CHARTER

of the

Colony of Connecticut

1662
[On the 14th of March, 1661, the General Court of Connecticut voted to petition the king for the continuance and confirmation of such privileges and liberties as were necessary for the comfortable and peaceable settlement of the Colony.

Governor Winthrop was requested to act as the agent for the Colony. He sailed from New York in July, 1661. The letter of credit for £500 sterling, which he took with him, may be seen in the State Library. The amount was paid in wheat and pease. He succeeded in procuring a very liberal charter, which bears date April 23d, 1662.

The charter was made in duplicate and sent in different ships. The duplicate probably arrived first, and was received in Connecticut in September, 1662. There are some trifling verbal differences between them, not, however, affecting the sense.

In 1687 it became evident that the Colony was likely to be deprived of the charter, and measures were taken accordingly. There is a very curious entry on the Colonial Records in June 1687, of the production of the (original) charter in court, and of its being left on the table with the key in the box at the adjournment of the Court, with no one responsible for its safety, the committee which had been appointed to keep it being discharged by their surrendry of it to the Court. Perhaps it was at this time that the charter was quietly taken by Nathaniel Stanly and John Talcott, and concealed in the famous oak.

On the 31st of October, 1687, Sir Edmund Andros came to Hartford to receive the surrender of the charter. The Assembly met and sat late at night. The duplicate charter was brought forth and placed on the table. Suddenly the lights were extinguished, and Captain Joseph Wadsworth carried off and concealed the duplicate, which he retained until 1715, when the Assembly made him a grant for his good service in the matter. The one more highly ornamented than the other, now hangs in the Secretary's office. What remains
of the second copy may be seen in the rooms of the Connecticut Historical Society at Hartford. How it was saved from being cut up to make the foundation of a bonnet is told in a note in Vol. 4 of the Colonial Records.

The charter continued to be the basis of our government until it was superseded by the constitution of 1818.—C. J. Hoadly.

Charles the Second, By the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, defender of the Faith, &c.; To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting: Whereas, by the several Navigaçons, discoveryes and successful Plantacon of diverse of our loving Subjects of this our Realme of England, Severall Lands, Islands, Places, Colonies and Plantacon have byn obtainyd and setled in that parte of the Continent of America called New England, and thereby the Trade and Comerce there hath byn of late yeares much increased, And whereas, wee have byn informed by the humble Peticion of our Trusty and welbeloved John Winthrop, John Mason, Samuell Willis, Henry Clerke, Mathew Allen, John Tappen, Nathan Gold, Richard Treate, Richard Lord, Henry Woolicott, John Talcott, Daniell Clerke, John Ogden, Thomas Wells, Obedias Brewen, John Clerke, Anthony Haukins, John Deming and Mathew Camfeild, being Persons Principally interested in our Colony or Plantacon of Connecticut in New England, that the same Colony or the greatest parte thereof was purchased and obtained for greate and valuable Consideracon, And some other parte thereof gained by Conquest and with much difficulty, and att
the onely endeavours, expence and Charge of them and their Associates, and those vnder whome they Clayme, Subdued and improved, and thereby become a consider-
able enlargement and addition of our Dominions and in-
tereft there,—

Now know ye, that in consideration thereof, and in regard the said Colony is remote from other the English Plantacons in the Places aforesaid, And to the end the Affaires and Busines which shall from tyme to tyme happen or arife concerning the fame may bee duely Ordered and managed, wee have thought fitt, and att the humble Peticon of the Persons aforesaid, and are graciously pleased to Create and Make them a Body Politique and Corporate, with the powers and Privilegges herein after menconed; And accordingly Our will and pleasure is, and of our especiall grace, certeine knowledge and meere mocon, wee have Ordeyned, Constituted and Declared, And by theis presents, for vs, our heires and Successors, Doe Ordeine, Constitute and Declare That they, the said John Winthrop, John Mason, Samuell Willis, Henry Clerke, Mathew Allen, John Tappen, Nathan Gold, Richard Treate, Richard Lord, Henry Woollcot, John Talcot, Daniell Clerke, John Ogden, Thomas Wells, Obadiah Brewen, John Clerke, Anthony Hawkins, John Deming and Mathew Camfeild, and all such others as now are or hereafter shall bee Admitted and made free of the Company and Society of our Collony of Connecticut in America, shall from tyme to tyme and for ever hereafter, bee one Body Corporate and

