

Athur S. Phillips

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# THE PHILLIPS HISTORY OF FALL RIVER

# → Fascicle I →

The Aborigines

Explorations and Early Settlements

The Freemen's and Pocasset Purchases

Boundary Disputes

*by* ARTHUR SHERMAN PHILLIPS 1941

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This, the first fascicle of the "HISTORY OF FALL RIVER" was finished and the author intended to publish it without waiting for the completion of the second book. For this reason the manuscript was placed in the printer's hands. It is the hope of the editor, that from the many recorded investigations and copious notes of the author, the second volume may be prepared at some not too distant date.

Mr. Phillips would wish to acknowledge the assistance he has received in the preparation. The first person to be so recognized would undoubtedly be his faithful secretary for many years, Mrs. Florence E. Bentley. Mrs. Helen R. Porter and Mr. William E. Emery were at times, in the employ of Mr. Phillips engaged in research and recording. By correspondence with individuals and organizations, in personal interviews and conversations, many helpful facts and suggestions were received. To mention the names of some would slight many unknown. Recognitions will be frequently found in the text.

The *Editor* is very fortunate in having Miss Alice Brayton assume the responsibility of indexing this fascicle and wishes to express his gratitude to her for this difficult undertaking.

EDITOR.

October 18, 1943.

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#### ARTHUR SHERMAN PHILLIPS

ARTHUR SHERMAN PHILLIPS was born December 13, 1865, in East Bridgewater, Mass. His parents were Mark Phillips and Susan Sherman Phillips, nee Pratt. The family removed from East Bridgewater to Fall River in 1872, first establishing a home on South Main Street (opposite Morgan Street); then at 605 Second Street (opposite Branch Street), and later at 377 Prospect Street, corner of Grove.

The first school he attended was in Liberty Hall, on the northeast corner of South Main and Morgan Streets; after that Morgan Street School till grammar school graduation in 1879; then the Fall River High School, first in the Davenport School on Branch Street and then in the Foster Hooper School on June Street, where he graduated with the class of 1883. He entered Williams College in the fall of 1883 and graduated with the class of 1887.

The same month that he graduated from college, he moved to Lowell, where he entered the employ of the Washington Mills Co. (afterwards the American Woolen Co.) as assistant to the bookkeeper. He was with this company for three years and for the same period he was in charge of the bookkeeping department in the Lowell Evening High School, and after that of a similar department in the Fall River Evening High School. While in Lowell he also tutored in mathematics and started a course of legal study with Frederick Fisher.

In 1890 he came back to Fall River and became a law student and general bookkeeper, typist and aid in the law office of Morton and Jennings, where the work was arduous, interminable but worth while. The work hours of one day often ended on the next day following. He was given much personal attention by the elder partner and was always coached and taught most efficiently, with plenty of practical illustrative work. He was admitted as a member of the bar in June 1891 and in the fall of the same year enrolled in Boston University Law School and was graduated in the 1892 class with a degree of LL.B., "magna cum laude". He was the prize essayist. Almost immediately he re-entered the Jennings office and worked on the defence of Lizzie Borden. For nearly a year he was the "trigger man" in collecting evidence, for which he gained legal recognition.

During the year the associated firm was Jennings and Brayton and when James M. Morton, Jr. came into the firm, Mr. Phillips opened an office of his own in Granite Block and shortly after associated with William E. Fuller, Jr. as Phillips and Fuller, which firm occupied rooms over the Union Savings Bank on Main Street and subsequently at 22 Bedford Street, till Mr. Fuller's health failed. Mr. Jennings had assisted Mr. Phillips in the organization of the Lafayette Co-operative Bank. He was engaged as counsel for the bank and held that position for fifty-three years. As personal counsel for Earl P. Charlton, he handled large financial and business interests, followed by similar work for the F. W. Woolworth Company, from the date of its organization, in which he assisted, till his retirement in 1938.

In religious beliefs, he had Congregational tendencies, for he described himself as a follower of Mark Hopkins. As an educator in addition to teaching, he was for many years treasurer and trustee of the Bradford Durfee Textile School and paid some attention to literary work, particularly on historical and legal lines. For recreation, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, golf and farming on his estate at Bristol Ferry.

