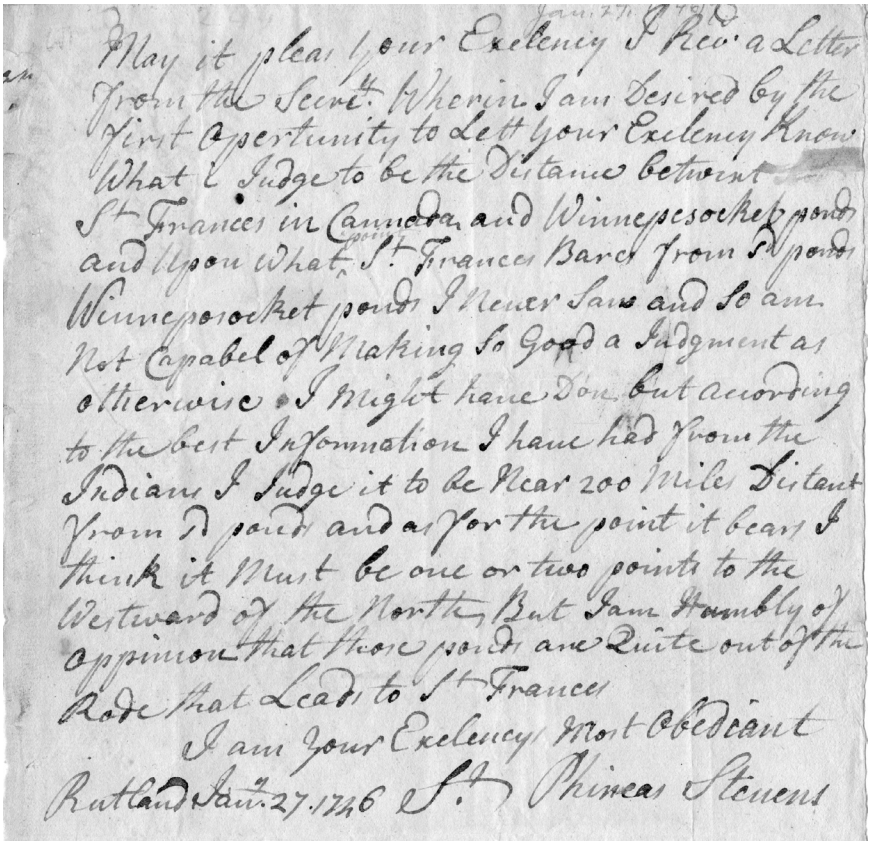

Letter from Phineas Stevens to William Shirley, January 27, 1746

May it pleas your Exclency I Recd a Letter / from the Secrey Wherein I am Desired by the / First Opertunity to Lett Your Exclency Know / What I Judge to be the Distance between / St Frances in Canada and Winnepesocket ponds / and Upon What [^point] St Frances Bares from sd ponds / Winneposocket ponds I never Saw and So am / Not Capabel of Making So Good a Judgment as / otherwise I Might have Don but according / to the best Information I have had from the / Indians I Judge it to be Near 200 Miles Distant / from sd ponds and as for the point it bears I / think it Must be one or two points to the / Westward of the Northern But I am Humbly of / opinion that those ponds are Quite out of the / Rode that Leads to St Frances / I am Your Exclencys Most Obediant S.t

Rutland Jan.y 27. 1746 H[Honorable] Phineas Stevens

Image and transcript courtesy of the New Hampshire Historical Society.

Phineas Stevens:

Massachusetts' Frontier Soldier-Diplomat

Duncan C. Wood

Editor's Introduction: *The following article is a study of Phineas Stevens (1706-1756) and his life in the contested territories between Canada and New England. Stevens was captured in an Abenaki raid on Rutland, Massachusetts in 1723 and taken to the village of Odanak, Canada. In his depiction of life in New England in the 1700s, Duncan Wood puts us in Stevens' shoes in the moments leading up to his abduction by Abenaki warriors. Using the limited sources available, Wood follows the tradition of John Demos'* The Unredeemed Captive *and asks us to imagine what Stevens' emotions and experiences might have been. Wood argues that Stevens bonded with his captors, including the man he would later refer to in his journals as his "Indian father." Stevens was eventually ransomed back to his family in Rutland and spent the remainder of his life at times fighting and at others attempting to make peace with the very people who had held him captive.*

Phineas Stevens was an important part of the history of English-Native American relations in the years prior to the independence of the British North American colonies. As a former captive himself, Stevens possessed the ability to negotiate for the return of other captives, which he did on several occasions. Living his life on the frontiers between French colonies, different Native American groups, and the growing English colonies of Massachusetts, New York, and New Hampshire, Stevens came into contact with key leaders of each—as a diplomat or as a soldier.

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The colonists of New Hampshire and western Massachusetts faced waves of violence and conflict, due in significant part to the quickly-growing Anglo population of the area. The French supported Abenaki raids on English settlements in the hopes of pushing English colonies eastward. Resident in Number 4, the northernmost English settlement at the time, established by the governor of Massachusetts in 1735, Stevens was a founding member of the community. Number 4 (present day Charlestown, New Hampshire) sat at the intersection of the Black River and Connecticut River, territory long-occupied and traversed by the Abenaki, and was in a strategic geographic location. Stevens lived and traveled through this region of overlapping claims and shifting political, religious, and cultural identities. Wood has mined the primary sources about Phineas Stevens, using them to attempt to reconstruct the emotions and motivations of the man who lived in a world of English, French, and native peoples competing for resources and survival.

Central to Stevens' story is the history of Indian captivity and captivity narratives in colonial history. There exist hundreds of captivity narratives, often extremely misleading about native perspectives, recounting the details of life amongst native peoples. While in her work Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives *(2000) anthropologist Pauline Turner Strong has shown that Native Americans taken captive and enslaved far outnumber the fewer, but better documented, cases of Anglo colonists, Phineas Stevens' story is a part of a robust historiography on English captivity. Seventeenth-century captivity narratives emphasized the ability of the English person to be "redeemed" and brought back into the Puritan fold. Puritan New Englanders were especially concerned about those captives held in French territory, where there might have been efforts made to convert them to Catholicism. The well-known case of Eunice Williams, abducted in 1704 with 111 others from Deerfield, Massachusetts, proved the danger of Indian captivity, as she converted to Catholicism and became a Mohawk. Later captivity narratives became more secular in nature, typically highlighting anti-indigenous and/or anti-French sentiments and sometimes demonstrating the sympathy of the captive for their captors. With varying degrees of violence, colonists were kidnapped and ransomed for money or in exchange for other Indian prisoners—Stevens was an integral part of these processes.*

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From 1689 to 1763, Massachusetts fought five wars against the Abenaki and their French Allies. The English colonists who were affected most by these wars were settlers at the edge of the New England frontier who carried the burden of defending their families, and communities. People, who in a time of peace would have remained unnoticed, rose to the challenge of their times. In the upper Connecticut River Valley, the person who fulfilled this role was farmer, shopkeeper, soldier, and diplomat Phineas Stevens (1706-1756).

