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Made available through the Rhode Island State Archives

Rhode Island Royal Charter, 1663

In 1663, Rhode Island was granted a Royal Charter from King Charles II. The Charter was a legal document that gave Rhode Islanders the right to follow the religion of their choice, and allowed them to govern themselves. It was the first charter to offer this degree of freedom to an English colony and marks a turning point in the evolution of human rights in the modern world.

The Charter combines language written specifically for Rhode Island with standard charter language from the period, so there is some repetition within it.

CHARLES THE SECOND, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc.

To All to whom these presents shall come, greeting.

Whereas, we have been informed, by the humble petition of our trusty and well-beloved subject, John Clarke, on the behalf of Benjamin Arnold, William Brenton, William Codrington, Nicholas Easton, William Boulston, John Porter, John Smith, Samuel Gorton, John Weekes, Roger Williams, Thomas Olney, Gregory Dexter, John Cogeshall, Joseph Clarke, Randall Holden, John Greene, John Roome, Samuel Wildbore, William Field, James Barker, Richard Tew, Thomas Harris, and William Dyre, and the rest of the purchasers and free inhabitants of our island, called Rhode Island, and the rest of the colony of Providence Plantations, in the Narragansett Bay, in New England, in America, that they, pursuing, with peaceable and loyal minds, their sober, serious, and religious intentions, of godly edifying themselves, and one another, in the holy Christian faith and worship, as they were persuaded; together with the gaining over and conversion of the poor ignorant Indian natives, in those parts of America, to the sincere profession and obedience of the same faith and worship, did, not only by the consent and good encouragement of our royal progenitors, transport themselves out of this kingdom of England into America, but also, since their arrival there, after their first settlement amongst other our subjects in those parts, for the avoiding of discord, and those many evils which were likely to ensue upon some of those our subjects not being able to bear, in these remote parts, their different apprehensions in religious concerns, and in pursuance of the aforesaid ends, did once again leave their desirable stations and habitations, and with excessive labor and travel, hazard and charge did

A portrait of Charles II is at the top left of the Charter. He was king of these countries and the New England colonies.

A group of Rhode Islanders went to England in 1651 to request a new charter for the colony. John Clarke stayed until he obtained this 1663 charter.

Rhode Island's colonial settlers sought a place where they could worship freely.

Settlers tried to convert the Indigenous people to Christianity.

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.

transplant themselves into the midst of the Indian natives, who as we are informed, are the most potent princes and people of all that country where;

Rhode Island settlers thrived due to hard work and providence.

by the good Providence of God, from whom the Plantations have taken their name, upon their labor and industry, they have not only been preserved to admiration, but have increased and prospered, and are seized and possessed, by purchase and consent of the said natives, to their full content, of such lands, islands, rivers, harbors and roads, as are very convenient, both for plantations, and also for building of ships, supply of pipe-staves, and other merchandize and which lies very commodious, in many respects, for commerce, and to accommodate our southern plantations, and may much advance the trade of this our realm, and greatly enlarge the territories thereof they having by near neighborhood to and friendly society with the great body of the Narragansett Indians, given them encouragement of their own accord, to subject themselves, their people and lands, unto us whereby, as is hoped, there may, in time, by the blessing of God upon their endeavors be laid a sure foundation of happiness to all America.

The English wanted to buy land to expand trade. Indigenous people didn't think of land as a commodity that could be bought and sold, so their "consent" is questionable.

And whereas, in their humble address, they have freely declared, that it is much on their hearts (if they may be permitted) to hold forth a lively experiment, that a most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained, and that among our English subjects, with a full liberty in religious concernments and that true piety rightly grounded upon gospel principles, will give the best and greatest security to sovereignty, and will lay in the hearts of men the strongest obligations to true loyalty.

The settlers requested permission to continue their "lively experiment" which included freedom of religion for Christians and non-Christians.

