

2011 State of Rhode Island Official Proclamation of Gaspee Days

1. Opening Remarks and Proclamation by RI Rep. Joseph McNamara
2. Awarding of Certificates and Huzzahs
3. The Indictment of Nathaniel Easterbrooks

Scene: It is the summer of 1773 in the City of Providence, where has been arrested for his part in the attack and burning of the *Gaspee*. The British have discovered that Nathaniel Easterbrooks, age 27, took part in the burning of the British revenue schooner, HMS *Gaspee*, in June of the previous year, 1772. He is now to be indicted for his crimes against His Majesty, King George the Third.

The British government held a royally-appointed commission of inquiry into the facts surrounding the destruction of one of their warships, but due to Rhode Island citizens refusing to cooperate and testify at the hearings, no formal indictments were ever handed down

To correct this historical oversight today, a descendant of Nathaniel Easterbrooks is to be indicted by a British Admiralty Judge for acts of treason, and other high crimes against His Majesty, King George III. The result of these charges would be to have Easterbrooks shipped off to England for trial, since the British government was very distrustful that any local trial in Rhode Island could possibly result in a conviction. If found guilty of treason in London, the punishment for any of these men would likely be hanging, followed by being drawn-and-quartered, followed by beheading, all in a public spectacle. This idea of a person being shipped off to England for trial (as were to be any discovered Gaspee attackers), rather than given a trial locally by peers, alarmed the Americans greatly and led directly to the formation of the permanent Committees of Correspondence and to the First Continental Congress. It was these unifying actions that first began the movement towards American independence. By now bringing formal charges we are actually recognizing this man as a true American patriot.

Nathaniel Easterbrooks (c1745-1821) was involved in a maritime-related profession in the Warren-Bristol area, possibly as a shipbuilder or dockworker. He was one of the 11 or 12 other known men from Bristol who rowed across the bay to join up with the other eight boatloads of men sent down from Providence to attack the Gaspee.

Daniel Hitchcock, Esq. was born in Springfield, MA c1740, educated at Yale, and practiced law in Providence. He was a co-conspirator to the Gaspee Affair, having had witnessed the men gathering to burn the *Gaspee*, but who later denied having any knowledge of the incident to the Royally-appointed *Gaspee* investigatory commission. He was among the first to organize an Army battalion from Providence to fight for independence from the British. He fought nobly for this cause and was wounded in the Battle of Trenton in 1777, succumbing to the combination of his wounds, exposure, and tuberculosis. He was personally eulogized by George Washington as a hero of the American Revolution.

More info available:

- Biography Notes of Nathaniel Easterbrooks: <http://gaspee.org/NathanielEasterbrooks.html>
- Gaspee Days Committee: <http://www.gaspee.COM>

- Gaspee Virtual Archives: <http://www.gaspee.ORG>
- Pawtuxet Rangers: <http://pawtuxetRangers.com>
- Gaspee Media Center: <http://gaspee.com/MediaCenter.htm>
- Steven Park, PhD, Professor of Maritime History, University of Connecticut, steven.park@uconn.edu who wrote his PhD dissertation on the Gaspee Affair.

Gaspee Proclamation Script Final-05-05-2011

Cast:

1. **Master of Ceremonies:** RI Representative Joseph McNamara, dressed in Colonial suit.
2. **Nathaniel Easterbrooks:** [Pronounced EASTER-BROOKS] Indictee. (played by Chuck Easterbrooks dressed in colonial shipyard clothing)
3. **Daniel Hitchcock, Esq.:** Defense Counsel (played by Dr. John Concannon, dressed in colonial professional attire).
4. **John Andrews, Esq.,** Judge of the Court of Vice Admiralty within the Colony of Rhode Island (Played by John Currier. Dressed in opulent admiralty blue Royal Navy uniform with powdered wig): To formally indict Nathaniel Easterbrooks.
5. **Royal Marines [1 & 2]** (Played by TBA two Pawtuxet Rangers in redcoats): Sent to assist Judge Andrews in enforcing British Vice-Admiralty justice in Rhode Island.
6. **Crowd of Rhode Island colonists** (Played by assorted Gaspee Days Committee members and E. T. Wyman Elementary School students in colonial dress): Carrying protest signs:
7. **Props:**
 - Protest signs, 3 or 4
 - Local Trial by Peerf!
 - Free Easterbrookf!
 - The Gaspee deferved it!
 - The King *if* a Fink!
 - Chains for Easterbrooks
 - Parchment scroll from which Currier reads indictments (actually includes his script lines). (*Currier to bring*)
 - Parchment scroll to show as the Charter of RI by King Charles II. (actually includes their script lines for Easterbrooks and Concannon).