Stevens, who in his youth suffered the trauma of Indian captivity, would spend his adult life playing a crucial role in the struggle between Massachusetts, the Abenaki, and their French allies. Stevens fought to protect settlers of the Connecticut River Valley, represented Massachusetts on diplomatic missions to French Canada to redeem settlers who had been captured in war, and tried in vain to bring peace between Massachusetts and the very Abenaki band that had held him captive. Between 1749 and 1752, Stevens, who, in a time of peace would have been unknown in the halls of power, was enlisted three times by Massachusetts authorities to go to Montreal and negotiate directly with the Governor of New France for the release of settlers captured in war by Abenaki raiders from Odanak, Canada. Stevens was picked because of his superior knowledge of the Odanak Abenaki and their bond with him, a bond that had formed two decades earlier when Stevens was their prisoner.

TIME IN CAPTIVITY

On August 14, 1723, in Rutland, Massachusetts, Phineas, his three brothers, and his father were at work cutting hay. Phineas, at seventeen years old, was the eldest. The youngest brother, Isaac, was four, and in the middle were Samuel and Joseph.[1] It is certain that little Isaac would not have been swinging a scythe. Perhaps he would have mimicked his father's and brothers' careful swipes of their scythes against the endless waves of tall, green grass with a stick or made the motions of raking up the fallen grass into piles to dry in the late summer sun. Maybe Isaac quickly tired and complained. The father, Joseph Stevens, a deacon in the town's church, might have been thinking about how he was going to distract the boy and at the same time complete the day's work. It could have been that Phineas, acting the second father—as eldest brothers often do, was keeping Isaac busy on a task that made him feel needed and grown up. As this typical New England frontier scene of family labor and togetherness played out, five Abenaki warriors stood up out of the tall grass and cut Samuel and Joseph down with hatchets and knives. Deacon Stevens ran for the woods, making his escape, but left Phineas and Isaac to face the Abenaki alone.[2]

The Abenaki were going to kill Isaac. Samuel and Joseph's ages decided their fates, for it was believed they could not make the trip north to Canada and captivity, where prisoners were ransomed back to their people or adopted into the tribe.[3] Phineas, however, was the perfect age. The little boy Isaac would only slow them down. Phineas must have been in shock, two brothers were slaughtered in front of him, and now Isaac, it can be imagined, shaking with terror, was seconds away from violent death. But Phineas, as he would so many times in his life, thought quickly. Phineas convinced the warriors that he could carry Isaac on his back all the way to Canada so that Isaac would not slow them down and would be an additional valuable hostage.[4] The raiding party was led by Gray Lock, a chief of the Woronoco, a Western Abenaki band that had once lived on the Westfield River in Massachusetts but had been forced to move after King Philip's War (1675-76), to the Indian refugee village of Schaghticoke located at the confluence of the Hoosic and Hudson Rivers.[5] The village had been founded by New York Governor Edmund Andros (1637-1714) to keep Indian refugees of the war with Massachusetts from being lured to Canada to join the French.[6] In 1712, Gray Lock and his followers left Schaghticoke and settled at Missisquoi on Lake Champlain, in what today is Swanton, Vermont, where the state of Vermont has recognized the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi since 2012.[7] Along with attacking Rutland in 1723, Gray Lock and his followers would carry out raids on Northfield, Deerfield, and Northampton, as part of a larger French and Abenaki effort against Massachusetts known as Father Rale's War or Governor Dummer's War (1722-23).[8] Gray Lock's raids were not unique. New England

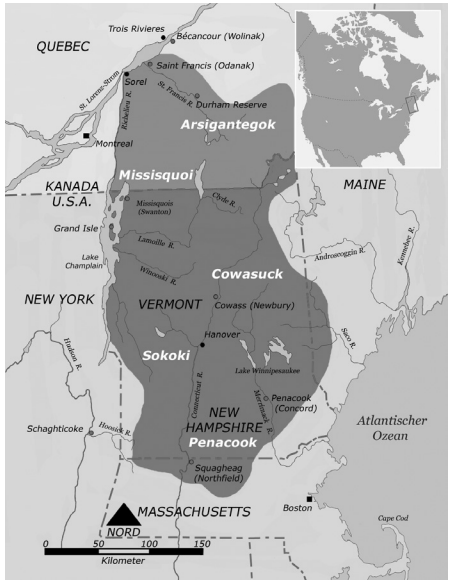
Sculpture of Chief Gray Lock, Battery Park, Burlington, Vermont

Dedicated in 1984 to all Native Americans indigenous to Vermont (carved by Peter Wolf Toth). Photo by: Niranjan Arminius

frontier settlements suffered frequent native attacks during the wars between France and Britain. Many of the raids were carried out by Abenaki who had been forced out of the Connecticut River Valley and into Canada by Massachusetts and Iroquois attacks in the aftermath of King Philip's War.[9]

Unlike the British, the French colonial government in Canada went out of its way to develop good relations with the Abenaki. The French were careful not to establish settlements on land claimed by the Abenaki without first obtaining their permission. They understood that they needed the Abenaki to help them stand up to their enemies: the Iroquois and the British.[10] The colonists of Massachusetts, on the other hand, constantly settled areas claimed by the Abenaki. Thus, when France and Britain went to war, Abenaki warriors were only too happy to return to the areas they once inhabited and attack Massachusetts settlements. The raiders were driven by a desire to avenge the loss of their territory and by the money they earned either selling captives to the French authorities in Montreal and Quebec who would, in turn, ransom the prisoners back to Massachusetts, or by ransoming back the prisoners themselves. Occasionally, captured New Englanders, usually children, were adopted by the Abenaki to replace members who had died in war or from European diseases.[11]

The Abenaki group that conducted many of the raids on New England were from the village of Odanak which means in the Western Abenaki language– "at the village."[12] Traditionally Western Abenaki territory encompassed western Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Eastern Abenaki lived in Maine. Both the Western and Eastern Abenaki spoke their own distinct variations of the Abenaki language.[13] New Englanders called the Abenaki from Odanak "Saint Francis Indians"– the French Saint Francois–because their village was located at the mouth of the Saint Francis River as it empties into the Saint Lawrence between Montreal and Quebec.



Map of Abenaki Settlements

Image courtesy of Nikater/Maps.

The first to make their home at Odanak were a Western Abenaki band—the Sokwaki. The Sokwaki had previously lived on the Connecticut River in present day Northfield, Massachusetts, and likely also resided along the river farther north into New Hampshire and Vermont.[14] They were joined in Odanak by an affiliate tribe called the Cowassuck—who lived at the oxbow of the Connecticut River, in present day Newbury, Vermont. The area was known for its fertile land and abundant game and called the Coos by the English. The Sokwaki and Cowassuck were later joined by Penacook from New Hampshire—another affiliated Western Abenaki tribe, and then later some Eastern Abenaki who had been forced out of Maine by war with Massachusetts.[15]

Odanak was not a static village; residents came and went. Some left for good while others lived parts of the year in the upper Connecticut River Valley, then returned to Odanak.[16] This pattern continued well into the nineteenth century. The Odanak Abenaki were closely allied with Gray Lock's Woronoco at Missisquoi.[17]

It is probable Gray Lock took Isaac and Phineas on the same route that Odanak Abenaki raiding parties followed. They walked along the Connecticut River north to the Black River, then hiked up and down the Green Mountains, picked up Otter Creek and followed it to Lake Champlain, where they would uncover canoes that had been cached on the way down and paddle back into Canada.[18] Sometimes raiding parties would continue north and, instead of veering west towards Lake Champlain, take Lake Memphremagog into Canada.[19] Isaac and Phineas were sold to different tribes, so whichever route Gray Lock took determined which brother was sold first. Phineas went to the Odanak Abenaki, Isaac to the Mohawk of Kahnawa:ke—a settlement on the St. Lawrence River near Montreal.[20] The Kahnawa:ke Mohawk were no strangers to assimilating Massachusetts captives. Seven-year-old Eunice Williams, taken in a 1704 raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts, spent the rest of her long life with the Kahnawa:ke, marrying into the tribe and raising a family.[21] It is possible that she interacted with Isaac during his time there.

