



Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

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Letters from Rhode Island Governor Wanton to Lieutenant Duddingston, 1772

After receiving complaints from merchants whose ships were harassed by the Gaspee, Rhode Island's Governor Wanton wrote to Lieutenant Duddingston on March 22, 1772, questioning his authority and actions. After receiving a reply, he wrote again to Duddingston the following day. This manuscript shows contemporary copies of both letters. These copies would have been kept by the Governor, and are now in the State Archives.

March 22, 1772

SIR: —A considerable number of the inhabitants of this Colony have complained to me of your having, in a most illegal and unwarrantable manner, interrupted their trade, by searching and detaining every little packet boat plying between the several towns. As I know not by what authority you assume this power, I have sent off the high sheriff, to inform you of the complaint exhibited against you, and expect that you do, without delay, produce me your commission and instructions, if any you have, which was your duty to have done when you first came within the jurisdiction of this Colony.

I am your humble servant,

J. WANTON.

To the commanding officer of a schooner near Brenton's Point

Newport Rhode Island

March 23, 1772

Yours of this day I have received, which does not give me that satisfaction I had a right to expect; neither was the bearer of the letter qualified to give me any authentic information respecting the legality of that authority you have presumed to exercise within this Colony. I expect that you do without delay, comply with my request of yesterday, and you may be assured that my utmost exertions shall not be wanting to protect your person from any insult or outrage on coming ashore.

I am your humble servant,

J. WANTON.

To Mr. W. Dudingston, of the Schooner Gaspee.

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

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.