Now, know ye, that we, being willing to encourage the hopeful undertaking of our said loyal and loving subjects, and to secure them in the free exercise and enjoyment of all their civil and religious rights, appertaining to them, as our loving subjects and to preserve unto them that liberty, in the true Christian faith and worship of God, which they have sought with so much travail, and with peaceable minds, and loyal subjection to our royal progenitors and ourselves, to enjoy; and because some of the people and inhabitants of the same colony cannot, in their private opinions, conform to the public exercise of religion, according to the liturgy, forms and ceremonies of the Church of England, or take or subscribe the oaths and articles made and established in that behalf; and for that the same, by reason of the remote distances of those places, will (as we hope) be no breach of the unity and uniformity established in this nation: Have therefore thought fit, and do hereby publish, grant, ordain and declare, that our

The King gave the colonists the civil and religious freedom they requested. He hoped that the colony's "experiment" would not affect people living in England.

royal will and pleasure is, that no person within the said colony, at any time hereafter shall be any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion, and do not actually disturb the civil peace of our said colony; but that all and every person and persons may, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their own judgments and consciences, in matters of religious concernments, throughout the tract of land hereafter mentioned, they behaving themselves peaceably and quietly, and not using this liberty to licentiousness and profaneness, nor to the civil injury or outward disturbance of others, any law, statute, or clause therein contained, or to be contained, usage or custom of this realm, to the contrary hereof, in any wise notwithstanding. And that they may be in the better capacity to defend themselves, in their just rights and liberties, against all the enemies of the Christian faith, and others, in all respects, we have further thought fit, and at the humble petition of the persons aforesaid are graciously pleased to declare, That they shall have and enjoy the benefit of our late act of indemnity and free pardon, as the rest of our subjects in other our dominions and territories have; and to create and make them a body politic or corporate, with the powers and privileges hereinafter mentioned.

The King declared that the colonists would not be punished for practicing different religions.

Rhode Islanders were permitted to follow their own "judgements and consciences" regarding religion.

And accordingly our will and pleasure is, and of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, we have ordained, constituted and declared, and by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, do ordain, constitute and declare: That they the said William Brenton, William Codrington, Nicholas Easton, Benedict Arnold, William Boulston, John Porter, Samuel Gorton, John Smith, John Weekes, Roger Williams, Thomas Olney, Gregory Dexter, John Cogeshall, Joseph Clarke, Randall Holden, John Greene, John Roome, William Dyre, Samuel Wildbore, Richard Tew, William Field, Thomas Harris, James Barker, (missing) Rainsborrow, (missing) Williams, and John Nickson, and all such others as now are, or hereafter shall be, admitted and made free of the company and society of our colony of Providence Plantations, in the Narragansett Bay, in New England, shall be, from time to time, and forever hereafter, a body corporate and politic, in fact and name, by the name of the Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England, in America;

Rhode Island was granted the status of a "body politic," meaning it could have its own government.

This is a list of the recipients of the patent, and the colony's official name.

and that, by the same name, they and their successors shall and may have perpetual succession, and shall and may be persons able and capable, in the law, to sue and be sued, to plead and be impleaded, to answer, and be answered unto, to defend and to be defended, in all and singular suits, causes, quarrels,

matters, actions and things, of what kind or nature so ever; and also to have, take, possess, acquire, and purchase lands, tenements or hereditaments, or any goods or chattels, and the same to lease, grant, demise, aliene, bargain, sell and dispose of, at their own will and pleasure, as other our liege people of this our realm of England, or any corporation or body politic, within the same, may lawfully do. And further, that they the said Governor and Company, and their successors, shall and may, forever hereafter have a common seal, to serve and use for all matters, causes, things, and affairs, whatsoever, of them, and their successors; and the same seal to alter, change, break, and make new, from time to time, at their will and pleasure, as they shall think fit.

This outlines the new government's authority.

