

INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS ON NEW ENGLAND'S FRONTIER:
A SURVEY OF THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

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In many respects, the form and progression of the New England frontier reflects a collision, of sorts, between two disparate peoples and their two divergent cultures. As the European confronted the native American in the wilderness setting, it soon became apparent that the demise of the Indian culture was inevitable, the only salient question being as to the nature of its decline.

A close examination of early Seventeenth Century relations shows the English as ambitious and militant expansionists who not only rejected the idea of cultural coexistence, but, in regarding the Indian solely from a European frame of reference, failed to make any substantial progress toward a theory of toleration.

The English were highly organized, strongly motivated, and eminently successful in their pursuit of the long range goals of settlement; and it is the very cohesiveness of the Puritan frontier which best illuminates the fateful dilemma of the indigenous population.

While fragmented by tribal particularism and internecine warfare, the native New Englanders were beset on all sides by enemies, European and Indian. Though willing, at first, to contest a permanent European colonial effort, their cultural resiliency was undermined by disease, and a multiplicity of negative factors which developed as their relationships with the English settlements moved toward interdependency.

As the confrontation moved into the climactic period following the Pequot War, the weight of the English presence had already brought about irreversible trends in the Indian way of life. With his lands diminishing under the pressure of two converging lines of frontier settlement, he was finally left with two impractical options, acculturation or resistance. Both charted a course to futility.

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The Algonquian tribes of the New England English were organized at

CHAPTER I

THE NEW ENGLAND WILDERNESS BEFORE EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Before the white men came to New England the land was both the master and servant of an assortment of Indian tribes of the eastern Algonquian group, a cultural affiliation of native Americans who ranged from Maine to the Chesapeake. In classifying the indigenous New England Indian as Algonquian, the foremost consideration is linguistic, but his living habits also reflected a definite structure of institutional homogeneity manifested in architectural practices, economic patterns, social and religious conventions and basic tribal organization.

Prior to the advent of European settlement, hundreds of Algonquian villages dotted the New England landscape, and it is these quasi-towns that yield the most descriptive tableau of tribal life. The village represented a clearly defined economic entity, but it also served as an expression of the collective will that sustained the norms of an ancient culture. It was the guardian of social mores, and, most important, a workable venture in a people's act of survival.

While the village was the foundation stone upon which rested the principles of tribal solidarity, no Algonquian community thought of itself as simply a functioning gear in the political machinery of the tribe at large; for within each village there would most probably reside members of several clans, each with its own council to settle clan disputes. Whereas clan authority tended toward a final stage diffusion of local political control, nonetheless, political organization was evident on the higher policy making levels of tribal life.

The Algonquian tribes of the New England region were comprised of

villages, or bands of villages, and presided over by a distinguished member of the community, the sachem. The sachem might be elected to his position by tribal vote, or, in the case of many larger tribes, chosen indirectly by a council of notables and war leaders called sagamores.¹

Another figure of some importance in the tribal hierarchy was the powwow, a religious leader who at times might rival the sachem in terms of political authority. It is of some interest to note, however, that his position as religious leader did not automatically make him preeminent; for, contrary to practices among the tribes of the western regions, the New England powwow did not usually possess the fanatical religious zeal which often thrust his Iroquoian counterparts into positions of leadership. Neither did religious matters move policy within the New England tribes. There was little fondness for religious ritual; and again in contrast to the people of the Five Nations, there seemed to be a minimal amount of fascination for the complexities of primitive mysticism, or the sadistic excesses of ceremonial torture.

It is apparent then, that among the Algonquian tribes of New England, the atmosphere of magisterial rigidity was almost totally absent. The political process, such as it was, operated in a manner somewhat responsible to popular sentiment. However, the political configuration of the tribe became more easily discernible, and indeed more complex, once contacts with Europeans began to stimulate a need for organization in the conduct of diplomacy and economic intercourse. But before the age of European settlement, it can be safely assumed that government, standardized law and religious formalism were but vague concepts, with tribal polity less

¹cf. Douglas E. Leach, The Northern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1673 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 9.

clearly defined in the period before European settlement.² The wilderness setting, in fact, did not cultivate the need for strictly defined socio-political institutions in the European sense; nor did the village environment demand constant litigation for the settlement of intra-tribal disputes.³

The New England Indian at the turn of the Seventeenth Century was a man of few personal possessions, untouched by the acquisitiveness which was part and parcel of European society. His village, usually palisaded, was a modestly compact affair where utility motivated architectural form. Unlike the communal "long houses" of the Iroquois, he made his home in a wigwam. Quite suitable to the extremes of the New England climate, the wigwam was constructed about an oval floor plan large enough to accommodate a family unit. Built of tree bark and reed matting, and reinforced by a framework of pliable saplings, it offered ample protection against the elements. Both easily and inexpensively constructed, it is but one of the many expressions of the Algonquian's sense of individual identity.

Although the New England Indian is best described as a town-dweller, the main village site was typically a semi-fixed location, for the tribe, or major segments of it, often migrated with the seasons. Several factors are noticeable in surveying the reasons for these short-term migrations, for with the absence of a technology, the Indian was forced to bend in the direction dictated by the wilderness itself. In the summer it was necessary to be near the planting fields which surrounded every major village. Here, while the women tended the annual crops, the men scoured

² Harold E. Driver, Indians of North America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 370.

³ Douglas E. Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip's War (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p. 4.

the nearby forests for game. Anticipating the lean months of cold and snow, the sannup, or warrior, went upon his quest armed with a hardwood bow strung with animal sinew, and a variety of clever traps and snares. As winter fell on the community, the village might move to a more sheltered location to await the spring thaw. With the approach of warm weather, the village would then retrace its steps to the original site to concern itself with the business of planting, perhaps sending out small elements to tribal fishing grounds on the coast, or the banks of a quick mountain stream. Village locations might also be changed for a number of other reasons relating to the fertility of the soil, the supply of wildlife or firewood, war, or in subsequent years, pestilence. Thus, the New England Indian was a creature of migration. While not truly nomadic as in the case of the prairie dwellers, he was liable to change location periodically within the somewhat loosely demarcated confines of the tribal region.

At times the causes of community movement developed out of friction between the tribes, but most often such crises were resolved short of open warfare. Simply stated, the New England tribes were not by nature warlike, and inter-tribal conflict for any reason was less frequent in the years before contacts were established with the Europeans.⁴ True, there was a constant series of ambuscades in the forest, but most of these altercations were engineered by individuals, or groups of adolescent adventurers, rather than by the tribe as a political unit.⁵

When the European immigrant disembarked upon the shores of southern New England, he brought with him, as a part of his cultural baggage, a new concept of land ownership. It didn't make a great deal of sense to the

⁴Driver, p. 370.

⁵Leach, Northern Colonial Frontier . . ., p. 12.

native American, for, although the boundaries of tribal lands were generally understood, he had no conception of permanent individual title. The Indian's notion of land tenure, like many of his other unwritten precepts, was vaguely formulated in terms of practical utility. A family might consistently work a given piece of land, but the surrounding territory was generally thought to be held in common by the tribe. A family, or a tribe, might transfer part of its land to another party, but its new occupancy was considered in the nature of an open end agreement to be maintained only as long as both remained satisfied. In an agreement of this type it was not the land, but the temporary utilization of it that was transferred.⁶

The eastern Algonquian undoubtedly felt that in view of the great surfeit of land, and all its abundant resources, there was little need to bicker over formal property arrangements. And, like many other peoples who have known the struggles of a hostile environment, they seemed predisposed to sharing what they did possess. For the most part, they believed in hospitality as a matter of course.⁷ The stranger in their country was a matter of curiosity and wonder, a traveller to be welcomed. Stopping by their village, a stranger could always expect to be given both food and shelter.⁸ This overt friendliness would surprise most of their first European visitors, and, all too often, the gratitude prompted

⁶ Leach, Northern Colonial Frontier . . ., p. 9. Also see: Homer C. Hockett, Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1492 - 1865 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), p. 44.

⁷ cf. Wilcomb E. Washburn, "The Moral and Legal Justifications for Dispossessing the Indians," Seventeenth Century America: Essays on Colonial History, ed. James M. Smith (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 19.

⁸ Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk . . ., p. 3.

by the host's uninhibited generosity was extremely short-lived. It is cruelly paradoxical that the naive beneficence of the New England Indian would carry with it the promise of his eventual subjugation.

When the European came to New England, there was a multiplicity of tribes in the region. Related culturally, there was, however, no sense of cohesiveness among them. Unwilling to confederate in the fashion of the Five Nations, they were dangerously weakened in the face of their stronger enemies. Had they but shown a willingness to forsake their petty quarrels and relinquish a share of their closely guarded tribal sovereignty, New England's early history would read quite differently today.

Among the most northern of the New England tribes were the Micmacs, living in an area encompassing an area of New Brunswick and northern Maine. Below them, living east of the White Mountains in the area drained by the great rivers of Maine were the Pequawkets, Penobscots, Androscoggins and other major bands of the sullen Abenakis. Belligerent, and at times expansive, they held their southern brothers in contempt and represented at least a potential threat to their well being. Before the end of the Seventeenth Century, the Abenakis fell under the leadership and influence of French Jesuits, and continued to bar the door in the north.

To the west of the tribes of southern New England, in an area south and east of Lake Ontario, lived the most dangerous enemy, the Iroquois. Possessed of a fraternal solidarity never achieved by the New England tribes, they remained a constant source of peril. Joined by language and culture the Confederation of the Five Nations consisted of the Senecas, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and the Mohawks. It was the last of these,

living just beyond the Hudson, that posed the most serious threat. The Mohawks were powerful, and were not adverse to displaying that power.

During this period on the eve of European settlement, no better set of circumstances displays the essential weakness of the tribes of southern New England than those bearing on the invasion of the Pequots. For reasons that are not fully understood, a major element of the Mohican people began a migration late in the Sixteenth Century. From their home in the upper reaches of the Hudson below Lake George, they began a slow and determined trek down into the Connecticut Valley.⁹ Moving south and east, they eventually carved out their new domain between the Connecticut and Pawcatuck Rivers. By force of arms they soon created an hegemony over the local tribes, and took upon themselves a new name - Pequot - an accurately descriptive Algonquian word meaning "destroyers of men."¹⁰ Thus, in the first decade of the new century, the tribes of southern New England found themselves not only pressured by foes on the periphery, but more and more preoccupied with the internecine havoc caused by this strong and vigorous enemy in their midst. Soon there would be others to contend with.

When the English first came to their New England plantations, there were five major tribes in addition to the Pequots. In the region surrounding the future sites of Boston and Quincy were the people of the Massachusetts tribe. In the area between the Massachusetts and Cape Cod

⁹ Alden T. Vaughan, "Pequots and Puritans: The Causes of the War of 1637," William and Mary Quarterly, XXI, No. 2 (April, 1964), p. 257.

¹⁰ While most historians accept the translation as given above, one prominent scholar delivers it simply as an Algonquian word meaning "gray fox." See: Cyclone Covey, The Gentle Radical: Roger Williams (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 159.

were the Wampanoags, inhabiting a region from the Taunton River eastward to the Atlantic. Neighboring the Wampanoags to the south were the Narragansetts whose tribal territory stretched from the western shore of the bay named for them, to the Pequot country of the Pawcatuck River. North and west of the future site of Boston, in the area beyond the Merrimack dwelled the Pennacooks. The last of the major tribes, the Nipmucks, were centrally located in the region around the future site of Worcester, Mass. Weakest of the larger tribes, their territories were often encroached upon by the five Indian powers mentioned.¹¹

The remainder of the Indian population at this time consisted of a scattering of subservient, or semi-sovereign tribes. For example, there were the Neponsets of the Blue Hills region who were part of the Massachusetts tribal complex, but retaining, nonetheless, somewhat of a distinct identity of their own. In the areas of Wampanoag authority there were similar bands with a comparable relation to the parent tribe. Among these were the Cohannets of the Taunton River and the Pockanocketts on the coast at the site which would in time become Plymouth. South and east of the Wampanoags were small tribes such as the Mashpees and Nausets, usually referred to collectively as the Cape Cod Indians. The tribal picture in the east is completed with the Wamesits, a minor band living near the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord Rivers, and the Niantics of Block Island Sound.

The Niantics, by themselves, best illustrate the fate of the smaller and weaker tribes during the power struggle that developed as a result of the Pequot invasion. Having had the misfortune to be located in the area contested by both the Pequots and Narragansetts, their lands at first

¹¹ Alden T. Vaughan, New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), p. 56.

assumed the form of a buffer zone. Soon, however, caught in the vise of aggression, their tribal identity began to erode. By the time the English began to settle the coast, the tribe had been split in two. One half, now known as the Eastern Niantics, remained in the southwestern corner of Narragansett country and became subservient to that tribe, while the Western Niantics were absorbed into the Pequot hegemony.

In the west, beyond the Nipmucks, lived a series of relatively small tribes holding down the fragile perimeter of Algonquian influence. Though exposed to the might of the Five Nations, and living in constant fear of the dreaded Mohawks, several Connecticut River communities held to their lands, bordered on the south by the Pequots and in the north by the Pennacooks. In the region where the fringes of the Pennacook territory met the Connecticut were the Squakheags, located near the future site of Northfield, Mass. Moving southward down the Connecticut Valley, there were the Nonotucks, and a loose conglomerate of bands known as the Pocumtucks whose main village was located on the future site of Deerfield, Mass. Farther down the Valley, and directly below the Pocumtucks, dwelled the so-called "River Indians." Small in number, and usually referred to collectively, they included the Podunks, Wongunks and Siciagogs. The one remaining force in the Valley north of Pequot control was the Agawam tribe living in the area where the present Massachusetts-Connecticut border intersects the Connecticut River.

And so it can be seen that just prior to the period of European colonization, the native peoples of southern New England found themselves not only fragmented, but confronted from within and without by hostile forces. If, in the face of this danger, their particularism did not include the fatal weakness, it would soon be aggravated by the threat of a militant and expansive alien civilization.

CHAPTER II

NEW ENGLAND AND THE VOYAGES OF EXPLORATION

Without considering obligations to provide substantial evidence, it is at least interesting to speculate that the Norsemen might have sighted the New England coast sometime in the Eleventh Century. And perhaps in later years, long before the voyages of Columbus, their course might have been followed by Bristol fishermen. It is with the same reasonable wager against credibility that one considers the case of the Portuguese explorer Joao Corte Real, who was reported to have sailed to a "New Land of Codfish" in 1473.¹ It is easy to dismiss his claims, but then the skeptic must also consider the careers of his two more famous sons. Both made voyages to North American waters in the following century, thereby giving rise to the tenuous suggestion that they sailed in a wake first cut by their father.