Mr. Phillips was a member of the United States Supreme Court and of Circuit and District United States Courts in Massachusetts and Rhode Island; also of the State courts in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He tried cases in Maine, New York and Pennsylvania and associated in considerable legal work in many other states. He was city solicitor of Fall River in 1899, under former Mayor Amos M. Jackson.

This brief sketch of the life of the author of this history was written in the first person by him, at about the time of his retirement from active legal practice. This first volume of "A History of Fall River" was complete at the time of his demise. Only a very few minor changes have been made in the text. The book is a record of years of most painstaking and exhaustive research and will serve posterity as an accurate reference for the early history of this region.

Arthur S. Phillips died March 18, 1941, in his seventy-sixth year. Simple funeral services were held in the Unitarian Church at East Bridgewater. He was buried in the same lot, in the East Bridgewater cemetery with his parents, his grandparents and his great grandparents. In an adjoining grave yard lies his Revolutionary soldier ancestor, his great grandfather.

#### A HISTORY OF FALL RIVER

THIS PART CONTAINS A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY, FROM THE EARLIEST RECORDS AND TRUSTWORTHY TRADITION, PRIOR TO ITS SEPARATION OR INTEGRATION FROM OTHER LANDS, OF THE TERRITORY OF WHICH FALL RIVER NOW FORMS A PART.

It discusses the status of the Indian tribal structure from the time when white men first landed on these shores. It contains a review of the Indian tribes and their relation with the discoverers and early settlers. It sketches the colonial political divisions and their subdivisions insofar as the territory now occupied by Fall River was an integral part of the same. It includes many records relating to the Freemen's, Sakonet, Puncatest and Pocasset Purchases. It refers briefly to the other settlements on Narragansett Bay at Providence, Portsmouth, Newport and Bristol. It records several land divisions among private and corporate owners since that time.



#### A HISTORY OF FALL RIVER

#### Scope of the Work

This story must be more comprehensive than would at first seem necessary, because the territory which includes Fall River was for a long time included in other jurisdictions, and while so included the story of the events which occurred in those other jurisdictions and applied to Fall River territory, are a part of Fall River's history. For instance until King Philip's war (1676) a large part of the city was Indian territory, not assigned to any town. The Pocasset Indian tribe, under direct control of the Pokanoket nation, occupied and was in control of a large territory which included all of Fall River. We shall make considerable study of those Indians and of their history, so far as applicable to our own. A part of this Fall River territory was organized into the town of Freetown, and the balance was included in the Pocasset Purchase which also included the town of Tiverton. Since many of the activities which controlled either of these towns related also to Fall River territory we shall consider them.

After the Indian war, when the colony sold these lands to pay the debts and obligations of the war, purchasers and settlers came largely from other towns, many from Portsmouth, some from Duxbury and Plymouth, and of these many prominent men purchased land for their relatives, for their own homes and for investment. We must inquire about many of these in order to determine what tendencies and what influences of either a civil or religious character came in this way to affect the lives of our early settlers. Religious activities are an important part of every history. Distinction between the influence of the Congregational (Orthodox and Colonial) churches, and those of many other societies which settled here must be studied at considerable length due to the large number of these churches and their varied influences. The vast number of records which have been examined make it necessary that some subjects of importance be only lightly and perhaps insufficiently considered and abstracted.

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#### Chapter I

#### THE ADVENTURERS WHO VISITED OUR SHORES IN

Norse visits and colonization (Leif Ericson and others)
The Florentine voyage of Hieronimo de Verrazano
Miauel Cortereal

ANCIENT TIMES

#### Norse Visits and Colonization

Prior to the preparation of accurate maps and before places had permanent and definite names and particularly before 1620 those adventurers and explorers who visited Narragansett Bay described conditions and events so differently that a skeptical historian might question the accuracy of their reports. For that reason I have recorded events which I believe occurred prior to the landing of the Mayflower and have stated my source of information if the stated facts seem in doubt.

