

Google Street View



Walley, Goffe, and Dixwell, New Haven CT

In the Fall of 1955, most of us were compelled to make the trek to the Payne Whitney Gymnasium to improve our posture (?) or take a swim test. I recall the trip on the way to the gym, along Broadway to the traffic circle at the intersections of Whalley, Goffe, and Dixwell, street names that made little or no impression on me then. They do now.

Not too long ago, having reached my ninth decade, I thought it would be a good idea to go online and do some ancestry research so that our children and grandchildren would have a record of what we know. Quite a lot of our family history intersects with that of Connecticut and New Haven and one interesting line includes a “Colonel John Jones.”

Colonel Jones was in his day Sheriff of London and Member of Parliament. In 1649, he was one of 59 magistrates who signed the death warrant authorizing the execution of King Charles I, during the English Civil Wars. [1]

**This went badly for all concerned. Charles I lost his head, but eleven years later, the throne was restored...**

This went badly for all concerned. Charles I lost his head, but eleven years later, the throne was restored to his son Charles II. He enacted revenge on all those involved in the trial that condemned his

father to death. About 20 regicides were executed including Colonel John Jones who was executed in a particularly barbaric way at Charing Cross in London in 1660. [2] This would have ended our lineage, but for his son, William Jones.

In 1658, William Jones married Hannah Eaton, daughter of Theophilus Eaton, the first governor of the New Haven Colony who had died two years previously. In 1659, William Jones and his wife came to America on the *Prudent Mary* to claim Eaton’s estate and live in his house. William Jones himself was later to become Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut. [3]

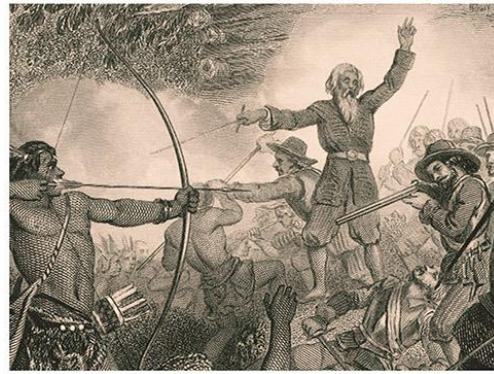
Travelling on the same voyage were three gentlemen with names familiar to us; Major General William Goffe, Major General Edward Whalley and Colonel John Dixwell. All three, like William Jones’s father, were regicides. Charles II vigorously pursued the three for many years thereafter.

Dixwell separated from Whalley and Goffe, reinventing himself under another name. Whalley and Goffe (Whalley’s son-in-law) were sheltered by William and Hannah Jones and by Reverend John Davenport (of Davenport College). After any number of close calls and pursuits, the two hid on West Rock, a high ridge west of New Haven within a set of boulders thereafter called “Judges Cave.”



Wikipedia Creative Commons

**Judges Cave West Rock New Haven**  
George Henry Durrier c. 1856 Wadsworth Athenium



**Excerpt "General Goffe repulsing the Indians at Hadley."**  
1839 engraving Artist: E. H. Courboud

Dixwell, Whalley and Goffe avoided capture but lived as fugitives for the remainder of their lives.

In 1665, King Charles II punished the Puritan Colony of New Haven by consolidating it into the Connecticut Colony. That's what you get for harboring regicides.

There are many stories about the three men in the following years, some doubtless apocryphal, but with enough currency to believe at least in part.

One story is told in *Killers of the King* by Charles Spencer (brother of Princess Diana). Spencer relates an incident worth retelling, although be cautioned that a review by the *Guardian* describes the book as "rather cavalier with its sources." [4]

***"...You are either Goffe, Whalley or the Devil, for there is no other man who can beat me."***

As Spencer writes it, there was a show of fencing skill in Boston, shortly after Goffe had arrived there. Goffe, unable to resist the temptation, emerged from the crowd and challenged the fencing master. Using a mop for a sword, Goffe held more than his own, with such skill that, as Spencer writes:

*The fencer, clearly frightened, shouted, "Who can you be? You are either Goffe, Whalley or the Devil, for there is no other man who can beat me."*

Another tale, cited here from *Annals of the New England Historical Society*, tells of an old man in a white beard and sword who appeared and took charge during an Indian attack on Hadley, Massachusetts purportedly during King Philip's War 1675. The swordsman was subsequently called the "Angel of Hadley," and as the story is told, believed to be our William Goffe. [5]

Such were the rumored sightings as the years passed, one can imagine with similar declarations such as, "You must be Walley!" or "...Goffe!" or "...Dixwell!" uttered whenever someone appeared of seasoned age and military bearing.

\* \* \*

In 1955, I had no idea that the intersection of these three streets next to the Payne Whitney gym also symbolized the intersection, almost 300 years earlier, of Whalley, Goffe and Dixwell with our own family history.

[1] [www.royal.uk/charles-i-r-1625-1649](http://www.royal.uk/charles-i-r-1625-1649)

[2] [www.geni.com/people/Col-John-Jones-MP-and-Regicide](http://www.geni.com/people/Col-John-Jones-MP-and-Regicide)

[3] [www.geni.com/people/William-Jones-24th-Dep-Gov-of-Connecticut-Colony](http://www.geni.com/people/William-Jones-24th-Dep-Gov-of-Connecticut-Colony)

[4] [www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/31/charles-spencer-killers-review](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/31/charles-spencer-killers-review)

[5] [www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com)