

### Prelude: the Land and Its Inhabitants

The long-held idea that the first settlers of New England encountered the proverbial “forest primeval” or “howling wilderness” on their arrival has been corrected in recent years. Indian tribes with agricultural ways of life had been in the area for many generations, and, like human beings everywhere, adapted the land to their purposes. As Howard S. Russell states in his *A Long Deep Furrow*, “From the westernmost limit of the Connecticut shore in what is now New England to the Saco River on the Maine coast, level treeless salt marsh fringed much of the shore. Fresh meadows bordered the edges of the great rivers and several of their interior tributaries. Alongside the numerous sheltered harbors, bays and estuaries.. .the native inhabitants had cleared substantial areas to provide village sites, and fields for their crops. They had cut the neighboring trees for firewood.”

“What most impressed English visitors, notes William Cronon in his *Changes in the Land*, “was the Indians’ burning of extensive sections of the surrounding forest once or twice a year.... By setting fire to wood piled around the base of standing trees, Indian women destroyed the bark and so killed the trees; the women could then plant corn amid the leafless skeletons that were left. During the next several years, many of the trees would topple and could be entirely removed by burning.”

Reasons other than agricultural ones encouraged the clearing of land by periodic burning. Russell adds, “the deer herd and the bears served the natives in place of livestock as a prime source of meat, clothing, and wigwam covering. Such game animals are not habitants of the deep forest, but increase where in the seasons following a fire, herbage is tender and easy to browse or penetrate.... ” [T]hese scorched clearings served a second purpose: burning them over brought successive years of raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, and later black cherries, all important food for the natives (and for game). A third motive for periodic burning...was to clear underbrush so as to make travel and hunting easier.

Although on some historical maps an Indian town appears in the Bayside section of Greenland, archeological evidence does not seem to justify such a feature. On the other hand, ancient Native Americans certainly spent time in Greenland. These may well have been summer visitors from the interior, who came to the Seacoast to hunt, fish, dig shellfish, and generally camp out and enjoy the sea breezes. Dr. Eugene Finch, of Phillips Exeter Academy, published an article in *The New Hampshire Archeologist* in 1969 about a series of digs, some of which he supervised, that were made near Brackett’s Point between 1956 and 1966, and addressed the Greenland Historical Society on the same subject in April 1970. These excavations turned up hearths, pipe fragments, potsherds, and a number of stone articles: points, knives, scrapers, hammers, grindstones, a chopper, and an apparent axe, all of native manufacture. More recently, similar objects have been found in Stratham and Newington. Even summer visitors to the Bayside may have improved the land for their convenience, to some extent.

It was not a complete coincidence that New Hampshire was settled by Englishmen soon after its Indians had been decimated (and worse) by disease, leaving many cleared areas conveniently free of tenants. In 1616 a devastating epidemic, carried by European sailors or fishermen, struck the natives, probably first in the Massachusetts Bay area, and spread southward to Cape Cod and northward to Maine, continuing in places until 1619. Chicken pox, measles, and bubonic or pneumonic plague have been suggested as the deadly agent; whichever it was (it may have been a combination), estimates of the toll among the natives within thirty miles or so of the coast range up to 75 percent. Alden T. Vaughan says that “from the Piscataqua River to the eastern shore of Narragansett Bay, the plague had left only a thin remnant of the earlier population; it was into this area that Puritan migration first took place.” Jere R. Daniell in his *Colonial New Hampshire* remarks, “The Piscataquas and Squamscotts [in the Seacoast area] suffered irremediable losses; many of their surviving members moved inland and joined bands and tribes in the lower Merrimack valley.”

The Puritans, being ignorant of the existence of bacteria, viruses, or hereditary immunity, tended to see the plague as a proof of God's favor. In John Smith's opinion, "it seems God hath provided this country for our Nation, destroying the natives by the plague, it not touching one Englishman, though many traded and were conversant amongst them; for they had three plagues in three years successively near two hundred miles along the sea coast, that in some places there scarce remained five of a hundred."

"Thereby," wrote Daniel Gookin, "divine providence made way for the quiet and peaceable settlement of the English in those nations." And in a decree issued in 1620 or 1621, King James I expressed an official, if not a Puritan, view: "within these late years there hath by God's visitation reigned a wonderful plague,...in a manner to the utter destruction, devastation, and depopulation of that whole territory...whereby we in our judgment are persuaded and satisfied that the appointed time is come in which Almighty God in His great goodness...hath thought fit and determined that those large and goodly territories, deserted as it were by their natural inhabitants, should be possessed and enjoyed by such of our subjects and people as...shall...be directed and conducted thither."