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Pollitique in fact and name, by the Name of Governour and Company of the English Collony of Connecticut in New England in America; And that by the same name they and their Successors shall and may have perpetuall Succession, and shall and may bee Persons able and Capable in the law to Plead and bee Impleaded, to Answer and to bee Answered vnto, to Defend and bee Defended in all and singuler Suits, Causes, quarrelles, Matters, Actions and things of what kind or nature soever, And alsoe to have, take, posseffe, acquire and purchase lands, Tenements or hereditaments, or any goods or Chattells, and the same to Lease, Graunt, Demise, Alien, bargaine, Sell and dispose of, as other our leige People of this our Realme of England, or any other Corporacion or Body Pollitique within the same may lawfully doe. And further, that the said Governour and Company, and their Successors shall and may for ever hereafter have a Comon Seale to serve and use for all Causes, matters, things and affaires, whatsoever of them and their Successors, and the same Seale to alter, change, breake and make new from tyme to tyme att their wills and pleasures, as they shall thinke fitt. And further, wee will and Ordeine, and by these presents for vs, our heires and Successors Doe Declare and appoint, that for the better ordering and manageing of the affaires and businesse of the said Company and their Successors, there shall bee one Governour, one Deputy Governour and Twelve Assistants, to bee from tyme to tyme Constituted, Electe
and chosen out of the Freemen of the said Company for the tyme being, in such manner and forme as hereafter in these presents is expressed; which said Officers shall apply themselves to take care for the best disposeing and Ordering of the Generall busines and affairs of and concerning the lands and hereditaments herein after mentioned to bee graunted, and the Plantaçon thereof and the Government of the People thereof. And for the better execution of our Royall Pleasure herein, wee doe for vs, our heires and Successors, Assigne, name, Constitute and appoint the aforesaid John Winthrop to bee the first and present Governour of the said Company; And the said John Mason to bee the Deputy Governour; And the said Samuell Willis, Mathew Allen, Nathan Gold, Henry Clerke, Richard Treat, John Ogden, Thomas Tappen, John Talcott, Thomas Wells, Henry Woolcot, Richard Lord and Daniell Clerke to bee the Twelve present Assistants of the said Company; to continue in the said several Offices respectively, vntill the second Thursday which shall bee in the moneth of October now next coming. And further, wee will, and by these presents for vs, our heires and Successors, doe Ordaine and Graunt that the Governour of the said Company for the tyme being, or, in his absence by occasion of sicknes, or otherwise by his leave or permission, the Deputy Governour for the tyme being, shall and may from tyme to tyme vpon all occasions give Order for the assembling or the said Company and calling them together to Consult
and advise of the businesse and Affaires of the said Company, And that for ever hereafter, Twice in every yeare, That is to say on every Second Thursday in October and on every Second Thursday in May, or oftener, in Case it shall bee requisite, The Assistants and freemen of the said Company, or such of them, not exceeding twoe Persons from each Place, Towne or Citty, whoe shall bee from tyme to tyme therevnto Elect or Deputed by the maior parte of the freemen of the respective Townes, Cittyes and Places for which they shall bee se elected or Deputed, shall have a generall meeting or Assembly, then and their to Consult and advise in and about the Affaires and businesse of the said Company; And that the Governour, or in his absence the Deputy Governour of the said Company for the tyme being, and such of the Assistants and freemen of the said Company as shall be se elected or Deputed and bee present att such meeting or Assembly, or the greatest number of them, whereof the Governour or Deputy Governour and Six of the Assistants at leaft, to bee Seaven, shall bee called the Generall Assembly, and shall have full power and authority to alter and change their dayes and tymes of meeting or Generall Assemblies for Electing the Governour, Deputy Governour and Assistants or other Officers or any other Courts, Assemblies or meetings, and to Choose, Nominate and appoint such and soe many other Persons as they shall thinke fitt and shall bee willing to accept the same, to be free of the said Company and Body Politique, and
