



David J. Silverman

Faith and Boundaries

Colonists, Christianity,
and Community among
the Wampanoag Indians
of Martha's Vineyard
1600–1871

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Faith and Boundaries

It was indeed possible for Indians and Europeans to live together peacefully in early America and for Indians to survive as distinct communities. *Faith and Boundaries* uses the story of Martha's Vineyard Wampanoags to examine how. On an island marked by centralized English authority, missionary commitment, and an Indian majority, the Wampanoags' adaptation to English culture, especially Christianity, checked violence while safeguarding their land, community, and, ironically, even customs. Yet the colonists' exploitation of Indian land and labor exposed the limits of Christian fellowship and thus hardened racial division. The Wampanoags learned about race through this rising bar of civilization – every time they met demands to reform, colonists moved the bar higher until it rested on biological difference. Under the right circumstances, like those on Martha's Vineyard, religion could bridge the wide difference between the peoples of early America, but its transcendent power was limited by the divisiveness of race.

David J. Silverman is Assistant Professor of History at the George Washington University. He has previously taught at Princeton University and Wayne State University. He is the author of several articles for such journals as *William and Mary Quarterly* and *New England Quarterly*. He has also been a Mellon Post-Dissertation Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society.

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DAVID J. SILVERMAN

George Washington University



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To Linda, more than ever, with love

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Abbreviations

AAS	American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.
AICRJ	<i>American Indian Culture and Research Journal</i>
BPL	Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston, Mass.
<i>Conquests and Triumphs</i>	Matthew Mayhew, <i>The Conquests and Triumphs of Grace: Being a Brief Narrative of the Success which the Gospel hath had among the Indians of Martha's Vineyard (and the Places adjacent) in New-England</i> (London, 1695).
Cotton Journal	"The Missionary Journal of John Cotton Jr., 1666–1678," Len Travers, ed., <i>Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society</i> 109 (1998), 52–101.
CPGNE	Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, Records, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, Mass.
DCCF	Dukes County Court Files, Office of the Clerk of Courts, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.
DCCP	Dukes County Court of Common Pleas, Records, Office of the Clerk of Courts, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.
DCCR	Dukes County Court Records, Office of the Clerk of Courts, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.
DCD	Dukes County Deeds, Dukes County Registry of Deeds, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.
DCGSP	Dukes County General Sessions of the Peace, Records, Office of the Clerk of Courts, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.

DCP	Dukes County Probate, Records, Dukes County Registry of Probate, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.
Earle Report	John Milton Earle, <i>Report to the Governor and Council, Concerning the Indians of the Commonwealth, Under the Act of April 6, 1859</i> , Senate Document No. 96 (Boston, 1861).
Edgartown Records	Edgartown Town Records, Edgartown Town Hall, Office of the Town Clerk, Edgartown, Mass.
FNPR	Farm Neck Proprietors' Records, 2 vols., Office of the Clerk of Courts, Dukes County Courthouse, Edgartown, Mass.
Force Papers	Dukes County, Mass., Records, MS 79-1773, 1712-1812, 173 items. Part of the collection of Peter Force Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
<i>Gay Head Report</i>	Richard L. Pease, <i>Report of the Commissioner Appointed to Complete the Examination and Determination of All Questions of Title to Land, and of All Boundary Lines between the Individual Owners, at Gay Head, on the Island of Martha's Vineyard</i> (Boston, 1871).
GIP	Guardians of Indian Plantations, Records, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.
<i>Glorious Progress</i>	Edward Winslow, <i>The Glorious Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England</i> (London, 1649), Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i> , 3d ser., 4 (1834), 69-98.
<i>Good News</i>	Edward Winslow, <i>Good News from New England: or a true Relation of things very remarkable at the Plantation of Plymouth in New England</i> , in Edward Arber, ed., <i>The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1616-1623, A.D., as Told by Themselves, Their Friends, and Their Enemies</i> (1624; London, 1897), 509-98
Hawley Journal	Gideon Hawley Letters and Journal, 4 vols., 1753-1806, Congregational Library, Boston, Mass.
"Historical Collections"	Daniel Gookin, "Historical Collections of the Indians in New England," Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i> , 1st ser., 1 (1792), 141-227.
"Indian Visitation"	Grindal Rawson and Samuel Danforth, "Account of an Indian Visitation, A.D. 1698," Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i> , 1st ser., 10 (1809), 129-34.