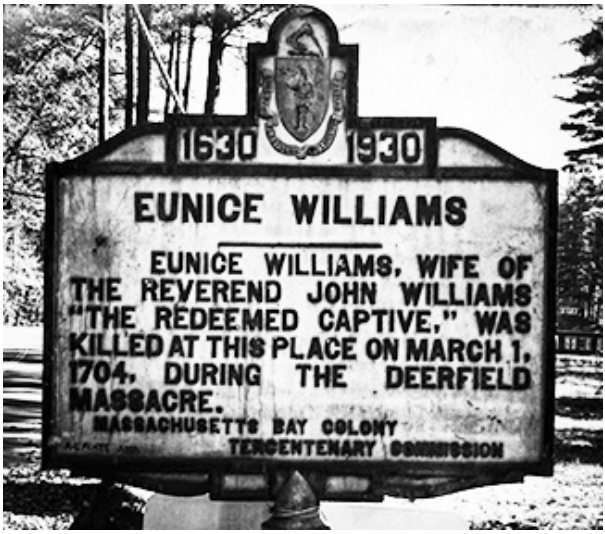
Stevens' introduction to Odanak would have begun by being met by a throng of Abenaki gathered below a high bluff overlooking the St. Francis River. When the canoes that carried captive Susannah Johnson and her family landed in the same spot years later, she experienced "a cloud of savages, of all sizes and sexes… running toward us." Then "when they reached the boats they formed themselves into a long parade, leaving a small space, through which we must pass."[22] This was an experience many prisoners of native groups went through. It was often reported that the gauntlet of Indians would beat the prisoners as they ran through the throng. In Johnson's case, the Abenaki

Drawing of Eunice Williams Being Abducted (1900)

did not strike hard, only gently tapping her and the other prisoners as they passed, more in a spirit of welcoming than punishment.[23] It is likely that Stevens had a similar experience.

After walking the gauntlet, Stevens would have been led up the bluff to the village. The first structure he would have seen was a Catholic church where the Abenaki worshiped. Susannah Johnson reported that there were evening and morning masses in the church, officiated by a French priest. She also remembered that "St. Francis contained about thirty wigwams which were thrown disorderly into a clump."[24] Though Johnson was captured a little over thirty years after Stevens, it is probable the number and array of Abenaki wigwams had not changed much since Stevens' time there. In one of these dwellings lived the man to whom Stevens was given, who he would describe years later as his Indian father.[25] On a 1752 mission to Canada, Stevens related that he was happy to cross paths with his Indian father in Montreal, from which could be inferred that Stevens had a pleasant experience in his time among the Abenaki.[26] Others who had been captives remembered their time in Odanak with feelings of respect and kinship. Johnson wrote that:

> In justice to the Indians, I ought to remark, that they never treated me with cruelty to a wanton degree; few people have survived a



Marker for the slain mother of 7-year-old Eunice

Inscription reads: "Here lyeth the body of Mrs. Eunice Williams, the vertuous & desirable consort of the Revrd. Mr. John Williams, & daughter to ye Revrd. Mr. Eleazer & Mrs. Esther Mather of Northampton. She was born Augt. 2, 1664, and fell by rage of ye barbarous Enemy. March 1, 1703-4 - Prov. 31. 28. Her children rise up and call her Blessed." Image courtesy of Jeff Lloyd. The Eunice Williams thus memorialized was the mother of the kidnapped child Eunice Williams.

> situation like mine, and few have fallen into the hands of savages disposed to more lenity and patience… Can it be said of civilized conquerors, that they, in the main, are willing to share with their prisoners, the last ration of food, when famine stares them in the face? Do they ever adopt an enemy, and salute him by tender name of brother? And I am justified in doubting, whether if I had fallen into the hands of French soldiery, so much assiduity would have been shewn, to preserve my life.[27]

Revolutionary War General John Stark of New Hampshire, captured by the Odanak Abenaki while on a hunting trip as a young man, later recounted that he "experienced more genuine kindness from the savages of St. Francis than he ever knew prisoners of war to receive from any civilized nation."[28]

It is a certainty that Stevens' Indian father would have taken him hunting, as Johnson's six-year-old son Sylvanus was. Stevens, being nearly a man, would have been substantially more useful to an Abenaki hunting party than a child.[29] This experience would have helped cement the bond between captor and captive. Through the hunts, Stevens would have learned how the Abenaki moved and operated in the woods, their personalities under stress, and what chances they would and would not take. Knowledge he could put to good use in the future.

BRINGING STEVENS BACK TO MASSACHUSETTS

While Stevens was learning the ways of the Abenaki, one can imagine the anguish felt by his parents back in Rutland. Joseph Stevens must have been particularly tortured by the memory of the attack in the hayfield and his decision to run rather than protect his sons. Why, with his sons in mortal danger, had Joseph chosen flight over fight? Was it because the situation was hopeless? Had Joseph stood his ground would it have been possible for him to fight off five armed men? Would all his sons have been killed in the struggle, including himself? Did Joseph, in that split second, decide he wanted to live more than to die fighting for his boys? Maybe Joseph did not think at all and just ran, realizing too late that his boys were not following him. Whatever the answer, Joseph Stevens did not rest until he brought Isaac and Phineas home.

The key to getting family members back from Canada was money. The Odanak Abenaki, and other native groups would give back captives for ransom. Often, they would sell captives to the French, either to the authorities, which would land the captive New Englanders in a French prison, or to a French family who would use the captives as slaves. Whichever was the New

England prisoners' fate, in the majority of cases, the only way they were going home was through a cash payment.[30] Sometimes the colonial governments provided the cash to buy family members back, but more often the families had to come up with the money on their own.[31] New Englanders hoping to redeem captured family members would travel to Montreal, where French authorities would arrange the payoff for the prisoners and their delivery.[32] In some rare cases, New Englanders would have to deal with the Indian tribe holding a relative on their own.

To pay his expenses for travel and ransom, Joseph asked Massachusetts towns for donations and sold most of his land, which ensured that he and his wife would forever after live in poverty. On his first trip to Canada, Joseph was only able to bring back Phineas.[33] On Joseph's second trip he was reunited with Isaac, but the boy had formed such a strong attachment to his Mohawk mother that he did not want to go back to Massachusetts.[34] This must have made for an unhappy period of adjustment when Isaac was returned to Rutland. Compounding this is the very real possibility that Phineas never forgave his father for abandoning his brothers and himself to the Abenaki raiders. In Stevens' journals there is no mention of his father or mother, even though they both outlived him.