Gaspar Corte Real sailed to Greenland in 1500, and rediscovered that island. On his second voyage in the following year, he reached Newfoundland, dispatched two companion vessels home, and then set sail southward into oblivion. In 1502, his brother Miguel went in search of him, and here the family becomes the center of another dispute. Most would have it that this second son perished with his crew off Newfoundland.² But some would say that he suffered the fate of the castaway in New England waters, and may have lived for nine years among the Narragansetts.³

¹ Boies Penrose, Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance, 1420-1620 (New York: Atheneum, 1962), p. 178. Cf. Frank Knight, The Sea Story: A Guide to Nautical Reading (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1958), p. 84.

² Penrose, p. 180.

³ Henry F. Howe, Early Explorers of Plymouth Harbor, 1525-1619 (Plymouth, Mass.: The Pilgrim Society & Plimoth Plantation, Inc., 1953), p. 4.

The European exploration of New England becomes more clearly defined following John Cabot's second voyage of 1498. Undoubtedly he did sail along the New England coast, tracing a course which might have taken him as far south as the Delaware Capes.

With Verrazano's French expedition of 1524 the exploration of the New England coast began to accelerate. Verrazano might have spent up to two weeks in Narragansett Bay replenishing stores, while in the next year Estevan Gomez, a Spaniard who had sailed with Magellan, spent about two months in New England waters. Documentation of the Gomez voyage is seen in the Diego Rivero map of 1529 which designates a land mass entitled "Tierra de Estevan Gomez." Looking quite like Boston Harbor, the map also denotes a prominent inlet indicated as "Bay of St. Christoval."⁴

With coastal traffic increasing at mid-century, there came to the Maine coast fishermen, and the desultory beginnings of the fur trade. Soon tall tales of the wilderness were circulating through the cities and seaports of western Europe. One such tells of the Englishman David Ingram, a castaway from Hawkins' third voyage to the Caribbean. Put ashore in Florida, in the year 1567, Ingram supposedly made his way overland to Nova Scotia.⁵ A fantastic accomplishment, to say the least, but in substance no more impossible than the earlier documented wanderings of Cabeza de Vaca in the southwest.

For the remainder of the Sixteenth Century there was a heightening of exploratory activity, and now thoughts of eventual colonization began

⁴ Howe, pp. 4-5.

⁵ Penrose, p. 288.

to evolve. In 1580, Sir Humphrey Gilbert dispatched a voyage of reconnaissance preparatory to his own subsequent sailing. Commanded by Simon Fernandes, a Portuguese, this expedition surveyed the coasts of Nova Scotia and Maine.⁶ In that same year, an English sailor named John Walker pushed farther down the coast to Penobscot Bay, where he explored the so-called "River of Norumbega."⁷

The first attempt at colonization in these latitudes was endeavored by the ill-starred Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Landing at Newfoundland, his party arrived to find a considerable assortment of fishermen - Spaniards, Portuguese, Frenchmen and Englishmen - all busy drying their catch.⁸

Gilbert's colonization effort lasted but two weeks, and the unfortunate adventurer was drowned off the Azores soon thereafter. His great misfortune, however, was not without gain. In spite of the tragic failure here, and the disaster at Roanoke, Englishmen in the 1580's were beginning to see the New World in terms of its economic potential. Prodded by propagandists such as Richard Hakluyt, they were coming to believe in the new mercantile concepts which alleged that the creation of colonies was imperative to the cause of national strength. But already England was late to the game, and looking to the new hemisphere she saw that her Latin antagonists were solidly entrenched in its southern sectors. The decision then, was all but made for her. It would be in the relatively unknown lands of the northern coastal areas that fortune awaited the latecomers to the race for empire. In the last decade of the century the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Penrose, p. 296.

⁸ Ibid., p. 289.

sentiment was growing that England must make up for lost time. This she would do with characteristic stubbornness, with courage and sacrifice, and a goodly share of unscrupulous self-assertion.⁹

In 1583 Sir Francis Drake and Thomas Smythe had founded the Muscovy Company, the first English chartered trading company. It was probably the most successful trading company ever established in England. It was the first to bring English trade to the Far East, and was soon to bring English ships to the Atlantic. The English were to be commanding sailors - who, like many challenges, was bound to be reinforced by other challenges by the people.

In 1585 a group of English noblemen took such an interest and consciousness of English worthiness that it will be the earliest party for the stated purpose of establishing India. It transpired that the expedition might well prove up a colony of discontent, to such thought to be the sovereign master of the French provinces. In one of the strange fancies of her Elizabethan history that this party of Englishmen, who would establish the first English settlement party of Roxbury, were aiming to save the Queen.

In a back yard garden, should gather for the Roxburyshire plots, and to plan for their final revolution, he used to say a book that later gave him much power as the "Painted Cell."¹⁰ Talking under the sky, the Englishmen planned to bring down the Queen.

⁹ W. Nelson Francis, "Hakluyt's Voyages: An Epic of Discovery," William and Mary Quarterly, XII, No. 3 (July, 1955), p. 447.

CHAPTER III

EUROPEANS AND INDIANS - THE FIRST SUBSTANTIAL CONTACTS

In 1593, an English captain named Richard Strong made a little known voyage from Nova Scotia southward along the coast.¹ This was, perhaps, the last of those cautious surveys characterizing the Sixteenth Century explorations of New England. With the new century would come new men; men who were less awe-struck by the wilderness, and thus more likely to make their demands upon it. They would come now in ever increasing numbers - men, who having challenged the sea, would not be intimidated by either the land or its people.

In 1602, a group of English merchants took risk in hand, and commissioned Captain Bartholomew Gosnold to sail to the western parts for the stated purpose of establishing trade. It was hoped that the expedition might gather up a quantity of sassafras, an herb thought to be "of sovereign virtue for the French poxe."² It is one of the strange ironies of New England's history that this party of Englishmen, who would establish the first meaningful habitation north of Roanoke, came seeking a cure for disease.

In a bark named Concord, Gosnold sailed for the Massachusetts shore, and in passing that famed prominence, he named it for a fish that later generations would honor as the "sacred Cod."³ Sailing under the Cape

¹ Penrose, p. 296.

² quoted in Howe, p. 7.

³ Bradford credits Gosnold with naming the Cape. See: William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, ed. Harvey Wish (New York: Capricorn, 1962), p. 59.

they landed on Cuttyhunk Island in Buzzards Bay, and here they built their trading station. Some kind of trouble with the native population, and perhaps a growing sense of discretion in the presence of those alien surroundings, persuaded Gosnold to return to England after a stay of only five weeks. But his expedition, far from successful as it was, represents a beginning.

Somewhat encouraged by Gosnold's safe return, a group of Bristol merchants organized a second voyage under Captain Martin Pring. Again the motive was trade and sassafras, and Pring's two stout ships, Speedwell and Discoverer, set sail with a crew of forty-four men and boys divided between the two vessels. Landing at a place known to the Indians as Patuxet (or Accomack), Pring built a small palisade fort. But like Gosnold, Pring's success in matters economic left something to be desired. They returned shortly to England, their only lasting accomplishment being that once again Englishmen had succeeded in rousing the ire of Indians who had received them in friendship. Pring's men were particularly thoughtless, for not content with allowing the expedition's pair of mastiff dogs to unsettle the natives' composure, they also made off with one of the Indian canoes,⁴ much to the chagrin of its infuriated owner.

In 1605, another party was sent to New England, this time by Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton. Commanded by Sir George Weymouth, they sailed to Nantucket by way of the Maine coast. A new and serious development in English-Indian relations came about as a result of the seizure of five Indians, all of whom were brought back to England. Once in England, the natives were given to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, one of

⁴ Howe, p. 7.

the more ambitious of the west-country Gentlemen Adventurers, and soon to be one of the original promoters of the Plymouth Company. Gorges evidently used the Indians for the purpose of publicizing support for colonial ventures in New England.⁵

In the same year a French expedition under Samuel de Champlain made coastal explorations of New England, and, like his English predecessors, the first contacts with the Indians proved to be friendly. Sailing southward, Champlain examined both Gloucester and Boston Harbors. In the latter place, called Shawmut by the Indians, he was presented with gifts of squashes by the local inhabitants. Moving along the coast he had further meetings , and in one of these Indians in fifteen large canoes paddled out to the French ship as it stood off the coast in the Marshfield-Green Harbor area. Champlain continued on to the Plymouth region where he was again received with kindness. Laying over in Plymouth Harbor he made a series of careful soundings, and drew a map which indicates that at this time the Indian population of the Plymouth-Kingston-Duxbury area was quite sizable. Leaving Plymouth, the Frenchmen sailed around Cape Cod to land in the country of the Nausets. Here, following a pattern set by earlier European explorers, a fight broke out. Apparently one of the Indians, not appreciating the Gallic attachment to things culinary, took a liking to one of the crew's kettles. In the brawl that ensued, one of the French sailors was killed.

Champlain sailed away to return in the following year, but in landing at Chatham in 1606, the French discovered that the temperament of the Indians had changed. In a dawn raid four hundred warriors attacked the

⁵ Wallace Notestein, The English People on the Eve of Colonization (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 256.

the camp costing the French four fatalities. The bloodshed of this day erupted again four days later. This time Champlain's crew murdered six Indians, after having discovered that the bodies of their fallen shipmates had been disinterred. Having decided that the coastal Indians could frustrate, if not turn back, future European penetrations of their territory, Champlain departed New England not to return. His experiences had convinced him that Canada would be the better place to satisfy French colonial ambitions.

In the same year that Champlain was repulsed, Martin Pring returned, this time to further explore the coast of Maine in preparation of the Plymouth Company's first attempt at colonization. Brought to fruition with the help of Gorges, and the active support of Lord Chief Justice Sir John Popham, a settlement was established near the mouth of the Kennebec River in 1607. Here at Sagadahoc George Popham, nephew (or perhaps the brother) of Sir John, and Raleigh Gilbert, son of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, built an impressive little fort, planted crops, and constructed a pinnace for the Indian trade. But misfortune plagued the settlers from the beginning. In an unusually severe winter, the fort caught fire and nearly burned down. The leadership of the settlement, unsteady at best, was further undermined with the death of Popham. And the Indians, throughout it all, proved to be suspicious and reluctant to trade. In the accounts of the failure of the Sagadahoc experiment, it has never been definitely determined whether Indian hostility seriously contributed to the demise of the settlement. But in 1611, a French Jesuit explorer was told by the Indians that the colony had suffered an Indian attack because of a series of injustices perpetrated by the English.⁶

⁶ Henry F. Howe, Prologue to New England (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1943), p. 163.

The failure of Sagadahoc temporarily curbed English enthusiasm for commercial settlement, and it wasn't until 1609 that coastal traders returned to New England in any great numbers. Sir Francis Popham, son of the Lord Chief Justice, sent out annual expeditions until 1614, yet still the memory of Sagadahoc tempered further plans for settlement.

In 1609, New England had a new visitor, this time from the south. After his explorations of the river which bears his name, Henry Hudson landed on Cape Cod, spending a few days there without incident. In the following year, Samuel Argall sailed to these waters in search of cod for the struggling Jamestown colony.

In the next several years, English explorations took on a bolder attitude, and as the number of their visits became more frequent, so increased the scale of friction between Indian and European. A typically impudent expedition, one with far-reaching consequences, was commanded by Captain Edward Harlow. Sent out by the Earl of Southampton in 1611, Harlow succeeded in stirring up no less than five skirmishes with the Indians on Cape Cod. During the process, he captured five and brought them back to England on the return voyage.

Soon it was the Dutch turn to seize the initiative, and in 1614, in his ship Onrust, Adrien Block set out for the New England coast. Sailing up from Long Island Sound, past the island named for him, Block surveyed the coast as far as Cape Cod, claiming it all as a part of Nieu Nederland. Unknown to the Dutch captain, another explorer was in the vicinity, for John Smith had already embarked upon his notable cruise of the area.

Smith's stay was about three months in duration, and he was met, like those who went before him, with friendship which soon turned to scorn. In landing at Cohasset he wrote: "We found the people in those parts verie

kinde, but in their furie no less valiant."⁷ Here, according to Smith, at least one Indian was killed in an argument with the crew. Passing on to Plymouth,⁸ he was also greeted with courtesy, but again the overbearing English created a row in which several of the combatants were killed. At the conclusion of the donnybrook, Smith's men went on to steal six or seven Indian canoes and forced their owners to buy them back with beaver pelts.

If the patience of the Indians was wearing thin at this point, they had only to wait for Smith's departure, for no sooner had Smith sailed than into the harbor came Captain Thomas Hunt, commanding a companion vessel in Smith's expedition. Having made a lucrative catch of fish off Maine's Monhegan Island, Hunt set his course southward, looking for other sources of profit. Putting in to Plymouth, he was up to the task of capturing twenty Indians,⁹ whom he later sold in Malaga "for 20 Pounds to a man."¹⁰

Again in this busy year of 1614, Sir Ferdinando Gorges sent out a party commanded by Captain Nicholas Hobson. Sailing to Martha's Vineyard, Hobson was under instructions to establish a trading station and investigate the possibilities of a fur trade. Accompanying this

⁷ quoted in Howe, Early Explorers . . ., p. 23.

⁸ Mapping the region as he went, Smith is credited with giving the Indian town, Patuxet, its future name, Plymouth.

⁹ One of these twenty Indians was the celebrated Squanto, who was later freed from his bondage by Spanish priests. This astoundingly durable soul somehow made his way to England where he was taken into the household of one John Slany, agent of the Newfoundland Company. Taking leave of Slany, he obtained passage to Newfoundland, from where, at last, he returned to the Massachusetts Bay area with Captain Dermer.

¹⁰ quoted in Howe, Early Explorers . . ., p. 24.

expedition was an Indian named Epenow, one of the five captured by Harlow. Once ashore, Epenow escaped his captors and returned with enough of the Vineyard Indians to force Harlow to leave for England, his mission a failure. In the skirmish which drove the English to their boats, Harlow and several of his crew were seriously wounded.

The last major expedition before the establishment of the Separatist colony at Plymouth, sailed for New England, by way of Newfoundland, in 1619. Commanded by Captain Thomas Dermer, this expedition differs in many respects from the preceding ones.