We know that New England had been visited by Europeans for several centuries before the voyages of Columbus, but although we know the dates of many of these visits and have a rather detailed record of the sections visited and the names then given to these sections, a subsequent rediscovery of these places finds these names so changed and the description of them so modified (even though changed slightly and then only by changed vistas) that we are often left in doubt as to the sequence of time of debarkation at the localities under consideration.

Deductions from available evidence lead to the conclusion that three major expeditions sojourned in the Narragansett Bay region prior to 1620, and that the influence of each of them can be rather definitely traced. Many other navigators quite certainly came to these shores bringing and leaving behind influences which are less tangible.

That very competent historian, Professor Wilfred H. Munro of Brown University, in his "Story of Mount Hope Lands" (1880) says that in the year 1000 A. D. Leif Ericson sailed up the Pocasset (now Sakonet) river and landed on the shores of Mount Hope Bay; that his crew consisted of

thirty-five men from Greenland; that at first they visited Newfoundland, then went to Markland, or the "land of the woods" (Nova Scotia), then to Nantucket "where the dew was sweet"; and finally that they landed at a place "where a river flowed out of a lake" (i. e. Mount Hope Bay with the Sakonet river flowing out of it). This they called Vinland.

From Leif's record that the shortest day of the year was nine hours (7:30 to 4:30) Munro fixes with a seemingly proper allowance for the Norse methods and means of computation and using the Skalholt or Icelandic time (twelve decades to the hundred) that the shortest day of the year (October 17th) can be nine hours long only in latitude 41°-24′-10″. a latitude which is almost exactly that of Mount Hope. Leif Ericson returned to Greenland after his second summer, after which his brother Thorwald visited Vinland and spent three winters in the huts (Leif's booths) which had been erected by his brother, but Thorwald was shot by the natives (Skraelings) and his party returned to Greenland in 1005. The records of this voyage are not minute. In 1007 another Norse voyageur (one hundred fifty-one men, seven with their wives) in three ships proceeded to colonize an island in Buzzard's Bay. They brought cattle with them but few provisions, and as the winters were extremely cold, and the forests and waters were frozen, they barely survived. They did however move to Leif's "river flowing through a lake" in 1008 and there erected houses additional to those which Leif had built, found the following winter mild and without snow so that the cattle lived unhoused, but they too had trouble with the natives and most of them withdrew to Buzzard's Bay and thence home in 1010. Norse records show other voyages to Vinland. Some of the navigators did not return. Freydis, with her husband (she a sister of both Leif and Thorwald), was there in 1011, and it is presumed from an Icelandic record of 1121 that Bishop Eric sailed to Vinland in 1021 to visit a colony which had been established there. It thus appears that the "Hop" Colony became permanent. No later "saga" has yet been discovered which gives more reliable information. Doubtless the mingling of races, during the five hundred years which intervened before Verrazano landed here in 1524, is responsible for the unusual stature and mental qualities which were then possessed by the local Indians who were the progenitors of our powerful Narragansett tribes and of the good old Sachem Massasoit. I have consulted the Norse "sagas" contained in the copy of 1860 which is called "Flateyjarbok". The original manuscript finished in 1387 is called "Codex Flatoensis", and is preserved in Copenhagen. No later "Sagas"

relating to this subject have been found, and the dark ages of Icelandic history followed almost immediately.

Doubt has been cast upon this story because it states that sand bars existed across the mouth of the Sakonet river to the extent that ships were obliged to wait for a high tide before they could enter. Such bars do not now exist. Babcock¹ says that the shifting of sand bars has occurred all along the eastern coast and that bays and entrances to rivers have changed within the interim of a thousand years.

Norse reports speak of very severe winters in Buzzard's Bay; and of winters at "Hop" when the cattle were comfortable in the open during the entire winter. This is not inconsistent with our present varying winters. We often have little snow and grasses and winter crops sometimes survive the season. These conditions seem to corroborate a conclusion that this Norse exploration must have been of land south of Cape Cod.

My theory of Norse visits to Narragansett Bay has been and doubtless will further be criticized, due to a fair question as to whether the proof is sufficient. I am writing of ancient times before written histories were numerous. I am therefore appending a further statement showing some corroboration.

