



# East Fork-Trinity Chapter Newsletter Texas Section Sons of the American Revolution



Volume ?, Issue 2 February 17, 2012

## Secretary's Message



Chapter Secretary  
Montie Monzingo

First off: thanks to Allen and Tom for furnishing photos for the newsletter. And now for something (perhaps) completely differ-

ent. Unless there is a great deal of opposition, I would like to include a section in each issue of the newsletter that focuses on and highlights one of our members. It might seem folksy, but the article could be devoted to a member's career, a hobby, articles written, or a trip taken.

In this issue, Compatriot Frank E. Roberts will be featured; in fact, my idea came from discussions with Frank. I hope you like the idea, and would appreciate comments whether they are for and against.

## 2012 Chapter Officers

President Walt Thomas,  
Vice President Paul Ridenour, Secretary Montie Monzingo, Treasurer Harmon Adair, Registrar Allen Christian, Historian Tom Whitelock, Chaplain Bill Bellomy.

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## Chapter Compatriot Frank Roberts intro by Montie Monzingo

Many of you might be unaware that Compatriot Frank Roberts is a published author of military history. He has published articles in the US Military Academy Alumni Association bulletin and also in the Military Officers Magazine. In addition, he has written a book, "The American Foreign Legion", published by the Naval Institute Press. Frank has consented to have one of his articles, The Gaspee Affair, The Real First Shots of the Revolutionary War, printed (beginning on page 4) in this newsletter. Now, a bit about the author.

Born, 18 September 1933, New Braunfels, Texas. Attended public school in Austin, Texas. Graduated from University of Texas at Austin with a Bachelor of Business Administration and a minor in mechanical engineering. Graduated from University of North Texas at Denton with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology and a minor in education. Did graduate work at University of North Texas and University of Virginia. In civilian career served in management and engineering positions in industry including president and chief executive officer of an electronic instruments manufacturing firm in Austin, Texas. Maintained a collateral career in United States Army on both active and reserve status serving seven years in the enlisted ranks, and twenty-five years as a commissioned officer, retiring in 1986 as Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers. Published author writing fiction and non-fiction military history articles and books. Participate in Christian outreach ministry programs including missionary work in India.

**Our next meeting will be held on March 8, 2012 at the Texas Land & Cattle Steak House on Lake Ray Hubbard in Garland.**

**Our speaker will be Compatriot Gary Lovell.**

## Minutes from the February 2012 Meeting of the East Fork-Trinity Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution

The February 9, 2012 meeting of the East Fork-Trinity Chapter of the SAR was called to order at 7:10 by President Walt Thomas, at the Texas Land and Cattle Steak House in Garland.

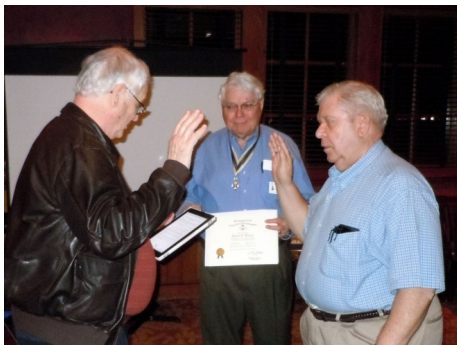
Eleven members and nine guests were in attendance: Members and spouses; David and Barbara Powell, Harmon and Joyce Adair, Robert and Della Vickers, Frank and Jane Roberts, Bill and Martha Bellomy, Allen and Jane Christian, Gary and Mindy Lovell. Members; Paul ~~Ridenour~~ Ridenour, Tom Whitelock, Walt Thomas, and Montie Monzingo. Visitors; Gary Snowden and Daryl Coleman.

Chaplain Bill Bellomy opened the meeting with prayer. Gary Snowden led the pledge of allegiance to the US flag. Compatriot Robert Vickers led the pledge to the Texas flag. Compatriot Gary Lovell led the pledge to the SAR.

Secretary Montie Monzingo presented the minutes, which were approved as posted.