It is most probable that by this time, Englishmen like Gorges were beginning to see that the economic potential of New England could not be tapped while the Indians remained hostile. There is little doubt that Dermer sailed with specific instructions to reestablish friendly relations. Of great help to him on this expedition was the infatigable Squanto (see p. 19n). Joining Dermer's crew in Newfoundland, they sailed southward to the coast of Wampanoag country, disembarked and marched inland to Nummastaquyt (Middleboro) where initial contacts with the tribe were established. Dermer then moved on to Poconokit, the sachem Massasoit's village at the mouth of the Taunton River. Here, through the good offices of Squanto, the long-lasting peace between the English and the Wampanoags was initiated, thus opening the door for permanent settlement.

In spite of Dermer's success with the Wampanoags, not all of the Indians of southern New England were quite so willing for a rapprochement with the Europeans. Even while the Mayflower was pushing toward her ultimate destination, Dermer himself was fatally wounded by Epenow's ¹¹ followers on the Vineyard.

¹¹ see Bradford, p. 75.

But the English would assume a new posture of competency. They would at last prevail, for at the time Dermer was making his entreaties to Massasoit, a new and alarming predicament had befallen the Indians. The English, as they would soon discover, had found the ally which the Indians of New England would find irresistible. This ally was the smallpox, which had already begun to ravage the Native Americans, and to spread pestilence.

The smallpox, a disease known to the Indians, either, under the name of "the white sickness," or "the red sickness," or "the black sickness," was now spreading among them. It was a disease which had no known cure, and which the English had not yet learned to combat. The Indians, however, were not ignorant of its presence, nor did they lack knowledge of its virulence. There were many Indian villages which suffered by this affliction, and people were all too anxious of where it had come from. Starting thither, where the Indians themselves were most numerous, the disease rapidly spread, and the neighboring tribes, who had been accustomed to mutual友邦, began to fall into a spirit of suspicion and distrust. The English, too, had been taught that the Indians were, and always had been, their enemies, and that the Indians were the cause of their misfortune. But the Indians were, and always had been, their friends, and the cause of their prosperity. They had given them shelter, and they had given them food. In time they would prosper, and in time so they would not have to pay the price of their prosperity, that of attacking both the nation and the government. For when Indian territory was won, they took but it yielded nothing.

For the Indians began to act suspiciously alone, yet it is not probable that they were brought by the infected arrows of one of the English.

¹ Captain Peter St. George, March 5, 1666, in Henry K. Cheever (ed.), *Documents of American History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1921), p. 57.

² Cf. Samuel R. Parker, *History of the Puritan Colony* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1906), p. 207.

CHAPTER IV

PERMANENT ENGLISH SETTLEMENT

When Henry VII, a sovereign ever watchful of the royal purse, commissioned John Cabot to sail to the New World, he gave to him a patent saying that he might, "subdue, occupy and possesse all such townes, cities, castles and isles of them found . . . getting unto us the rule, title and iurisdiction of the same villages, towns, castles and firme land so found."¹ And now, at last, the English had the opportunity to do just that, for in the year 1617, a plague swept through the Indian people of New England. Few villages were spared, and thus was the land made ready for the taking. Those coastal regions which offered the best agricultural prospects were all but cleared of native inhabitants. Planting fields, which the Indians habitually burned out of the forest, simply waited for an English spade. Here on the continent's ravaged doorstep only an ailing handful of natives could dispute the English landing. But the foreigners came, and they made their settlements on the former sites of Indian villages. They planted their corn in the Indian fashion, and they survived. In time they would prosper, and in doing so they would not have to pay the price of later frontiers, that of overcoming both the native and the environment. For those Indians retaining any spirit, they soon had it drubbed out of them.²

How the epidemic began is not sufficiently clear, yet it is most probable that it was brought by the infected crewmen of one of the earlier

¹"Letters Patent to John Cabot, March 5, 1496," in Henry S. Commager (ed.), Documents of American History (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958), p. 5.

²cf. Samuel E. Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 13.

coastal voyages. Indians of the Massachusetts tribe, for example, believed the sickness was caused by a curse turned upon them by the dying members of a French expedition wrecked on Boston Harbor's Peddock's Island.³ A more prosaic explanation might be measles, or chicken pox, or several of the other varieties of childhood diseases to which the English had built up a general immunity. Whatever the true nature of the malady, the epidemic spread quickly through most of the tribes.

As the English settlers moved into eastern Massachusetts, they saw before them a region almost totally devoid of human habitation. When Bradford, Carter and the Elder Brewster brought their people safely ashore, they knew that they had come to a once populous area. Bradford, in fact, had a letter written by Dermer in which that ill-fated trader-explorer spoke of the Pockanocketts as a tribe that not only despised, and were determined to resist, the English, but were "of more streingth then all the savags from thence to Penobscote."⁴ When the winter passed and Samoset, a sagamore from the Maine coast, wandered into the settlement he told the English, having learned a fair command of their tongue from fishermen, that the plague had destroyed the Pockanocketts.⁵ How different the story of Plymouth Plantation would be had these people - the same who would have killed Dermer had Squanto not intervened - been there to resist. They most certainly would have contested the Pilgrims' landing.

As spring turned to summer in 1621, the Plymouth colonists ventured inland to pay a courtesy call on Massasoit. Cruelly treated by the

³ Howe, Early Explorers . . ., p. 26.

⁴ quoted in Bradford, p. 74.

⁵ see D. Kenelm Winslow, Mayflower Heritage: A Family Record of the Growth of Anglo-American Partnership (London: George G. Harrap and Company, Ltd., 1957), p. 52.

epidemic, the Wampanoags, in their weakened state, had formed an alliance with the English, in part that they might have a strong ally with which to face their ambitious enemy, the Narragansetts. Massasoit's example was soon followed by nine other tribal leaders of like motive.

Using the courtesy visit as an opportunity for reconnaissance, Edward Winslow took a small party, with Squanto as guide, and trekked overland to the Taunton River. On the way, the English were able to see the extent of the disaster wrecked upon the native people. The sites of former Indian villages were scenes more terrible than their own dormant impressions of plague-struck cities of the medieval past. They saw the unburied remains of hundreds of people who died, suffering their last torments, unaware of concepts of the fallen essence of man. But the English paused amid the horror and speculated on sin, and the dogged persistence of sin. They would later report that "skuls and bones were found in many places lying still above ground, where their houses and dwellings had been; a very sad spectakle to behould."⁶ Sad indeed, but they unctiously agreed that this was an act of Divine Providence; an act of the Lord preparing the way for His favored people.⁷

And so the English came to the abandoned coast, bringing with them confidence in their institutions, a hope for prosperity and a surety that they were doing the Lord's work. And as they approached their own problems, which were legion in number, one is left wondering as to the intensity of of their subliminal guilt.

Within the next several years, colonization activity began to increase

⁶ Bradford, p. 78.

⁷ Winslow, p. 52.

along the Massachusetts coast. Thomas Weston laid the foundation of a commercial settlement at Wessagusset, but by 1623 it was sliding into failure. In 1623, Roger Conant, and a band of Puritans from the southern shires of England, came to Cape Ann. They quickly moved to the location of an Indian village called Naumkeag, and planted the settlement of Salem. Perhaps they too paused to reflect upon the handiwork of the pestilence that had prepared their way.

Some Englishmen, however, turned their back on the place, not so much moved by commiseration, but for the prospects of better planting elsewhere. In 1625, when Captain Wollaston attempted settlement in that area of Quincy Bay which still bears his name, he found himself in a place that had supported one of the largest of the New England tribes. But the Massachusetts had been engulfed by the sickness, and the sachem Chickatabot had moved northward with the shattered remnants of his tribe, leaving his empty wigwam standing in testament to his tragedy.⁸ Wollaston left for Virginia in the following year, having been sorely used by the New England winter; but again one wonders if perhaps he took one last look, scanning the panorama of listless Black's Creek and the hill called Passonagessit upon which the sachem's mother was buried, and decided that this place had been touched by the Fates. Had Wollaston remained, he would have seen the survivors of this tribe which had once numbered over three thousand, decline to the point where by 1630 it numbered no more than five hundred.⁹ This factor alone goes far in explaining why the

⁸Daniel M. Wilson, Three Hundred Years of Quincy: 1625-1925 (the City Government of Quincy, Mass., 1926), p. 3.

⁹Vaughan, New England Frontier . . ., p. 54

Massachusetts, and most of the other eastern tribes, received the Europeans with such passivity, if not cordiality, during the formative period of settlement. This is further highlighted by the fact that the Narragansetts, numbering some four thousand with their Eastern Niantic allies, and the only major tribe to escape the full force of the epidemic, remained aggressive for many decades thereafter.¹⁰

The plague of 1617-1618 overwhelmed most of the tribes from the Mystic River to Narragansett Bay, and from Cape Cod to the lands of the Nipmucks; and before it had run its full course it had infected Indians as far north as Saco Bay in Maine, and as far west as the Connecticut. At the same time that the Jamestown settlement was struggling to recover from the punishment it had absorbed in that first great Indian uprising, there were already some fourteen hundred Englishmen living on the coastal fringes of New England between Cape Ann and Cape Cod.¹¹ While the New England colonists were growing more powerful and more organized, the native population was growing weaker, and in their debilitated state were losing even the semblance of racial cohesiveness. Diseased and disunited, the English took their "corne fields and salvage gardens." Defenseless, most gave way and moved from their tribal lands.

Considering the thousands who fell victim to the plague, many of them who had known and resisted the Europeans in the days of the coastal explorations, it takes no great feat of the imagination to reflect upon what might have been. Without the aid of their invisible ally - without this plague that they saw in terms of Moses and Pharaoh - the English would have been hardpressed in the seizure of their colonial foothold.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 55

¹¹ cf. Herman R. Friis, "A Series of Population Maps of the Colonies and the United States, 1625-1790," Geographical Review, XXX, No. 3 (July, 1940), p. 463.

CHAPTER V

THE PURITAN VIEW OF NEW ENGLAND

The English Puritans who sailed to New England during the years of the Great Migration were sustained not only by their dogmatism, but also by a world-view which rested upon order. They were moved by immutable principles whose postulates supported method over turmoil, regulation over derangement, and the systematizing of all temporal things. They found comfort in a modus vivendi that bears little resemblance to the popular, romantic notions of pioneering. Rather than approaching their challenge in a flurry of random activity, they seized upon opportunity in well-measured strides; and there, in the Bay region that had known the uninhibited ways of the Indian, they would shape a frontier in which progress was expressed, almost solely, in terms of deliberate gradation.

It is to be remembered that the Puritans, in spite of some of their misconceptions as to the true nature of the frontier, came to New England eminently conscious of the power of the wilderness. They knew it could hobble the timid, transform the just and, given the chance, debase those Englishmen it defeated. They knew, for example, of the failure of Weston's Wessagusset settlement, of English men and women starving and cowed by the Indians. They could reason that Weston had failed because his people, stripped of their vigor by the wilderness, were unable, or much worse unwilling, to make their European institutions work for them. Weston's people had failed, and once they were too weak to steal food from the Indians, they began to die. Had they been witness to these sorry events, the Puritans would have reacted just as the horrified Bradford did, and

they too would have seen that the Weston colony's fatal error "must needs be their great disorder."¹ But they were determined not to make the same mistakes, and they would come to grips with the promise of their new home pushed by a sense of community building which grew naturally out of their European background.

The Puritans began from the premise that the land, its resources, and the native inhabitants as well, were there to be exploited; for the Lord had led them, as the Children of Israel, to a New Canaan where he wished them to prosper among all the things he had provided.² As for the Indian himself, though he might conceivably be set to constructive purposes, he was always to be regarded with the utmost apprehension. He was the personification of the indiscriminate discontinuity of the wilderness, and as such stood as a clear admonition as to the eternal punishment to which they might descend. Living not like civilized men, he reaffirmed the image they held of themselves, and showed them what they must never be.³ And in time the Puritans transformed the wilderness, but as surely as time passed, so was their Covenant transformed. The days were not long in coming before the religious purpose of their settlement was overshadowed by secular pursuits; but then, in the final analysis, they "were concerned less with the ends of society than with its organization, and less with making the community good than making it effective."⁴ And

¹ Bradford, p. 86.

² Thomas J. Wertenbaker, The Puritan Oligarchy: The Founding of American Civilization (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 183.

³ cf. Roy H. Pearce, The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 3-5.

⁴ Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Colonial Experience (New York: Vintage, 1958), p. 29.

in building the "Citty upon a Hill" that strong sense of the ordered community that had been part and parcel of their cultural heritage, would dominate the wilderness, and finally, the Indian himself.

Before the Arbella dropped anchor at Salem in June of 1630, its passengers must have thought of a life among unknown numbers of potential enemies. Even John Winthrop reflects the concern, and certainly during the voyage he must have pondered on how honest Englishmen might conduct themselves in a land fraught with danger. Confident of the new Covenant, he approached the question, albeit somewhat tangentially, in an exhortation delivered before landfall was sighted. In this sermon called "A Modell of Christian Charity," he reasoned that while the teachings of natural law were unclear, "all enemies are to be considered friends in the estate of innocency," for both moral law and Scriptures were definite: "the Gospell commands love to an enemy."⁵ But the proclivities of the Puritan spirit tended elsewhere, and the case for charity broke apart in that strange dialectic fed by the ambition of Christian imperialism and the limitations of Puritan logic.

To most Puritans the Indian was the spawn of the Devil, proof of this being amply demonstrated by the savage state of the environment. To those who did not assent outright to the Indian's league with Satan, they looked upon him, at the very least, as a corrupted being whose offerings of friendship was but guile masking the designs of evil. Even those who are considered among the first benefactors of the Indian were highly suspect.

⁵ Daniel J. Boorstin (ed.), An American Primer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 11-12.

Daniel Gooking likened them to "the wild ass's colt, and not many degrees above beasts."⁶ John Eliot was not hesitant in calling them the dregs of humanity, and even Roger Williams, so often praised for his tolerance, described them as the "barborous scum and offscourings of mankinde."⁷

Charles M. Andrews once wrote: "The Seventeenth Century shows us an English world in America,"⁸ and as surely as the Puritans were English, the manner in which they coped with the frontier reflects the bourgeois mainstream of the England they had left behind. In trying to fathom the ways of the Indian, their first and lasting mistake was to begin from a European frame of reference. This being so, they would never truly understand him, nor would their progeny until they too became a natural part of the wilderness.

