

## Massasoit: First Politician In Warren?

By FRANK CANCIAN

When Warren voters go to the polls tomorrow to elect a senator and representative in a special election they will be voting in two districts once presided over and influenced by the first Warren politician — Massasoit, political boss and chief sachem of the Wampanoag Indians from 1620 until his death in 1661.

Massasoit, whose political roots took hold at the same time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, controlled a massive area which at one time extended from Newport to Massachusetts.

But his political headquarters was believed to have been located near the narrows of the Kickemuit River, not far from the District Two voting site at the National Guard Armory on Market Street.

When voters file in from District Two many of them will travel down Market Street, once an Indian trail which led past "the national grinding mill" of the Wampanoags. More voters will flock into the Joyce Street polling center from Main Street, formerly an Indian trail from Poppasquash to the bridge in Warren's north end.

### Political Byways

These roads were the political byways also for Massasoit who with keen political sagacity and dignity successfully checked the possibility of war between his followers and the white men for some 41 years, a feat that politicians, statesmen, premiers, commissars have failed to equal in the 20th century.

For it was Massasoit who in 1621 signed with Colonial Governor Carver a mutual assistance pact which lasted without interruption until well after Massasoit's death.

For this, Massasoit is remembered, honored by white men, today.

But it was not complete political altruism which brought either Indians and white men to the treaty table.

Massasoit, whose tribe had been reduced from 3,000 to about 300 as a result of a terrible plague, was supremely conscious of the threat the Narragansett Indians led by Canonicus posed against his weakened followers.

Politically, he put the axiom "if you can't fight 'em, join 'em" to good use, for he felt he would receive aid from the English if the Narragansetts should launch a concerted attack upon his domain.

However, the great yellow feathered leader of the Wampanoags was a living example of a statement once made by John Viscount Moreley that "those who would treat politics and morality apart will never understand one or the other."

He once gave Pilgrims seed corn after it had been known these same Pilgrims had rationalized the theft of an Indian seed-corn cache prior to their landing at Plymouth Rock.

Furthermore, the sachem never forgot his debt to the white man. In 1623 Governor Bradford received word Massasoit was "like to die" and whites were dispatched to cure the chief who was then 43 years old as he lay on his death bed.

One of the party visiting Mas-

sasoit was recorded as saying, "In the midst of their charms for him, making such a hellish noise as it distempered us that were well, and therefore unlikely to ease him that was sick."

After much administration of confection and English broth the chief pulled through and he commented "whilst I live I will never forget this kindness they have showed me." He never did.

A testimonial dinner was staged for the visiting "medicine men," according to Henry J. Peck's "200th Anniversary of Warren, R.I. Historical Sketch."

What Warren politician, or national politician for that matter, would not envy the meaning of the following bit of praise which was heaped upon Massasoit by one of his own Indian counsel members?

"He is no liar, he was not bloody and cruel . . . in anger and passion he was soon reconciled, easy to be reconciled toward such as had offended him, ruled by reason in such measure as he would not scorn advice of mean men; and that he governed his men better with few strokes than others did with many, truly loving where he loved . . . he feared we had not a faithful friend left among the Indians; showing how he had oft times restrained their malice."

### Issue Unchanged

A curious sale of land in 1653 by Massasoit and his son Wamsutta (Alexander) to the white men for 35 pounds sterling points up the fact that at least one political issue has not changed essentially over a span of 305 years.

Massasoit sold a large part of Pokonket including Sowams lands. The sole string attached was the English could take possession of only marsh lands bordering on waters, leaving the uplands of Mt. Hope neck (Central Warren) and Bristol for Indians.

The implication was that Massasoit wanted to preserve the natural resources of the area, including trees, his headquarters and, perhaps most important, wild life.

The similarity between Massasoit's aim and that of the current Rhode Island shellfisherman's objection to the proposed Jamestown refinery is obvious.

Not much is known of how Massasoit came to power or the inner workings of the political framework among the Wampanoags, members of the Algonquin language group which also included the Narragansetts who finally joined with the Wampanoags in King Philip's War which began on June 20, 1675.

However, when over 100 years later Thomas Dawes, the adjutant of the Boston regiment, and John Adams met in a smoke filled room with others they called their meeting a "caucus" while framing the mechanics of the Revolutionary War.

Americans today owe the word to the Indian who used "caucus" in reference to their political council meetings.

And if "caucus" carries with it the implication of smoke filled rooms it is not the fault of white men.

According to Professor James L. Giddings of Brown University and director of that university's Haffenreffer Museum of the



Massasoit

American Indian, Bristol, natives of this area in selection of a sachem would remain in continual caucus until a chief was "unanimously decided upon," with no absentee voting allowed.

Moreover, Mr. Giddings said Indian women played an integral part in politics for "they would prevail upon their husbands. The husbands took credit for the decisions but the women had much to say," Mr. Giddings explained, indicating another facet of American politics has not changed much.

Caucus meetings were either held outdoors or in wigwams which among the Wampanoags were a hemispheric, oval-shaped structure styled something along the lines of a loaf of rounded home-baked bread.

Mr. Giddings also reported there was no such thing as a political draft exemption among the Indians of this and other areas.