President Walt Thomas acknowledged the guests present.

President Walt Thomas presented Compatriot Paul ~~Ridenour~~ Ridenour with a Past-President's pin and certificate of appreciation for his service to the chapter.



District 6 VP Harmon Adair inducted Robert Vickers into our chapter. Robert was presented with a membership certificate and a rosette. At our January meeting, Compatriot Vickers spoke briefly about his Revolutionary War ancestor, Richard Caswell.

Several announcements were made:

The state convention of the TXSSAR will be held in San Antonio in March.

Poster contest judging will be done at our March meeting.

Compatriot Allen Christian discussed a suggestion by Tom Whitelock that an award be given to the deputy sheriff who recently rescued two ladies at Lake Ray Hubbard. Allen Christian moved and Paul ~~Ridenour~~ Ridenour seconded the motion that the medal of heroism be awarded. The motion was carried.

Treasurer Harmon Adair reported that as of February 9, 2012, the chapter's balance was \$1017.95, and that a check for \$55.45 would be deposited, bringing the total \$1073.40.

Historian Tom Whitelock thanked those who had submitted photos for the chapter's scrapbook, and requested that other photos be submitted.

A joint DAR/SAR meeting was discussed.

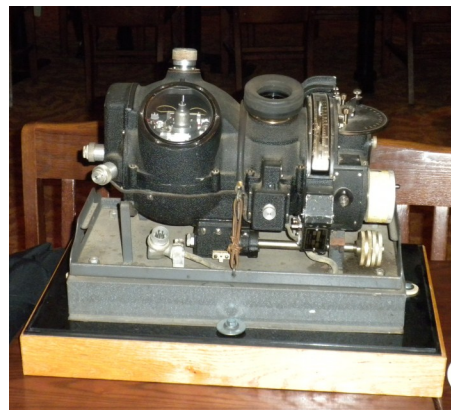
The December 1 Christmas Parade was discussed. Bill and Martha Bellomy suggested that members could march in the parade even though they didn't have a uniform; that a tri-corn hat, rolled up slacks, and knee socks would be sufficient.

Compatriot Allen Christian invited members to attend the local SCV meeting.



Compatriot Paul ~~Ridenour~~ Ridenour showed the audience a pin designed by the Plano Camp of the ~~SCV~~ SUV to honor civil war veterans from both sides of the conflict. He reported that the pin was rejected by the National ~~SCV~~ SUVCW Organization, but has been widely accepted by others.

Compatriot Montie Monzingo's presentation, "What did bombs do before they became smart?", was a historical sketch of aerial bombardment leading up to and including WWII and the Norden bombsight. At the end of his presentation, Compatriot Montie Monzingo brought out a Norden bombsight for the audience to view. Following the presentation, District 6 VP Harmon Adair related his experiences as a bombardier in a B52, and gave additional information on the use of the Norden bombsight.



Compatriot Tom Whitelock conducted a drawing for four doors prizes, which were won by Allen Christian, Daryl Coleman, Robert Vickers, and Frank Roberts.

Compatriot Allen Christian led the closing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Montie Monzingo, Secretary

Note: The Chapter's next meeting is on March 8, 2012 at the Texas Land & Cattle Steak House, and our speaker will be Compatriot Gary Lovell.

# The Gaspee Affair, The Real First Shots of the Revolutionary War

By Frank E. Roberts

On the morning of April 19, 1775, on the village green at Lexington, Massachusetts, a skirmish occurred between about seventy colonial militiamen and a small contingent of British soldiers. These British soldiers were the advance guard of a substantial force sent out of Boston to seize muskets, cannon and gunpowder in the hands of the local militia. Though it is not known whether the Colonials or the British soldiers fired first, the results were eight dead militiamen and one British soldier wounded. This small action is considered by most to be the first shots fired in anger between citizens of the American colonies and British military forces. In fact, far less known and even less publicized were several maritime encounters prior to the fight at Lexington, which resulted in gunfire between the Colonials and the British.