In the beginning, the Puritans speculated on the origins of the forest dweller. A popular theory, adhered to on both sides of the Atlantic was that he descended from the scattered tribes of Israel, for to some the Algonquian tongue sounded like Hebrew. Roger Williams sagely put this theory aside when he noted that their "Barborous, Rockie speech" was nearer Greek than Hebrew.⁹ While Williams mulled over the problem, others let their imaginations run the full circle. Perhaps, they thought, the Indians were Tartars, or Moors, Carthaginians, Welshmen, or even Plato's Atlanteans. While opinions differed regarding the immediate place

⁶ Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk . . ., p. 6.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Charles M. Andrews, The Settlements, Vol. I of The Colonial Period of American History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), xiii.

⁹ Covey, p. 47.

of origin, the Indians had to be assigned to a niche within the Judeo-Christian reference catalogue; so more conventional views began to prevail. After the first few years of debate, the overwhelmingly prevalent opinion asserted that the Americas had been inhabited after the Flood by the offspring of Noah. This being a reasonable hypothesis, Gookin reveals the disposition of his fellow colonists by sweeping the Indians into the macrocosm of Christian experience, saying: "They are Adam's posterity and therefore children of wrath."¹⁰ Never developing a theory of toleration, the Puritans began to look upon the Indian as a pariah, seeing him as the ever-present enemy standing in the way of a predetermined providence.

Even in a superficial examination of Indian relations in the first years of the Massachusetts Bay settlement, a number of contradictions between cause and effect seem apparent in Puritan policy. It would appear, at first glance, that these hardy Englishmen considered themselves soundly motivated in their desire to restructure their American environment. As they said, planting models of English villages where there had been nothing but an unproductive preserve for savages, would be of benefit to both parties. Insisting that they were on a just and moral course meant, naturally, that the Indian must shed his blindness to reason, and allow the English to drag him out of his condition of depravity. Even in the days when the initial suspicion had turned to conflict, there were some Puritan liberals, optimists all, who tenaciously held to the precept that once the spiritual deficiencies of the Indians were remedied, red men and white might join their energies to increase the spiritual and material efficacy of the Bible Commonwealth. But if any enlightened Puritans did

¹⁰ quoted in John K. Wright, Human Nature in Geography: Fourteen Papers, 1925-1965 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 281.

envision the practical advantages of a spiritual and social merger,¹¹ the good intentions of the few never bore fruit, for the roots of their commonwealth would not thrive on a diet of compromise. It cannot be said, however, that it was solely the fault of their Calvinist theology that prevented the assimilation of the Indian. Of equal, or perhaps more importance, was the ontological awareness of being Englishmen, and therefore somehow superior.

The formative generation of the Massachusetts Bay leadership was Elizabethan, men whose belief in an ordered society, with full control over its components, was unquestionable. They placed an abundant amount of faith in the hierarchical nature of English society, and, while they were not enthusiastically outspoken in their recognition of plateaus above them in this world, they were quite prepared to demonstrate the fact that there were those who stood below them.¹² Not only the leadership, but the vast majority of the Massachusetts Bay settlers, of all classes, held fast to tenets which expressed the innate inequality of man.¹³ And even the flexibility that Puritan society succumbed to, as the low born and indentured became freemen in the settlements of the hinterland, expresses only the accidental limits of social mobility; for even on the frontier line they refused to give up the idea of caste.

If it can be said that the Puritans' first reactions to the Indian

¹¹ see Oscar Handlin, Race and Nationality in American Life (New York: Doubleday Company, Inc., 1957), p. 26.

¹² cf. A. L. Rowse, The Elizabethans and America (New York: Harper and Bros., 1959), p. 127.

¹³ George L. Haskins, Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts: A Study in Tradition and Design (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 98.

culture around them were the typical reactions of immigrants,¹⁴ then it must also be said that their Indian policy took form upon more than simply an initial uneasiness over strange surroundings. Once they had established relations with the neighboring tribes, their policy began to develop with a vigorous self-assurance that virtually shouted racial conceit. From their very first dealings with the Indian sachems, Winthrop and the Puritan leadership displayed that "unabashed assumption of superiority which was to carry English rule around the world."¹⁵ These policy makers of the Bay were truly "aristocrats by tradition and profession . . . but the moral quickening of their religion had not completely freed them from the narrowness and bigotry which their times had inherited from the Middle Ages."¹⁶

The new immigrants from Ireland, the Scotch-Irishmen, brought the same religious enthusiasm and the same narrowness of mind. The anti-Seminole Indians, who had been so friendly to the Puritans, had now turned against them. John Winthrop, who had visited their camp, described them as a pack of brutes who had committed every sin known to man. When the Puritans gave up at New Haven, they became, though not for long, the leaders of Connecticut, the leading community along the Massachusetts coast during the days

¹⁴ cf. Marcus L. Hansen, The Immigrant in American History (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 101-102.

¹⁵ Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p. 60.

¹⁶ Homer C. Hockett, Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1492-1865 (New York; The Macmillan Company, 1943), p. 40.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE INDIAN TRADE

In the early years of the Seventeenth Century, the port town backers of the Plymouth Company were confident that profit earning factories could be established on the North American coast. George Popham's Sagadahoc was to be one of these, built with the hope that natives would come bringing all the natural wealth of the surrounding area. With the failure of this settlement, thoughts of trucking with the Indians turned to the less ambitious subject of fish. By 1614, the Englishmen contented themselves to stay on the offshore islands. Building their shelters on Damariscove, Matinicus and Monhegan Islands, the would be traders' hopes for large scale commercial success came to nothing. One can hardly blame the Indians reluctance to have contacts with them, for a certain John Josselyn, who had visited their camps, described them as a pack of drunken and undisciplined clods and remarked that "when Wine in their guts is at full Tide, they quarrel, fight and do one another mischief."¹ Likewise, the trading expeditions along the Massachusetts coast during the same period, left those Indians skeptical, and in many cases hostile to the English trader.

In succeeding years, when the Plymouth Colony began to turn in the direction of the Indian trade, they found themselves troubled by outcast traders of similar stripe. For throughout the early colonial period, there were many men who made a profession of victimizing the Indian.

¹quoted in Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 14.

From the day that the treaty was drawn up with the Wampanoags, William Bradford was aware that there were economic benefits to such an alliance; and the Indian trade was soon looked upon as the colony's key to solvency.² Realizing that the debts incurred in settlement must be paid, and that a return must be gained for all company investors, the Plymouth men watched over their trade with care. As this was "their one substantial source of income then available,"³ they were adamant in their desire to keep other colonials, no matter what their nationality, at a safe distance. They were emphatic in their plans to maintain strict controls; and, in 1623, when the ships Anne and Little James brought over those first settlers to come independent of the joint-stock company, they were barred from dealing with the Indians. According to Bradford, the Indian trade represented a profit earning windfall, and although it never did live up to his expectations, he took pains to explain that it should serve "the generall good, and none were to trade in perticuler."⁴ It was not long in coming, however, that the Pilgrims found in their midst that same type of unprincipled intruder that had been plying the Indian trade since the days of Captain Hunt.

First among these was Thomas Weston, whom they had known since the Leyden days. Wanted in England for arms smuggling,⁵ he had since brought ruin upon the aborted Wessagusset settlement where stealing from the Indians had been commonplace.

² Leach, Northern Colonial Frontier . . ., p. 19.

³ George D. Langdon, Jr., "The Franchise and Political Democracy in Plymouth Colony," William and Mary Quarterly, XX, No. 4 (October, 1963), p. 515.

⁴ Bradford, p. 127.

⁵ Bailyn, p. 13.

Next among them was the ubiquitous John Oldham. Oldham was a tempestuous sort who respected neither the interests of the Indians, nor the rights of the Separatists. This blatant opportunist, who Bradford described as a "mad Jack in his mood," was at last driven from Plymouth with "a bob on the bumme," having dabbled in a conspiracy designed to return the settlement to episcopacy.⁶

The most notorious of these derelict traders was Thomas Morton. In 1627, Morton established a trading station at Merrymount, close to the site of the defunct Wollaston settlement. By any standards Morton was an amoral rogue, and his dealings with the Indians represent, perhaps, the logical culmination of the unjust and unregulated trade typifying the period of exploration and first settlements. At Merrymount, heterodox practices became the social norm; and after raising up his celebrated maypole, Bradford notes, Morton became a "lord of misrule."⁷

In the course of his trade with the Indians, Morton made it the regular custom to purchase peltry with liquor and firearms. It was a highly profitable business, but not all of Morton's relations with the Indians were along economic grounds. Bradford soberly points out that there were many riotous nights spent at Merrymount, with Morton's men and their Indian women "dancing and frisking togither (like so many fairies,⁸ or furies rather) and worse practices." While it can be said that the lusty predilections of Morton's behavior caused the Pilgrims some degree of uneasiness, their most serious concern, as with all the other tiny

⁶Ibid.

⁷Bradford, p. 141

⁸Ibid.

settlements from Maine to Plymouth, was his trade in alcohol and guns. Morton was given fair warning, but finally, in 1628, it took force and Myles Standish to close down the bacchanalian retreat at Merrymount. Morton was brought to Plymouth and then shipped to England, but like the proverbial penny, he returned once more to Merrymount. By this time the fledgling Bay Colony began to take an interest in his affairs. Morton's business had grown to the point where he was turning a six to seven hundred percent profit in furs, and the settlement itself had become the haven for runaway servants and thrill-seeking young men.⁹ Refusing to conform, Morton was arrested by the Bay authorities. Transported to Boston, he was clapped in the bilboes to await his second expulsion. Before he was sent back to England, however, he was made to give satisfaction to the Indians he had wronged, many of them journeying to Boston to witness Morton's punishment.¹⁰

To classify Morton as a marginal degenerate would be a charitable use of understatement, but not quite so kind as Archbishop Laud's committee of the Privy Council which welcomed him back to England as "an Anglican martyr."¹¹ After writing his own justification called New English Canaan, he returned to the Bay where, after a short spell in jail, he wandered up to York in coastal Maine and died in a half-crazed state.

⁹ Morison, p. 17.

¹⁰ see Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (ed.), Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (Boston: William White, printer to the Commonwealth, 1853), I, p. 75 (hereafter as Mass. Records).

¹¹ Morison, p. 17.

As the fur supply of coastal Massachusetts was soon exhausted, the English began to push outward in search of new pelts. By the time the Bay Colony was fully established, Plymouth had built a series of trading stations in the outlying areas. They set up work at the head of Buzzards Bay, on Narragansett Bay, and had two major houses in Maine controlling the fur trade of the Penobscot and Kennebec Rivers. Of the stations in Maine, one was near the future site of Augusta. The other, at Castine, was managed by the half-wild Edward Astly, described by Bradford as a "very profane yonge man."¹² Like Morton, he was finally sent home for making illicit sales to the Indians.

In the early 1630's English farmers were also thinking in terms of penetrating the interior; and for them, as well as the traders who sought to exploit the western fur resources, it became evident that the English must obtain some degree of control over the Connecticut River. As early as 1627, the Dutch had sent word to Plymouth that they were ready to trade along the river. Peter Minuit took the initiative and dispatched an emissary in the person of Isaack de Rasieres, the Secretary of New Netherland. Little came of these cordial negotiations, but the men of Plymouth were quick to inform the Dutch that they expected no trespassing on the lands of the English.

By 1631, the Valley Indians, hard pressed by the Pequots and seeking allies, also extended invitations to trade on the river. Both Plymouth and the Bay settlers politely refused, although the former sent a pinnace on a mission of exploration as far upriver as Matianuck (Windsor). In 1633, the Valley Indians extended another invitation to the English, and this time their complaints of Pequot encroachment were given with a new

¹²quoted in Bailyn, p. 14.

sense of urgency. They also informed the English that the Dutch were preparing a fort on the river. Alive to the danger of Dutch control of the west country, Bradford and Winslow traveled to Boston, hoping to effect an English partnership along the Connecticut. Governor Winthrop refused the offer, but in the next two weeks the Bay sent two expeditions to the Valley. One consisted of dispatching the thirty ton bark, Blessing of the Bay, on a voyage to the mouth of the river. The second was an overland trip undertaken by John Oldham and two companions. Upon their return, Governor Winthrop was pleased to report that the Indians, some of whom might have visited Boston prior to Oldham's departure, had used the Englishmen kindly, and had invited them to stay over in Indian villages all along the way.¹³ The explorers returned with hemp, which aroused the interest of nautical Boston, and quantities of graphite that the Indians used for ceremonial body painting.¹⁴

Although primarily interested in the fur trade, John Oldham's glowing reports of the land and soil of the Connecticut Valley helped prepare the way for its eventual settlement. Oldham himself would come back two years later to help plant the town of Wethersfield, Conn.

In that same year of 1633, the men of Plymouth, not to be outdone by either the Dutch or their countrymen at Boston, decided to send a trading

¹³ John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal: History of New England, 1630-1649, ed. James K. Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), I, p. 108.

¹⁴ Some years later, in 1644, John Winthrop, Jr. purchased these graphite deposits at Tentiusques (Sturbridge, Mass.), and all the land for ten miles around. With 1,000 Pounds capital, and with miners and equipment brought over from England, he went into business. The price he paid for both land and mine was ten belts of wampum. See: Roy Johnson, "Not a Mining State But We Had Mines," Boston Globe, December 5, 1967, p. 34.

expedition to the Connecticut; but unlike the others, the party from Plymouth was going there to stay. Commanded by William Holmes, the little group left Plymouth on September 26, carrying with them several minor sachems who had been driven from their lands in the Valley by the expansive Pequots. Entering the river from Long Island Sound, they traveled upstream as far as the present site of Hartford. Here, during the previous June, the Dutch had completed their trading fort called House of Good Hope. The fort's garrison challenged the approaching English, but the Plymouth men continued on their way, and sailed past Dutch Point unharmed. Moving upriver to a place the Indians called Matianuck, they planted the town of Windsor. Here amid hundreds of acres of meadowland surveyed by their exploration of two years earlier, they threw up a prefabricated fort.¹⁵ Mindful of the fact that both the Dutch and the Pequots were irritated at their presence, they quickly added a sturdy palisade.

The Dutch were first to respond. Incensed that the English had failed to heed their commands at Good Hope, they "sent a band of about 70. men, in warlike manner, with colours displayed, to assault them."¹⁶ Seeing the English well defended, the Dutch withdrew, evidently deciding that discretion should be the order of the day.

Unlike the earlier days when the Indian trade was the fiefdom of blunderers of sundry and assorted varieties, the trade in the Connecticut Valley, from the outset, seems to have been conducted to the apparent satisfaction of the Valley Indians. However, in inviting the Europeans to trade, they had done themselves, and their eastern brothers, irreparable

¹⁵ Samuel E. Morison, The Story of the "Old Colony" of New Plymouth, 1620-1692 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 136.