A second blow was dealt the New England natives in 1633-4, when an epidemic of smallpox struck, and several thousand more died. Gov. John Winthrop of Massachusetts noted in his diary that "This infectious disease spread to Pascataquack, where all the remaining Indians (except one or two) died." Disputes between English and Indians over land ownership had begun to arise in Massachusetts by the early 1630s; but, as a Puritan chronicler saw it, "God ended the Controversy by sending the Small-pox amongst the Indians." Gov. Winthrop asked, referring to both epidemics, "if God were not pleased with our inheriting these parts, why did he drive out the natives before us? and why doth he still make room for us, by diminishing them as we increase?"

In short, from the English point of view, the Indians cleared the lands that settlers found most desirable, then conveniently died. It needn't have been that way. As Karen O. Kupperman wrote in her *Settling With the Indians*, "One can only speculate what the outcome of the rivalry would have been if the impact of European diseases on the American population had not been so devastating. If colonists had not been able to occupy lands already cleared by Indian farmers who had vanished, colonization would have proceeded much more slowly. If Indian culture had not been devastated by the physical and psychological assaults it had suffered, colonization might not have proceeded at all in the 16th and 17th centuries." Francis Jennings in his *The Invasion of America* was more succinct: "The American land was more like a widow than a virgin. Europeans did not find a wilderness here; rather, however involuntarily, they made one.... The so-called settlement of America was a resettlement, a reoccupation of a land made waste by the diseases and demoralization introduced by the newcomers."

#### Prelude: the Newcomers

The Englishman and woman preparing to voyage to America in the 1630s had a number of reliable sources of information on what they were getting into. The extreme nature of the climate, compared to what they were used to, was frequently stressed. Francis Higginson, in a popular book called *New England's Plantation* (1630), warned that "In the summertime, in the midst of July and August, it is a good deal hotter than in old England; and in winter, January and February are much colder, as they say; but the spring and autumn are of a middle temper. In the summer season, for these three months, June, July, and August, we are troubled much with little flies called Musketoes, being the same they are troubled with in Lincolnshire and the Fens; and they are nothing but Gnats, which, except they be smoked out of their houses, are troublesome in the night season. In the winter season for two months' space the earth is commonly covered with snow, which is accompanied with sharp biting frosts, something more sharp than in old England, and therefore [we] are forced to make great fires."

Much later in the century, Edward Ward, in *A Trip to New-England*, described the country as “always troubled with an ague and fever; as soon as ever the cold fit’s over, ‘tis attended with a hot; and the natives themselves, whose bodies are habituated to the sudden changes from one extreme to another, cannot but confess, they freeze in winter and fry in summer.” A woman quoted by Massachusetts Governor (and historian) Thomas Hutchinson was even less flattering: “The air of the country is sharp, the rocks many, the trees innumerable, the grass little, the winter cold, the summer hot, the gnats in summer biting, the wolves at midnight howling.” She probably wasn’t asked to contribute to a guidebook.

The climate of the new land, however, was a secondary consideration. First, there was the decision whether or not to cross the ocean at all. As Allen French notes in his *Charles I and the Puritan Upheaval*, “the decision to go was no mere pauper’s determination to leave everything, which was nothing, and with a bundle of clothes, to step aboard ship. There was first the passage to be paid -- no slight burden. Next to be provided were the tools and household utensils that would be needed across the water. And, finally, all should be furnished with food for at least a year. Not difficult perhaps for a single man, having no dependents. But for one with a wife and children, and perhaps with apprentices and servants to help him set up his farm, the investment would amount to a considerable sum.... To leave a home in which, no matter how difficult were questions of money or the restrictions of religion, there were at least a roof overhead, a well close by, old neighbors not far away, and town at hand where necessities could be bought -- to leave this for a wilderness where the land must be cleared, the house built, the well dug, where the neighbors might be strangers or even painted savages, and where most things needed must be either made or gone without: decidedly there were two sides to the problem.” Most of Greenland’s early male settlers did in fact come as relatively unburdened single men; but the women they eventually married came from families which had to make the difficult decisions French outlines.