For some time Britain had been undergoing severe financial stress due to increased costs in conducting wars in Europe and supporting garrisons in the American Colonies. Britain needed funds and the American Colonies, rich in raw materials, seemed a likely and convenient source, resulting in onerous taxes on imported goods being levied on the colonies by King George III's government.

As a consequence, a thriving smuggling business developed along the entire East Coast conducted largely by citizens of the Northern Colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Such smuggling was not only in defiance of tax laws, but as well of an earlier British law requiring all shipments into and out of the colonies to be brought in only by British vessels carrying only British owned goods.

Additional tax acts were passed in 1767, causing tensions to ratchet up another notch. The tea tax and the sugar tax, which included coffee and wine, were particularly hated entities, and smuggling of such goods from sources other than British owned and in ships other than British flourished along the eastern seaboard.

The area with the most action and getting the most attention by the British Navy was the small colony of Rhode Island. With few resources other than trade and the production of rum from molasses, Rhode Island developed a lively smuggling business coming through Narragansett Sound's port cities. A major problem for the British navy was that the inhabitants were not the most docile of men, as many were hard boiled frontiersman and seaman, experienced in the hard facts of life and death, and not easily cowed by British customs agents or British navy sea captains.

In January of 1764, John Temple, a British customs official sent to Rhode Island from Boston, openly advertised that he intended to enforce the Molasses Act of 1733. In July, the armed sloop, *HMS St. John* with a Lieutenant Hill commanding, arrived on the scene to support Temple, and seized and impounded the cargo vessel *Rhoda*, arriving at Newport from Surinam with molasses in her hold. This seizure so infuriated the citizens of Newport that they outfitted a sloop with guns, intent upon taking the

*HMS St. John*. The plan was thwarted by the arrival of reinforcements in the form of the twenty-gun *HMS Squirrel*, though the enraged Rhode Islanders did fire several cannon rounds at the *HMS St. John* from a captured battery at Fort George on nearby Goat Island. The citizens abandoned any further action towards the ship itself, but two days later the *Rhoda* was boarded at night by clandestine parties, sail was set, and the ship disappeared out of the harbor to ports unknown. Rewards were posted by British officials for the capture of those involved in the incident, to no avail.

In the spring of 1768, a British customs official, Charles Dudley, replaced Temple, and established himself in Newport, Rhode Island bent on strict enforcement of all customs and import laws on ships arriving in the colony. As with previous customs officials, the citizens of Newport generally ignored him and committed various illegal acts such as stealing more impounded merchant vessels and sailing them out of port.

In May of 1769, the armed British sloop, *HMS Liberty*, a Lieutenant Reid commanding, arrived to support Dudley. Reid seized a brig and a sloop, inbound from Connecticut, and brought the two vessels to anchor in the harbor at Newport. An altercation occurred between the captain of the brig and Reid, and Reid fired a cannon shot at the brig captain while he was going ashore in his longboat. Reid's shot missed, but many of the townspeople were watching the events unfold, and became enraged. That night a group of citizens boarded the British sloop, forced Reid and his crew ashore, and cut the vessel adrift, resulting in its grounding. The Rhode Islanders then cut down the mast, scuttled the ship and, when the tide carried the ship out to ground on Goat Island, set her afire.

As if the previous events weren't enough, things really began to heat up in early 1772, when Lieutenant William Dudingston, Royal Navy, arrived with his vessel, the two-mast, eight-gun revenue cutter *HMS Gaspee*. Dudingston was ordered up from patrolling the coast of Pennsylvania to cover the shores of Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Dudingston's orders from Admiral John Montague, stationed in Boston and commanding British naval forces in the colonies, were specific: quell the smuggling of goods along the upper coast of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Dudingston quickly discovered that the major smuggling activities were in the Narragansett Sound of Rhode Island and concentrated his activities there, establishing a base for his cutter and a service tender at Newport.