LIFE AFTER CAPITIVITY

Financial stability for most Massachusetts families meant owning many acres of farmable land. Ideally fathers would hand land down to their sons so that they could marry and start a family, but this was not always possible. Often sons had to move to the frontier to acquire land of their own.[35] Since Joseph Stevens sold his land to bring Isaac and Phineas back, he had nothing to pass down. Phineas married his cousin Elizabeth in 1734, and their life together progressed with an ever-growing family that needed space and the land to support it.[36] The only property Phineas and Elizabeth could afford was north of Rutland on the Connecticut River in areas contested by New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

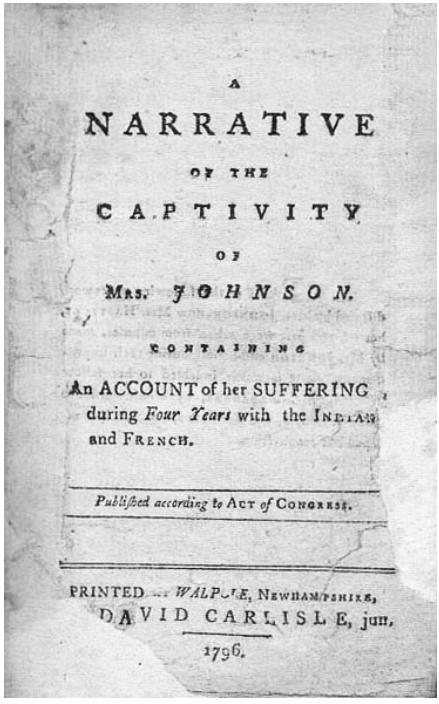
This argument over ownership of the Connecticut River Valley came to a head in the 1730's. In 1733, New Hampshire and Massachusetts submitted their claims to King George II. His Majesty would decide who would control the Connecticut River and the land along its banks, which today belong to New Hampshire and Vermont.[37] However Massachusetts, always shamelessly expansionist, did not wait for the King's decision and began mapping out townships along what would later be the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut River. The new towns were not named but numbered.

Their names came much later. Number One would become Chesterfield, Number Two Westmoreland, Number Three Walpole, and Number Four Charlestown.[38] Though by 1738, the king had decided that these towns on the eastern bank of the Connecticut River were part of New Hampshire, it was families from central and western Massachusetts who settled the new townships.[38]

Phineas, Elizabeth, and their children moved to Number Four in 1742, joining the few families who had settled there, and built a small house and farm. The settlers soon built a sawmill and held an outdoor dance on the first boards the mill fashioned out of the timber that surrounded them. Stevens supplemented his farming income by operating a store where he sold various products (rum, hatchets, lead, gun powder, snowshoe strings, and deer hide) to his neighbors, as well as Indians and New Englanders who stopped at Number Four as they traveled up and down the Connecticut River.[41]

From the start, Number Four's situation was precarious. It was the northern-most settlement on the Connecticut River and, when war came, was dangerously exposed to French and Indian attack. Abenaki from Odanak hunted on the land and considered it theirs. Though this soon caused problems, the relationship between settler and Abenaki was good in the beginning.

In 1744, Susannah Johnson, future Number Four resident and Odanak Abenaki captive, made the trip from Leominster, Massachusetts, to visit her parents at Number Four. She gave a first-hand account of the atmosphere of the Connecticut River frontier of those days. The two-day journey through woods on a blazed trail unnerved her. Acres of "gloomy forest" with only "a few solitary inhabitants, who appeared the representatives of wretchedness, were scattered on the way."[42] When Johnson and her party finally arrived at Number Four, she was "chilled at the sight" of Indians drinking from a cask of rum, dancing, and singing


A
NARRATIVE
OF THE
CAPTIVITY
OF
MRS. JOHNSON.
CONTAINING
An ACCOUNT of her SUFFERING
during *Four Years* with the INDIANS
and FRENCH.
Published according to ACT *of* CONGRESS.
PRINTED AT WALPOLE, NEWHAMPSHIRE,
DAVID CARLISLE, jun.
1796.

Page from Captivity Narrative of Susannah Willard Johnson

as Susannah "passed trembling by."[43] As she remembered years later, "In those days there was such a mixture on the frontiers, of savages and settlers, without established laws to govern them, that the state of society cannot be easily described."[44]

DEFENDING NUMBER FOUR

These days of live and let live between settlers and the Abenaki would not last. France and Britain began again to fight one of their seemingly endless wars, this one the War of Austrian Succession, which would cross the Atlantic and be played out in North America as King George's War (1744-48). To protect themselves the settlers of Number Four built a fort.[45] They did this by dismantling their houses and putting them back together in a rectangle, the back walls of the houses forming the outer wall of the fort.[46] Stevens was officially put in command of the militia guarding Number Four when Massachusetts Governor William Shirley commissioned him "to be Captain of a Company of Volunteers to be raised for his majesty's service against the French and Indian Enemy."[47] Colonial authorities were forced to take the lead in defending Number Four because New Hampshire felt it did not have the resources to defend its Connecticut River settlements while at the same time supporting the majority of its citizens who lived miles east of the river. Though Massachusetts now had no legal claim to the upper Connecticut River Valley settlements, it deemed that defense of these settlements was crucial in protecting its own western towns.[48]

As for the settlers of Number Four, they would be safe from Indian raids inside their new fort, buttoned up and protected from musket fire by its thick wooden walls, but they could not raise the crops and livestock they needed to survive without leaving the fort. These basics of life, by necessity, had to exist outside the fort in the verdant land of the river valley. This reality left the settlers extremely vulnerable to attack. It would have been wise if they always left the fort armed and alert, but coming and going to and from the fort to tend crops and cattle day after day and the tranquil natural scene of the valley easily lulled the residents of Number Four into thinking a swift violent attack impossible.

On April 19, 1746, native raiders struck, capturing three men, burning down the settlement's sawmill, and killing oxen and cutting out their tongues.[49] The settlers of Number Four thereafter left the protection of the fort with more care, but this was not always enough. On May 24, Seth Putnam was outside with an armed party guarding a group of women who were tasked with milking their families' cows. A native raiding party, which

had approached the fort undetected, opened fire, instantly killing Putnam. His companions returned fire, wounding two of the attackers and forcing them to retreat.[50]

The attacks made it clear Number Four needed help. Massachusetts responded by sending militia Captain Daniel Paine and a company of cavalry to reinforce the settlement. When he arrived, Paine listened intently to the story of the attack that had killed Putnam. The more Paine heard, the more curious he became, so curious that he demanded to see the spot where Putnam had been shot dead.[51] Stevens warned Paine not to leave the safety of the fort, but, impervious to danger, Captain Paine and his company ventured out. When they arrived at the spot, Indians hidden in the undergrowth opened fire. Stevens immediately gathered a relief force and rushed to Paine and his company who were in serious trouble. Stevens and his men fired a sharp volley forcing the natives to retreat hurriedly, some dropping guns and blankets as they ran. Captain Paine's foolishness cost his command six men; five killed, and one captured.[52]

During the summer of 1746, other relief columns would come from Massachusetts to bring aid to Number Four. The settlers welcomed these reinforcements. Fighting native raiders, most likely from Odanak, was now no longer sporadic but constant. Although the historic record does not specify where the raiders came from, narratives written by settlers who were captured say they were taken to Odanak.[53] Exactly what Stevens felt about fighting his old friends he never recounted in any surviving narrative.