them into the same to Admitt and to Elect, and Constitute such Officers as they shall thinke fitt and requisite for the Ordering, mannageing and disposeing of the Affaires of the said Governour and Company and their Successors. And wee doe hereby for vs, our heires and Successors, Establish and Ordeine, that once in the yeare for ever hereafter, namely, the said Second Thursday in May, the Governour, Deputy Governour, and Assistants of the said Company and other Officers of the said Company, or such of them as the said Generall Assembly shall thinke fitt, shall bee in the said Generall Court and Assembly to bee held from that day or tyme newly Chosen for the yeare ensuing, by such greater part of the said Company for the tyme being then and there present. And if the Governour, Deputy Governour and Assistants by these presents appointed, or such as hereafter bee newly Chosen into their Roomes, or any of them, or any other the Officers to bee appointed for the said Company shall dye or bee removed from his or their severall Offices or Places before the said Generall day of Election, whome wee doe hereby Declare for any misdemeanour or default to bee removeable by the Governour, Assistants and Company, or such greater part of them in any of the said publique Courts to bee Assembled as is aforesaid, That then and in every such Cafe itt shall and may bee lawfull to and for the Governour, Deputy Governour and Assistants and Company aforesaid, or such greater parte of them soe to bee Assembled as is aforesaid in any of their Assemblies
to Proceede to a New Elecĉon of one or more of their Company in the Roome or place, Roomes or Places of such Governour, Deputy Governour, Assistant or other Officer or Officers soe dyeing or removed, according to their discretions; and immediately vpon and after such Elecĉon or Elecĉons made of such Governour, Deputy Governour, Assistant or Assistants, or any other Officer of the said Company in manner and forme aforesaid, The Authority, Office and Power before given to the former Governour, Deputy Governour or other Officer and Officers soe removed, in whose stead and Place new shal be chosen, shal as to him and them and every of them respectively cease and determine. Provided, alsoe, and our will and pleasure is, That as well such as are by theis presents appointed to bee the present Governour, Deputy Governour and Assistants of the said Company as thofe that shall suceed them, and all other Officers to bee appointed and Chosen as aforesaid, shal, before they vndertake the Execucon of their said Offices and Places respectively, take their severall and respective Corporall Oathes for the due and faithfull performance of their dutyes in their severall Offices and Places, before such Person or Persons as are by these Presents hereafter appoynted to take and receive the fame; That is to say, the said John Winthrop, whoe is herein before nominated and appointed the present Governour of the said Com- pany, shal take the said Oath before one or more of the Masters of our Court of Chancery for the tyme being,
vn\. to which Master of Chancery wee doe, by theis presents, give full power and authority to Administer the said Oath to the said John Winthrop accordingly. And the said John Mason, whoe is herein before nominated and duly appointed the present Deputy Governour of the said Company, shall take the said Oath before the said John Winthrop, or any twoe of the Assistants of the said Company, vnto whome wee doe by these presents, give full power and authority to Administer the said Oath to the said John Mason accordingly. And the said Samuell Willis, Henry Clerke, Mathew Allen, John Tappen, Nathan Gold, Richard Treate, Richard Lord, Henry Woolcott, John Talcott, Daniell Clerke, John Ogden and Thomas Welles, whoe are herein before Nominated and appointed the present Assistants of the said Company, shall take the Oath before the said John Winthrop and John Mason, or one of them, to whome wee doe hereby give full power and authority to Administer the same accordingly. And our further will and pleasure is, that all and every Governour or Deputy Governour to bee Electe by vertue of theis presents, shall take the said Oath before two or more of the Assistants of the said Company for the tyme being, vnto whom wee doe, by theis presents, give full power and authority to give and Administer the said Oath accordingly. And the said Assistants and every of them, and all and every other Officer or Officers to bee hereafter Chosen from tyme to tyme, to take the said Oath before the Governour or