<i>Indian Converts</i>	Experience Mayhew, <i>Indian Converts: Or, Some Account of the Lives and Speeches of a Considerable Number of the Christianized Indians of Martha's Vineyard</i> (London, 1727).
JAH	<i>Journal of American History</i>
JER	<i>Journal of the Early Republic</i>
JMEP	John Milton Earle, Papers, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.
<i>Light Appearing</i>	Henry Whitfield, <i>The Light appearing more and more towards the perfect Day. Or, a farther Discovery of the present state of the Indians in New-England, Concerning the Progresse of the Gospel amongst them</i> (London, 1651), Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i> , 3d ser., 4 (1834), 101-47.
<i>Mass. Acts and Resolves</i>	<i>The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay</i> , 21 vols. (Boston, 1869-1922).
Mass. Archives	Massachusetts Archives Series, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.
MHSC	Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i>
<i>Mass. House Journals</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts</i> , 1715-1766, 43 vols. (Boston, 1919-73).
Mass. House Rept. No. 68	D. L. Child, H. Stebbins, and D. Fellows Jr., <i>Report on the Condition of the Native Indians and Descendants of Indians, in This Commonwealth</i> , Massachusetts House Report No. 68 (Boston, 1827).
Mayhew Papers	Mayhew Papers (1648-1774), Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University, Boston, Mass.
NBFPL	New Bedford Free Public Library, Special Collections, New Bedford, Mass.
NCD	Nantucket County Deeds, Registry of Deeds, Town and County Building, Nantucket, Mass.
NCR	Nantucket County, Records, Registry of Deeds, Town and County Building, Nantucket, Mass.
<i>Native Writings</i>	Ives Goddard and Kathleen J. Bragdon, eds., <i>Native Writings in Massachusetts</i> , 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1988).
NE Co. MSS	New England Company, Records, Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.
NEHGR	<i>New England Historic Genealogical Register</i>
NEQ	<i>New England Quarterly</i>

PLP	Passed Legislation Packets, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.
<i>Plymouth Records</i>	Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and David Pulsifer, eds., <i>Records of the Colony of New Plymouth</i> , 12 vols. (Boston, 1855).
<i>Report of the Commissioners</i>	F. W. Bird, Whiting Griswold, and Cyrus Weekes, <i>Report of the Commissioners Relating to the Condition of the Indians</i> , Massachusetts House Document No. 46 (Boston, 1849).
RSCJ	Records of the Superior Court of Judicature, 1686–1700, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.
Senate Doc. No. 14	<i>Report of the Committee of the Legislature of 1869, on the Condition of the Gay Head Indians</i> , Senate Doc. No. 14 (Boston, 1870).
<i>Some Account of those English Ministers</i>	Thomas Prince, <i>Some Account of those English Ministers who have Successfully Presided Over the Work of Gospelizing to the Indians on Martha's Vineyard and the Adjacent Islands</i> (London, 1727), appendix to Experience Mayhew, <i>Indian Converts</i> .
<i>Some Correspondence</i>	John W. Ford, ed., <i>Some Correspondence between the Governors and Treasurers of the New England Company in London and the Commissioners of the United Colonies in America, the Missionaries and Others between the Years 1657 and 1712</i> (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1896).
SPGNA	Society for Propagating the Gospel in North America, Papers, Philip's Library of the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.
<i>Strength Out of Weaknesse</i>	Henry Whitfield, <i>Strength Out of Weaknesse; Or, a Glorious Manifestation of the further Progresse of the Gospel among the Indians in New England</i> (London, 1652), Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i> , 3d ser., 4 (1834), 149–96.
Suffolk Files	Suffolk Files, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.
<i>Tears of Repentance</i>	John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew Jr., <i>Tears of Repentance: Or, a Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England</i> (London, 1653). Massachusetts Historical Society, <i>Collections</i> , 3d ser., 4 (1834), 197–260.
ULRIA	Unpassed Legislation Relating to Indian Affairs, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.