McNamara:

- Welcoming remarks, off-the-cuff:
- Recognizes and thanks students from **the E. T. Wyman Elementary School** in the Gaspee Plateau neighborhood of Warwick.
- The Wyman PTA produces the **Walk in Historic Pawtuxet Village** that will this year be held on **Saturday, May 21st**
- **Officially proclaiming** on behalf of the State of Rhode Island the opening of the **Gaspee Days Celebrations**.
- Gaspee Days Committee for **46 years since 1966**.
- The Gaspee Days Committee is a civic-minded nonprofit organization that operates many community events in and around Pawtuxet Village, including the famous Gaspee Days Parade each June. These events are all designed to commemorate the 1772 burning of the hated British revenue schooner, HMS Gaspee, by Rhode Island patriots as America's 'First Blow for Freedom' TM
- This year's Gaspee Days Annual **Arts & Crafts Festival** to be held over **Memorial Day Weekend**.
- And the **Gaspee Days Parade** on **Saturday June 11th** at 10 am.
- Many other Gaspee celebrations and events (holds up brochure of Gaspee Events).
- Thank yous, and presentations of awards and huzzahs
- Introduces skit: "**The Indictment of Nathaniel Easterbrooks**"
- **By pleading guilty** to the Admiralty Judge's accusations, this man will be **acknowledged as patriots** to the cause of American independence.
- Introduces **British Admiralty Judge Andrews** to indict Easterbrooks for his crimes against the Crown.
- Cues the start of the skit:

THE INDICTMENT OF NATHANIEL EASTERBROOKS

Royal Marine 1: OY YEA, OY YEA, OY YEA! BE SILENT AND UPSTANDING! THE COURT OF VICE-ADMIRALTY WITHIN THE COLONY OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS IS HEREBY IN SESSION, THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE JOHN ANDREWS, PRESIDING!

Andrews: (*Andrews, considering himself superior in position under the Crown of King George, ignores platitudes and proceeds to step forward. He carries a haughty, condescending attitude.*)

Andrews: BRING THE ACCUSED FORWARD!

(*Easterbrooks, in chains, and his defense counsel Hitchcock, flanked to either side by Royal Marines. Further back is a crowd of Rhode Island colonists all vocally supportive of the this man, holding protest signs, and making the occasional insulting remark at the judge.*)

Andrews: (*looks at the indictee with disdain*) AND WHAT IS THIS?

Easterbrooks: I am Nathaniel Easterbrooks of Bristol, and I have committed NO offense that should bring me HERE!

Hitchcock: Counsel for the Defense, Daniel Hitchcock, sir. It seems my client wishes to plead *nolo contendere*, your honor.

Andrews: WELL, it is the treasonous behavior of the whole lot of you that brings you all here today before me. (points his finger at Hitchcock), And you too, as well, Hitchcock!

(*Andrews proceeds to open a large parchment scroll from which he reads the charges.*)

NATHANIEL EASTERBROOKS, FREE-MAN OF THE SO-CALLED COLONY OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS, YOU, AS A KING'S SUBJECT, ARE HEREBY CHARGED WITH THE FOLLOWING TREASONOUS CRIMES AGAINST HIS MAJESTY, KING GEORGE THE THIRD.