¹⁶ Bradford, p. 169.

harm. In hoping that English settlements might contain the menace of the Pequots, they had opened the floodgates of immigration. The Valley now braced itself for the first seizure of land mania in American history,¹⁷ for although the first Dutch and English settlers talked constantly of trading in furs, it was not by accident that they located themselves on the best soil in the Valley.¹⁸

The coming movement to the Connecticut carried with it the ultimate destruction of the Algonquian culture of southern New England; for this second frontier line, thrown up behind the coast, placed the Indian lands of the interior in extreme jeopardy. With the Mohawks to the west, and the belligerent Pequots in their very midst, the western tribes took that fateful option of asking in the Europeans. Naively, they believed that the European trader would protect their interests, while serving his own. But they didn't comprehend the full implications of the English presence; nor that it would stir into action two damaging forces which, in the end, brought about irreversible trends in their culture. First, the European demand for furs, land and trade goods increased economic competition among the already fragmented tribes. With this development, petty inter-tribal warfare tended to increase instead of diminish, leaving them further weakened in the face of their enemies, European and Indian.¹⁹ Secondly, by joining the fabric of English trade and commerce, they contributed to the stability and economic staying power of the growing numbers of

¹⁷ Alan Heimert, "Puritanism, the Wilderness and the Frontier," New England Quarterly, XXVI, No. 3 (September, 1953), pp. 364-365.

¹⁸ Archer B. Hulbert, Soil: Its Influence on the History of the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 95.

¹⁹ cf. Driver, p. 370.

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English settlements. Thus, without truly understanding, they were serving the architects of their own downfall.

²⁰ Clarence L. Ver Steeg, The Formative Years, 1607-1763 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965), p. 35.

CHAPTER VII

THE PEQUOT WAR

Before the end of 1636, hundreds of English settlers had left for the Connecticut Valley. Coming from Boston and its environs, they soon eclipsed the efforts of the Separatists and the Dutch along the river, and laid the foundations of three Puritan villages at Hartford,¹ Windsor, and Wethersfield. Though sure of the promise of their settlements, the new immigrants were no less anxious at the close proximity of the Pequots. In reminiscing years later, one of their number, a certain Samuel Smith of Hadley, recalled the fears of the early settlement at Wethersfield. Writing to his son in 1699, he said: "Ye first Meetinge House was solid mayde to withstande ye wicked onsaults of ye Red Skins. Its Foundations was laide in ye feare of ye Lord, but its Walls was truly laide in ye feare of ye Indians, for many & grate was ye Terrors of em."² The fears of these Puritan settlers were soon justified, for by the following year they became involved in the first large scale Indian war on New England's

¹The Plymouth settlers in the Valley had little choice but to merge with their more numerous countrymen, but the manner in which the Dutch were finally expelled bears some comment. In 1640, if Adriaen van der Donck's account is accurate, the Bay settlers went on to seize the Dutch farms surrounding the House of Good Hope. This irate gentleman claimed that the English went "even still further, and . . . belabored the Company's people with sticks and heavy clubs; and have forcibly thrown into the river their ploughs and other instruments." See: "The Representation of New Netherland, 1650," in J. Franklin Jameson (ed.), Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 308.

²Letter from Samuel Smith to Rev. Henry Smith of Wethersfield, Conn., January 1, 1699. Quoted in Helen E. Smith, Colonial Days and Ways: As Gathered from Family Papers (New York: Frederick Ungar Company, 1966), pp. 49-50.

frontier. It was a war that laid bare animosities which had been simmering for the better part of a decade. It was the war that totally destroyed the Pequot people; and as they marched off to their campaigns one is left with the impression that the English enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity "to teach the Indians a lesson they would never forget."³

From the very beginning, the men at the Bay were concerned over the possibilities of trouble with the Indians. In the Spring of 1631, for example, the General Court ordered that travel to neighboring plantations must be done under arms. But then this was only a matter of caution, and good English common sense. By 1637, however, the situation in Connecticut had caused so much alarm the Court directed that, with the exception of the village proper, a man was to be fined twelve pence if he was found wandering about without a weapon.⁴ And their alarm is understandable, for the Pequots, interlopers themselves, were determined to maintain their hard won hegemony in south-western New England.

In 1634 the Pequots, under their grand sachem Wopigwooit, found themselves at war with two potent enemies. The Dutch pressed them from the west, and to the east were the Narragansetts with whom they disputed the land between the Pawcatuck River and Wehapaug Brook. Realizing that the English in the Valley must be kept neutral, they concluded the Treaty of Newtown with the Bay Colony. Engineered by the omnipresent John Oldham, who was quick to see gain in any trade agreement with the Pequots, the treaty was signed in November of 1634. However, the peace that the Pequots so desperately needed was not long in enduring.

³ Leach, Northern Colonial Frontier . . ., p. 37.

⁴ Mass. Records, I, p. 85; I, p. 190.

During the period of these first negotiations, Indians friendly to the magistrates at Boston intervened to tell the English that the Pequots had lately boarded the ship of a Virginia trader, and killed its captain, one John Stone, while he lay sleeping in his cabin. It was further reported that after murdering the crew of eight, the assassins looted the ship and made off with its cargo. Upon hearing of this mayhem, the outraged magistrates demanded that the Pequots give up the guilty warriors. When it was the turn of the Pequot emissaries to speak, however, they told a completely different tale. They said that Stone had seized two Indians so that he might have guides to take him up the Connecticut River. Unable to tolerate this, the Pequots ambushed Stone and his crew during one of their trips ashore. Furthermore, they stated that the leader of the ambush had since been killed by the Dutch, and all but two of the other participants had fallen victims to disease. The Puritans evidently believed the Pequots,⁵ and the treaty was signed with the Indians agreeing to surrender the two remaining participants, and to recognize the English hold along parts of the Connecticut. The Pequots also agreed to pay an indemnity in wampum and beaver skins; but then, at least for the present, they had no other choice if the English were to remain neutral.

In 1635, the sachem Sassacus succeeded Wopigwooit as leader of the Pequots, and a stiffening of their stand against the Bay Colony was forthcoming. Sassacus was reluctant to surrender the two Indians in question, but the English were insistent. John Winthrop, Jr., already settled in Connecticut, was informed by the Bay in midsummer of 1636, that he must demonstrate English power by personally charging Sassacus to give up the

⁵Vaughan, William and Mary Quarterly, XXI, No. 2, p. 258.

two warriors. Before Winthrop could complete his mission, however, an event took place which now serves as a watershed in the history of the Indian in New England.

On July 20, 1636, a trader named John Gallop was pushing his craft down Rhode Island Sound in the direction of Long Island. With a crew of a man and two boys, he approached the coast of Block Island, and there spotted a pinnace swarming with Indians. Driving them off with gunfire, he boarded the vessel and found the naked and mutilated body of John Oldham. Oldham the trader - past Deputy from Watertown, planter of Wethersfield, and religious provocateur whose theological dispositions were limber enough to bend to the prevailing winds - was dead at last. He was pioneer, scoundrel, trailblazer, opportunist; and the complete man will never be fully known. But he lay in a pool of blood with his skull crushed and his limbs partially severed from his body, and New England's future turned on the question of culpability.

Soon after Oldham's murder, the Narragansetts quickly adopted a wilderness version of realpolitik. Through Roger Williams, they sent word to the Bay that the guilty Indians could be found among the Pequots. To demonstrate their good faith, they delivered up two young survivors who had sailed with Oldham, and a portion of his cargo. At the same time, they allowed the Pequots to delude themselves over the possibility of a truce, while muzzling several of the more ambitious sagamores who actually favored a Pequot-Narragansett alliance. Fearful of such an alliance, and with the Bay's military preparations in a somewhat disorganized state, Governor Vane appealed to Williams to go to the Narragansetts in an effort to prevent the pact. In what has been called "one of the greatest feats of diplomacy in American history,"⁶ Roger Williams traveled about thirty

⁶Covey, p. 163.

miles down the west shore of Narragansett Bay in an open canoe, to confer with the Narragansett co-sachems, Canonicus, and his aggressive nephew, Miantonomoy. The hazards of this trip were numerous, but considering the importance of the mission, and the fact that the Pequot ambassadors were already in the village when he arrived, lends a higher sense of drama to the proceedings. Williams was successful, and though the Narragansetts were never overly fond of the English, they were, after all, realists.

Events were now beginning to overrun the Pequots. Recently, after a succession controversy which had made Sassacus chief, a powerful group of Pequots had defected from the tribe, restored the old name Mohican, and accepted the leadership of a new sachem, Uncas. Weakened in this fashion, they were forced to accept a sell out on the part of the Narragansetts. For not only did Williams prevent a Pequot-Narragansett alliance, but he went on to lay the groundwork of the Narragansett-Mohican-Massachusetts alliance that helped the English in the months to come. At this time when the future of New England rested upon the skill, courage and incredible boldness of a single outcast Englishmen, Roger Williams was to write: "God wondrously praeserued me & helpt me to breake to pieces the Pequots Negociations & Designe & to make & promote & finish . . . the English League with the Nahiggonsiks & Monhiggins against the Pequots."⁷

The first movement against the Pequots was organized by the English in September, and placed under the command of magistrate John Endicott. A veteran of the Dutch wars and a man of violent temper, he had a great distaste for Indians, whatever the tribe. Assisted by Captain John Underhill, Endicott's punitive expedition was to proceed to Block Island,

⁷ quoted in Covey, p. 162.

kill the male Indian population, and seize any surviving women and children.⁸ It took two days for Endicott's ninety men to devastate the island, and then they set out for Pequot country. Making passage across Block Island Sound, they quickly established contacts with the Pequots. A parley was convened, but with both sides embittered and suspicious, it soon erupted into a brawl in which a number of the Indians were killed. Ironically, as tradition would have it, the first Pequot to fall died at the hands of another Indian, one of Endicott's several guides, Cutshamekin, sagamore of the Massachusetts.

Humiliated in their past dealings with the English, who were now demanding little else but total submission, the Pequots began to take their revenge. After killing a few isolated traders, it was not long before Pequot warriors began attacking settlements from Fort Saybrook, at the mouth of the Connecticut, to Wethersfield. The English reeled under the shock, but it was not until the following spring that they resumed the offensive.

In May of 1637 Connecticut, bearing the full brunt of the war, assumed the status of a new colony. Now, with the war moving into its second phase, the three colonies, galvanized by the emergency into a policy of military cooperation, began the offensive which brought the predictable victory. The quality of the English forces had improved considerably in the intervening months. It had not been long ago that colonial trainband musters had been characterized by confusion and a humorous lack of military competence. Winthrop, in writing of one of these exercises, describes Captain Underhill's men as a bewildered mob,

⁸ Winthrop's Journal . . . , I, p. 186.

"who like men amazed, knew not how to behave themselves, so as the officers could not draw them into any order."⁹ But in the Spring of 1637, the English troops were better motivated, better trained, and better armed, for by now the cumbersome matchlock had largely been replaced with the more effective flint firearms.¹⁰

As the war moved into its final stage, the fighting was marked by lopsided English victories such as the burning of the major Pequot stronghold at Mystic.¹¹ Nearly two decades after this bloody encounter, Captain John Mason of the Connecticut forces was commissioned by his General Court to record his remembrances of the English victory. He vividly recalled that the calculated massacre of the Pequots was completed "to the extreme Amazement of the Enemy, and great Rejoycing of our selves."¹²

With the war lost, small bands of Pequots began to flee north and westward. Many of these were hunted down and killed by the Valley Indians, who took delight in demonstrating their loyalty to the English by delivering the severed heads of their quarry to the frontier towns along the river. Along with forty of his warriors, Sassacus himself met this fate at the hands of the treacherous Mohawks, to whom he had gone seeking protection. For most of that small and tragic number of the Pequots who had somehow survived the bloodletting, the New England colonials, as they

⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁰ Harold L. Peterson, Arms and Armor in Colonial America, 1526-1783 (New York: Bramhill House, 1956), p. 144.

¹¹ see John Tebbel and Keith Jennison, The American Indian Wars (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), p. 28.

¹² John Mason, A Brief History of the Pequot War (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 9.

did throughout the Seventeenth Century, recognized the immediate possibilities of slave trading.¹³ For the one hundred and eighty captives who were placed in bondage, some scattered as far away as the West Indies plantations, it would have been far better had they perished with the rest of their people.

The English victory in the Pequot War represents yet another example of superior organization, and singleness of purpose, adapted to exploit the Indian's tendencies toward fragmentation and disunity. Even to the point of assuring the militia that their fortunes would not be compromised by service, men remaining behind in the Bay Colony were impressed to carry on "the husbandry of such persons" who had been sent to fight the Indians.¹⁴ And in terms of inter-colonial cooperation, the forthcoming New England Confederation of 1643 demonstrates that the English fully realized that synchronization of effort was the real key to military power.¹⁵

In late November of 1637, the General Court of Massachusetts issued a declaration of self-congratulations which reveals not only a Puritan interpretation of the gains of victory, but perhaps a valuable key to an understanding of the causes of the war. The Court proclaimed that through God's intercession, the English had won the lands of the Pequot "by just title of conquest," and that by this conquest "oportunity is also

¹³ cf. Handlin, Race and Nationality . . ., p. 18; and James T. Adams, Provincial Society, 1690-1763 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 101.

¹⁴ Richard B. Morris, Government and Labor in Early America (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 7.

¹⁵ Harry M. Ward, The United Colonies of New England, 1643-1690 (New York: Vantage Press, 1961), p. 28.

given for peaceable habitation to all such as shall hearafter inhabite the lands of our said enemies." The Court further amplified the English claim, and stated that regarding those "parts beyond towards the Dutch, we do hearby declare the just right & title wch ourselves & our said assotiaats upon Conecticot have to all the said lands & territories.¹⁶ In the light of this proclamation, there seems little doubt that in sifting out the Puritan reasons for going to war, the subject of "land hunger" becomes one of paramount importance.

From the time of the initial negotiations in which the Pequots hesitated under the demands to "yield up Conecticot," it would seem that the English were in search of a casus belli. It was to be found in the incidents surrounding the deaths of Stone and Oldham. The English rested their case on the assertion that they went to war in order to avenge their murdered countrymen,¹⁷ but their claims of bereavement have a hollow ring to them.