The Viking explorers were a most rugged, courageous and adventurous people. In the ninth and tenth centuries the seas were dotted with their little open boats. They settled Iceland, crossed to Greenland and colonized Vinland. The ruins of their settlements are often discovered by explorers in latitudes which had seldom been visited (e. g. by MacMillan in north latitude 56). When they discovered America no one was prepared to make a permanent settlement there. Not long after the year 1000 a great historian of Bremen by name "Adam" wrote of their activities and his is the first reference to a "Vinland" which they had discovered, so that our first written reference to the voyages of the Vikings comes from Germany.

The "Pageant of America", compiled by the Oxford University Press and copyrighted by the Yale University Press in 1925, shows at page 72 a drawing of the "conjectural routes" of the Norsemen from 800 to 1000 A. D., and, for use in this history only, I have been allowed to sketch the supposed path of these "Norse Sea Rovers". This first recorded reference to Vinland by Adam of Bremen can be found in his history in the "Staats Bibliothek" in Vienna. It was written long before the sagas or legends of early Scandinavian literature were collected; yet for many years story-telling

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> William H. Babcock "Early Norse Visits to North America"; Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 59, No. 19 (Washington 1913).

introduced into Iceland from Norway had served to entertain the educational centers of Iceland.

The "Flatey" book of sagas was written by one Pordarson, not earlier than 1387, so that the sagas and tales then collected were a version of Vinland voyages which had occurred nearly 400 years before that date.

I have been able to acquire and to study carefully a copy of this "Flatey-jarbok", and of the "HAUK Book", containing a photostatic reproduction of the Icelandic text, and of its English translation, —both being manuscripts from the Vatican Library, and accompanied by Papal letters of approval and Chancellor's certification. They seem to confirm my conclusions.

#### The Voyage of Verrazano

The second major expedition which visited the Narragansett Bay region was that of Hieronimo (or Govanni) de Verrazano, a Florentine in the service of the King of France. After visiting Block Island he proceeded to another place which he says was fifteen leagues distant, and entered what he termed a very excellent harbor. He called it Refugio. It was the harbor of Newport, R. I.

Historians do not agree as to the accuracy of the detailed report of this trip which Verrazano made to Francis I, the then king of France, claiming that it was much colored in the interest of the Adventurer. His visit here was in May 1524, and his report was dated July 8, 1524. Its authenticity is accepted by those who believe that he made a substantially accurate description of the places visited. These include Munro in his "Mount Hope Lands" (chapter 2) and Bicknell in his "History of Rhode Island". The latter published an elaborate translation from original sources. A learned and elaborate memoir of this visit was also prepared by J. Carson Brevoort Esq. from Italian texts filed with the New York Historical Society. This is also found in the Archivio Storico Italiano. Portions of the story were extremely criticized in a publication by Henry C. Murphy in 1872, he claiming that many details are either unverified or untrue.

Verrazano says that before entering Refugio he saw about twenty small boats filled with people who approached his ship with various cries and wonderment, yet they would not approach nearer than fifty paces; that they looked over the structure of the ship and the person and dress of the crew, and cried out their delight in unison; that they were inspired by signs with a measure of confidence and then came near enough to accept tokens of bells, glasses and toys at which they laughed and then came aboard without fear, among them two kings who were more attractive in form and stature

than can be described, one being about forty years old and the other about twenty-four; that the elder king had a deer-skin, decorated with many embroideries wrapped around his nude body, and his hair bound behind with various bands, his head bare with vari-colored stones hanging in a large chain around his neck; that the younger king was like him in appearance; that the people were the fairest ("colore bianchissimo") and their costumes the handsomest that were seen on the voyage; that they exceeded the Europeans in size, were of very fair complexion, some inclined more to a white and others to a tawny color; that their faces were sharp and their hair long and black, and evidenced by its adornments the exercise of great care; that their eyes were black and keen, their demeanor gentle and attractive, with nothing to suggest bodies other than that of such good proportion as belong to well-formed men; that the women were graceful, handsome and attractive in dress and manners, but with no clothing other than the ornamental deer skins, though some wore rich lynx skins over their arms, various ornaments on their heads, with braided hair hanging to their breasts; that the married people wore ornaments in their ears, hanging down in oriental fashion.