Dudingston seized several merchant vessels moving in and out of Narragansett Sound, an act again inflaming the local populace, and he further fanned the fires by seizing supplies and foodstuffs from merchants and farmers on shore without giving payment. Dudingston's heavy handed action caused the citizens of Newport to consider fitting out an armed vessel of their own to come to the rescue of colonial vessels being boarded by Dudingston.

A letter of complaint concerning Dudingston's conduct was sent by Governor Wanton of Rhode Island to Montague. In a responding letter, Wanton was rebuked by Montague, stating that Dudingston was well within his right to seize anything he

needed and any vessel he suspected of smuggling. Montague had also heard about the intent of Newport citizens to arm a vessel and warned Wanton that any colonial vessel attacking a ship of the Royal Navy would be captured and the crew hanged as pirates. Dudingston, now emboldened by Montague's statements to Wanton, began seizing and impounding as British property most any merchant vessel plying Narragansett Bay, suspected of smuggling or not.

On June 9, 1772, Captain Benjamin Lindsay sailed his schooner, *Hannah*, out of Newport Harbor, on his way home to Providence. A few miles out of Newport, Lindsay observed the two masts of the *HMS Gaspee* coming out from behind an island and, realizing it was giving chase, raised more sail in an attempt to evade boarding of his vessel.

Dudingston's cutter was faster and soon closed on the *Hannah* and, though still out of range, fired a cannon shot, hoping to convince Lindsay to heave to. Instead, the *Hannah* increased sail and continued north up the sound. Lindsay, native to the area, was intimately familiar with the topography of the bay as well as the tides. He began maneuvering the *Hannah* through the low tide shallows at Namquid point, on the west side of the sound near the mouth of the Pawtuxet River. Lindsay made it safely through the shallows, but Dudingston, in his eagerness to catch the *Hannah*, tried crossing close to the end of the point. He miscalculated the depth, and ran the *HMS Gaspee* full aground on a sand bar at about 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

Lindsay sailed on into Providence, docked his vessel, and went immediately to the house of John Brown, a noted town leader, merchant, and one of the founders of Brown University. Lindsay informed Brown of the encounter, and that the *HMS Gaspee* was aground. He further informed Brown that he estimated that Dudingston could not get off the sandbar until the next high tide, sometime around 3:00 o'clock the following morning.

A quick decision was made by the two men to take the *HMS Gaspee* and destroy her. Brown notified Abraham Whipple, one of his trusted merchant sea captains, to assemble boats with muffled oars and rowlocks at Arthur Fenner's Wharf at the waterfront. Brown then passed word throughout the town for men to gather at James Sabin's house, an inn just opposite Fenner's Wharf. Word spread quickly and a group of some sixty or so angry townsmen, all bent on seeking revenge on Dudingston and the *HMS Gaspee*, met in a room at the inn bringing with them an array of clubs, guns, and swords. Whipple was elected leader of the expedition, and at about 10:00 o'clock that evening the boats, loaded with armed men, cast off from Fenner's Wharf, and, after a quick stop at Carlin's Wharf for additional arms, began the long struggle of rowing against the incoming tide for the six miles to Namquid Point and the *HMS Gaspee*.

It was a moonless night and, as the boats neared the *HMS Gaspee*, Whipple brought them into single file and moved to approach the revenue cutter bow-on so Dudingston could not bring his cannons to bear. Whipple, aboard the lead boat, was within a stone's-throw of the bow of the *HMS Gaspee* when an alert lookout shouted "Who comes there?" followed instantly by the order, "Stand off!"



Whipple, his words peppered with a few profanities, shouted that he was the Sheriff of Kent County, and that he had come to arrest Dudingston, and that he would get the British officer, dead or alive. Whipple then ordered the boats to close and board the British vessel. At that moment Dudingston came on deck, armed with a cutlass and a pistol. Musket and pistol shots from the *HMS Gaspee* were answered with shots from the raiding boats and Dudingston went down with a ball in his groin. The raiders came along side, swarmed onto the deck and, with their captain wounded, the crew of the *HMS Gaspee* threw down their weapons and retreated below deck.