And further, we will and ordain, and by these presents, for us, our heirs, and successors, do declare and appoint that, for the better ordering and managing of the affairs and business of the said Company, and their successors, there shall be one Governor, one Deputy-Governor and ten Assistants, to be from time to time, constituted, elected and chosen, out of the freemen of the said Company, for the time being, in such manner and form as is hereafter in these presents expressed, which said officers shall apply themselves to take care for the best disposing and ordering of the general business and affairs of and concerning the lands, and hereditaments hereinafter mentioned to be granted, and the plantation thereof, and the government of the people there. And, for the better execution of our royal pleasure herein, We do, for us, our heirs and successors, assign, name, constitute, and appoint the aforesaid Benedict Arnold to be the first and present Governor of the said Company and the said William Brenton to be the Deputy-Governor, and the said William Boulston, John Porter, Roger Williams, Thomas Olney, John Smith, John Greene, John Cogeshall, James Barker, William Field and Joseph Clarke, to be the ten present Assistants of the said Company, to continue in the said several offices, respectively, until the first Wednesday which shall be in the month of May now next coming. And further, we will, and by these presents, for us, our heirs, and successors, do ordain and grant that the Governor of the said Company, for the time being, or, in his absence, by occasion of sickness or otherwise, by his leave and permission, the Deputy-Governor, for the time being, shall and may, from time to time, upon all occasions, give order for the assembling of the said Company, and calling them together, to consult and advise of the business and affairs of the said Company.

These are descriptions of the offices that will form the new government, and the names of the colony's first governor and other officials.

And that forever after hereafter, twice in every year, that is to say, on every first Wednesday in the month of May, and on every last Wednesday in October,

Rhode Island's government would meet twice a year, or more if necessary.

or oftener, in case it shall be requisite, the Assistants and such of the freemen of the said Company, not exceeding six persons for Newport, four persons for each of the respective towns of Providence, Portsmouth and Warwick, and two persons for each other place, town or city, who shall be from time to time, thereunto elected or deputed by the major part of the freemen of the respective towns or places for which they shall be so elected or deputed, shall have a general meeting or assembly, then and there to consult, advise and determine in and about the affairs and business of the said Company and Plantations. And, further, we do, of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, give and grant unto the said Governor and Company of the English colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England, in America, and their successors that the Governor, or, in his absence, or, by his permission the Deputy-Governor of the said Company, for the time being the Assistants, and such of the freemen of the said Company as shall be so as aforesaid elected or deputed, or so many of them as shall be present at such meeting or assembly, as aforesaid, shall be called the General Assembly and that they, or the greatest part of them present, whereof the Governor or Deputy-Governor, and six of the Assistants, at least to be seven shall have, and have hereby given and granted unto them, full power and authority, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, to appoint, alter and change such days, times and places of meeting and General Assembly, as they shall think fit ; and

Each town would have a certain number of representatives with specific duties and responsibilities.

The legislative branch was named the General Assembly.

to choose, nominate and appoint, such and so many other persons as they shall think fit, and shall be willing to accept the same, to be free of the said Company and body politic, and them into the same to admit; and

The General Assembly was given the power to hold elections and create commissions.

to elect and constitute such offices and officers, and to grant such needful commissions, as they shall think fit and requisite, for the ordering, managing, and dispatching of the affairs of the said Governor and Company, and their successors; and from time to time,

to make, ordain, constitute or repeal, such laws, statutes, orders and ordinances, forms and ceremonies of government and magistracy, as to them shall seem meet, for the good and welfare of the said Company, and for the government and ordering of the lands and hereditaments, hereinafter mentioned to be granted, and of the people that do, or at any time hereafter shall, inhabit or be within the same; so as such laws, ordinances and constitutions, so made, be not contrary and repugnant unto, but as near as may be, agreeable to the laws of

Rhode Island could make its own laws, but those laws could not contradict the laws of England.

this our realm of England, considering the nature and constitution of the place and people there; and also

“Courts of jurisdiction” were created to hear trials.