First considering the case of Stone, it seems likely that the English believed the Pequot account of his death, for no military action was taken in 1634. This is further supported by the Puritans' knowledge that Stone was a thief, and a malicious drunkard who would be prone to mistreating any Indians with which he had contact. It is known, for example, that on his voyage from Virginia, he stopped over at Manhattan with a cargo of cattle and salt. Here, in a drunken fuddle, he attempted to steal a vessel from Plymouth as it lay at anchor in the harbor. In what cannot be considered a completely rational move, he then set sail for Plymouth where

¹⁶ Mass. Records, I, p. 216.

¹⁷ Winthrop's Journal . . ., I, p. 186.

he was promptly charged with piracy.¹⁸ In offering a defense, he claimed that the Plymouth sailors had said some unkind things about his native Virginia; but on the verge of being shipped to England for an appearance before an Admiralty Court, he succeeded in persuading the captain of the Plymouth vessel to drop the charges.¹⁹ Not leaving well enough alone, he initiated an argument with Governor Thomas Prence, and would have stabbed him had he not been restrained.²⁰ Run out of Plymouth, Stone made his way to Boston where he was accused of lewdness and drunkenness, and of "being found upon the bed in the night with one Barcroft's wife."²¹ Tried on these charges, and having threatened physical injury to Deputy Governor Roger Ludlow, he was banished from the colony under pain of death, and given a suspended fine of 100 Pounds.²² On his way back to Virginia he was killed by the Indians, and it would be stretching the imagination to envision either Plymouth or Boston mourning his passing.

As for the case of Oldham, whose death Bradford notes "was one ground of the Pequente warr which followed,"²³ it is also difficult to imagine either colony inordinately grief-stricken over his fate.²⁴ At the time in 1625 when Oldham, and the Anglican minister John Lyford, tried to

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Vaughan, William and Mary Quarterly, XXI, No. 2, p. 263.

²¹ Winthrop's Journal, I, p. 108.

²² Ibid.

²³ Bradford, p. 120.

²⁴ The same might be said of Oldham's many creditors, for early Connecticut probate records show that at the time of his death he owed seventeen individuals 50*l*/09*s*/03*d*, while he had 136/66*s*/21*d* due him. See: Harral Ayres, The Great Trail of New England (Boston: Meador Company, 1910), p. 123n.

undermine the Separatist structure of the Plymouth church, Bradford described him as a man who "suffered his unruly passion to rune beyonde the limits of all reason and modestie."²⁵ Both men were driven from Plymouth, and both later expressed a contrite conversion to the Bay's form of congregationalism. Lyford went on to a pastorate where, in addition to his theological backsiding, he retained a wandering eye for the ladies and a marked fondness for political intrigues. Oldham continued on his errant ways, but he soon became a nominal Puritan and allowed the profits of the Indian trade to temper his zeal for the sacramental liturgy. It is no doubt, however, that his maneuverings at Plymouth had made the men of the Bay uneasy, for Oldham continued to be the maverick to whom "all reprofes were but as oyle to the fire and made the flame of his coller greater."²⁶ But at last the Puritans were obliged to come to a position of a mutually beneficial tolerance. Trail-blazers were needed, and if Oldham refrained from sticking out his heretical neck they would endure him, but only as long as the Bay was served.

The circumstances of Oldham's death also tend to support the notion that the English artificially constructed the excuse of making war. To begin with, it is well established that the actual perpetrators of the crime were the Block Island Indians, and not the Pequots. But it is highly unreasonable to suppose that the Block Islanders, already in a state of war with the Pequots as a result of their alliance with the Narragansetts, acted as the agents of a Pequot conspiracy. It is,

²⁵Bradford, p. 118.

²⁶Ibid.

however, clearly reasonable to conclude that Oldham was killed by the Block Islanders because he had been trading with the hated Pequots. And it is most probable, in spite of the feigned innocence of their sachems, that he was killed with the full concurrence of the Narragansetts, whose eagerness to blame the Pequots does not fully conceal the benefits they would realize from an all out English-Pequot war. It was, after all, the Narragansetts who so efficiently recovered the survivors and cargo of the Oldham pinnace, a vessel which, by the way, carried two Narragansett warriors to assist the crew.²⁷ Finally, it was the Narragansetts who had the most to gain from a war of mutual destruction. They would be rid of the Pequots, and the continual challenge they posed. Then, established as the dominant tribe in southern New England, they could go on to finish the job on the English, a hatred of whom they periodically revealed from the time they sent the Pilgrims their first war challenge. In entering the do-nothing alliance with the English, they thought they were following the logical course to their ultimate triumph. But while content to let them fight their war with the Pequots, they failed, in the end, to reckon with the prospects of a massive English victory.

The English were likewise guided by expediency. With the Narragansetts thus committed, their hands were free to get on with the most immediate task, the clearing of the Connecticut Valley. And so the jihad began, the Soldiers of Christ off to fight the forces of Satan. They went, they said, to avenge the death of two of their countrymen whose bones they thought to be as corrupt as the Indians they were about to destroy. Though years afterward, Puritan historians like Winthrop, Mason,

²⁷ Winthrop's Journal, I, p. 183.

and Edward Johnson vociferously and self-righteously pronounced their acquittal of English conduct,²⁸ at least the motives are clear: land, trade and an open line of overland communications. For the Indians who helped forge the conclusive English victory, their fate was sealed. They now "found themselves between the English hammer and the Iroquoian anvil,"²⁹ with the later holocaust of King Philip's War representing merely the final spasm of an expiring culture.

It is the author's contention that the Puritan New Englanders were instrumental in the growth of the New England Confederation. This was due to their religious beliefs which were strengthened by the influences of Puritanism. The Puritan New Englanders were influenced by the religious fervor of the Puritan settlers who had originally arrived by the Pilgrim Fathers. These settlers had a strong spiritual base which had been cultivated in the religious atmosphere of the Netherlands, the Puritan, by nature and circumstances, was both more religious, less so under the congregational system of the church, limited by the power of actual excommunication, dispossessed by the element of infinite God will, the Puritan could turn to the word of scripture for an explanation of separation from related or non-related persons. Under the guidance of the General Court and the religious leaders, there was no escape for the Puritan's people by America. This was his chosen home, which he had been given in history, and

²⁸ see Richard S. Dunn, "Seventeenth Century English Historians of America," Seventeenth Century America: Essays in Colonial History, ed. James M. Smith (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 195-225.

²⁹ Howard H. Peckham, The Colonial Wars (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 20.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TOWN PLANTERS

The Puritan migration to New England stands as a significant turning point in the history of the English colonization of North America. Unlike the first clumsy failures, or even those settlements that learned to survive by the painful process of trial and error, the Puritans came with a steady confidence in proven institutions and procedures. Like those who went before them, they would make adaptations demanded by the wilderness, but much of the Puritan's frontier was bent and shaped into forms which satisfied him. Quite unlike his countrymen to the south, his frontier moved forward in methodical progression. Whereas the Virginian moved inland in random expansion, his single staple agriculture watered by the many navigable streams of the tidewater, the Puritan, by desire and circumstance, was much more restrained. Held in check by the congregational nature of his church, limited by the paucity of natural waterways, and circumscribed by the vagaries of climate and soil, the Puritan moved forth from the coast in a systematic form of expansion that related to his medieval past. Under the watchful eye of the General Court and the orthodox clergy, he went out to create his New England township by township.¹ True to his mission of community building, his towns grew in number, and although the cattle grew fat and the common fields were plentiful, he remained a villager whose husbandry and town-life simply revealed the one

¹ For a discussion of the origins of the English "town-commune," and its relation to the town of Puritan New England, see: Edward Eggleston, The Transit of Civilization: from England to America in the Seventeenth Century (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1901), pp. 277-284.

society from two vantage points.² On the distant marches of European civilization his life might be full of danger and uncertainty, but the town, of which he was a vital part, reassured his faith in social order and civic stability.³

The New England town is the best single expression of the cohesive nature of the northern frontier. It answered the economic necessities of settlement, while it gave form to the collective exertion of frontier life. And as it demonstrated the efficacy of the Puritan Zion, it tied the settler to the old and familiar paths of England.

In 1630, the estimated population of North America's English settlements was some 5,700 persons.⁴ Out of this number, approximately 1,500 lived in the Massachusetts Bay area.⁵ By 1634, with twelve towns clustered about the Bay, the population had expanded to over 8,000, with fifteen immigrant ships landing in the month of July alone.⁶ In the next several years, such a flood poured into the colony, that the King and his ministers were beginning to think seriously of prohibiting further sailings to the New England plantations.⁷

² Robert R. Walcott, "Husbandry in Colonial New England," New England Quarterly, IX, No. 2 (June, 1936), p. 251.

³ Sumner C. Powell, Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), p. 142. For a Seventeenth Century account of the administrative detail and procedures of town-planting, see: Edward Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), Bk. II, pp. 212-216.

⁴ U.S., Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Historical Highlights of Public Land Management (1962), p. 3.

⁵ R. V. Coleman, The First Frontier (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 228.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ C. V. Wedgewood, The King's Peace, 1637-1641 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), pp. 110-111.

By the time the Great Migration had run its course, the population of the two colonies in Massachusetts had reached past the number 23,000.⁸ The Old Colony had expanded from the Cape to the Bay, settling the coastal towns of Scituate, Marshfield, Duxbury, Sandwich, Barnstable, Yarmouth, Eastham, the inland town of Taunton, and the outpost towns of Dartmouth, Swansea and Rehoboth. The pattern of expansion in the Bay Colony, however, demonstrates both the pinch for land, and the Puritan willingness to come to grips with the interior.

Winthrop's original design for the colony was to be a compact settlement at Newtown (Cambridge), whose fort and meeting house could protect the settlers from the physical and spiritual dangers of the surrounding countryside.⁹ Before the end of the first winter, however, he found his vision shattered. With surprising haste, the Puritans began to move out beyond Boston, planting the towns of Roxbury, Dorchester and Watertown. Some went off to the Salem settlement, while others built their homes in Charlestown, Medford, Saugus and Weymouth, near the site of Weston's abortive community. Before the end of the next decade, Bay towns began to push out from Boston in concentric rings: Hull, Chelsea, Lynn, Hingham, Dedham, Woburn, Reading, Danvers, Manchester, Sudbury, - Concord, Wenham, Topsfield, Andover, Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury - and the circles expanded outward toward Lancaster and Worcester and the Valley settlements beyond. The remarkable, orderly growth of these towns reveals, as nothing else can, the disciplined nature of the Puritan frontier.

⁸ Henry F. Howe, Massachusetts: There She Is - Behold Her (New York: Harper and Bros., 1960), p. 46.

⁹ Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part II: The Southwest Frontier and New England," Political Science Quarterly, LXIX, No. 4 (December, 1954), p. 588. Also see: Garrett Rutman, Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), p. 282.

The planting of Puritan towns differed from community to community, but they all held to a similar general format. To begin with, title to a township was secured from the General Court after the petitioning group had demonstrated their adherence to certain preconditions. In most cases the prospective patentees were investigated so that the Court might be satisfied they were doctrinally sound Christians, and "men of good and honest report."¹⁰ The Court would then assess the fitness of the locale, and provide for a survey of boundaries. Hopefully the new community could be located near another settled area; but wherever the site, it was the task of the Colony's surveyors to plot the customary four to six square miles of township land. The actual work of laying out the town proper: the business of land distribution, area improvement, street routes, the location of meeting house and school, and the many other details of town-planting, was left largely to the discretion of the patentees under the final approval of the General Court. In some cases there were provisions to inhibit land speculation, but the practice of holding land for resale at a later period was never really eliminated.¹¹ Once the town became a going concern, it was not long before it took the well-regulated form of its sister communities. A bevy of town functionaries was appointed: hog reeves, haywards and fence viewers, -gatekeepers and poundkeepers, -town constables, wood procurers, and highway surveyors. Cattle and oxen were branded with the town mark, and became the responsibility of town herdsmen. Among the many official appointments, there might even be a man designated to hobble the dogs during cornplanting season, so that the alewives used

¹⁰ Johnson, Bk. II, p. 213.

¹¹ Thomas C. Cochran, "The History of a Business Society," The Journal of American History, LIV, No. 1 (June, 1967), p. 9.

for fertilizer would remain in their specified place. It was an efficient little community, mindful of an economy of motion and purpose, and, in spite of its adaptations to the new environment, it was as English as the fields of Suffolk.

With the exception of a few radical thinkers such as Roger Williams, the town planters of New England did not question the legitimacy of the royal patents, or that the lands of the Indian were all but a part of the King's domain.¹² Yet repeatedly, they felt it necessary to justify their presence on the Indian land; and the attempts to rationalize their tenure give a valuable insight into how they perceived morality as the child of their special forms of logic. As if deliberating on a new Separatist Summa Theologica, one early source asks the question: "What right have I to goe live in the heathens countrie?"¹³ Conclusions to the argument are given in three parts. First cited is the validity of the English claims of discovery. The authors then go on to point out that it was a moral imperative to bring Christianity to the natives, and explain that, "the means cannot be used unlesce we goe to them or they come to us: to us they cannot come, our land is full: to them we may goe, their land is emptie." The third response to the question is a pragmatic and utilitarian justification which appears in many of the original sources:

This then is sufficient reason to prove our going thither to live, lawfull: their land is spatiuous and void & there are few and doe but run over the grasse, as doe Foxes and wilde beasts: they are not industrious, neither have art,

¹²

Viola F. Barnes, "Land Tenure in English Colonial Charters of the Seventeenth Century," Essays in Colonial History Presented to Charles McLean Andrews by His Students (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), p. 32.

¹³

Mourt's Relation: Journal of the English Plantation at Plimoth (Ann Arbor, Mich: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 67.

science, skill or facultie to use either the land or the commodities of it, but all spoils, rots, and is marred for want of manuring, gathering, ordering, &c ¹⁴

This then is the European reaction to the problem at hand, but in its condescension it goes far in distorting reality. It was, after all Aspinet, a Nauset warrior, who taught them how to plant their corn; and it was a score of other Indians who showed them how to prepare their pone, samp and succotash. And their cultural achievements aside, the Indians who were displaced were not only hunters, but agriculturists and town-dwellers possessed of an infinite number of skills relating to their natural environment. But if the area around Plymouth appeared to be suffering from lack of care, its fields neglected and lacking of good order, it was certainly not the fault of the local inhabitants. If the Indians appeared indolent and dispirited, then the root causes could only be explained in the aftermath of the plague brought over by other Europeans.