By the end of the summer, Massachusetts' leaders decided that its military was stretched too thin, and the order was given to withdraw from the Connecticut River Valley settlements, which meant that Stevens, his family and fellow settlers, would have to abandon Number Four.[54] Stevens believed leaving the fort unoccupied was an enormous tactical oversight. It was directly on the path that native war parties took to attack western Massachusetts settlements. He felt that a strong force in residence would disrupt French and Abenaki invasions. Not only would the fort act as an impediment to attacks, but Stevens believed that Rangers (militia units experienced in maneuvering in the woods) operating out of Number Four, and other similar frontier outposts, would have the ability to go out into the forest and ambush Abenaki raiders as they left their canoes at Lake Champlain and began their trek over the Green Mountains. Stevens presented this plan to Massachusetts Governor Shirley:

> To his Excellency William Shirley…
>
> > No. 4 is situated upon the Connecticut River about 45 miles above Northfield the uppermost town on the river at which place…the enemy have been continually endeavoring to do spoil upon the English, and many great advantages have been lost for want of a suitable number at that garrison.—Fort Massachusetts is situated 34 miles west from Deerfield in the proper road of the enemy coming upon our frontier when they come by wood creek or the drowned lands, as No. 4 is when they come by Otter Creek.—Now it appears to me—may it please your Excellency and Honor—that if about 100 men were early sent to each of the forts by the latter end of March and suitable encouragement was given them to go and way lay the streams the enemy come upon when they issue out from Crown Point, they might be very much discouraged in coming in small-parties as here to fore… There is one thing I have observed while among the Indians, they are a people which are soon flushed up and elated when they have success and as soon discouraged and dismayed when they are disappointed.[55]

Governor Shirley liked the idea, but the General Court would only provide Stevens with the funds to recruit and arm thirty men. Nevertheless, Stevens and his small band of Rangers reoccupied the Fort at Number Four in March 1747.[56]

For several weeks there were no attacks. Eventually Stevens and the men let down their guard. They began opening the gate in the morning so that they could easily move in and out of the fort. Stevens' party had dogs with them, which it was hoped, would alert them when native raiders were nearby. One morning the dogs were agitated, and the men decided it was better to keep the fort's gates shut. At 9:00 a.m., curiosity got the better of one of the men and he cracked open the gate, slipping out with the dogs to investigate. In a fit he yelled "Chaboy" and fired his gun. The meaning of the term "Chaboy" is unclear. It might be the equivalent of "get him boy," or some other challenge. Whatever the meaning, as soon as the Ranger uttered the word and let loose with his gun, Indian and French soldiers sprung up from behind a log and began firing on him. Miraculously he was able to get back inside the fort with only slight wounds. The gates were slammed shut and locked as the Indians and French "attack'd us on all Sides."[57] Stevens wrote later in his after-action report:

> The Wind being very high, and everything exceeding dry, they set fire to all the old fences, and an old log-house about 40 rods distance from the Fort, to the windward, so that within a few Minutes we were entirely surrounded with fire, all which was perform'd with the most hideous shouting and firing from all quarters, which they continued in a very terrible manner till the next day at 10 o'clock at night without intermission, in which time we had no opportunity either to eat or sleep.[58]

Stevens and his company returned fire, "not withstanding all their [the enemy's] shoutings and threatenings, our men seem'd not to be the least daunted, but fought with great resolution." Through the white smoke of spent gunpowder Stevens could see the French and Indians building a structure out of logs, which he was sure they were going to use to shield themselves as they rushed the fort and set a fire that would burn a hole in the wall, allowing the attackers to enter. However, instead of attacking, the French and Indians asked for a ceasefire until morning. Stevens agreed, though he feared the enemy were only using the lull in the shooting to make their move.[59]

Reconstruction Built in 1960 of the Fort at Settlement Number 4 (Charlestown, NH)

Image courtesy of John Phelan.

As the sun rose, the commander of the joint Indian and French assault force came into view of the fort with fifty or sixty men, and stuck a flag of truce in the ground. He introduced himself as General Debelina, which was the name Stevens used in his report, however historians believe the officer was actually Ensign Joseph Boucher de Niverville.[60] The Ensign may have introduced himself as a general, with a made-up name, in hopes of impressing the Yankee backwoodsmen.

Niverville wanted to talk. After some back and forth where both commanders sent men out to deliver and receive messages, Niverville and Stevens met face to face. Niverville told Stevens that if the fort surrendered the men's lives would be spared, and they would be allowed to keep their clothes and provisions on the trip to imprisonment in Canada. If they did not give up, the French and Indians would burn Number Four down and storm it with seven hundred men, and if just one Indian were killed in the assault, Stevens and all his men would be executed.[61]

Stevens was not easily intimidated. His mind, as demonstrated years before when Abenaki warriors killed his brothers, did not freeze in periods of extreme peril. Stevens replied that it was his duty to hold the fort, and that he did not think Niverville's men had the ability to take it.[62] Niverville told Stevens that he would be wise to ask his men if they were as dedicated as he was to facing certain death. Stevens went back to the fort and gathered the men. Did they want to surrender or fight it out? To a man they voted to fight. Stevens shouted the decision out to the enemy and the Indians and French started shooting and yelling.[63] Stevens and his men returned fire and the fight went on into the night and through the next morning, when the French and Indians called for another ceasefire, as two Indians came out of cover carrying a flag of truce. They said that if Stevens sold them "provisions, they would leave us and not fight anymore." Stevens replied that he would not sell them food "but that if they had any prisoners, I would give them five bushels of corn for everyone they returned." The French and Indian answer was revealingly brief. They fired on the fort and left.[64]

Stevens and his men had won, keeping control of this breakwater against French and Indian attacks on the Connecticut River Valley. Stevens was fiercely proud of his men. He reported, "I believe Men were never known to hold out with better Resolution; for they did not seem to desire to sit or lye still one Minute. There were but 30 Men in the Fort, and altho' we had some thousands of Guns fired at us, we had but 2 Men slightly wounded, *viz, John Brown,* and *Joseph Ealy*." Captain Phineas Stevens' account of the battle made quite a splash. It was published in *The Boston Evening Post*, and British

Navy Commodore Charles Knowles was so impressed with the defense of Number Four that he had a sword made for Stevens.[65]

The success at Number Four granted Stevens' wish. Both his command and Fort Massachusetts were garrisoned with one hundred men. Their mission was to range the woods and intercept raiding parties from Odanak to keep them from attacking the settlements.[66] With this mission, Stevens and his comrades had limited success. There was a lot of hard fighting, but often the natives had the upper hand. The native ability to maneuver unseen through the woods and superiority in small unit tactics usually put the Massachusetts Rangers back on their heels.[67] Despite this, all the natives had the capacity to do was hit, retreat, and take captives. New Englanders endured devastating defeats only to come back for more. In the end, the settlers' overall superiority in numbers would guarantee their control of the Connecticut River Valley.

WINDING DOWN THE WAR & NEGOTIATING FOR CAPTIVES

The Peace of Aix la Chapelle ended King George's War in 1748, but this news took a while to cross the Atlantic and find its way to the New England frontier. Phineas' own son Enos, was taken captive by Indian raiders on June 20, 1749, only to be returned in September, as news of the end of the hostilities between Britain and France became known.[68.]

There were some New England prisoners who were not returned at the war's conclusion. Stevens was entrusted by Massachusetts Governor Shirley to travel to Montreal and negotiate with the governor of New France, the Marquis de la Jonquiere, and the Abenaki, for the return of these prisoners.[69] Stevens was the man for the job. He knew the territory and knew the Odanak Abenaki who had taken his fellow settlers prisoner.