to appoint, order and direct, erect and settle, such places and courts of jurisdiction, for the hearing and determining of all actions, cases, matters and things, happening within the said colony and plantation, and which shall be in dispute, and depending there, as they shall think fit; and also to distinguish and set forth the several names and titles, duties, powers and limits, of each court, office and officer, superior and inferior; and also

Court officials were required to take oaths of office.

to contrive and appoint such forms of oaths and attestations, not repugnant, but as near as may be agreeable, as aforesaid, to the laws and statutes of this our realm, as are convenient and requisite with respect to the due administration of justice, and due execution and discharge of all offices and places of trust by the persons that shall be therein concerned, and also

The government had the authority to regulate elections.

to regulate and order the way and manner of all elections to offices and places of trust, and

The government would regulate town and city boundaries.

to prescribe, limit and distinguish the numbers and bounds of all places, towns or cities, within the limits and bounds hereinafter mentioned, and not herein particularly named, who have, or shall have, the power of electing and sending of freemen to the said General Assembly; and also

The government could impose or revoke fines and punishments.

to order, direct and authorize the imposing of lawful and reasonable fines, mulcts, imprisonments, and executing other punishments, pecuniary and corporal, upon offenders and delinquents, according to the course of other corporations within this our kingdom of England; and again to alter, revoke, annul or pardon, under their common seal, or otherwise, such fines, mulcts, imprisonments, sentences, judgments and condemnations, as shall be thought fit; and

The government could regulate trade with Indigenous communities.

to direct, rule, order and dispose of, all other matters and things, and particularly that which relates to the making of purchases of the native Indians, as to them shall seem meet; whereby our said people and inhabitants in the said Plantations, may be so religiously, peaceably and civilly governed, as that by their good life and orderly conversation, they may win and invite the native Indians of the country to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind;

The King hoped that by demonstrating peace and order, the settlers would inspire the Indigenous people to convert to Christianity.

willing, commanding and requiring and by these presents for us, our heirs and successors, ordaining and appointing, that all such laws, statutes, orders and ordinances, instructions, impositions and directions, as shall be so made by the Governor, Deputy-Governor, Assistants and freemen, or such number of them as aforesaid, and published in writing, under their common seal, shall be carefully and duly observed, kept, performed and put in execution, according to the true intent and meaning of the same.

Laws would be published under the seal of the colony.

And these our letters patent, or the duplicate or exemplification thereof, shall be to all and every such officer, superior or inferior, from time to time, for the putting of the same orders, laws, statutes, ordinances, instructions and directions in due execution, against us, our heirs and successors, a sufficient warrant and discharge.

“Letters patent” refers to the Charter, which was an official instruction from the King.

And further, our will and pleasure is, and we do hereby, for us, our heirs and successors, establish and ordain, that yearly, once in the year, forever hereafter, namely, the aforesaid Wednesday in May, and at the town of Newport, or elsewhere, if urgent occasion do require, the Governor, Deputy-Governor and Assistants of the said Company, and other officers of the said Company, or such of them as the General Assembly shall think fit, shall be, in the said General Court or Assembly to be held from that day or time, newly chosen for the year ensuing, by such greater part of the said Company, for the time being, as shall be then and there present;

Government officials would be chosen by annual elections.

and if it shall happen that the present Governor, Deputy-Governor and Assistants, by these presents appointed, or any such as shall hereafter be newly chosen into their rooms, or any of them, or any other the officers of the said Company, shall die or be removed from his or their several offices or places before the said general day of election, whom we do hereby declare, for any misdemeanor or default, to be removable by the Governor, Assistants and Company, or such greater part of them, in any of the said public courts, to be assembled as aforesaid, that then, and in every such case, it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Governor, Deputy-Governor, Assistants and Company aforesaid, or such greater part of them, so to be assembled as is aforesaid, in any their assemblies, to proceed to a new election of one or more of their Company, in the room or place, rooms or places, of such officer or officers, so dying or removed, according to their discretions; and immediately upon and after such election or elections made of such Governor, Deputy-Governor, Assistant or Assistants, or any other officer of the said Company, in manner and form

A procedure was established for replacing government officials who died or were removed from office.

aforesaid, the authority, office and power, before given to the former Governor, Deputy-Governor, and other officer and officers so removed, in whose stead and place new shall be chosen, shall, as to him and them, and every of them, respectively, cease and determine.