WMQ
ZHP

William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser.
Zachariah Howwoswee Papers, MS America, John
Carter Brown Library at Brown University,
Providence, R.I.

Preface

Do Good Walls Make Good Neighbors?

The inspiration for this study came, innocently enough, with a walk along a stone wall. Linda, my fiancé (now my wife), and I were on a late May vacation after I had finished my first year of graduate school. Short of money and in desperate need of some time outside, we were lucky to have a week at a ramshackle timeshare on the island of Martha's Vineyard, just off Cape Cod in Massachusetts. I wanted this trip to be a diversion from my studies of early America, and when the island greeted us with glorious sun and lilac-perfumed sea air I knew it would not disappoint. No sooner had we set down our bags than we ventured out for a hike, unwilling to watch the day pass. An arbitrarily chosen trail led us winding through scrub pine and oak trees, past the weed-choked foundations of a colonial-era farmstead, and up a gradual peak, until it ended at a boulder split by a deep diagonal crack sitting atop a wooded hill. This landmark, our tourist literature explained, was called Waskosim's Rock and figured prominently in the oral tradition of the island's Indians, a group that I mistakenly assumed – as I soon discovered much to my embarrassment – had disappeared several generations ago, leaving whatever stories they once told about this monument to conjecture now.

A classic New England stone wall extending from the boulder into the forest added a poetic element to the scene. Although it was not until the nineteenth century that stone walls became a common feature of the New England landscape, in the popular imagination they symbolize the pluck, piety, and permanence of the region's colonial stock, and the supposedly inevitable demise of the Natives. The story goes that Puritans sailed to America's "howling wilderness" resolved to fulfill God's dictate in Genesis 1:28 to subdue the land, only to discover that New England's craggy ground made their new Israel not unlike the desert of old. No matter: a Protestant work ethic of legendary proportions impelled them to hitch up their oxen, plow the earth, and transform overturned rocks into sturdy farm walls. The stones, once barriers to cultivation, now demarcated private property and hemmed in domestic animals, clear signs of civilized living. Faced with

generations of such stubborn rivals, Indians lost one tract of territory after another, until finally their unwillingness to discard beloved hunting ways for the dominant order led them either to put up a futile resistance or fade into the western woods. The Natives' destiny, in other words, was death or migration, a subtly sinister but pervasive myth that makes Indians who have adapted to their times invisible to the broader public or somehow inauthentic. They were not supposed to have a place in a land of stone walls.

My naiveté came to an abrupt end that afternoon. With the hilltop juncture of Indian and English symbols piquing my imagination, at first opportunity I asked a "Vineyarder" about the place, sparking a conversation that went something like this: "Oh, the wall," he answered, "that's the Middle Line." "The Middle Line?" "That's right. It divided whites and Indians in the old days. We built half," he said, referring to the colonists, "they," the Indians, "built the other. Before that, the rock divided two tribes." "You know," he digressed, "we never had an Indian war here on the island." Because this was as much news to me as the Middle Line, I followed up, "well, what happened to the Indians?" Clearly I was from the mainland, or as some Vineyarders call it, America. The man leaned forward in his chair, pointed down the road, and explained matter-of-factly, "most of them live at Gay Head." I was incredulous: "Now?" "Sure enough," he responded, trying not to look bemused, "and if you're interested in Indians, down the way follow the signs to Christiantown. That's where the Mayhews used to preach to them."