Verrazano reports that he saw pieces of wrought copper which were deemed more precious than gold inasmuch as they apparently disliked a yellow color, valuing rather articles of blue or red; that they preferred gifts of bells, azure and toys which they could hang from ears or necks and did not value silks or draperies nor implements of steel or iron, not even admiring the weapons of the crew; nor did they like looking glasses, which they returned with smiles; that they were very generous in giving of what they had.

Verrazano also reports that during the fifteen days he remained at Refugio, the natives came every day, often with their wives of whom they were very careful, not allowing them on board the ship but leaving them on land for their safety while the king would remain on shipboard for a long time.

Verrazano reports that he visited the interior of the land for a distance of five or six leagues and found it to be pleasant, adapted to cultivation with large open spaces free from trees and so fertile as to yield excellent crops; that there were apples, plums, filberts and other fruits, but that the animals differed from those of Europe, deer, lynx and others being captured in considerable numbers by snares and by bows, the latter being the principal weapon, the arrows being beautifully made with points of emery, jasper, marble and sharp stones instead of iron; that these sharp stones were also

used to fell trees and to construct boats from a single log, which were hollowed out with remarkable skill and were of size to seat a dozen persons; that the oars were short, with broad blades and used with force of the arms as carefully and as speedily as wished; that their dwellings were circular in form, ten or twelve paces in circumference, and made of split logs, and covered with straw nicely put on and ample to keep out wind and rain; that the whole family dwelt in a single house, sometimes twenty-five to thirty people, their food being pulse, which is better and more carefully cultivated here than elsewhere; that their sowing was governed by the moon; that they hunted and fished and were long lived, curing themselves with the heat of the fire, yet when they died the relatives joined in weeping, mingled with song, for a long while.

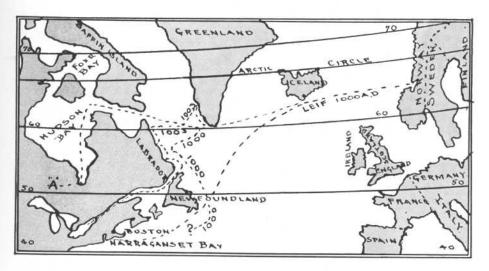
Verrazano could not learn about their religious faith, but judged that they had no knowledge of a "First Cause" and that they did not worship any heavenly body. I accept his statement of historical facts as true.

#### Miguel Cortereal - Dighton Rock

The third major visit of Europeans to Narragansett Bay is that of the expedition which probably settled on Assonet Neck in the present town of Berkley, Massachusetts. This site was formerly a part of Dighton and the settlement was at or near the so-called "Dighton Rock". The inscriptions on this rock enter very largely into the probable location of the settlement. A wide variety of inscriptions are carved upon Dighton Rock, some of them shallow and probably made by Indians or by idle sojourners, but a few of them are ancient and deeply carved. Goodwin<sup>2</sup> says that these must have been cut with metallic tools by a person of skill. Many rocks on the Atlantic coast have carved inscriptions (petrographs). There is one at Machias Bay in the State of Maine, and there are a dozen or more along the shores of Narragansett Bay. While Dighton Rock is the more prominent and best known of these, there are inscriptions of great interest near the "Bristol Narrows", which were described by Professor Munro in the appendix of his book of Mount Hope Lands. Photographs and a cast of the petrographs on Dighton Rock were at a very early date sent for study to antiquarians in Denmark. Goodwin says they held these materials for more than a century before concluding that the inscriptions were not Norse.

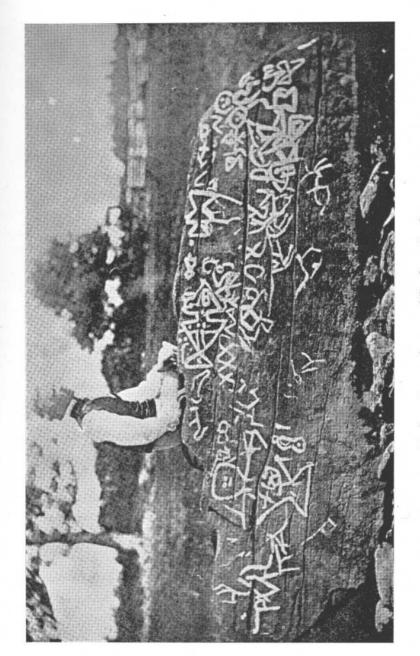
The Indians in the east had many pieces of metal, some formed into wrought tools, and there is an exhibition of these at the George Haile Free

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Goodwin was the author of the "Pilgrim Republic" published in 1920. It is a fine "Historical Review of the Colony of New Plymouth."



