

Colonial Tales About Uncas

Sachem's Head, Guilford

The harbor in Guilford lies a short distance south of the town center. It is a poor thing, shallow, and encumbered with many rocks. But then about two miles westward from it is an excellent though small harbor. It is landlocked on all sides but the southwest; the entrance or mouth narrow. It is well known by coasters. It is called "Sachem's Head". It may not be unentertaining to mention the occasion of its taking this extraordinary name.

After the Pequod Indians were driven from their forts at Mystick River, they fled to the westward towards Fairfield, the English pursued them, and though most of the forces went from the fort at Saybrook by water, a number of soldiers with Uncas and his Indians scoured the shores near the sea, lest any of the Pequods should lurk there. Not a great way from this harbor, they came across a Pequod sachem with a few Indians, whom they pursued. As the south side of the harbor is formed by a long narrow point of land, the Pequods went on to this point, hoping their pursuers would have passed them. But Uncas knew Indian's craft, and ordered some of his men to search that point. The Pequods, perceiving that they were pursued, swam over the mouth of the harbor, which is narrow. But they were waylaid, and taken as they landed. The sachem was sentenced to be shot to death. Uncas shot him with an arrow, cut off his head, and stuck it up in the crotch of a large oak tree near the harbor, where the skull remained for a great many years. Thus from this extraordinary incident, the name was adopted to the harbor.

Sachem's Plain, Norwich

In the eastern part of this town is a place called "Sachem's Plain". This place is rendered memorable by the battle between Uncas and Miantonimoh, the sachem of the Narragansetts. The army of Miantonimoh was routed, he was taken prisoner and afterwards executed and buried there. He was buried on the spot where he was slain, but a few years since a large heap of stones, thrown together by the wandering Indians according to the custom of their country, and as a melancholy mark of the love the Narragansetts had for their fallen chief, lay on his grave; but the despicable cupidity of some people in that vicinity, has removed them to make common stone walls, as it saved them the trouble of gathering stones for that purpose. The spot of his sepulture is, however, yet known [1836].

The following account is taken from Dr. Trumbull's History of Connecticut:

"Miantonimoh, without consulting the English, according to agreement, without proclaiming war, or giving Uncas the least information, raised an army of nine hundred or a thousand men, and marched against him. Uncas's spies discovered the army at some distance and gave him intelligence. He was unprepared, but rallying between four and five hundred of his bravest men, he told them they must by no means suffer Miantonimoh to come into their town; but must go and fight him on his way.

Having marched three or four miles, the armies met upon a large plain. When they had advanced within fair bow shot of each other, Uncas had recourse to a stratagem, with which he had previously acquainted his warriors. He desired a parley, and both

armies halted in the face of each other. Uncas gallantly advancing in the front of his men, and addressed Miantonimoh to this effect: 'You have a number of stout men with you, and so have I with me. It is a great pity that such brave warriors should be killed in a private quarrel between us only. Come like a man, as you profess to be, and let us fight it out. If you kill me, my men shall be yours; but if I kill you, your men shall be mine.' Miantonimoh replied: 'My men came to fight, and they shall fight'. Uncas falling instantly upon the ground, his men discharged a shower of arrows upon the Narragansetts; and without a moment's interval, rushing upon them in a furious manner, with their hideous Indian yell, put them immediately to flight. The Mohegans pursued the enemy with the same fury and eagerness with which they commenced the action. The Narragansetts were driven down rocks and precipices, and chased like a doe by the huntsman. Among others Miantonimoh was exceedingly pressed. Some of Uncas's bravest men, who were most light of foot, coming up with him, twitched him back, impeding his flight, and passed him, that Uncas might take him. Uncas was a stout man, [stout here means powerful] and rushing forward, like a lion greedy for his prey, seized him by the shoulder. He knew Uncas, and saw that he was now in the power of the man whom he had hated, and by all means attempted to destroy; but he sat down sullen and spake not a word. Uncas gave the Indian whoop and called up his men, who were behind, to his assistance. The victory was complete. About thirty of the Narragansetts were slain, and a much greater number wounded."

"Among the latter was a brother of Miantonimoh and two sons of Canonicus, a chief sachem of the Narragansett Indians. The brother of Miantonimoh was not only wounded, but armed with a coat of mail, both which retarded his flight. Two of Miantonimoh's captains, who formerly were Uncas's men, but had treacherously deserted him, discovered his situation, took him, and carried him to Uncas, expecting in this way to reconcile themselves to their sachem. But Uncas and his men slew them. Miantonimoh made no request either for himself or his men; but continued in the same sullen, speechless mood. Uncas therefore demanded of him why he would not speak. Said he, "Had you taken me, I should have besought you for my life." Uncas, for the present, spared his life, though he would not ask it, and returned with great triumph to Mohegan, carrying the Narragansett sachem, as an illustrious trophy of his victory."

Uncas conducted Miantonimoh to Hartford. Here his mouth was opened, and he pled most earnestly to be left in the custody of the English, probably expecting better treatment from them than from Uncas. He was accordingly kept under guard at Hartford, till the meeting of the commissioners at Boston. After an examination of the case, the commissioners resolved, 'that as it was evident that Uncas could not be safe while Miantonimoh lived; but that, either by secret treachery or open force, his life would be continually in danger, he might justly put such a false and bloodthirsty enemy to death.' They determined it should be done out of the English jurisdiction. They advised Uncas that no torture or cruelty, but 'all mercy and moderation be exercised in the manner of his execution,'

"Immediately upon the return of the commissioners of Connecticut and New Haven, Uncas, with a competent number of his most trusty men, was ordered to repair forthwith to Hartford. He was made acquainted with the determination of the commissioners, and receiving his prisoner, marched with him to the spot where he had

been taken. At the instant they arrived on the ground, one of Uncas's men, who marched behind Miantonimoh, split his head with a hatchet, killing him at a single stroke.