If, in the time of war, an Indian warrior felt he had not built up enough "Manitou" (Spirit), he would merely tell his chief that the war dances and oratory had not "charged him,

spirited him." In such cases, Mr. Giddings explained, fellow Indians on the war council would politely excuse him from service—at least for one campaign. No hostile feelings were held against such a warrior.

Massasoit must have received a fair share of "spiritual charges" in his day, for before he became sachem—essentially a diplomatic, political desk job as campaign planner—he gained a wide reputation among his council members as a valiant leader in war, according to A. G. Weeks' "Massasoit, Indian Chief."

It is difficult to speculate how Massasoit would view today's election campaigns sometimes loaded with vituperation, always keyed with cross assertions and radio addresses.

But somewhere in "Sowannee," Indian paradise, he might have silently chuckled when Will Rogers said, "politics has got so expensive that it costs lots of money to even get beat with."

And brother, that means loss of "wampum." Any old Indian knows that.

## Building of Tiverton Delayed by Poor

### Spring Start Still Hoped By Company

One of the worst price structures experienced in years by the petroleum industry is a factor delaying a time table for construction of the Rhode Island Refinery in Tiverton.

Robert R. Wing, on-site representative of the corporation, reported also yesterday that planning for the \$35,000,000 plant high on the hill in the Fish Road section of the town is yet to be completed.

He said hopes are for a beginning in the spring, but that the economic situation will be a major factor. Possible government restrictions on foreign crude oil, plus the high price of domestic oil represent a price situation which is discouraging, according to Mr. Wing.

The Rhode Island Refinery now owns about 1,100 acres on both sides of Fish Road, and has negotiations underway for additional parcels, which, Mr. Wing says, "should wrap up the land acquisition. A situation involving an old cemetery, which halted property dealings for a while, has been satisfactorily resolved he said.

About 200 of the 1,100 acres have been cleared under a contract recently terminated.

Although the refinery has rights to use treated effluent from Fall River's sewage treatment plant as a coolant in the refining process, it still is looking at the possibility of salt water from Mt. Hope Bay for the same purpose. A study still in process is aimed at determining which method will be the least costly.

Mr. Wing said that if Fall River is willing to sell, the refinery will be happy to buy water from the city. No other source for fresh water is accessible to the firm now. It will require at least three million gallons a day.

### Awaits Tiverton Vote

## Proposed Zone Code May Affect Refinery

Tiverton's proposed zoning ordinance, if adopted at the town meeting March 19, will compel the Rhode Island Refining Corporation to seek new permission to construct its Fish Road refinery.

The oil company now has valid building and oil storage permits effective to May 1 and the way for construction is open. But if it delays further in exercising those permits, the zoning regulations would force town fathers to regard the refinery proposal as an entirely new industrial venture in town.

The gimmick for the refinery is a provision that petroleum refining and petroleum products manufacture can be allowed in the industrial zones only under a special exception granted by a zoning board. Before such an exception could be granted, a public hearing must be held.

The property purchased by the refinery is properly outlined on the zoning map as an industrial district. The ordinance



Edward J. Seigny

## Close Election As Warren Voters To Polls Tomorrow

By ROBERT A. WILLIAMS

The consensus among many Warren voters, observers and politicians is that tomorrow's special election to choose a senator and representative will be close.

While the Republicans are girded and optimistic about electing a General Assembly delegation for the first time since 1926, the Democrats are maintaining that they will hold onto the two seats but it may be close balloting.

Another general feeling was that it will be a battle of election day machinery: that the Democrats can get out their necessary vote but can the GOP stir up enough voter turnout for what they would need to "tip it over."

While somebody wanting to put

a good-sized Republican candidate could have money at stake to even money. The pre-1926 election started its own effort, with two seats prior to this week. With the party "hollered" questioned they feel the queries about involved in. While it n the service the history back 30 years. The frequent mates of "been voiced part of town history publican de representation 1926 when t (senator) a selin (repre The char later. In 1 Bullock, a late W. broke the i had a Rep with him two years i reelected in Democrat have The Rep the "outs," factors to l ly, hurt claim: a la ter-represer work witho didates wh people; a s lief that t Democratic elections; a absence of Smith from District 1 p by the Dem Democrat on their est town admi of their v the leaders gins, admi U.S. Sena

would offer no problem if construction, according to the building permit, is started before or by the effective date of the ordinance. If not, the refinery will represent a non-conforming use of the zone.

Company representatives are disturbed by the prospect of having to fight another public battle with the town's refinery opponents. They met Friday night with the zoning group, but nothing was resolved.

H. Don Levesque, chairman of the Tiverton Planning Board, reported yesterday that refinery objections to the proposed zoning ordinance will be taken into consideration along with others, voiced by the townspeople, at hearings being held throughout the town.

Robert R. Wing, on-site representative of the Rhode Island Refining Corporation, stated Friday that the company has no plans yet to battle to maintain the validity of its existing permits. After reporting the refinery has set no timetable yet for construction, he said that in view of the zoning threat the refinery officials plan just to sit back and wait. Zoning twice has been de-

# Beck Asks \$100,000 Bonds Okay