Those who were considering emigration had good advice to guide them. Christopher Levett, writer of *A Voyage to New England* (1628) made it clear that “it is a country, where none can live except he either labor himself, or be able to keep others to labor for him. If a man have a wife and many small children, not to come there, except for every three loiterers 4. (e.g., non-productive consumers), he have one worker; which if he have, he may make a shift to live, and not starve. If a man have but as many good laborers as loiterers, he shall live much better there than in any place I know. If all be laborers, and no children, then let him not fear, but to do more good there in seven years than in England in twenty.” Levett recommended that an emigrant carry with him provisions not for a year, but eighteen months; so did William Wood, author of *New England’s Prospect* (1634), who promised that “any that will carry provision enough for a year and a half, shall not need to fear want, if he either be industrious himself, or have industrious agents to manage his estate and affairs.” Wood listed several occupations highly valued in the new land, such as carpentry, barrel making, blacksmithing, gardening, and working with cloth and leather; “if there be any that hath skill in any of these trades, & he can transport himself, he needs not fear but he may improve his time and endeavors to his own benefit, and comfort; if any cannot transport himself, he may provide himself of an honest master, and so may do as well.” A number of men who prospered in the new world, such as Greenland’s Samuel Haines, came across the Atlantic originally as indentured servants.

Wood pointed out the reason for the eighteen-month rule regarding provisions: if a man landed in May or June, it would be too late to locate, build, plant, and harvest his crops before the fall of the second year. As for the kind of foods needed on the voyage, Wood advised that “although every man have ship-provisions allowed him for his five pound a man [apparently the usual fare for the crossing, which is salt beef, pork, salt fish, butter, cheese, pease, pottage, water-gruel, and such kind of victuals,

with good biscuits, and six-shilling beer, yet will it be necessary to carry some comfortable refreshing of fresh victual. At first, for such as have ability, some conserves, and good claret wine.... Prunes are good to be stewed; sugar, for many things; white biscuits, and eggs, and bacon, rice, poultry, and some wether-sheep to kill aboard the ship.... Juice of lemons well put up is good either to prevent or cure the scurvy. Here it must not be forgotten to carry small skillets, or pipkins, and small frying-pans, to dress their victuals in at sea. For bedding, so it be easy, and cleanly, and warm, it is no matter how old or coarse it be for the use of the sea, and so likewise for apparel; the oldest clothes be the fittest, with a long coarse coat, to keep better things from the pitched ropes and planks." As for provisions for use after arrival, "malt, beef, butter, cheese, some pease, good wines, seed vinegar, strong waters, etc." would come in handy; whatever wasn't consumed could be sold at a profit in America.

The voyage itself can seldom have been pleasant. French writes, "For the long voyages we must imagine great discomfort, especially in bad weather. How [the passengers] washed, ministered to their bodily needs, cooked, ate, even in good weather with the hatches open, we had better not try to picture to ourselves. But they were hardy and endured it: in all the many voyages few died." Curtis P. Nettels, in his *Roots of American Civilization*, gives six to twelve weeks as the usual time of passage; "Vessels were unmercifully overcrowded, and the horses and cattle on board did not improve sanitary conditions. And Charles E. Banks, in *The Planters of the Commonwealth*, agrees that "The imagination is beggared to know how the requirements of nature were met in prolonged storms in . . .small boats when men, women, and children were kept under the hatches for safety.... Doubtless they went to bed at sundown, as there was no way to light the decks. They rose at the break of day to begin another like round of nothing in particular."

Reach their destination the emigrants did, however, with very few exceptions; shipboard conditions were for many no worse than those at home in England, and for some they may have been an improvement. Wood's claim that for some "which have come with such foul bodies to sea, as did make their days uncomfortable on land, have been so purged and clarified at sea, that they have been more healthful for after times," may be an exaggeration, however (although a stormy voyage must have afforded numerous opportunities for purgation).

Banks describes the usual situation of the newly arrived voyager in the new world: "Arrived at his destination after weeks of tossing on the restless ocean, the emigrant either followed a prescribed course planned in advance or sat down to consider where he was and to make a choice of a habitation.... He remembered his former estate as a tenant paying homage and quit rents as his ancestors had done, and he realized that he had left all that behind.... There was no limit to his choice of a home in the wilderness, and emigrants made two or three moves before coming to a final halt. Land was free to him for the asking under easy conditions of permanency, and it is not strange that with all this boundless opportunity open to him, he still looked with longing eyes on every new settlement where he could enlarge his acreage." Greenland's first permanent English settler would take his time before choosing a final residence; but having done so, he would plant his family name for several generations; and his descendants are still among us.