Provided always, and our will and pleasure is, that as well such as are by these presents appointed to be the present Governor, Deputy-Governor and Assistants of the said Company, as those that shall succeed them, and all other officers to be appointed and chosen as aforesaid, shall, before the undertaking the execution of the said offices and places respectively, give their solemn engagement, by oath or otherwise, for the due and faithful performance of their duties in their several offices and places, before such person or persons as are by these presents hereafter appointed to take and receive the same, that is to say: the said Benedict Arnold, who is herein before nominated and appointed the present Governor of the said Company, shall give the aforesaid engagement before William Brenton, or any two of the said Assistants of the said Company; unto whom we do by these presents give full power and authority to require and receive the same; and the said William Brenton, who is hereby before nominated and appointed the present Deputy-Governor of the said Company, shall give the aforesaid engagement before the said Benedict Arnold, or any two of the Assistants of the said Company; unto whom we do by these presents give full power and authority to require and receive the same; and the said William Boulston, John Porter, Roger Williams, Thomas Olney, John Smith, John Greene, John Cogeshall, James Barker, William Field, and Joseph Clarke, who are hereinbefore nominated and appointed the present Assistants of the said Company, shall give the said engagement to their offices and places respectively belonging before the said Benedict Arnold and William Brenton, or one of them; to whom respectively we do hereby give full power and authority to require, administer, or receive the same; and further, our will and pleasure is, that all and every other future Governor or Deputy-Governor, to be elected and chosen by virtue of these presents, shall give the said engagement before two or more of the said Assistants of the said Company for the time being; unto whom we do by these presents give full power and authority to require, administer or receive the same; and the said Assistants, and every of them, and all and every other officer or officers to be hereafter elected and chosen by virtue of these presents from time to time, shall give the like engagements, to their offices and places respectively belonging, before the Governor or Deputy-Governor, for the time being; unto which said Governor, or Deputy-Governor, we do by these presents

Government officials were required to take oaths of office.

The names of the first government officials are repeated.

give full power and authority to require, administer or receive the same accordingly.

And we do likewise, for us, our heirs and successors, give and grant unto the said Governor and Company, and their successors, by these presents, that for the more peaceable and orderly government of the said Plantations, it shall and may be lawful for the Governor, Deputy-Governor, Assistants and all other officers and ministers of the said Company, in the administration of justice, and exercise of government, in the said Plantations, to use, exercise, and put in execution, such methods, rules, orders and directions, not being contrary or repugnant to the laws and statutes of this our realm, as have been heretofore given, used and accustomed, in such cases respectively, to be put in practice, until at the next or some other General Assembly, special provision shall be made and ordained in the cases aforesaid.

Government officials could make and enforce rules and laws, provided the laws did not conflict with the laws of England.

And we do further, for us, our heirs, and successors, give and grant unto the said Governor and Company, and their successors, by these presents; that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Governor, or, in his absence, the Deputy-Governor, and major part of the said Assistants, for the time being, at any time when the said General Assembly is not sitting, to nominate, appoint and constitute, such and so many commanders, governors, and military officers, as to them shall seem requisite, for the leading, conducting and training up the inhabitants of the said Plantations in martial affairs, and for the defense and safeguard of the said Plantations; and that it shall and may be lawful to and for all and every such commander, governor, and military officer, that shall be so as aforesaid, or by the Governor, or in his absence, the Deputy-Governor, and six of the said Assistants, and major part of the freemen of the said Company present at any General Assemblies, nominated, appointed and constituted, according to the tenor of his and their respective commissions and directions, to assemble, exercise in arms, martial array, and put in warlike posture, the inhabitants of the said colony, for their special defense and safety; and to lead and conduct the said inhabitants, and to encounter, expulse, expel and resist, by force of arms, as well by sea as by land, and also to kill, slay and destroy, by all fitting ways, enterprises and means, whatsoever, all and every such person or persons as shall, at any time hereafter, attempt or enterprise the destruction, invasion, detriment or annoyance of the said inhabitants or Plantations; and to use and exercise the law martial in such cases only as occasion shall necessarily require;

Government officials could nominate military officers to train Rhode Islanders to defend their "Plantations."