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Deputy Governour for the tyme being, vn to which said Governour or Deputy Governour wee doe, by theis presents, give full power and authority to Administer the same accordingly. And further, of our more ample grace, certeine knowledge and meere mocon wee have given and Graunted, and by theis presents, for vs, our heires and Successors, Doe give and Graunt vn to the said Governour and Company of the English Colony of Connecticuit in New England in America, and to every Inhabitant there, and to every Person and Persons Trading thither, And to every such Person and Persons as are or shall bee free of the said Collony, full power and authority from tyme to tyme and att all tymes hereafter, to take, Ship, Transport and Carry away, for and towards the Plantacon and defence of the said Collony such of our loveing Subjects and Strangers as shall or will willingly accompany them in and to their said Collony and Plantaçon; (Except such Person and Persons as are or shall bee therein restrayne by vs, our heires and Successors;) And alsoe to Ship and Transport all and all manner of goods, Chattells, Merchandizes and other things whatsoever that are or shall bee vsefull or necessaery for the Inhabitants of the said Collony and may lawfully bee Transported thither; Neverthelesse, not to bee discharged of payment to vs, our heires and Successors, of the Dutyes, Customes and Subsidies which are or ought to bee paid or payable for the same. And further, Our will and pleasure is, and wee doe for vs, our heires and Successors, Ordeyne, De-
clare and Graunt vnto the said Governor and Company and their Successors, That all and every the Subjects of vs, our heires or Successors which shall goe to Inhabite within the said Colony, and every of their Children which shall happen to bee borne there or on the Sea in goeing thither or returneing from thence, shall have and enjoye all liberties and Immunities of free and naturall Subjects within any the Dominions of vs, our heires or Successors, to all intents, Construccons and purposes whatsoever, as if they and every of them were borne within the Realme of England. And wee doe authorise and impower the Governour, or in his absence the Deputy Governour for the tyme being, to appointe two or more of the said assistants att any of their Courts or Assemblyes to bee held as aforesaid, to have power and authority to Administer the Oath of Supremacy and obedience to all and every Person and Persons which shall att any tyme or tymes hereafter goe or passe into the said Colony of Co-necticutt, vnto which said Assistants doe to bee appointed as aforesaid, wee doe, by these presents, give full power and authority to Administer the said Oath accordingly. And wee doe further, of our especiall grace, certeine knowledge and meere mocon, give and Graunt vnto the said Governor and Company of the English Colony of Conecticutt in New England in America, and their Successors, that itt shall and may bee lawfull to and for the Governour or Deputy Governour and such of the Assistants of the said Company for the tyme being as shall bee
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Assembled in any of the General Courts aforesaid, or in any Courts to be especially Sumoned or Asssembled for that purpose, or the greater parte of them, whereof the Governor or Deputy Governor and Six of the Assistants, (to be all wayes Seaven,) to Erect and make such Judici- catories for the heareing and Determining of all Acçons, Causes, matters and thinges happening within the saïd Colony or Plantaçon and which shal bee in dispute and depending there, as they shal thinke fitt and convenient; And alseoe from tyme to tyme to Make, Ordaine and Establish All manner of wholesome and reasonable Lawes, Statutes, Ordinances, Direcçons and Instrucçons, not contrary to the lawes of this Realme of England, aswell for setling the formes and Ceremonies of Government and Magestracy fitt and necessary for the saïd Plantaçon and the Inhabitants there as for nameing and Stileing all sortes of Officers, both superior and inferior, which they shal find needfull for the Govenment and Plantaçon of the saïd Colony, and the distinguishing and setting forth of the severall Dutyes, Powers and Lymitts of every such Office and Place, and the formes of such Oaths, not being contrary to the Lawes and Statutes of this our Realme of England, to bee Administred for the Execuçon of the saïd severall Offices and Places; As alseoe for the dispose- ing and Ordering of the Elecçon of such of the saïd Officers as are to bee Annually Chosen, and of such others as shal succeed in case of death or removall, and Administring the saïd Oath to the new Eleçted Officers, and