Stevens was ordered to Boston to pick up a letter from Governor Shirley to Marquis de la Jonquiere, he then travelled west to Hadley where he ran into his son Enos returning from his own captivity.[70] From there the journey took Stevens to Albany where he hired two Kahnawa:ke Mohawk to help him paddle canoes up the Hudson, through Lake George to the French fort at Crown Point on Lake Champlain.[71] On Lake George, Stevens ran into an Abenaki friend of his, probably someone he had known as a captive teenager. The Odanak Abenaki were living in wigwams at the edge of the lake. Stevens recounted that the "St. Francois Indians… appeared friendly and one of my old acquaintance presented me with 2 wild geese."[72]

From Crown Point, after some delay, the party was taken to a fort on the Shamblee River where they were again delayed.[73] Finally Stevens was allowed

to proceed to Montreal, arriving on October 28. There he met the Marquis de la Jonquiere, but negotiations to free New England prisoners went nowhere. There was confusion, or made-up confusion, on the Marquis' part over the purpose of Governor Shirley's letter, and the Marquis sent back a clarifying letter to Boston.[74] When Governor Shirley's reply came back, Stevens was ordered by the Marquis to go back to New England.[75] The only prisoner Stevens was allowed to bring back with him was a Dutch man named David Abeall.[76]

One interesting outcome of the trip was Stevens' discovery of Massachusetts captives of the Nauset tribe, who Stevens called "Cape Cod Indians."[77] The Nauset did live on Cape Cod and had backed Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies in King Philip's War. They considered themselves English subjects and were angry that they were not being considered for repatriation.[78] As Stevens reported in the account of his trip which was given to Governor Shirley at its conclusion, "There is also a number of Indians belonging to Cape Cod two of which I saw at Montreal sold for slaves who were very uneasy and take it very hard that they are not treated as the rest of King George's subjects." Two more of the "Cape Cod Indians" were living with the Odanak Abenaki. "One of them I saw at Crown Point who was married one of their squaws and has no desire to come home he told me his name was Isaac Peck. The other I did not see. There is more in the country but could not find out where they lived."[79]

Though Stevens spent a good part of his life fighting natives, he did have sympathy for them, especially for the Abenaki from Odanak. When the shooting stopped, Stevens displayed much affection for his old captors. On his second mission to Canada in 1751, Stevens met up with Odanak Abenaki at a trading post near Albany. They told him they did not want war. "ST. Franceway Indians told me (when sober) that they had no mind for war and had it not been for the French they would not move against the English." Stevens added that, "I am fully persuaded that were it not for the French it would be easy to live at peace with the Indians." Among the Abenaki at this impromptu meeting was a man Stevens called Pinywanie who had visited Number Four and done business with Stevens. Pinywanie told Stevens that he would be stopping by Number Four to pick up a trap he had left there "before the war." Stevens made efforts on Pinywanie's behalf to ensure that the settlers of Number Four would not be alarmed and shoot him when he came to retrieve his property.[80]

Stevens' 1751 mission was precipitated by a combined Abenaki/Norridgewock raid on Swan Island, Maine, in September 1750, in which thirteen New England settlers were captured.[81] Massachusetts colonial

official Josiah Willard asked Stevens in an October 15, 1750 letter to go to Montreal and try to bring the prisoners back.[82] Stevens stated in a letter to Governor's Council member William Pepperell that he would go but that "wintertime being so near and the affair so unexpected It will Require sum time to prepare myself for such a fetaguing Journey."

Stevens started his journey in late February when the traveling was easier and got to Montreal on March 3, 1751.[83] There he was able to work out a deal with the Governor—still the Marquis de la Jonquiere. Stevens would be allowed to take one prisoner, Timothy Whidden, back to New England with him, the rest would be sent to Crown Point where they would stay until their ransoms were paid.[84] Out of the thirteen taken from Swan Island, ten were eventually sent home. One died in captivity, and one young girl, Francis Nobel, was kept by French settlers.[85]

By this time, it was clear how much Massachusetts colonial officials relied on Stevens' expertise in negotiating with the French and Abenaki. A year after the return of the prisoners from the Swan Island raid, Stevens was sent on yet another mission to Canada, this time by Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips, as Governor Shirley was in London on business.[86] Joining him on the mission was Nathaniel Wheelwright, who had extensive business dealings with the French in Canada. Phips' directions to Stevens and Wheelwright were that they try to negotiate the release of the New England prisoners without paying ransom—though this was not likely, and it was generally assumed by the Governor that ransom would eventually have to be paid.[87] Why Phips felt it necessary to go through the charade of non-payment for the prisoners is unknown. This is particularly surprising given the fact that in the same instructions he directed Wheelwright and Stevens "to draw upon the Province Treasurer, for such sum or sums as you may find necessary, as well for the Ransome of the Prisoners, as for the charge of their travel and other Contingencie."[88]

Another way New England colonies funded missions to redeem prisoners was to provide a letter of credit to the redeemer to give to an English person residing near the Canadian border who had business dealings with the French. The merchant would provide the redeemer with cash, so they could pay the prisoner's ransom, and the merchant would in turn be paid back by the colonial legislature. [89]

Stevens did carry a letter from Phips to the French Governor, now Baron de Longueil, which attempted to force the issue of native prisoners from Massachusetts:

> I must in a particular manner repeat my pressing demands for the restoration of any of those Indians, (now surviving) the subjects of this his Majesty's Government, who were taken upon the sea, being on a whaling voyage, or any other Indians belonging to this Province, some of whom it has been reported are treated as slaves, tho' in this Province, they live in as much freedom as the English themselves.[90]

Phineas, accompanied by his son Samuel, left Number Four on April 27, 1752. Samuel and Phineas met Wheelwright in Albany, and they hired Stockbridge Indians to help them make the journey.

Stockbridge Indians were Mahicans from western Massachusetts who had converted to Christianity and lived in one of the colony's Praying Towns, called Stockbridge. These were settlements for Christian Indians. Stockbridge Indians fought on the side of Massachusetts in many of its wars. Tragically, the reward for this loyalty was to be moved out of Stockbridge and resettled several times. Eventually, most of the tribe ended up in Wisconsin. They are still there today on the Stockbridge-Munsee reservation.[91]

Stevens and his party left Albany on May 13, and arrived in Montreal on May 27, where Governor de Longueil invited them to dinner.[92] Then for weeks nothing happened. Finally, on June 22, Odanak Abenaki showed up in Montreal and came to visit Stevens. "A number of the chiefs of St. Francois Indians came to Montreal, and showed me the respect as to come the same day and pay me a visit." One of these chiefs was Stevens' "old Indian father" who Stevens presented with a hat.[93] Stevens' Indian father may have been Paulperwasomit.[94] In a November 26, 1753 letter to Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire, Colonel Ebenezer Hindsdale recounts a meeting the Colonel had with four Odanak Abenaki Chiefs, one of them being "Paul-per-wa-so-mit," who stated that he intended to travel to Number Four during Christmas, or as soon as the ice was solid enough on the Connecticut River for travel.[95] It is possible that the reason Paulperwasomit wanted to go to Number Four was to visit his English son Stevens.

The chiefs were in Montreal to negotiate peace with Massachusetts. Stevens was to represent Massachusetts in a more formal meeting that would happen the next day after the principals had dined with Governor de Longueil.[96] There are no known instructions in the historical record from Governor Phips as to how Stevens was to represent Massachusetts in this meeting, so it might have been unknown to Massachusetts authorities that the meeting was going to take place.