The colony had the right to defend itself.

and to take or surprise, by all ways and means whatsoever, all and every such person and persons, with their ship or ships, armor, ammunition or other goods of such persons, as shall, in hostile manner, invade or attempt the defeating of the said Plantations, or the hurt of the said Company and inhabitants;

To defend itself, the colony could attack hostile ships.

and upon just causes, to invade and destroy the native Indians, or other enemies of the said Colony.

The colony could, with "just causes... invade and destroy the native Indians, or other enemies. "

Nevertheless, our will and pleasure is, and we do hereby declare to the rest of our Colonies in New England, that it shall not be lawful for this our said Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in America, in New England, to invade the natives inhabiting within the bounds and limits of their said Colonies, without the knowledge and consent of the said other Colonies.

Colonies had to inform each other if they invaded Indigenous settlements.

And it is hereby declared, that it shall not be lawful to or for the rest of the Colonies to invade or molest the native Indians or any other inhabitants inhabiting within the bounds and limits hereafter mentioned, they having subjected themselves unto us, and being by us taken into our special protection, without the knowledge and consent of the Governor and Company of our Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

The colony and its inhabitants were under the "special protection" of the King.

Also our will and pleasure is, and we do hereby declare unto all Christian Kings, Princes and States, that if any person, which shall hereafter be of the said Company or Plantations, or any other, by appointment of the said Governor and Company for the time being, shall at any time or times hereafter, rob or spoil, by sea or land, or do any hurt, or unlawful hostility to any of the subjects of us, our heirs or successors, or any of the subjects of any Prince or State, being then in league with us, our heirs or successors, upon complaint of such injury done to any such Prince or State, or their subjects, we, our heirs and successors, will make open proclamation within any parts of our realm of England, fit for that purpose, that the person or persons committing any such robbery or spoil shall, within the time limited by such proclamation, make full restitution, or satisfaction of all such injuries, done or committed, so as the said Prince, or others so complaining, may be fully satisfied, and contented; and if the said person or persons who shall commit any such robbery or spoil shall not make satisfaction, accordingly, within such time, so to be limited, that then we, our heirs and successors, will put such person or persons, out of our allegiance and protection; and that then it shall and may be lawful and free for all Princes or

People who broke the law were responsible for making payments or otherwise compensating injuries or losses; those who refused were no longer protected by the King and were subject to prosecution.

others to prosecute with hostility, such offenders, and every of them, their and every of their procurers, aiders, abettors, and counsellors, in that behalf:

Freedom to fish the New England coast

Provided also, and our express will and pleasure is, and we do, by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, ordain and appoint that these presents, shall not, in any manner, hinder any of our loving subjects, whatsoever, from using and exercising the trade of fishing upon the coast of New England, in America; but that they, and every or any of them, shall have full and free power and liberty to continue and use the trade of fishing upon the said coast, in any of the seas thereunto adjoining, or any arms of the seas, or salt water, rivers and creeks, where they have been accustomed to fish; and to build and set upon the waste land belonging to the said Colony and Plantations, such wharves, stages and workhouses as shall be necessary for the salting, drying and keeping of their fish, to be taken or gotten upon that coast.

Colonists were permitted to fish, and engage in related trades.