#### A PLEASANT ABIDING PLACE

The logical person with whom to begin a history of Greenland is Samuel Haines, born about 1611, who in 1635 was a servant of an English gentleman named John Cogswell. Samuel accompanied Cogswell and his family, bound for Ipswich, Mass., on board a small ship called the *Angel Gabriel*, which sailed from Milford Haven on June 22, 1635, for New England. Rev. Richard Mather, ancestor of the famous Massachusetts family, was a passenger on the *James*, which accompanied the *Angel Gabriel* until the fourth of July, and described her as "a strong ship, and well furnished with fourteen or sixteen

pieces of ordnance, but a slow sailer." For that reason, the James left the *Angel Gabriel* behind, and made landfall at Monhegan Island on August 8. She then moved on to the southward, and was off the Isles of Shoals on August 15, when the slower vessel, with Cogswell and Haines aboard, had reached Pemaquid Island. For both ships and their passengers, this was unfortunate; for they thus encountered the worst hurricane to hit the New England coast for many decades.

Mather, who thanked God that his ship was spared by it, called the August 15, 1635 hurricane "very terrible and grievous." According to Massachusetts Governor William Bradford, it "blew down sundry houses, and uncovered divers others; divers Vessels were lost at sea in it, and many more in extrem danger... It blew down many hundred thousands of Trees, turning up the stronger by the roots, and breaking the high Pine Trees and such like in the midst." The *Angel Gabriel* was "burst in pieces and cast away on Pemaquid, and most of the cattle and other goods, with one seaman and three or four passengers, did also perish therein," according to Mather. (Some later writers claimed that no one died in the wreck, but Mather's contemporary account probably deserves preference.) According to Massachusetts records, John Cogswell was less injured by the *Angel Gabriel's* wreck than he might have been, saving "severall Cask both of Dry Goods and provisions," and "a Good Quantity Of Good Household goods both feather beds and Bedding and also a good quantity of brass and Pewter and also several pieces of plate" -- not to mention, according to Samuel Haines's deposition in 1676, "a turkey worked Carpett ... which he commonly used to lay upon his parlour table." All in all, Samuel and his master had survived the frightening experience pretty well.

Everyone wasn't so fortunate. The Puritan historian William Hubbard, no doubt hoping to teach a salutary lesson, wrote that "An old man that used to go to sea in a small boat, without any other help save a dog, whom he had taught to steer [!], sailing down Ipswich River, was warned of [the hurricane] that approached, but he answered that he would go to sea, though the devil were there. Whether the devil were there at sea or no,... it is no matter. This his vessel was never seen more by them on the land." The lesson for the modern reader may be that the Yankee character was formed somewhat earlier than some have claimed.

Despite the outcome of his 1635 voyage, Samuel Haines went back to England, probably in 1637, to bring more of his master's goods across the ocean -- a measure of Cogswell's trust in his servant. This took considerable fortitude, considering the climax of Haines's first crossing. The round-trip voyage, including his time in England, occupied about a year and a half. It no doubt brightened the return trip to America greatly that he brought with him the former Eleanor Neate, whom he had married in Wiltshire on April 1, 1638.

Samuel appears to have discharged his obligations to Cogswell by 1640, when he became one of the signers of the "Dover Combination," dated Oct. 22. By this, 42 "Inhabitants upon the River Pascataquack" agreed to "combine our Selves into a Body Politique that wee may the more comfortably enjoy the benefit of his Maj[es]ties Lawes." Although there is no way to tell how close the two were at this time, one of Haines's fellow signers was a military man from Devonshire named Captain Francis Champernowne.

Champernowne (the most common spelling) is thought to have come to New England in 1637. It was probably in 1640 that, in the words of his biographer Charles Wesley Tuttle, "he selected for his principal residence. . . a tract of land lying in a picturesque region on the southerly side of the Great Bay and east of Winnicut River, within the present town of Greenland, then a part of Strawberry Bank, now Portsmouth, in New Hampshire." If Tuttle is correct about the site of Champernowne's house, it stood between the present fourth and seventh tees of the Portsmouth Country Club. During his residence in the Seacoast, and for some time afterward, the Captain was a bachelor.

Tuttle finds it probable that Capt. Champernowne, an experienced fighter on land and sea, and a strong royalist, spent 1641-1648 as an officer in the Royal Navy opposing the forces of Parliament in the English Civil Wars, returning to America only when the King's cause was clearly lost. If so, he missed a number of events that were highly important to the residents of the Seacoast area. In the fall of 1641, Dover and Strawberry Bank petitioned to come under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts Bay, which ("as compassion to the poor inhabitants," according to William Hubbard) the Boston government agreed to. The next year, the Massachusetts General Court extended political rights to all freemen in the Seacoast area, whether they were church members or not which, given the un-Puritan ways of a great many inhabitants, probably broadened the franchise greatly. In 1643, the County of Norfolk was organized, with its seat at Salisbury, and including Haverhill, along with Hampton, Exeter, Dover, and Strawberry Bank. The last two towns, being somewhat distant from Salisbury, were authorized to set up their own court, and promptly did so.