I had read a bit about the Mayhews from scholars of Christian missions, most of whom use the tolerant methods of this proselytizing Puritan family as a counterpoint to the more demanding "civilizing" program of a Boston-area evangelical named John Eliot. Curious, we followed the man's directions, parked, and then followed a narrow path leading to an overgrown graveyard of unmarked headstones and a replica of a tiny eighteenth-century meeting-house. According to a plaque, these were the places of rest and worship for some of the Mayhews' "praying Indians," who, the surroundings implied, had found little refuge in their Christianity. However, another nearby sign crushed that old chestnut too, for *currently* maintaining the site was the Wampanoag Tribe of Aquinnah (or Gay Head). As it turned out, they boasted the oldest Protestant Indian congregation in continuous existence in North America.

Vacation or not, my mind was spinning: here, away from the centers of colonial population, power, and trade, were Indians who built stone walls, worshipped Jesus, and buried one another in marked graves; Natives and newcomers who erected boundaries rather than breastworks to address their differences; people who spoke about historical populations as "we" and "they"; a New England Indian community that refused to vanish. This was something special. So on the first rainy day I poked around the island's town and county archives and the local historical society. In these places I

found a treasure trove of documents relating to and occasionally penned by Indians, sometimes in their own Wampanoag language. Many of these gems lay covered in dust, bound in twine, or in a few cases, hidden, having fallen untold years ago behind office filing cabinets. Historians of American Indians commonly bemoan the lack of source materials. Yet contained within the unassuming walls of Martha's Vineyard's institutions were piles of records that shed light on a supposedly inaccessible population. A story that *should* be told *could* be told.

This book is my attempt to explain the uneasy, often troubling, yet permanent Wampanoag–English coexistence on Martha's Vineyard, and to determine why some Wampanoag communities survived the colonial period and beyond, while others did not. Islands “are a catalogue of quirks and superlatives,” one scholar has observed, which makes the relevance of their histories suspect.¹ Yet exceptions to the pattern of total Indian dispossession and removal in the face of Anglo-American expansion need to be studied in order to critique the widespread assumption that this outcome was inevitable. Telling isolated stories of a shared America provides a better understanding of lost opportunities in other times and places. As I learned from my encounter with an aging stone wall, tales from unexpected sources can breathe new life into places we think we already know.

Crafting a book is similar to building a stone wall. One must survey the historiographical ground one wants to enclose, dig up the source materials, and then carefully piece them together. Over the last several years, the gracious assistance I have received from others has made this enterprise less toil and more a labor of love.

Two mentors guided me through the landscape of early American history, inspired me with their own research, and offered sage advice at every turn. When I first returned from Martha's Vineyard flush with excitement about my latest research topic, James Axtell encouraged me to pursue the idea. Long after I finished my M.A. work under his tutelage, he continued to read my materials, applying his renowned sharp pen and puckish humor to make my prose into intelligible history. I count myself fortunate that he stayed with me to the end.

John Murrin has been an ideal advisor from the start. Beginning at Princeton through our time together at the American Antiquarian Society, he provided unequivocal moral support and helped me to see the larger context by asking questions rather than giving answers. Equally important, he has provided me with a model of historian, colleague, and friend, and passed

¹ Philip Morgan, “Encounters Between British and Indigenous Peoples,” in Mary Daunt and Rick Halpern, eds., *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600–1850* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 55.

along several priceless tips about the arts of hitting a softball and delivering a bad, bad pun. I cannot thank you enough, John.

Several institutions opened their doors and coffers to make this book possible. The Center for the Study of New England History's W. B. H. Dowse Fellowship introduced me to the Massachusetts Historical Society's goldmine of manuscripts. In graduate school, I was able to focus on this study without distraction because of the consistent financial generosity of Princeton University. During the main stage of writing, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation provided me with a Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship and timely requests for progress reports. The American Antiquarian Society's Mellon Post-Dissertation Fellowship was a year of uninterrupted thinking, reading, and revising, aided by a magnificent staff and academic community. I extend special thanks to Wayne State University's Department of History and especially to its indefatigable department chair, Marc Kruman, for permitting me to indulge in this special opportunity, to Caroline Sloat for making my time in Worcester so productive, and to my fellow Fellows, including Pat Cohen, Benjamin Reis, Joanne Radner, Daniel Mandell, Robert Gross, Karsten Fitz, Bridget Ford, and Eliza Richards for serving as lunch-time sounding boards and good chums.

