss the hypothesis that Thomas Angell arrived in Providence with Roger Williams as an unsupported myth.<sup>186</sup>
  9. THOMAS HARRIS. He was baptized in Northbourne, Kent, in 1613.<sup>187</sup> The Compact is the first record of him in New England. His brother William came to Providence with Roger Williams in 1636.<sup>188</sup>
  10. FRANCIS WEEKES. His English origin is unknown, but he was somehow linked to John Smith of Dorchester, miller. Both Weekes and Smith came to Providence with Roger Williams in 1636, according to Williams's own account.<sup>189</sup>
  11. BENEDICT ARNOLD. As part of his father William Arnold's family, he came from Ilchester, Somerset, to Hingham in 1635. The family then moved from Hingham to Providence, but the date of their arrival is hard to establish. The question is too involved to explore in full here, but all

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1852), 304; Charles Candee Baldwin, *The Baldwin Genealogy From 1500 to 1881* (Cleveland, 1881), 42; *Records of the . . . Massachusetts Bay* [note 3], 1:235.

<sup>186</sup> Smith, *Ancestry of Emily Jane Angell* [note 4], 107–10.

<sup>187</sup> Ullmann and Harris, "Origins of Thomas<sup>1</sup> Harris and William<sup>1</sup> Harris of Providence" [note 29], NEHGR 167(2013):99, citing parish registers and transcripts.

<sup>188</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 750.

<sup>189</sup> *Correspondence of Roger Williams* [note 3], 750; Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634–1635* [note 30], 6:389, 7:273.

evidence suggests the Arnolds were in Providence by sometime in 1637, and some evidence suggests they came in 1636.<sup>190</sup>

12. JOSHUA WINSOR. In 1636 almost five years remained of a contract apprenticing him to William Lammas of Redriffe, London. He apparently came to New England and transferred into John Winthrop's service at Boston that same year. In September 1638, he was still in Winthrop's service, but Roger Williams suggested that he come to Providence. He appears on the Williams-James Account, so was very probably in Providence by 13 May 1639.
13. WILLIAM WICKENDEN/WIGGINTON. His origin is unknown, but the records connected to his arrest for officiating at conventicles at Flushing, New Netherland, in 1656 indicate he was "a native of Oxfordshire." He appears on the Williams-James Account, so was very probably in Providence by 13 May 1639. Otherwise, the Compact is the first record of him in New England.

#### DATES FOR THE PROVIDENCE CIVIL COMPACT

The varying inks used in the Compact show that it was signed in two sessions. The first included six men (Scott through Rickards) and the second seven men (Cope through Wickenden). This division is consistent with the location of the men's lots: the first six signers received lots which were essentially adjacent to each other, and more central than the lots of most of the latter seven signers. The two groups also differed somewhat in age, origin, and family status. Of the first group, at least three were married in 1638: Scott, Browne, Warner, and possibly Field. Of the second group, there is no known evidence that any was married by that year. In the first group, the origins of five of the six are known or suspected, and of these five, four came from St. Albans, Hertfordshire, or from nearby areas. In the second group, the known origins were much more diverse, including London, Oxfordshire, Somerset, and Kent.

Separate date ranges can be determined for the two groups of signatories. The first group of signatures could not have been made before 15 July 1638, the first day when Chad Browne could practically have arrived at Providence. Since George Rickards had almost certainly left Providence for Massachusetts by 4 December 1638, that day is a plausible later bound for the first group of signatures.

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<sup>190</sup> Two good entry points into the question of dating Arnold's arrival are Eugene Cole Zubrinsky, "William<sup>1</sup> Carpenter of Providence, Rhode Island (*James*, 1635)," revision of 9 Dec. 2010 (online: [carpentercousins.com/Wm1\\_Providence.pdf](http://carpentercousins.com/Wm1_Providence.pdf)), pp. 2-4, and a discussion of the issue by Welcome Arnold Greene in *Narragansett Historical Register* 5(1886-87):39-42.

The first group of Providence Compact signatures was therefore made some time between 15 July 1638 and 4 December 1638. This conclusion comes at the cost of having to assume that first-group signer John Warner came to New England in the spring of 1638, apparently without his wife Priscilla (Holliman) Warner, who followed in 1639 or later. As noted above, John Warner was very probably the father of a child baptized in St. Albans on 6 January 1638/9. If so, he must have sailed from England in April or May 1638, perhaps on the same ship as Chad Browne, and left his wife to come over later (perhaps still unaware of her pregnancy). Such arrangements were not uncommon.<sup>191</sup>

The second group of signatures on the Compact was obviously made after the first group, but whether the interval was measured in hours, days, weeks, or even months cannot be determined. The signatures must have been made before the signing of the Combination on 27 July 1640, and it is very unlikely that they were made at any time in 1640. Signing the Compact would have had little purpose once the Combination was in preparation, and by 1640 the population of Providence had grown to a level where we would expect more signatures on an agreement by newcomers.

