



Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

Primary Source Document Transcription

Made available through the Rhode Island State Archives

Deposition of George Brown, June 1773

George Brown was at Sabin's Tavern the night of the attack on the Gaspee. Although he shares the same last name as accused Gaspee attackers John and Joseph Brown, the men are not closely related, and may not be related at all. In January, George Brown wrote a letter to the Commission saying that he had no information about the attack. In June, shortly before the Commission concluded its investigation, he traveled to Newport to testify in person.

The examination of George Brown of Providence, in the colony of Rhode Island, Esq., taken on oath at Newport in said colony, this fifth day of June AD 1773. Who saith, that the evening preceding the burning of the Schooner Gaspee he with several other gentlemen met at the house of Mr. James Sabin, in Providence aforesaid, it being a public house, to spend the evening together. About 10 of the clock as I suppose, I heard a drum beat in the street. I asked the reason of said drum beating, on which some one of the company, but whom I do not recollect, answered that there were some boys beating the drum, which was common for two or three years past in summer evenings in said town. It is also been usual for the young people to assemble to learn to beat a drum & other military exercises. Before sun set that evening I had heard the said schooner was aground. But had not then the least suspicion that any mischief was intended to be done to said schooner, or any body on board her, not having heard any intimation to that purpose. And I further declare that I have not any knowledge directly or indirectly of any plans being laid to burn or otherwise destroy said schooner, or of any person concerned in so vile a crime, or wounding Lieutenant Dudingston. Sometime after I heard the drum, I had occasion to go to the door, when I plainly saw about ten or a dozen boys with a drum & am confident there was not at that time one man among them. Nor had I, during that evening, any conception of any mischief intended. The place where said schooner was burnt is in the township of Warwick in the county of Kent, in the colony of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations. From the dwelling house of Mr. Samuel Tompkins to the place where said schooner was burnt is, according to my judgement, about nine miles. And further this deponent saith not.

G. Brown

Taken & Sworn at Newport on the day & year aforewritten

Before,

J. Wanton

Dan. Horsmanden

Frd. Smythe

This transcript is intended to capture the substance of the document.

For details of capitalization, punctuation, spelling and spacing, we recommend consulting the original document.

Peter Oliver.
Robt. Auchmuty

This primary source comes from the Rhode Island State Archives, C#0554 – Gaspee Commission Records 1772-1773.

The Rhode Island State Archives is responsible for preserving and maintaining access to the permanent, historical records of state government. Some records may contain content that is harmful, offensive, or difficult to view, as some of the materials presented in our collections may reflect outdated, biased, offensive, and possibly violent views and opinions that do not constitute the current opinions and views of the Department of State.