

Local Indians declare war on the English Settlers

King Philip's War of 1675-1676 marked the last major effort by the Indians of southern New England to drive out the English settlers. Led by Metacom, the Pokunoket chief called 'King Philip' by the English, the tribe known today as the Wampanoag Indians joined with the Nipmucks, Pocumtucks, and Narragansetts in a bloody uprising.

It lasted fourteen months and destroyed English twelve frontier towns, ending shortly after when Metacom was captured and beheaded

When we stand today atop Anawan Rock (colonial historic site in, Massachusetts.), we are as close to experiencing King Philip's War as the changes of over three centuries allows.

The capture of Anawan left one more titillating mystery for future generations: What became of Philip's intricately woven wampum (sea shell)belts, which told the history and traditions of the Pokanoket people?

When Benjamin Church captured Anawan, the aged Pokanoket presented Church with Philip's belt, curiously wrought with wampum, being nine inches broad, wrought with black and white wompom, in various figures, and flowers and pictures of many birds and beasts.

This, when hanged upon Captain Church's shoulders reached his ankles
It had two flags on the back part, which hung down on his back, and another small belt with a star upon the end of it, which he used to hang on his breast, and they were all edged with red hair, which Annawon said they got in the Mohog's [Mohawk] country."

While Church was generous with Philip's possessions, it seems fairly certain that he delivered these great treasures to the governor of Plymouth Colony, Josiah Winslow.'" In 1677, Winslow sent a letter to King Charles II, detailing the end of the war and adding:

Craves His Majesty's favourable acceptance of a few Indian rarities, the best of their spoils of the ornaments and treasure of Sachem Philip, the grand rebel, most of them taken by Captain Benjamin Church (a person of great loyalty and the most successful of their Commanders) when slain by him, being his Crown, gorge, and two belts of their own making of their gold and silver."

The governor sent these items to England courtesy of his brother-in-law, Major Waldegrave Pelham.

It was with great distress, then, that Plymouth received a letter from the Crown in 1679, chastening the Colony for neglecting to communicate to them the conclusion of King Philip's War.

Winslow relayed this to the General Court in July 1679, where a second letter was ordered written, and copies of the original documents attached. Winslow made no mention of his brother-in-law's responsibility for this embarrassing incident.

The King received this second correspondence in September 1679, remarking in a note to Winslow that "*they were the first letters received from him and is very thankful for the presents he never received, nor the letters, the copies of which he has sent.*'

We know, therefore, that in September 1679 Philip's belts were still "at large," no longer in Winslow's hands but not yet in the hands of the Crown.

In May 1680 Winslow wrote again to the king, this time naming his brother-in-law specifically as the culprit in the 1677 misadventure:

The letters were delivered to Mr. Asbury, of London, merchant, and by him delivered to Winslow's wife's brother, Major Waldegrave Pelham, an Essex gentleman, of Ferriers Hall in Bewers.

Winslow was very unwilling because of their relation to have named him, but has twice written to him very plainly and advised him to frame the best excuse he could for his neglect and yet to deliver them the presents, but he will not give a word in answer?" Strangely enough, the letter of June 26, 1677, accompanying the belts that Josiah Winslow sent to the king, eventually made it into Whitehall's catalog of state papers, though it was inserted out of place, among the documents of 1680. Whether this was a duplicate copy of Winslow's letter, sent later, or proof that the original letter (and belts?) were finally delivered by Pelham to the king is unknown.

Nothing more was heard from Pelham on the subject; he retreated to his family home called Ferriers, near Bures in Essex, and died in 1699.

His manor became in modern times Ferrier's Barn/Farm, a self-help cultural cooperative for the elderly.

Where Philip's belts lie today remains a mystery. Perhaps they are hidden among the treasures of the British Crown, or locked away in some dusty storage area of the British Museum. (The museum had disclaimed any knowledge of Philip's belts, 'and entreaties to the Crown go unanswered, as one might expects")

Perhaps, too, they are buried in the ground near the old Pelham manor in Essex. Or maybe, as some historians hold, the belts never made it to England at all, but still reside somewhere in New England. One nineteenth-century antiquarian was told that a family in Swansea, Massachusetts, held Philip's belts.

Likewise, a bead belt held by the Rhode Island Historical Society was thought for many years to be that of King Philip, and went by the name King Philip's belt. Not long ago it was determined that the beads for the belt could not have been manufactured much before the 1790's, placing the age of King Philip's belt a century younger than Philip himself."

One tantalizing clue as to the belts' whereabouts remains. In the 1980s, Maurice Robbins of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, believing he may have located the belts, began negotiations with a small museum in Great Britain for their return. Several members of the society remembered discussion of a possible trade, as the corresponding museum was interested in a particular type of cannon to add to its collection.

With Robbins' death in 1990, however, the negotiations broke off, and members of the society today have no written record of Robbins' work or remember the museum with which he was corresponding."

Reference

(a) text scanned from documents

(b) <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/king-philips-war-begins>