Was the second group of signatures made in 1638, quite soon after the first group? Possibly so. Four of the seven signers in the second group are known to have been in Providence by the fall of 1638. A fifth, Joshua Winsor, may well have set off for Providence soon after Roger Williams suggested that he come, in September or October 1638. William Wickenden was probably in Providence by 13 May 1639, and there is no evidence ruling out the possibility of his presence there in the fall of 1638. Only Thomas Harris's movements during 1638 and 1639 are unknown. If the second group signed all together in fall 1638, it would have to have been after Joshua Winsor's arrival in Providence, and he could not have come before about the end of September.

Could the second group of signatures have been made in 1639? Yes, possibly so. Nothing has been found to rule out signing in 1639. All of the seven signers in the second group signed the Combination in 1640. None of them are known to have left town between 1638 and 1640.

The conclusion, therefore, is that the second group of Providence Compact signatures could not have been added earlier than the end of September 1638, could possibly have been added in 1639, and is very unlikely to have been added in 1640.

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<sup>191</sup> For example, *Mayflower* passengers Francis Cooke, Degory Priest, and Richard Warren sailed without their wives, who came later (Robert Charles Anderson, *The Mayflower Migration: Immigrants to Plymouth, 1620* [Boston, 2020], 63, 141, 179).

If both the first and second groups of signatures were made within a few days of each other—which is neither claimed nor ruled out here—this would have happened between the end of September 1638 and the beginning of December 1638.

#### APPENDIX: REVISED IMMIGRATION YEARS FOR THE SIGNERS

On the basis of this analysis, corrections are now proposed for the latest possible arrival year, as listed in the *Great Migration Directory*, of six of the thirteen Providence Compact signers. Appearance in the first group of Compact signers is properly taken as evidence of arrival in New England at latest in 1638, and appearance in the second group of Compact signers as evidence of arrival in New England at latest in 1639. Appearance in the first group of the Payments List (made before the end of February 1637/8) is taken as evidence of arrival by 31 December 1637, following the established Great Migration reasoning that migrants to New England did not normally arrive during the dead of winter. Similarly, appearance in the Williams-James Account is taken as evidence of arrival in New England by 31 December 1638.

Names are listed here in order of their appearance on the Compact:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Migration</b>	<b>Prior listing</b>	<b>Key evidence</b>
Richard Scott	1634, Boston <sup>192</sup>		
John Field	1638, Providence	1637	Compact (1st group)
William Renolds	1637, Providence		Payments List
Chad Browne	1638, Providence		Compact (1st group)
John Warner	1638, Providence	1637	Compact (1st group)
George Rickards	1638, Providence	1637	Compact (1st group), Williams-James Account
Edward Cope	1637, Providence		Payments List
Thomas Angell	1637, Providence		Payments List
Thomas Harris	1639, Providence	1637	Compact (2nd group)
Francis Weekes	1635, Dorchester <sup>193</sup>		
Benedict Arnold	1635, Hingham <sup>194</sup>		

<sup>192</sup> See his sketch, Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 6:202-9.

<sup>193</sup> See his sketch, Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 7:273-80.

Joshua Winsor	1636, Boston	1637, Providence	Transfer of apprenticeship contract to John Winthrop
William Wickenden	1638, Providence	1637	Compact (2nd group), Williams-James Account

(concluded)

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<sup>194</sup> Came with his father, William Arnold (Anderson, *Great Migration, 1634-1635* [note 30], 1:84-91).

## A SHAKER AVANT LA LETTRE

*Contributed by Robert Charles Anderson, FASG*

SOBER AND SINGLE DANCING of men apart, and women apart, hath had his use, and praise also, not only among the Heathen, but amongst the people of God, when by the nimble motions and gestures of the body, they have expressed the great joyes of their hearts, for some good of their owne, or set forth Gods glory. But mixt dancing of men and women, with light and lascivious gestures and actions, framed in number and measure to please a wanton eye, and provoke one anothers lust, or to serve the humour of some wicked *Herod*, hath ever been held, both of the ancient Fathers within the Church, and of the best Authors that ever wrote amongst the Heathen without, to bee utterly unlawfull, sinfull, shamefull, carnall, sensuall, and divellish, as hateful unto God, as hurtfull unto men.<sup>1</sup>

*Jaffrey, New Hampshire*

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<sup>1</sup> William Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance of The Holy Life and Happy Death, of Iohn Bruen of Bruen-Stapleford, in the County of Chester, Esquire* . . . (London 1641), 10-11. In this passage, William Hinde, John Bruen's brother-in-law, is commenting on Bruen's time as an adolescent student at a dancing school, about 1570. By 1587 Bruen had completed his conversion to godliness and was the head of a puritan household which would never have permitted "mixt dancing."