Graunting necessary Comissions, and for imposition of lawfull Fines, Mulcts, Imprisonment or other Punishment upon Offenders and Delinquents, according to the Course of other Corporations within this our Kingdom of England, and the same Lawes, fines, Mulcts and Executions to alter, change, revoke, adnull, release or Pardon, under their Comon Seale, As by the said Generall Assembly or the major part of them shall bee thought fitt; And for the directing, ruleing and disposing of all other matters and things whereby our said people, Inhabitants there, may bee soe religiously, peaceably and civillly Governed as their good life and orderly Conversation may wynn and invite the Natives of the Country to the knowledge and obedience of the onely true God and Saviour of mankind and the Christian faith, which in our Royall intençons and the Adventurers free profession is the onely and principall end of this Plantacon; Willing, Commanding and requireing, and by these presents, for vs, our heires and Successiors, Ordaineing and appointeing That all such Lawes, Statutes and Ordinances, Instruccons, Imposiçons, and Direcçons as shall bee soe made by the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Assistants, as aforesaid, and published in writing under their Comon Seale, shall carefully and duely bee observed, kept, performed and putt in executçon, according to the true intent and meaning of the same. And these our letters Patent, or the Duplicate or Exemplificaçon thereof, shall bee to all and every such Officers, Superiors and inferiors, from tyme to tyme for
the Putting of the same Orders, Lawes, Statutes, Ordinances, Instruccons and Direccons in due Execuccon, against vs, our heires and Successors, a sufficient warrant and dis-charge. And wee doe further, for vs, our heires and Successors, give and Graunt vnto the said Governor and Company and their Successors, by these presents, That itt shall and may bee lawfull to and for the Cheife Commanders, Governors and Officers of the said Company for the tyme being whoe shall bee resident in the parts of New England hereafter menconed, and others inhabiting there by their leave, admittance, appointment or direccon, from tyme to tyme and att all tymes hereafter, for their speciall defence and safety, to Assemble, Martiall, Array, and putt in Warlike posture the Inhabitants of the said Colony, and to Commissonate, Impower and authorise such Person or Persons as they shall thinke fitt to lead and Conduett the said Inhabitants, and to encounter, expulse, repell and resift by force of Armes, as well by Sea as by land, And alsoe to kill, Slay and destroy, by all fitting wayes, enterprizes and meanes whatsoever, all and every such Person or Persons as shall att any tyme hereafter Attempt or enterprize the destruccon, invasion, detritment or annoyance of the said Inhabitants or Plantacon, And to use and exercise the Law Martiall in such Cases onely as occassion shall require, And to take or surprize by all wayes and meanes whatsoever, all and every such Person and Persons, with their Shipps, Armour, Ammunition, and other goods of such as shall in such hostile
manner invade or attempt the defeating of the said Plantaçon or the hurt of the said Company and Inhabitants; and upon just Causes to invade and destroy the Natives or other Enemies of the said Colony. Nevertheless, Our Will and pleasure is, And wee doe hereby Declare vnto all Christian Kings, Princes and States, That if any Persons which shall hereafter bee of the said Company or Plantaçon, or any other, by appointment of the said Governor and Company for the tyme being, shall att any tyme or tymes hereafter Robb or Spoile by Sea or by land, and doe any hurt, violence or unlawfull hostillity to any of the Subjectts of vs, our heires or Successors, or any of the Subjectts of any Prince or State beinge then in league with vs, our heires or Successors, vpon Complaint of such injury done to any such Prince or State, or their Subjectts, wee, our heires and Successors, will make open Proclamaçon within any parts of our Realme of England fitt for that purpose, That the Person or Persons commitinge any such Robbery or Spoile, shall within the tyme lymitted by such Proclamaçon, make full restitution or satisfaction of all such injuries done or committed, Soe as the said Prince or others soe complayneing may bee fully satisfied and contented. And if the said Person or Persons whoe shall committ any such Robbery or Spoile shall not make satisfaction accordingly, within such tyme soe to bee limited, That then itt shall and may bee lawfull for vs, our heires and Successors, to putt such Person or Persons out of our Allegiance and Proteccion. And