The spokesman for the Odanak Abenaki was chief Atiwaneto—Atecouando in the modern Abenaki transliteration.[97] In his opening statement, Atecouando stated that he would talk to Stevens as if he were the Governor of Massachusetts. Atecouando said that "Bostonians say that the Abenaki are bad people," but the truth was that Bostonians always attacked the Abenaki and then lied about it. Atecouando went on to express that New England settlers were threatening to move into the Coos.[98] "Our elders have been willing to tolerate you, brothers Englishmen, on the seaboard as far as Sakweto [central Maine]; as that has been decided, we wish it to be so." But the Abenaki demanded that settlers stay out of the Coos and not harvest the beaver and timber there, stating, "brothers, who hath authorized you to have those lands surveyed? We request brother, the Governor of Boston, to have these surveyors punished, as we cannot imagine that they acted by

18th-Century Watercolor of Abenaki Couple by an Unknown Artist
City of Montreal Records Management & Archives, Montreal, Canada

his authority . . . on condition that you will not encroach on those lands we will be at peace, as the King of France is with the King of Great Britain" The Abenaki then gave Stevens a wampum belt to present to the Governor. Atecouando said, "By a belt. I repeat to you, Brothers, by this belt, that it depends on yourselves to be at peace with the Abenakis."[99] Then it was Stevens' turn to speak:

> Brothers, I shall report your message to my Governor, and in order that it may not suffer any alteration I shall take it in writing. He will transmit his answer to the Baron de Longueil as you desire. Brother Abenakis, I ask if the attack which your nation has made these two years, on the English is in consequence of encroachments by the latter on your lands? Are you satisfied with the death of your people on account of your attacks on the English? I know that it is not permitted to go on your lands; those who have been there are young fools, without character."[100]

Atecouando responded that recent actions carried out by the Odanak Abenaki were the killing of two settlers who had encroached on their territory and the capture of two others that "hunted Beaver on our lands."[101] One of those captured was probably John Stark, future hero of the Battle of Bennington. Stark had been captured in April of 1752 on a hunting trip near Rumney, New Hampshire, and taken to Odanak.[102] Then, as if to explain Abenaki actions, Atecouando said, "Listen, Brothers Englishmen, to what our Indian custom among ourselves, with persons we find on land we possess; we should take their game, and if they made any resistance, we would knock them on the head."[103]

The immediate result of this peace council was that, in the days following it, New England captives slowly started streaming in from Odanak. On July 5, Stevens paid the Odanak Abenaki "300 Livres each and ten Livres each charge of bringing them to Montreal," for Seth Webb and Amos Eastman. On July 7, "Mrs. Honor Hancock, a prisoner taken from Jebucto [Halifax, Nova Scotia] was brought to Montreal; which we bought at 300 livres, and 30 livres for the charge of bringing her." On July 13, "John Starks [John Stark] was brought to Montreal by his Indian Master. He was taken a hunting this spring. He is given us for an Indian pony in his place, for which we paid 515 livres."[104]

All told, Stevens and Wheelwright were able to bring eight prisoners with them when they started the trip back to New England on July 14. It must be noted that no native prisoners from Massachusetts were redeemed. Why

this was so was not recorded. The party traveled by both boat and canoe to Crown Point. Stevens' Indian father went with him, possibly both men felt the need for more time together— "we hoisted sail and came to Crown Point about sunrise. I would note that my old Indian master came in the canoe with me."[105] When Stevens got to Albany he stayed for a few days "upon the desire of a number of the St. Francoice Indians, who this day had a sort of treaty with the Dutch Traders." Whether the Odanak Abenaki wanted Stevens to witness the treaty signing so he would report this back to New England authorities or if they wanted him to stay for social reasons, Stevens did not say.

Stevens finally got back to Number Four on August 4, where he "Found my family well, my wheat reaped, etc.," but he was soon to be gone again, this time to the New Hampshire capital of those days, Portsmouth, to petition New Hampshire formally, making the "proposition with the Governor and counsel for the township No. 4."[106] Stevens was successful in this effort, and New Hampshire allowed Number Four to be officially incorporated into the colony. Though most of the residents of Number Four were from Massachusetts and the Bay Colony had sent soldiers to fight for the outpost, the ownership of the upper Connecticut River Valley had been decided years before by King George II. Number Four eventually needed New Hampshire to recognize its existence. The residents of Number Four decided to name their town Charlestown, after Commodore Charles Knowles, who had given Stevens a sword in recognition of his defense of the Fort at Number Four against the Indians and French.[107]

Stevens finally came home to stay, for a while anyway, on September 16, 1752. At Charlestown, the residents were beginning to believe that King George's War was really over, and that a life without violence was possible. The settlers moved out of the cramped conditions of the fort, built new houses on their properties, and farmed their land in peace.[108]

Stevens began cutting down timber for a house, building a road on his property, and harvesting his corn and hay. By November 11, the Stevens house was up, and he went down river to Number Three, (later Walpole, New Hampshire) to help his friend Lieutenant Bellows raise his house and barn.[109] Unfortunately, Stevens' journey into a life of normalcy would not last long.

RENEWAL OF WAR

A year after Stevens' 1752 summit with the Odanak Abenaki in Montreal, it was clear that the peace was in danger of falling apart. A contingent of

Abenaki came to Number Four under a flag of truce to complain that New Hampshire was making plans to settle the Coos. After the meeting, Stevens dashed off a letter to Colonel Israel Williams in Hatfield, Massachusetts, to report what the Abenaki had told him. Williams then sent a letter to Lieutenant Governor Phips detailing what Stevens had reported, stating that the Abenaki had advised that it would mean war if there was New England settlement in the Coos.[110] Governor Phips wrote a letter to New Hampshire Governor Wentworth on April 13, 1753, asking that Wentworth make a proclamation that no roads or settlements would be built in the Coos.[111]

The above-mentioned letters aside, New Hampshire and Massachusetts did not do all they could have to come to an agreement with the Abenaki that would ensure a lasting peace. Two years after Stevens' conference with the Odanak Abenaki there had been no official public response to their demands that New England settlers stay off their lands. The chiefs of the Abenaki Penobscot, Norridgewock, and Arresag bands sent a letter to Governor Shirley, back from England and in charge again, complaining that they had not received a response to the peace offer presented to Stevens in Montreal. Shirley responded with a letter on March 4, 1754, that reads more like a lesson in the art of diplomatic stonewalling than a genuine effort to come to an agreement:

> I have seen the Conference which Capt. Stevens had with some of the Abenakis at Montreal when the French Governor was present. I suppose this is what you refer in your Letter to which, you say you expected an Answer… I don't think it would have been proper to have sent an answer to be communicated to you by the French Governor as you desired. What the English have to say to you must come directly from themselves and not through the French.[112]

Then on the question of settlements Shirley says earlier in the letter:

> [Y]ou don't like the English making settlements so high up the Kennebunk River as some have… If the English have purchased any lands of any of your Ancestors you would not desire to… make void such purchases.[113]

Shirley then promised that he was open to hearing any objections that the Abenaki may have had to these past land deals, and that any disputes could be ironed out when he met with the chiefs. But the Governor made no actual

Portrait of Massachusetts Governor William Shirley by Thomas Hudson (1748)

plans to meet with them. He stated that he was too busy to come to them as they wished he would and made a half-hearted invitation for a delegation of chiefs to come to Boston:

> I have told you that the Affairs of my Government will not allow me to see you so easily; but if you have any matter of moment to communicate which cannot . . . be deferred . . . send one or two of your Chiefs from each tribe up to Boston.[114]

The weak efforts to avoid more armed conflict with the Abenaki and the heightening tensions between France and Britain would bring on a new round of warfare—a war that would settle once and for all which European superpower would control North America.

