

Narragansett Indian Church

A Timeline of Religious Leaders

This timeline is a work in progress undertaken by our Education Department. This information is largely collected from the documentation of Rev. Harold Mars, but also builds upon the research done by Paulla Dove Jennings. As more information and photographs are uncovered, it will continue to be updated.



1746



Sketch by Laima Glista of the Indian Schoolhouse built in 1815. The first Indian Schoolhouse that superseded this building was built in 1769, This building is now demolished. Samuel Niles along with church members pressured for more control over the schoolhouse and the education tribal children received there.

1776

James Simon (Simon James), Pequot

Ordained Elder of the church by the laying on of hands of Elder Babcock and others...some dispute arose concerning this ordination and he removed himself and a number of followers and carried on services in his home.

Samuel Niles, Narragansett

Remembered as the first pastor of the Indian church, he was actually the second after James Simon's removal. Unable to read, he memorized scripture and delivered it by heart. An ardent defender of his people, he worked passionately in defense of Narragansett land claims and opposed the selling of Indian Lands by then Chief Ninigret.

"It seems extraordinary that such a one should be a pastor. He is however acquainted with the Doctrines of the Gospel and an earnest, zealous man and perhaps does more good to the Indian than any white man could do...He is of an unblameable life as to morals and sobriety. He has very great influence over the Indians." ~President Ezra Stiles of Yale University, a clergyman,

"This Niles whom I have known some years is a sober religious man, of good sense and great fluency of speech and I know not but a very honest man. Has a good deal of scriptures by heart and professes a regard for the Bible. But his unhappiness is this..he cannot read a word." ~Rev. Joseph Fish of Stonington

Close of 18th Century



CATHERINE STANTON
"Chilton's First Lady"

Portrait of Catherine Ross-Stanton, wife of Moses Stanton. Moved to Brothertown Wisconsin with husband where they owned and operated a lumber mill and gristmill.

1823

1841

John Sekatur, Narragansett

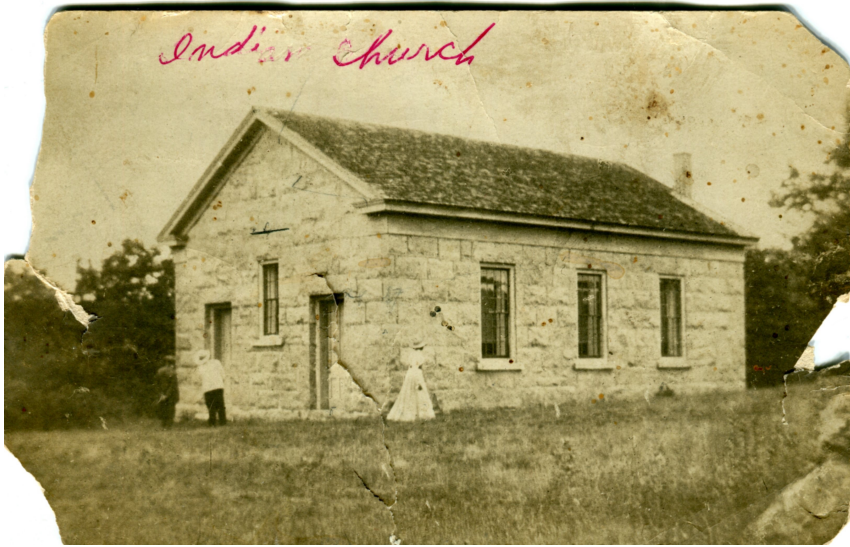
Pastored near the close of the 18th century, he was described as "a useful and good man"

Moses Stanton, Narragansett

Ordained in 1823, the only record of him states that he toiled faithfully. He left the church about 1844 and during a second removal to Brothertown, moved to Ann Arbor Michigan where he died. (Brothertown Removal - large exodus of Indigenous people from Southern New England, predominately of Narragansett descent, who left the New England area and moved to Brothertown, Wisconsin)

George Champlin, Narragansett

1858



Postcard featuring the Narragansett Indian Church around the turn of the century.

Interim

Turn of Century

Aaron Sekatur, Narragansett

It was during his office or thereabouts that a fire destroyed the church, a wooden structure, and the Narragansett were without a place of worship for 6 years

Interim

When there wasn't a pastor, the church was under the charge of deacons or clerks. At this time, ministers both white and Indigenous supplied the pulpit but for many years there was no assigned pastor of the church.