that it shall and may be lawfull and free for all Princes or others to Prosecute with hostility such Offenders and every of them, their and every of their Procurers, ayders, Abettors and Councillors in that behalfe. Provided, alsoe, and our expresse will and pleasure is, And wee doe by these presents for vs, our heires and Successors, Ordeyne and appointe that these presents shall not in any manner hinder any of our loveing Subiects whatsoever to vse and exercife the Trade of Fisheinge vpon the Coast of New England in America, but they and every or any of them shall have full and free power and liberty to contynue and vse the said Trade of Fisheing vpon the said Coast, in any of the Seas therevnto adjoyning, or any Armes of the Seas or Salt Water Rivers where they have byn accus-tomed to Fishe, And to build and sett vpon the wast land belonging to the said Colony of Conecticutt, such Wharves, Stages and workehouses as shall bee necessarie for the Salting, dryeing and keepeing of their Fishe to bee taken or gotten vpon that Coast,—any thinge in these presents conteyned to the contrary notwithstanding. And knowe yee further, That Wee, of our more abundant grace, certaine knowledge and meere mocon have given, Graunted and Confirmed, And by theis presents, for vs, our heires and Successors, Doe give, Graunt and Confirme vnto the said Governor and Company and their Successors, All that parte of our Dominions in Newe England in America bounded on the East by Norrogancett River, comonly called Norrogancett Bay, where the said
River falleth into the Sea, and on the North by the lyne of the Massachusetts Plantacon, and on the South by the Sea, and in longitude as the lyne of the Massachusetts Colony, runinge from East to West; that is to say, from the said Narrogancett Bay on the East to the South Sea on the West parte, with the Islands thereunto adioyninge, Together with all firme lands, Soyles, Grounds, Havens, Ports, Rivers, Waters, Fishings, Mynes, Myneralls, Precious Stones, Quarries, and all and singuler other Comodities, Jurisdictioners, Royalties, Privilegeds, Franchises, Preheminences, and hereditaments whatsoever within the said Tract, Bounds, lands and Islands aforesaid, or to them or any of them belonging, To have and to hold the same vnto the said Governor and Company, their Successors and Assignes, for ever vpon Trust and for the vie and benefitt of themselves and their Associates, freemen of the said Colony, their heires and Assignes, To bee holden of vs, our heires and Successors, as of our Manor of East Greene-wich, in Free and Comon Socage, and not in Capite nor by Knights Service, Yielding and Payinge therefore to vs, our heires and Successors, onely the Fifth parte of all the Oare of Gold and Silver which from tyme to tyme and att all tymes hereafter shall bee there gotten, had or obteyned, in liew of all Services, Dutyes and Demaunds whatsoever, to bee to vs, our heires or Successors, therefore or thereout rendered, made or paid. And lastly, Wee doe for vs, our heires, and Successors, Graunt to the said Governor and Company and their Successors, by these
presents, that these our Letters Patent shall bee firme, good and effectuall in the lawe to all intents, Constructions and purposes whatsoever, accordinge to our true intent and meaneing herein before Declared, as shall bee Construed, reputed and adjudged most favourable on the behalfe and for the best benefit and behoofe of the said Governor and Company and their Successors, Although express mention of the true yearely value of certeinty of the premises, or of any of them, or of any other Gifts or Grants by vs or by any of our Progenitors or Predecessors heretofore made to the said Governor and Company of the English Colony of Connecticut in New England in America aforesaid in these presents is not made, or any Statute, Act, Ordinance, Provision, Proclamation or Restriction heretofore had, made, Enacted, Ordeyned or Provided, or any other matter, Cause or thing whatsoever to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding. In witnes whereof, we have caused these our Letters to bee made Patent: witnes our Selfe, att Westminster, the three and Twentieth day of Aprill, in the Fowerteenth yeare of our Reigne.

By writt of Privy Seale. Howard.