The French and Indian War reached Charlestown, New Hampshire on the night of August 29, 1754, when Odanak Abenaki raiders stormed Susannah Johnson's house taking her, her family, and two hired hands prisoner. A third hired man was able to escape to the fort and sound the alarm. Stevens immediately raised men to pursue the raiders, but Johnson's parents, fearing this would only lead to their daughter's and her family's death, convinced Stevens to stand down.[115]

Although hostilities had begun, both New Hampshire and Massachusetts wanted to send Stevens again to Canada in 1755 to retrieve more New England captives.[116] New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth wrote Governor Shirley:

> Sir, Having with great difficulty at last prevailed the Assembly to unite with your Excys Government in Employing Cap. Stevens of Charlestown to proceed to Canada in order to redeem the Captives now in the hands of the French and Inds. I must Desire your favor in Despatching him here as soon as possible, the Sec. having wrote him by my order to that purpose. The sum already voted is L 150. Stirling, but I am hoping to get it Enlarged by Capt. Stevens arrival. I am with great Esteem
>
> Sr Your Excellencys most Obedient humble Servant
> B. Wentworth[117]

The mission was called off when it was decided that paying ransoms only encouraged the Indians to keep capturing New Englanders, and that the only effective way to respond to these constant attacks and taking of prisoners was to hit back.[118] It was now clear that the beginning of warfare between France and Britain had quenched any desire to pursue further negotiations with the Abenaki, and the other tribes aligned with France.

Stevens moved his family to Deerfield, Massachusetts, where he hoped they would sit out the French and Indian War in safety. He then recruited a company of men to participate in the attack on Fort Beausejour in New Brunswick. Stevens and his company reported first to Boston then sailed for Canada on May 20, 1755, arriving on June 1. The siege on Fort Beausejour began on June 3. The fort fell on June 16, 1755, and was renamed Fort Cumberland.[119] There Captain Phineas Stevens died of fever on April 6, 1756.[120] It was not explained what caused the fever, but it can be assumed Stevens succumbed to the unsanitary conditions of an eighteenth-century military encampment. He was 49.

Phineas Stevens' life was dedicated to the service of the settlements in the Connecticut River Valley and the effort to bring peace between New England and the Odanak Abenaki who had once kept him captive, who he had grown to care for and respect. Had Stevens lived in more settled times his life would have been ordinary. He would have made a decent living as an independent businessman and taken part in the leadership of his small community, but Stevens did not live in ordinary times. Necessity made him a soldier and diplomat, and his talents exercised on the fringe of New England society brought him to the attention of the ruling elite, who came to depend on his unique abilities.

Stevens did not live to see peace between New England and the Odanak Abenaki. Odanak survived the British conquest of French Canada, despite a brutal raid led by New Hampshire Ranger Robert Rogers that killed many Abenaki and burnt their village to the ground.[121] The Abenaki rebuilt their village at Odanak, persevered through the centuries and survived—they are still there today. The church that Stevens saw, after walking through the gauntlet, was destroyed in the Rogers raid, but was rebuilt in the same spot. Near the church is now a museum exploring the history and traditions of the Abenaki. Both the church and the museum stand on the site of the original village where Stevens lived with his Indian father. The modern town of Odanak has spread back from the bluff overlooking the Saint Francis River.

Charlestown, the "Old No. 4," lies forty miles north of the Massachusetts-Vermont border and is surrounded by river valley farmland and tree-covered hills that slope up from the valley. The fort that Stevens and his fellow settlers constructed long ago rotted into the ground, but in 1960 a replica was built a few miles north of the fort's original sight, and today serves as a portal for visitors who wish to see and feel another time. A time when this peaceful, verdant land was the focal point of the struggle between Massachusetts settlers and Abenaki for survival, a struggle which in the end, they both won.

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A NOTE ABOUT SOURCES

The sources used in this article are regional histories written in the 19th and early 20th centuries, contemporary histories of the period, primary source documents and captivity narratives.

The most helpful regional history was Henry H. Saunderson's *History of Charlestown New Hampshire, The Old No. 4*. The book, written in 1876, gives a thorough account of the founding of the settlement and Stevens' defense of it. Emma Lewis Coleman's two volume work, *New England Captives Carried to Canada*, published in 1926, tells the story of Stevens' captivity and others taken in Indian raids on the New England frontier.

For a more modern and nuanced understanding of the Western Abenaki and their relationship with New England settlers in the Connecticut River Valley, Colin G. Calloway's well-written and researched books, *The Western Abenaki of Vermont 1600-1800* (1994), *Dawnland Encounters: Indians and Europeans in Northern New England* (2000), and *North Country Captives: Selected Narratives of Indian Captivity from Vermont and New Hampshire* (1992)—are crucial in understanding the region and the peoples struggling to control it.

There are a number of documents held by the Massachusetts Archives (all available online) which are essential in understanding Stevens' story. Stevens' letters to and from Governors Shirley and Phips are there, as are the travel journals of his 1749 and 1752 missions to Canada. The account of the 1751 mission seems to be no longer in the archives, but a letter to Stevens requesting he go on the mission is there, and a letter from Governor Phips to Governor Edward Cornwallis of Nova Scotia, dated April 5, 1751, states that Stevens had recently gone to Canada to demand the release of prisoners held there. Emma Lewis Coleman's history tells the story of Stevens' mission and cites his travel journal of the 1751 journey housed in the Massachusetts Archives. It could be that the 1751 journal was lifted at some point by an unscrupulous researcher—an unfortunate, though not uncommon, practice in the era before archive security and digitization. Incidentally, a published version of Stevens' 1752 mission to Canada can be found in the Newton Mereness compilation, *Travels in The American Colonies*.

The two newspapers used in the article were The New England Courant's account of the attack on the Stevens family in Rutland in the August 19, 1723 edition, and Stevens' telling of his defense of the fort at Number Four in the April 27, 1747 edition of The Boston Evening Post. Both eighteenth

century newspapers are available online. For those interested in reading the entire transcript of the Odanak Abenaki peace conference with Phineas Stevens it can be seen in *Documents relative to the Colonial history of the State of New York*, Volume 10. This is also available online.

Accounts written by settlers of their captivity by Indians were popular in the 1600s and 1700s. Susannah Johnson, a native of Charlestown, New Hampshire, was captured in 1754 by the Odanak Abenaki and she gives a detailed narrative of her experiences, and life in Odanak. There is also Caleb Stark's recounting of his grandfather's, General John Stark, narrative of his experience with the Odanak Abenaki.

Gordan M. Day's book, *The Identity of The Saint Francis Indians* (1981), is a crucial component of the story. Day spent 30 years of his life studying the Odanak Abenaki, tracing their origins and learning their language. Eric B. Emery's excellent master's thesis, "New England Captives in Canada and the Ransom Missions of Phineas Stevens, 1749, 1751 and 1752" was very helpful in the research and execution of this article. It is available at the University of Vermont's Library Research Annex. As are various financial and military records of Stevens. Account books and a deed to the Phineas Stevens homestead in Charlestown, New Hampshire, can be found at the New York Historical Society.

HJM

Notes

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