Other English settlers, probably less the victims of malice than of insensibility, made their justifications on similar observations. One such is that of a Salem preacher of less than a decade later. He acknowledged that,

Great pity it is to see so much good ground for corn and grass as any is under the heavens, to lie altogether unoccupied, when so many honest men and their families in Old England, through the populousness thereof, do make very hard shift to live one by the other. ¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68. Published in London in 1621, this piece was most likely authored by William Bradford and Edward Winslow. "G. Mourt (Morton)" who prepared the Preface is, probably, little more than the person who arranged for its publication.

¹⁵ Francis Higgeson (or Higgman), "New Englands Plantation: or a Short and True Description of the Commodities and Discommodities of that Country," *Tracts and Other Papers*, ed. Peter Force (Washington, D.C.: Peter Force, 1836), p. 12.

As it came time to take a portion of the Indian land for the creation of a new township, the English consistently recognized the dictates of conscience by reenacting the customary payment upon transferral. There were many instances of outright fraud; and even in the best of circumstances, the Indians were obliged to sell from within the framework of a legal system they could not grasp.¹⁶ Misunderstanding the subtleties of the European concept of land tenure, they often regarded the sale as simply a warrant allowing the English to share the use of the property.¹⁷ Unschooled in the notion of permanent title, they saw no reason why the placing of their totem on a piece of paper prohibited the continuance of their usual activities, especially if the land was not immediately occupied by the English buyers.¹⁸ Naturally friction developed out of the Indians' lack of comprehension. One such instance, that surely must have set the Puritan bile flowing, grew out of the negotiations for the Indian land around the site of Hartford. The sachem was most cooperative in transferring the land to the English, and it bothered him not at all that he had already sold it to the Dutch.¹⁹

If the English were amazed at the Indians' ignorance in matters of real property, the Indians were no less perplexed as to the reasons for such rigid procedures. The Narragansetts, for example, in trying to fathom the reasons for the foreigners' actions, surmised that burning all

¹⁶Tebbel and Jennison, p. 32.

¹⁷Hockett, p. 44

¹⁸Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk . . ., p. 16.

¹⁹Marion L. Starkey, The Congregational Way: The Role of the Pilgrims and Their Heirs in Shaping America (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 63.

the firewood in their own country, they came to these shores intent upon having more. This, after all, would be a logical motive for an Indian's desiring for new territory, and he naturally projected it to the Englishmen. And in observing what was to him the penurious behavior of the settlers regarding this plentiful commodity, his ideas were simply reinforced.²⁰

In the years which saw the Indian moved off the best of his territories, the English continued to demonstrate from Scriptures (Gen. 13:6,11,12 or Gen. 34:21 are oft quoted references) that they were justified. But somehow the urgings of conscience continued to bob to the surface. Writing at the time of King Philip's War, the eminent Nathaniel Saltonstall in shrill yet humble tones wrote: "The English took not a Foot of Land from the Indians, but Bought all and although they bought it for an inconsiderable Value, yet they did Buy it."²¹ And up to this time the English did buy the land if the Indians pretended ownership, but it might be said that they went through the charade simply in hopes that it would keep the savages pacified.²²

²⁰ In March of 1626, for example, Plymouth passed a statute forbidding anyone, English or Indian, to cut timber without the approval of the Governor and Council. See; David Pulsifer (ed.), Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England, 1620-1651 (Boston: William White, 1861), I, p. 8.

²¹ Nathaniel Saltonstall, "The Present State of New-England, With Respect to the Indian War," King Philip's War Narratives (Ann Arbor, Mich: University Microfilms, Inc., 1966), p. 2.

²² Pearce, p. 20.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTRICKTION OF THE INDIAN LANDS

The first phase of inland expansion, immediately preceding the Pequot War, opened at a time when the plague had revisited the Indians of New England. Breaking out in 1633, it was known this time to be smallpox, and, with appalling consequences, it raged as far west as the Valley and at least as far north as the Indian lands of the Piscataqua.¹ The Pequots were wracked by it, and the English, untouched as before, found themselves at a considerable advantage in the forthcoming war. Even the Narragansetts came under its scathing touch, and it had troubled them to the point that, in speaking with Roger Williams during the crucial Pequot War negotiations, the old Sachem Canonicus raged and cursed the English for sending pestilence among his people.² But to the English, with their thoughts of peltry and rich meadowland, it was yet another "clear manifestation of God's providence."³

At the time when the coastal settlers were beginning to exhibit a restlessness to be off to the planting fields in the west, they knew precious little of the geography of the area. They knew of a river that the Dutch called Fresh River, but in trying to translate the Algonquian expression meaning "at the long estuary," their spelling proved to be as erratic as their geography. Hence the English name for the river ran the

¹ Winthrop's Journal, I, p. 118.

² Covey, p. 164.

³ Marion L. Starkey, Land Where Our Fathers Died: The Settling of the Eastern Shores, 1607-1735 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 88.

full spectrum from Quenticutt to Conightecute, until they began to tire of the effort, many calling it simply the Great River.

Imponderable names aside, the Puritan Fathers began to think often of the river; and some were even curious as to what lay beyond. Hearing Indian accounts of the west country, John Winthrop surmised, in 1633, that the Connecticut's source, along with that of the Merrimack and Virginia's Potomac, could be found somewhere north and west of Boston in the region of a great, swamp-hidden lake.⁴ A year later, William Wood displays the common ignorance by writing that all of New England was either an island, or a large peninsula, "surrounded on the north side with the spacious river Cannada, and on the south side by Hudson's river," with both rivers rising in a distant region of great lakes.⁵

Leaving suppositions to the more timid, some Englishmen began to probe the interior, first by water routes, and then the more daring excursions such as John Oldham's trek in the late summer of 1633. With the fur traders pointing the way, it was not long before the farmer followed.

Led by men like Edward Winslow and Johnathan Brewster, Plymouth took an early lead, hoping that the fur trade might offer the opportunity to acquit herself of the debt owed English merchants. The Bay, while tardy to the lists, followed soon after; and before the end of 1634 there were the three English villages at Wethersfield, Hartford and Windsor. In the following year, John Pynchon established a fourth settlement upriver at

⁴ Winthrop's Journal, I, p. 110.

⁵ Alexander Young (ed.), "William Wood's Description of Massachusetts," Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1846), p. 391. This selection is taken from Wood's New England's Prospect, first published in London in 1634.

Agawam (Springfield).

The first English surge into the Valley has been described as a "veritable gold rush,"⁶ and the traders were confident that the rivers of the west would continue to yield up their seemingly inexhaustible supply of pelts. With the Valley Indians in their employ they took, at least for the first few years, sizable quantities of fur: beaver, marten, fox, otter, muskrat, wildcat, mink and woodshaw (fisher cat). But the supply of peltry was limited, and as many expanded their operations to meet the problem, their costs of production became prohibitive. At the time of the Pequot War, the New England fur trade had already entered into its decline, but the fur trader, as he did along the streams between the Merrimack and the Charles, had preceded the fringes of new settlement.

The congregation at Newtown (Cambridge) was the first to formally articulate the mounting desire to be off to the Connecticut. In appealing to the General Court for permission to move, their request was based chiefly upon charges that, with the Colony's growing population, there would shortly be a lack of room in the Bay area. The debates on the issue, which lasted most of the month of September 1634, were evidently quite animated. Winthrop recorded that they complained of a "wont of accommodation for their cattle," and that they gave anxious warnings, pointing out "the fruitfulness and commodiousness of Connecticut, and the danger of having it possessed by others, Dutch or English."⁷ Although at first disturbed at the thoughts of the diminution of their own influence, the Puritan leadership began to see the wisdom of the proposition. They at

⁶ Baily, p. 29.

⁷ Winthrop's Journal, I, p. 132.

last relented, and acknowledged "the strong bent of their spirits to remove thither."⁸

It was later, in the Spring of 1636, that the mass movement to the Valley got underway. From Dorchester, "about half ye Church removed to Winsor;"⁹ and in other villages surrounding Boston the scenes were similar. Hooker and his Newtown congregation; families from Oldham's Watertown and Pynchon's Roxbury - all on their way to the Connecticut.

In assessing the motives of this most important phase of English expansion in New England, the overriding factor, especially in these years of the Great Migration from England, is the desire for land. No case can be made which treats this second frontier line as simply an extension of the Indian trade. While the traders did lead the way, it cannot be assumed that the subsequent Valley settlements were simply their accidental step-child. To begin with, the trading enterprises were not organized solely around the principle of short term gain. With scores of willing Indians doing the leg-work in the back country, the traders did not plan for periodic relocations as a means to increase the intake of pelts. Rather, the trading stations were designed as non-transient, self-sufficient communities whose Indian lands were to be turned immediately to agriculture. On this frontier, even the traders thought in terms of settlement, and a permanent English presence in the Valley. This is brought out rather handily, for example, in John Pynchon's choice of a site. Agawam, located upriver from the other settlements, gave him control over the furs moving down the Valley. Yet, not far past the area

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ James Blake, Annals of the Town of Dorchester (Boston: David Clapp, Jr., 1846), p. 14.

in the Valley that could be serviced by ocean-going vessels, Agawam also marked the point on the river where the largest Indian trail could be found, connecting the Bay area with the Hudson. Here, amid some of the richest alluvial soil New England had to offer, Pynchon built his Springfield; and keeping a keen eye on the economic potential of the region, he no doubt recognized the limited viability of the Indian trade.

Like many other fur traders faced with the problem of diminishing returns, Pynchon realized the need for a diversity of investment. There is little reason to doubt that he had foreseen the passing of the trade, for located on the main trail, and near the break-in-bulk section of the river, he soon increased his fortune as the chief distributor of the agricultural produce of the Springfield area. For those of the fur trade who were simple farmers to begin with, one Puritan chronicler reports, they "encreased so many that it became little worth, by reason of their out-buying one another, which hath caused them to live upon husbandry."¹⁰ For all but the most unrealistic, this was accepted as a natural and predictable turn of events.

The second point challenging the premise of "land hunger" in Puritan expansionism is the ecclesiastical factor. In the usual discussion of friction between the dissident elements and the orthodox power structure, an argument endeavoring to show causal effect often progresses from Roger Williams and Mistress Hutchinson, neither of whom generated mass movement, to Thomas Hooker, who did. It is known that some heat was engendered in the relationship between Hooker and John Cotton, after the latter was designated "teacher" at the Boston church. Yet the smoke produced from

¹⁰ Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence . . ., Bk. III, p. 237.

this rivalry was kept discreetly under wraps. In analyzing the motives in Hooker's decision to leave, this strained relationship is relevant to some degree; but it is not truly important in terms of its effects upon the wholesale withdrawal to the Connecticut.

At the same time, it cannot be said that the movement merely represents an expression of the democratic tendencies of a frustrated congregationalist minority. While it is true that the democratic implications of congregationalism were more fully realized in the forthcoming Connecticut settlements, the subject of church organization was not a major concern; for at the time of the removal, the Bay churches, from Hingham to Newbury, had all been gathered in the congregationalist manner.¹¹ Quite simply, no fundamental ecclesiastical or theological dispute was involved; and neither Hooker's opinion of Cotton, nor any form of doctrinal disagreement in general, was aired during the preliminary debates before the General Court.¹²

So often Puritan expansionism is interpreted in the light of non-conforming malcontents, forced from the Bay by matters of spiritual conscience. However, in spite of the obvious exceptions such as Williams, the character of Puritan expansion can best be described in terms of the doctrinal conservative. For example, when Theophilus Eaton, a merchant of "fair estate and great esteem for religion,"¹³ founded the New Haven Colony in 1638, he, along with the Reverend John Davenport, established

¹¹ Morgan, p. 78.

¹² Starkey, Land Where Our Fathers Died . . ., p. 90.

¹³ quoted in Carl L. Becker, Beginnings of the American People (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 105.

a church of uncompromising purity. And in planting their community at the mouth of the Quinnipiac, they rested their souls in the vigor of their orthodoxy, and, like others on the second frontier, "prepared to make the most of their excellent situation and resources."¹⁴ In the Valley of the Connecticut as well, Puritan orthodoxy was the rule. Here again there were exceptions,¹⁵ but in general, as the years passed, "the farther west one traveled, the more 'orthodox' was the Puritanism at work."¹⁶

The factors supporting the case for doctrinal dispute again become attractive when one investigates the nature of the withdrawal, that is, by congregation or major parts of congregations. Why, for instance, when Hooker's Newtown congregation had so heavily invested in Plymouth cattle, did they not simply expand into the neighboring districts of today's Essex and Middlesex Counties? In going so far, some congregations intact, it would appear that their removal represents the classic case of a flight from theocratic authority.

Again, this is a simplistic argument which does not take into account that a major portion of the Watertown, Dorchester and Roxbury churches were newly arrived from England, and being so they had few emotional or

¹⁴ Baily, p. 29.

¹⁵ Unable to accept the orthodox tenets of Calvinism where they propounded the doctrine that Christ "descended into Hell" to atone for the sins of Mankind, John Pynchon was ordered to recant before the General Court. Unwilling to bend, he left his business enterprises at Springfield in the hands of his son, and departed for England. In 1650, he published a tract in his defense entitled, The Meritorious Price of Our Redemption.

¹⁶ Robert A. East, "Puritanism and New Settlement," New England Quarterly, XVII, No. 2 (June, 1944), p. 257.

economic roots in the Bay area.¹⁷ But if some hesitated at leaving the rustic comfort of the tidy little eastern villages, their reluctance was quite easily overcome with the promise of the western meadowlands.

In expanding to the Connecticut River, these settlers were following the line of penetration which offered the least resistance. This fact becomes especially salient after the defeat of the Pequots. Along the river they would have a free line of communications between mutually supporting settlements, and this, of course, is an advantage that could not be realized among isolated towns thrown up in the Nipmuck territory west of Boston. Here in the Valley, where the smallpox had run its terrible course in 1633, they could easily exploit the chronic divisiveness of those despairing, plague-ridden tribes. Nor did it really matter if the Indians seemed willing to have them, as long as they could possess those fine meadows, the like of which compared favorably to the prized "champion land" of their native England. Their object then was the land, and they, like the yeomen of succeeding generations, were bound to have it; and they had been so determined since first they heard of its quality. As one observer has put it:

When John Pynchon went from Massachusetts Bay to the Connecticut and returned home again, what were the first questions put to him by the citizens of Roxbury? The very ones that were put to Daniel Boone on his return from Kentucky, to Moses Cleveland on his return from the Western Reserve, to Lewis and Clark on their return from the Columbia and the Pacific: 'What of the soils?' 'What do they produce?' ¹⁸

¹⁷A random sample of Valley settlers, showing arrival from England and departure to Connecticut, can easily be taken from sources such as: Charles H. Pope, The Pioneers of Massachusetts: A Descriptive List, Drawn from Records of the Colonies, Towns and Churches and Other Contemporaneous Documents (Boston: Charles H. Pope, 1900).