Dudingston was to have one stroke of good luck that night. Dr. John Mawney, a surgeon, was among the raiding party and tended the lieutenant's wounds, so severe that had the bleeding not been stopped Dudingston would have died. Dudingston and his crew were placed in several boats and delivered ashore on the Warwick side of the bay close enough to the town to get immediate assistance for the lieutenant.

Dawn was approaching when all boats assembled back at the *HMS Gaspee*, at which time Whipple ordered the British vessel be set afire. The Rhode Islanders were moving their boats away from the revenue cutter to watch it burn when the flames reached the powder stores and the vessel was suddenly blown apart, showering the small boats with debris. After the explosion nothing remained of the vessel but part of the hull and bits of burning wreckage scattered over the water. The raiders, satisfied with their work, quietly rowed back to Providence, and dispersed.

Word of the destruction of *HMS Gaspee* soon reached Admiral Montague and was quickly communicated to England. Governor Wanton, though a loyalist sympathetic to the colonists, was obliged to post a \$500 reward for information identifying any of the men involved in the burning of *the HMS Gaspee* and the real issue, the wounding of Dudingston, a serving British officer. King George III sent back to the colonies notice of a reward of \$5000 for the head of the leader and \$2500 for any of the crew of the raider boats. In addition, a commission of five loyalists was appointed to go to Rhode Island, and set up a court to uncover who was involved in the raid, as the entire episode was considered piracy and the penalty for finding and convicting any of the raiders was to be death by hanging.

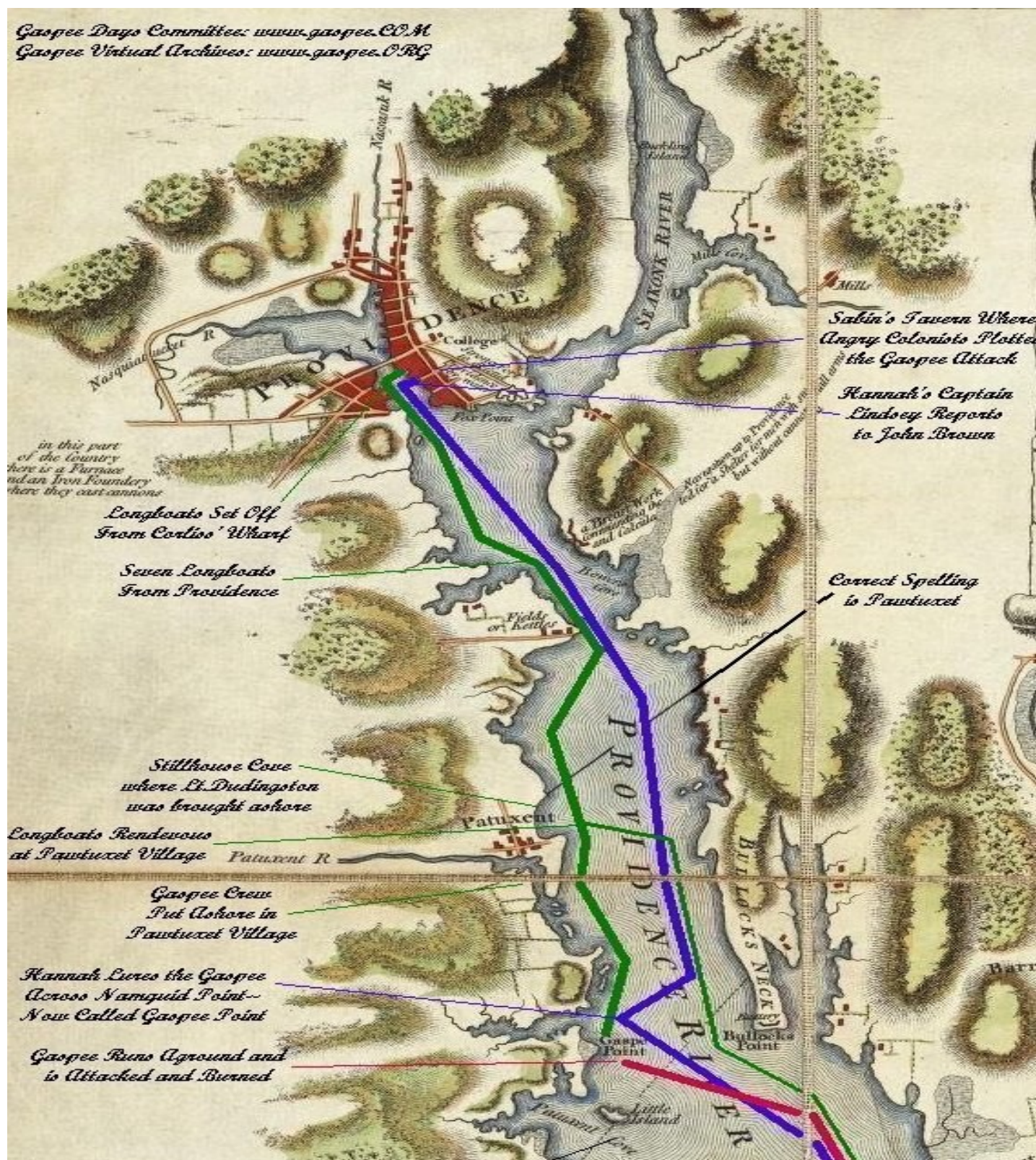
The entire population of the town of Providence and eventually the whole bay area had to have known details of the actions taken that night and those involved. Still, no one came forward to collect the rewards and the commission failed abysmally in trying to uncover the participants through interviews and interrogations.