TO WIT:

FIRST; YOU DID OPENLY CONSPIRE WITH THE KNOWN REVOLUTIONARIES FROM BRISTOL, ROWED ACROSS THE BAY, AND JOINED WITH OTHER KNOWN CRIMINALS FROM PROVIDENCE IN ATTACKING THE GASPEE SCHOONER AS SHE LIE AGROUND ON NAMQUID POINT IN WARWICK.

SECOND; YOU WERE PARTY TO THIS ATTACK ON THE GASPEE THAT GRIEVOUSLY WOUNDED HER COMMANDER, LIEUTENANT DUDINGSTON. THEN YOU TOOK PART IN SETTING FIRE TO THE GASPEE, AND BLOWING HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP TO SMITHEREENS!

NOW, YOU PIRATICAL SCUM, WHAT SAY YOU?! GUILTY OR INNOCENT?

Easterbrooks: I have committed NO offense over which YOU have any authority. But nonetheless, I will plead GUILTY AS CHARGED! (*Easterbrooks shake his chains*)

Wyman Students: MAY A POX BE UPON YOU, AND YOUR REDCOAT MARINES!

Andrews: CRAVEN COWARDS AND TRAITORS, THE LOT OF YOU! NATHANIEL EASTERBROOKS, YOUR GUILTY PLEA WILL BE ENTERED INTO THE RECORD FOR ALL POSTERITY!

Hitchcock: SIR, YOUR COURT HATH NO VENUE HERE. UNDER THE CHARTER GRANTED BY KING CHARLES THE SECOND TO OUR COLONY'S FOUNDER, ROGER WILLIAMS, (*holds up scroll of the Charter*) THE PEOPLE OF RHODE ISLAND HAVE BEEN GRANTED THE RIGHT TO TAKE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS ALL MATTERS OF JUSTICE WITHIN THE COLONY. WE, AS ENGLISHMEN, INSIST ON THE RIGHT OF PERSONS ACCUSED TO BE TRIED LOCALLY, AND BY A JURY OF PEERS, NOT TO BE SHIPPED OFF TO A FOREIGN LAND FOR TRIAL. THESE PROCEEDINGS ARE BUT THOSE OF A KANGAROO COURT. THEY HAVE NO AUTHORITY WITHIN OUR BOUNDARIES.

Andrews: HOW DARE YOU INSULT MY AUTHORITY! I WILL HAVE YOU **BOTH** THROWN IN IRONS! I WILL HAVE YOU TWO SHIPPED OFF TO LONDON TO BE HUNG, DRAWN-AND-QUARTERED AS TRAITORS TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING!

SURELY, THIS ROGUE ISLAND COLONY WILL LEAD REVOLUTION AGAINST THE CROWN! MARINES, TAKE THE PRISONERS AWAY!

Easterbrooks and Hitchcock: (*Cuss loudly while being led away in the arms of the Royal Marines.*)

Wyman Students: (*Without fighting, block the Marines, release the prisoners from their chains, and cheer.*)

The End of Skit

McNamara: Thanks cast in order:

- Members of the **Gaspee Days Committee** (*members bow/curtsy*).
- Students of the **E. T. Wyman Elementary School in Warwick**. (boys bow and girls curtsy)
- Royal Marines 1 & 2: Played by **To Be Cast**, members of the **Pawtuxet Rangers**, Rhode Island Militia (*both give salute*).
- Daniel Hitchcock, Esq. Played by **Dr. John Concannon**, President of the Gaspee Days Committee. (coughs, then holds out his hand)
- Vice-Admiralty Justice John Andrews: Played by **John Currier**, fellow member of the Pawtuxet Rangers and Official Archivist for the City of *Warwick* (*Currier gives a condescending sneer, then bows*)
- Nathaniel Easterbrooks, Played by seventh generation descendant, **Chuck Easterbrooks**, of Warwick, RI. (*gives a V for victory, then bows*)

McNamara:

- Thanks everyone for attending.
- Please pick up a copy of the Gaspee Days brochure
- More info always available on the Gaspee Days Committee web sites at www.gaspee.com
- Press kits are available