And further, for the encouragement of the inhabitants of our said Colony of Providence Plantations to set upon the business of taking whales, it shall be lawful for them, or any of them, having struck whale, dubertus, or other great fish, it or them to pursue unto any part of that coast, and into any bay, river, cove, creek, or shore, belonging thereto, and it or them, upon the said coast, or in the said bay, river, cove, creek, or shore, belonging thereto, to kill and order for the best advantage, without molestation, they making no willful waste or spoil anything in these presents contained, or any other matter or thing, to the contrary, notwithstanding.

Colonists were permitted to hunt whales.

And further also, we are graciously pleased, and do hereby declare, that if any of the inhabitants of our said Colony do set upon the planting of vineyards, the soil and climate both seeming naturally to concur to the production of wines, or be industrious in the discovery of fishing banks, in or about the said Colony, we will, from time to time, give and allow all due and fitting encouragement therein, as to others, in cases of like nature.

Colonists were permitted to plant vineyards.

And further, of our more ample grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, we have given and granted, and by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, do give and grant unto the said Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in the Narragansett Bay, in New

England, in America, and to every inhabitant there; and to every person and persons, trading thither, and to every such person or persons as are or shall be free of the said Colony, full power and authority, from time to time, and at all times hereafter to take, ship, transport and carry away, out of any of our realms and dominions, for and towards the plantation and defense of the said Colony, such and so many of our loving subjects and strangers as shall or will willingly accompany them in and to their said Colony and Plantation; except such person or persons as are or shall be therein restrained by us, our heirs and successors or any law or statute of this realm: and also to ship and transport all and all manner of goods, chattels, merchandizes and other things whatsoever, that are or shall be useful or necessary for the said Plantations, and defense thereof, and usually transported, and not prohibited by any law or statute of this our realm; yielding and paying unto us, our heirs and successors, such the duties, customs and subsidies, as are or ought to be paid or payable for the same.

Colonists could bring new, willing settlers to Rhode Island, to defend and expand the colony.

And further, our will and pleasure is, and we do, for us, our heirs and successors, ordain, declare, and grant unto the said Governor and Company, and their successors, that all and every the subjects of us, our heirs and successors, which are already planted and settled within our said Colony of Providence Plantations, or which shall hereafter go to inhabit within the said Colony, and all and every of their children, which have been born there, or which shall happen hereafter to be born there, or on the sea, going thither, or returning from thence, shall have and enjoy all liberties and immunities of free and natural subjects within any [of] the dominions of us, our heirs and successors, to all intents, constructions and purposes, whatsoever, as if they, and every of them, were born within the realm of England.

Colonists could bring goods into the colony, however they would have to pay taxes to the King on those goods.

And further, know ye, that we, of our more abundant grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, have given, granted and confirmed, and by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, do give, grant and confirm, unto the said Governor and Company and their successors, all that part of our dominions in England, in America, containing the Nahantick and Nanhygansett, alias Narragansett Bay, and countries and parts adjacent, bounded on the west or westerly, to the middle or channel of a river there, commonly called and known by the name of Pawcatuck, alias Pawcawtuck river; and so along the said river, as the greater or middle stream thereof reacheth or lies up into the north country, northward, unto the head thereof, and from thence, by a straight line drawn due north, until it meets with the south line of the Massachusetts Colony: and on the north, or

Colonists had the same rights as English citizens.

The colony's geographical boundaries were described.