¹⁸Hulbert, p. 69.

As stated, some of the Indians of the area had, themselves, taken a hand in opening the gates for English expansionism. The Valley Indians, long victimized by Pequot and Mohawk, had, in the last resort, invited the English as prospective allies. Likewise the Pequots, in following the only open line of policy, had hoped to buy time and English neutrality while they struggled with the Dutch and Narragansetts. But in the end, none of the Indians of southern New England had appraised the real intensity of English covetousness. As for the Pequots, the Valley frontier shaped the forces which ultimately led to the encirclement of their territories, and a war of extermination. For the others, already checked by the Iroquois in the west, they found themselves in the squeeze of two steadily expanding lines of English settlement. One reached up the Valley as far as Northampton, Hadley and Hatfield, moving on at last to Deerfield, Picomegan (Greenfield) and Squakheag (Northfield). The other, pushing out slowly from the Bay, eventually settled Quinsigamond (Worcester) and moved on to the towns on the river above Springfield.¹⁹

After the last serious obstruction to English expansion had been overcome with the defeat of the Pequots, the colonial governments began to set their territorial gains in order. In 1642, two surveyors, Nathaniel Woodward and Solomon Saffery, were commissioned to establish the southern boundary of the Bay Colony.²⁰ With the expansion of the Bay settlers into Connecticut already a fait accompli for anyone who might

¹⁹ For a conveniently manageable set of maps showing the location of townships and Indian villages of Seventeenth Century New England, see plates 14 - 18 in: James T. Adams (ed.), Atlas of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943).

²⁰ Franklin K. Van Zandt, Boundaries of the United States and the Several States, Geological Survey Bulletin No. 1212, Department of the Interior (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 97.

yet dispute the legal boundaries of the original patent, the two surveyors duly planted their marking stakes, as the charter had ordained, three miles south of the head of the Charles River. In the course of their many travels, they created a map showing the Indian paths that had now become the overland trails of the English.²¹ From Boston, these rude highways now served the English as the arteries of settlement. Meandering through the shrinking territory of those who first tamed them out of the forest, they laced the two frontiers together. The Great Path showed the way to Hartford and Windsor, and the trail to Springfield; while the Narragansett Path pointed the way to Providence. As they turned these trails to their own use, the English demonstrated a measure of the growing surety that they could possess the land. Shortly, the strength of their hold on it would be seen in correlation to the inevitable demise of its original inhabitants.

In the end, what had made the western settlements possible was the demoralization of the tribes of those regions. Disease had depleted their villages. What the pestilence had left undone, Mohawks and Englishmen helped finish. In this chapter of their history they were but "a cowed remnant of a people which a half-century earlier would have resisted the white invasion with vigor."²² But as events were to prove, they were already too late.

²¹ Massachusetts Archives, XXXV, 3rd Series (Maps and Plans), p. 18.

²² Herbert C. Parsons, A Puritan Outpost: A History of the Town and People of Northfield, Massachusetts (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 19.

CHAPTER X

THE FEASIBILITY OF ASSIMILATION

From the time of the first settlements, the English immigrants to New England demonstrated that their hope was not to "coexist" with the Indian; rather, they wished to reorient the native population to a way of life more acceptable to their own taste. With their imaginations awash in the tales of coastal explorers, the immigrants came with their preconceived images. The stereotype had already been formed in England, and it depicted the Indian as a savage and brutish malfactor, a "Tawney serpent" in league with Satan. In his comments on the Indian, Edward Johnson was to write: "As for any religious observation, they were the most destitute of any people yet heard of, the Divel having them in very great subjection, not using craft to delude them, as he ordinarily doth in most parts of the World."¹

Even in times of great want, when the assistance of the Indian helped avert disaster, the bias and the suspicion remained. It remained after the Wampanoags had sent gifts of corn to the Plymouth community after that great period of trial. It remained after that first winter when Valley Indians carried corn on their backs to scurvy-ridden Boston. And it continued to thrive at the close of the Pequot War when the hungry Connecticut towns were nourished with fifty canoes of food brought by Indians as far upriver as Pocumtuck (Deerfield, Mass.). Such acts of kindness, no matter how many such instances were recorded, did not alter the

¹Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence . . ., Bk. III, p. 263.

European's opinion that by nature the Indian was something base and malicious. Quite simply, the English, in expecting the Indian to be continuously hostile, interpreted any display of open friendship as part of a treacherous design hiding the ambitions of covert evil. Seeing examples of Indian hospitality, they were impressed not by the deed, but rather by the power of their God who, for the moment, had infused the attribute of kindness into the savage will.²

Throughout the formative period of European settlement, even the most enlightened Englishmen viewed the Indian from the same distorted vantage point. As early as 1583, Sir George Peckham, an ardent proponent of English colonialism, felt that he had achieved the formula which could free the Indian from the forces of Darkness. For Peckham, and many of his concerned successors, the key to the problem was conversion and a disciplined program of acculturation. Inject the tribal American into a mold cast around European institutions, and when the process was completed, the Indian would, the Lord willing, assume the mien and form of Englishmen. He would "be reduced from unseemly customs to honest manners, from disordered, riotous routs and companies to a well governed commonwealth, and withal shall be taught mechanical occupations, arts, and liberal sciences."³

Years later, moved by the same sense of moral obligation, the very charter of the Massachusetts Bay settlers echoed this approach toward "freeing" the Indian from the prison of his own culture. True to an English sense of order and civility, the Charter of the Colony specified

² Smith, Seventeenth Century America . . ., p. 19.

³ quoted in Jack D. Forbes (ed.), The Indian in America's Past (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 11.

the "principall end" of their plantation, that is, to "wynn and incite the natives of the country to the knowledge and obedience of the onlie true God."⁴

The fact that the acculturation process failed so dismally in New England is not simply the fault of misdirected idealism, but rather it stemmed from a flaw in the major premise of the stated objectives. All factors being equal, for the Indian to be made an integral part of Christian New England, he must first be converted, and then restructured in the image of that society. In the main, he declined the opportunity. And for the English settler, his own preconceptions soon crystallized into racial bias thereby further frustrating any general movement toward a program of assimilation. And then, after the frontier had been boiled in the cauldron of forest warfare, the Indian became less an object of evangelical charity, and more an objectionable hindrance to English expansionism.

Throughout the early years of settlement, thoughts of the eventual incorporation of the Indian remained, at best, subliminal to overall policy. Where hope continued to prevail, however, zealous sponsors of acculturation remained clinging fast to the goal of conversion. Had it not failed, New England might have become a valuable laboratory for social experimentation. And though there is an outside chance that they might have been, the New England colonies never did become the scene of a massive mission to the Indians. Unfortunately, it quickly became evident to the vast majority of English settlers, that there were more

⁴Mass. Records, I, p. 17.

expedient methods of dealing with the native populace. There were, after all, racial limits to the colonial melting pot.

Indian policy, whether expressed tacitly or officially in Puritan New England, seems to have suffered from a double standard. Like many other facets of Puritan life, there was that eternal discrepancy between stated intention and practical result. In moments of pique, one might determine that there was astoundingly obvious strain of hypocrisy running through the regenerate elect. Antinomians like Ann Hutchinson had perhaps seized upon it when they asserted that the apparently sanctified leadership had been laboring under a "covenant of works." For her presumptiveness she was, of course, banished from the Bay, and the Saints continued in the common pastime of rationalizing their rather arbitrary behavior. As one case in point, Deputy Governor Thomas Dudley, as stiff-necked and hard in the jaw as any of the Massachusetts Puritans, once wrote home to England in 1630 saying: "If any come hither to plant for worldly ends, that can live well at home, he commits an error, of which he will soon repent him."⁵ Yet during the lean days of the Bay settlement, this same old gentleman took the opportunity of lending his hungry countrymen seven and one-half bushels of corn, for the price of ten at harvest time.⁶ Now Dudley's conduct cannot be explained away simply in terms of the tension between the spiritual and concupiscent tendencies of man's potentially justifiable essence. It can't be completely exonerated by Puritan eschatologists, nor can it be ignored by present-day apologists as they sift through the frailties and fallibilities of the Visible Saints.

The double standard is also evident in Indian affairs. Here it

⁵ quoted in Lee Vrooman, The Faith That Built America (New York: Arrowhead Books, Inc., 1955), p. 27.

⁶ Morgan, p. 87.

assumes the difference between the sermon's fine intentions and the actual disposition of Indian policy; and as it does so, it manifests but another extension of that same idiosyncrasy in the Puritan character. As the years went by in New England, the conflict between Christian duty and the growing posture of bias was consistently resolved with the remission of the latter. In this sense, the double standard separating the theoretical from the actual Christian not only persisted, but thrived amid an unflappable sense of European superiority. And if, as was the case, the greatest of the early Indian benefactors were marked by it, then what can be said for the common, unschooled husbandman? If Roger Williams found it obligatory to thank the Lord for giving him a "painful patient spirit to lodge with them in their filthy, smoky holes,"⁷ then how might the townsman mask his condescension?

To remind the colonists of Massachusetts as to the "principall end" of their commonwealth, the Seal of the Bay Company displayed an Indian and the inscription, "Come over and help us." Of those few who actually tried, the foremost was, of course, John Eliot. But in spite of his particular energy, and the Colony's stated intentions, no substantial effort was made to convert the Indians for years after the initial settlement.

Eliot had been with the Roxbury church since 1631, but he didn't begin his work with the Indians until well after the Pequot War. Once he had begun his mission, he started out from the same traditional viewpoint in that civilization must go hand in hand with Christianity. The

⁷quoted in Walter Bowie, Men of Fire: Torchbearers of the Gospel (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 171.

Indian must be induced to take up residence in orderly, self-governing villages, set apart, of course, from those of the English. Here, living under a theocratic compact, he must learn the hierarchy of English cultural values, the skills of the English farmer and mechanic, and, what was to him, the imponderabilities of the Christian ethic.

In his Praying Towns, Eliot departed from earlier theories, for civilization would come before conversion. Essential to his program was the fact that the Indian would be separated from his natural surroundings. Rather than go into the wilderness, as did Williams, the proselytes would come to him.

Besides Eliot, and his colleague Daniel Gookin, James Fitch in Connecticut, and Thomas Mayhew on Martha's Vineyard were also determined to bring Christian civilization to the Indian. Predictably, their efforts needed to be financed; and just as predictable, the funds came mostly from England. In 1649, Edward Winslow, acting as agent for Massachusetts Bay, obtained a charter from the Rump Parliament authorizing the establishment of The Society for the Promoting and the Propagating of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England. The act of incorporation was read from pulpits throughout England, and in the course of the next decade 4,673 Pounds were raised in the home churches. During the same period, no such generosity was evident among the New England congregations.⁸

The greatest flaw in the New England mission was in Eliot's conviction that piety must stem from learning.⁹ Though in itself a work of great devotion, his Indian Bible, as well as the very theory behind the Praying

⁸ Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony, p. 299.

⁹ Edwin S. Gaustad, A Religious History of America (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 53.

Town exhibits the Puritan's unrealistic insistence that the Indians be brought to accept the full package of English civilization. To the north, the more successful Jesuits who would found missions such as St. Francis or Norridgewock, were resigned, from the beginning, to the necessity of allowing the Indian to adopt Christianity from within the familiarity of his own cultural guidelines. But to the Puritan, any dilution of Calvinist principle was wanton heresy; and any attempted toleration of an Indian setting was little more than an admission of defeat regarding the secondary object, civilization.

In spite of the labors of a few, and in contradiction to the designs set down in the Charter, the Puritans "paid only lip service to the ideal of a mass conversion of all Indian souls to Christianity."¹⁰ Lacking broad popular support among the English settlers, it could not be otherwise. While earnest men like Eliot attracted some Indians to a full belief in the majesty of the English God, and the efficacy of English institutions, the majority stayed apart cultivating their apprehensions of the growing power and population of the foreigners.

For the Indian who refused to embrace English civilization and the Puritan worship, he was bound, in the end, to acknowledge its supremacy¹¹ in New England. But, of course, there was nothing approaching reciprocity in the manner of English respect for Indian canonicals. One case in point relates to an area in the vicinity of Lake Webster. Here at the

¹⁰ Harvey Wish, Society and Thought in Early America (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1964), p. 39.

¹¹ For example, a series of Massachusetts blasphemy statutes, carrying the death penalty, were amended to include the Indian in 1648. See: Haskins, Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts . . ., p. 148.

convergence of several of the major cross-country paths, the tribes of southern New England recognized a neutral sanctuary honored as the abode of the Great Spirit, and the resting place of the souls of their dead.¹² And the fact that the Woodward-Saffery map indicates no Indian settlement in this region, gives support to the assumption that it was, indeed, a neutral preserve. But due to its strategic location as the half-way control point on the Great Path to Connecticut, it soon became a midland distribution center for westbound English traffic. Although most Englishmen were probably unaware of their transgression, in the eyes of the offended Indian, their conduct could only be thought of as sacrilegious. But then more and more, especially after the great migration to the Connecticut River Valley, the Indians were becoming quick to see that "at every point where their own way of life came into conflict with the white men's civilization, the latter always revealed an aggressive and usually predominant strength."¹³

In the final analysis, acculturation failed on the New England frontier because the apostles like Eliot were themselves the articulators of Puritan exclusiveness. If, indeed, they "hoped to bring the world of nature under the control of grace,"¹⁴ they could not do it effectively from within a community whose racial bias and economic ambitions had already outstripped the urgencies of religion. The proposition that

¹² cf. Ayres, p. 99.

¹³ Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk . . ., p. 22

¹⁴ Leo F. Solt, "Puritanism, Capitalism, Democracy, and the New Science," American Historical Review, LXXIII, No. 1 (October, 1967), p. 27.

small homeopathic doses of Calvinism and English civilization could transmute the creature of primitive spontaneity, simply did not recognize the true temper of the frontier. And in the end, as one scholar has noted, it didn't really make a great deal of difference whether the native American could be "as 'mannerly and civil as any of Europe,'" for "the aggressive tendencies of the age made conquest a normal feature of human existence."¹⁵

The final, insoluble dilemma facing the New England Indian is seen in the fact that, with his lands and resources diminishing, he was forced to choose between the perplexing course of acculturation, and the more natural solutions born of resistance. His great tragedy is that he succeeded in neither.

¹⁵Forbes, p. 12.

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