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Letter from James Sabin to the Gaspee Commission

James Sabin owned a “public house” or tavern in Providence. Several of the men accused of participating in the Gaspee attack claimed to have been in his tavern the night of the attack, so the Gaspee Commission asked Sabin to appear before them to testify. In his letter, Sabin explains why he cannot appear in person and names several men who he says were in the tavern when the attack took place.

PROVIDENCE, January 19th, 1773.

To the Honorable ,the Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Circumstances Relative to the Destroying the Schooner Gaspee:

Gentlemen

I now address you in consequence of a summons I received from you requiring my attendance at the Council Chamber in Newport, on Wednesday, 20th inst.

Now, gentlemen, I beg leave to acquaint you what renders me incapable of attending. In the first place, please to be informed, I am an insolvent debtor; and therefore my person would be subject to an arrest by some one or other of my creditors; and my health has been on decline these two months past, and it would be dangerous should I leave my house; and further were I to attend, I could give no information relative to the assembling, arming, training or leading on the people concerned in destroying the schooner Gaspee on the 9th day of June. All night I was employed at my house attending company, which were John Andrew, Esq., Judge of the court of Admiralty, John Cole, Esq., Mr. Hitchcock, and George Brown, who supped at my house and stayed there until two of the clock in the morning following and I have not any knowledge relative to the matter on which I am summoned which I am ready to make oath to before any Justice of the Peace.

I am, gentlemen most respectfully, your most humble servant,
James Sabin

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