To His Majesty, King George III, Ruler of England,

It is my duty to tell you, your Majesty, about the English ship, H.M.S. *Gaspee*, and what happened to it. As you know, H.M.S *Gaspee* was sent from Britain to the small colony of Rhode Island, settled in 1636, to enforce the Stamp Acts, so that you, your Majesty, could use the money to pay off our debts from the French-Indian War. The ship was also sent to New England because you wanted Lieutenant William Dudingston to stem the tide of illegal trade. In fact, the efforts made by Dudingston were so successful, that Parliament believed that riots might break out because he seized so many ships that were smuggling. Unfortunately, the activities continued. When you heard this, my Lord, you ordered the *Gaspee* to patrol Narragansett Bay permanently in early March of 1772. As the months continued, the aggressive tactics of Dudingston continued to incite the colonists. He pursued every ship from the large merchantmen to the small traders and fishermen. The *Gaspee* crew was accused of take supplies from area farmers without permission or compensation. When news of these actions reached Rhode Island governor Joseph Wanton, he called for a meeting with the dear Lieutenant to think about the complaints of the residents. However, he refused.

The cause of the burning of the *Gaspee* was on June 9, 1772. It all started when the small vessel, *Hannah*, left the town of Newport, Rhode Island, and headed toward the town of Providence, Rhode Island. Seeing this ship, H.M.S. *Gaspee* started to follow it. When the *Hannah*'s captain, Captain Lindsey, saw what the *Gaspee* was doing, he deliberately lured her across the shallows off Namquid Point and left your ship hard aground on a sandbar, unable to move until the flood tide of the next day.

Later that day, on June 9, 1772, Captain Lindsey reported what happened to John Brown, one of the most prominent and respected merchants in Rhode Island. After listening to Lindsey, he sent out a town crier inviting all interested parties to meet at Sabin's Tavern to plan the *Gaspee*'s destruction. Under the leadership of Abraham Whipple, the small band of patriots rowed eight longboats with muffled oars to the ship. The dark moonless evening kept the rowboats out of sight until they were within sixty to one hundred yards of your ship. The reason why they did this, your Majesty, was because they knew that if they were caught, the eight large guns of the *Gaspee* would tear them to shreds. By the time the *Gaspee*'s sentinel raised the alarm, the ship was surrounded. Brown, who described himself as "the Sheriff of Kent County," called for the surrender of your ship and Lieutenant Dudingston. In response, Dudingston ordered the crew to fire upon anyone who attempted to board the ship. Shortly thereafter, the Rhode Islanders rushed the decks of the *Gaspee*. In that short time, Dudingston was shot. He was rudely shot in the groin. The remainder of the *Gaspee* crew, most of whom were asleep below deck, were overcome by the raiding party. In the end, Dudingston was forced to surrender. The captured crew was bound, placed into the colonist's rowboats, and placed on shore in the Pawtuxet area. The leaders of the rebels then removed most of the documents aboard the *Gaspee* and ordered the ship to be burned.
Your Majesty, I am deeply saddened about what happened to the Gaspee. These colonists do not understand that we are taxing them for a good reason. Our government does not need to be in debt, and if the colonists were us, my Lord, then maybe they would feel the same feeling that you do right now, after receiving this letter. Please pray to God that this will never happen again, and that the colonists will act more like civilized people than wild animals. Let us hope that they are brought to justice.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Anthony
Reporter of The Burning of
the H.M.S. Gaspee

Bibliography

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