northerly, by the aforesaid south or southerly line of the Massachusetts Colony or Plantation, and extending towards the east, or eastwardly, three English miles, to the east and northeast of the most eastern and northeastern parts of the aforesaid Narragansett Bay, as the said Bay lyeth or extendeth itself from the ocean on the south, or southwardly unto the mouth of the river which runneth towards the town of Providence, and from thence along the easterly side or bank of the said river higher called by the name of Seacunk river, up to the falls called Patuckett falls, being the most westwardly line of Plymouth Colony, and so from the said falls, in a straight line, due north until it meet with the aforesaid line of the Massachusetts Colony; and bounded on the south by the ocean; and, in particular, the lands belonging to the towns of Providence, Pawtuxet, Warwick, Misquammacot, alias Pawcatuck, and the rest upon the main land in the tract aforesaid, together with Rhode Island, Block Island, and all the rest of the islands and banks in the Narragansett Bay, and bordering upon the coast of the tract aforesaid, Fisher's Island only excepted, together with all firm lands, soils, grounds, havens, ports, rivers, waters, fishings, mines royal, and all other mines, minerals, precious stones, quarries, woods, wood grounds, rocks, slates, and all and singular other commodities, jurisdictions, royalties, privileges, franchises, preheminances, and hereditaments, whatsoever, within the said tract, bounds, lands and islands aforesaid, or to them or any of them belonging, or in any wise appertaining; To have and to hold the same, unto the said Governor and Company, and their successors, forever, upon trust, for the use and benefit of themselves and their associates, freemen of the said Colony, their heirs and assigns, to be holden of us, our heirs and successors, as of the Manor of East Greenwich, in our county of Kent, in free and common soccage, and not in capite, nor by knight service; yielding and paying therefor, to us, our heirs and successors, only the fifth part of all the ore of gold and silver which, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, shall be there gotten, had or obtained, in lieu and satisfaction of all services, duties, fines, forfeitures, made or to be made, claims and demands whatsoever, to be to us, our heirs or successors, therefor or thereout rendered, made or paid; any grant, or clause, in a late grant, to the Governor and Company of Connecticut Colony, in America, to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding; the aforesaid Pawcatuck river having been yielded, after much debate, for the fixed and certain bounds between these our said Colonies, by the Agents thereof; who have also agreed, that the said Pawcatuck river shall be also called alias Norrogansett or Narrogansett river; and, to prevent future disputes, that otherwise might arise thereby, forever hereafter shall be construed, deemed and taken to be the Narragansett river in

The colony had to pay taxes to the King.

The Pawcatuck River was declared the boundary between Connecticut and Rhode Island.

our late grant to Connecticut Colony mentioned as the easterly bounds of that Colony.

And further, our will and pleasure is, that in all matters of public controversy which may fall out between our Colony of Providence Plantations, and the rest of our Colonies in New England, it shall and may be lawful to and for the Governor and Company of the said Colony of Providence Plantations to make their appeals therein to us, our heirs and successors, for redress in such cases, within this our realm of England:

Disputes with other colonies would be settled by the King.

and that it shall be lawful to and for the inhabitants of the said Colony of Providence Plantations, without let or molestation, to pass and repass, with freedom, into and through the rest of the English Colonies, upon their lawful and civil occasions, and to converse, and hold commerce and trade, with such of the inhabitants of our other English Colonies as shall be willing to admit them thereunto, they behaving themselves peaceably among them; any act, clause or sentence, in any of the said Colonies provided, or that shall be provided, to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding.

Colonists were permitted to travel through and trade with other colonies.

And lastly, we do, for us, our heirs and successors, ordain and grant unto the said Governor and Company, and their successors, by these presents, that these our letters patent shall be firm, good, effectual and available in all things in the law, to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever, according to our true intent and meaning hereinbefore declared; and shall be construed, reputed and adjudged in all cases most favorably on the behalf, and for the best benefit and behoof, of the said Governor and Company, and their successors; although express mention of the true yearly value or certainty of the premises, or any of them, or of any other gifts or grants, by us, or by any of our progenitors or predecessors, heretofore made to the said Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in the Narragansett Bay, New England, in America, in these presents is not made or any statute, act, ordinance, provision, proclamation or restriction, heretofore had, made, enacted, ordained or provided, or any other matter, cause or thing whatsoever, to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding. In witness whereof, we have caused these our letters to be made patent. Witness ourself at Westminster, the eighth day of July, in the fifteenth year of our reign.

The Charter ends with a statement that it is "firm, good, effectual and available in all things in the law," and that it is intended to be for the "best benefit" of Rhode Island.

By the King
HOWARD

A court scribe would have written the Charter. Howard may refer to the Clerk of Patents, Robert Howard.