Among those were:

Samuel Noka

Sam Fletcher

Joshua Noka

Benjamin Thomas, Secretary of the Church

There were many Narragansett homes adjacent to the church, among those the home of Benjamin Thomas, who was the secretary of both the tribe and church. His name appears often in relation to the church in historical documents.

**Julia Davis,
Narragansett**

Though not a Pastor, this Narragansett woman reinvigorated the church when she opened a Sunday School for community children at the Narragansett Indian Church and was very active in this work.



Photograph of Ernest Hazard,
Tomaquag Museum Archive



Ousamequin (LeRoy Perry), circa 1931, sitting in King Philip's
Chair, a large rock formation where his ancestor and
predecessor as supreme sachem once held meetings. Courtesy
of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University

Turn of Century

1901

Nettie Davis, Narragansett

Daughter of Julia Davis, after the passing of her mother she continued to run the Sunday School until her passing.

1910

Fred Thomas, Narragansett

Ernest Hazard Prophet Eagle Eye, Narragansett

Rev. Ernest Hazard constructed the cross that once sat in the church window, carved from the surviving beams of the original wooden church structure.

1920s

Leroy Perry, Ousamequin (Yellow Feather), Mashpee Wampanoag

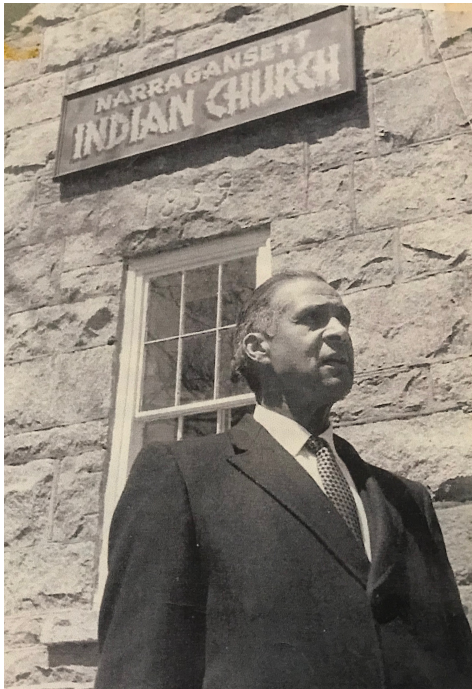
Wampanoag Chief and Minister from Cape Cod who often spoke at the Annual August Meeting services.



Christian Sherman Mars
White Buffalo,
Narragansett

1933

Descendant of Rev. Samuel Niles, accepted the position of pastor of the Narragansett Indian church in 1933. Prior to this he had ministered at numerous Indian Churches throughout New England including the Gay Head Indian Church where he grew up, Mashpee Indian Church of Cape Cod Massachusetts, Groton Indian Church of Connecticut, and the Mohegan Indian Church of Uncasville Connecticut.



Harold Sherman Mars
Comonetop (My Friend), Narragansett

1963

The son of Christian Mars and Tribal Prophet of the Narragansett Tribe, Rev. Harold Mars accepted the position of Pastor of the Narragansett Church in 1963 after many years of ministry throughout New England and New York. Conducted many traditional ceremonies alongside the Chief and Medicine Man. Tribal Historian and member of Charlestown Historical Society, this timeline was constructed with the assistance of his well documented research.

Photograph of Rev. Harold Mars outside of the Church, taken around 1970s.



Three generations of Narragansett Ministers. Rev. Roland Mars, Rev. Gregory Mars, and Rev. Wallace Hazard. All three have spoken at the Narragansett Indian Church.

1977

Wallace Hazard, Narragansett

First Cousin of the late Rev. Roland Mars, Rev. Wallace Hazard was appointed Tribal Prophet for the Narragansett Tribe in 2017. Although he does not preach regularly at the Narragansett Indian Church, he does provide spiritual guidance to the tribal community, providing Christian burials for tribal members among other counseling and services. He currently pastors a church in Wakefield, Rhode Island to a congregation largely attended by tribal members.



Rev. Roland Mars standing behind pulpit at the Narragansett Indian Church during rebuilding of church after 1993 fire.

1990

Roland Christian Mars, Narragansett

The son of Rev. Harold Mars, Rev. Roland Mars first took tenure of the church in the 90s. It was during his pastorate the 1993 arson destroyed the church. With the support of the church body, he rallied the support of other church communities from various denominations, community programs including Habitat for Humanity, and many volunteers both tribal and non-tribal to raise funds and work to reconstruct the church. Rev. Mars passed away in 2015. The church continues services with various speakers from the tribal community.