Viking Voyagers





Earliest Picture known of Dighton Rock

Library in Warren. There is a carved rock in Tiverton situate on the shore about five miles south of Stone Bridge; another one in Portsmouth, R. I. and still another in Warwick, and the details of all of these are collected in the publications of Professor Edmund Burke Delabarre, who was professor of psychology at Brown University. His book entitled "Dighton Rock", published in 1928 is exhaustive, evidences remarkable skill and care in its preparation, and his argumentative conclusions (Chapter XVIII) should be accepted by a historian as probably true.

Other publications by this same author, viz: "The middle period of Dighton Rock History"; "A Recent History of Dighton Rock" (See Mass. Colonial Society Records, vols. 19 and 20 for the year 1917), his contributions to the Journal of American History and to the Rhode Island Historical Society, and his demand as a lecturer, manifest his deep study and knowledge of this subject, and the general public interest in his conclusions shows a substantial adoption of his viewpoint, as follows:—that Gaspar Cortereal with several ships from Lisbon explored the coast of Newfoundland in 1501; that he sent his boats back but did not return himself; that his brother Miguel set out in search for him leaving Lisbon on May 10, 1502; that he went to Newfoundland and sent his ships out singly, each to search a different coast and to return to the rendezvous on August 20th; that Miguel did not return and that after a considerable delay the other ships returned to Lisbon.

Professor Delabarre concludes that Miguel, in his search, came to Narragansett Bay and became marooned there, and that Miguel is the author of certain of the petrographs which were inscribed on Dighton Rock. In his book entitled "Dighton Rock" Professor Delabarre exhibits photographs of these inscriptions (see pages 169 and 172). The words "Miguel Cortereal" rather clearly appear, but the other inscriptions, though deeply cut, (including the date "1511") have been carefully examined by those who were anxious to discover in them writings of definite importance, and who have been unable to concur with Professor Delabarre, that they furnish a definite proof. (See "Harvard Historical Monographs XIV", printed in 1940, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison, at note No. 118 on page 72.)

For seventy-five years after 1511 no white man, except Verrazano's party, is known to have visited Narragansett Bay, and by that time recollection of Miguel had ceased. We assume that he must have died prior to 1524, else Verrazano's party which explored five or six leagues inland would have found him.

Of course Miguel might have visited Dighton and might have caused these carvings without remaining as a settler, yet the word "dux" indicates that he was a ruler over some Indian people there, and that the inscriptions were leisurely done. There is some slight corroboration of this probability in the survival of two Indian traditions or myths. The first is reported by Danforth as of 1680 to the effect that many years before there came sailing up the Assonet river a wooden house and men of another country who fought the Indians and slew their sachem. The other tradition lately reported by Kendall is that in days long past white men arrived in Assonet Neck like a bird, took natives as hostages and fresh water from a spring; that the natives attacked the white men at the spring and slew many, whereupon thunder and lightning came from the bird and the hostages escaped. The spring which feeds a brook near Dighton Rock is called "White Man's Spring".

Professor Delabarre says that Cortereal was then too old to proceed further with his adventures (doubtless his outlit was damaged), but that by his high qualities of leadership he was able to hold the power of the deceased sachem as the word "dux" indicates; and that the petrographs and the seal were engraved at a place where they would likely be seen by other adventurers, in order to show where Cortereal might be found.

The Indian word "hassam-et" means "near the rock" and the word

Assonet is its corruption or its English synonym.

I believe that Professor Delabarre has presented facts which a historian should accept, and that the basis of his theories so thoroughly edited and his arguments so forcefully put, lend verisimilitude to his conclusions.