The only negative result for the Colonists was that Governor Wanton, who often sided with the Colonists and had tried to get Dudingston to conduct himself civilly towards the citizens of Rhode Island, was relieved from his post.

Other incidents of shots being fired at each other by the Colonists and the British Army and Navy up to the incident at Lexington, which resulted in the siege of Boston and the Revolutionary War, but what came to be known as the "Gaspee Affair" was the first known in which blood was spilled.



Author's Note: Anyone wishing further details on the "Gaspee Affair" should refer to the internet site, [www.Gaspee.org](http://www.Gaspee.org), entitled "Gaspee Virtual Archive" mentioned in the references.



Extract From Charles Blaskowitz' 1772 map of Narragansett Sound, Rhode Island  
From the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection





“Burning of the HMS Gaspee” by Frank T. Merrill  
Colorized by Dan Shippey, 2010  
The Breed’s Hill Institute  
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## References:

1. Allen, Gardner W., *A Naval History of the American Revolution*, Boston, Houghton, 1913.
2. Bucklin, Leonard, *The Gaspee Attack*”, A National History Center for the Gaspee Attack of 1772, [www.Gaspee.info](http://www.Gaspee.info), 2005-2009, accessed January 27, 2012.
3. Haley, John Williams, *The Gaspee Affair, That Troublesome Vessel*, Providence, R. H., *The Old Stone Bank History of Rhode Island*, Vol. II, pp 115-117, 1939.
4. Rhode Island Historical Society Postal History Collection, *1751 Letter From R. Partridge to Arthur Fenner*.
5. Wheeler, Lucia Hammond, Compiler., *Official Chronicle and Tribute Book of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, Providence, R. H., George D. Hall, Inc. for the Official Chronicle Committee, 1936.
6. “Gaspee Virtual Archive”, [www.Gaspee.org](http://www.Gaspee.org), accessed January 27, 2012.

# Americanism, Main Program Presentations

2012

Meeting	Month	Member name
1	January	Paul Ridenour
2	February	Montie Monzingo
3	March	Gary Lovell
4	April	Allen Christian
5	May	Bill Bellomy
6	June	no meeting
7	July	no meeting
8	August	no meeting
9	September	Harmon Adair
10	October	Frank Roberts
11	November	Paul Ridenour [or meet with the DAR]
12	December	Christmas Party