The munificence of the above organizations enabled me to indulge my fondness for archival research in some of early Americana's great repositories. Along the way, I received courteous assistance from the staffs of the Alexander Library of Rutgers University, American Antiquarian Society (Worcester), Boston Public Library, Congregational Library (Boston), Connecticut Historical Society (Hartford), Connecticut State Archives (Hartford), Chilmark Town Hall, Dukes County Superior Court, Edgartown Town Hall, Guildhall Library (London), Houghton and Pursey Libraries of Harvard University, John Carter Brown Library of Brown University, Massachusetts State Archives (Boston), Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University, Newberry Library (Chicago), Philips Library of the Peabody-Essex Museum (Salem), Edouard A. Stackpole Library and Research Center of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Nantucket Superior Court, Rhode Island State Archives (Providence), and especially Princeton's Firestone Library. I extend warmest appreciation to the good people of the Dukes County Registry of Deeds, led by Jean Powers, and the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society, particularly Jill Bouck, who gave me more liberty to explore their rich collections than I had any right to expect. I will always warmly recall my time in their company. Thanks are also due to Michael Fickes, Holly Mitchell, Ann Marie Plane, and Daniel Mandell, who called my attention to manuscript collections and provided me with copies of items that I otherwise might have missed, and to Ives Goddard, who translated two Wampanoag language documents that I found in the archives. At a later stage of writing, genealogist Andrew Pierce's

detailed memory saved me from a number of errors and steered me toward sources I had overlooked. Students of New England history will benefit handsomely from his painstakingly researched, co-authored genealogical study of the Vineyard Wampanoags. I only wish I had access to it from the start.

The input of scholarly audiences, colleagues, and friends has made this a better book. I presented draft chapters and related works-in-progress before the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, the annual meeting of the American Society of Ethnohistory, the 31st Algonquian Conference, the McNeil Center for Early American Studies, an Annual Meeting and Colloquium of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, the New England Seminar at the American Antiquarian Society, and history department brown bags at Wayne State University and the George Washington University. Good citizens Barry O'Connell, Nancy Shoemaker, Len Travers, Pat Cohen, John Hench, and Caroline Sloat charted a clear path to revision by reading an early version of the manuscript and then trenchantly, but kindly, explaining what hard choices I had to make. Neal Salisbury and Fred Hoxie prodded me to extend my reach in later drafts and showed the way how. Daniel K. Richter gave an essay version of Chapter 5 his expert editorial critique, while Virginia Anderson, Christopher Grasso, Jenny Hale Pulsipher, Alden T. Vaughan, and Douglas Watson helped me fine-tune articles containing this book's theses. My thanks to *Explorations in Early American Culture* (now *Early American Studies*), *New England Quarterly*, and *William and Mary Quarterly* for permission to reprint portions of those articles that have appeared in their pages. Hans Hummer, Andrew Isenberg, Chris Johnson, Marc Kruman, Kenneth Mills, Jon Parmenter, Elizabeth Lewis Pardoe, Stanley Shapiro, Sandra Van Burkleo, and my perpetual partners in crime, Denver Brunzman and Jarbel Rodriguez, have also provided me with friendly, constructive criticism (some of which I have even accepted). Needless to say, I take all responsibility for errors of fact and interpretation.

The most penetrating exchanges have come in discussions with several members of the Wampanoag Tribe of Aquinnah, among them, Ryan Malonson, Helen Manning, June Manning, William Derwood Vanderhoop, Gladys Widdiss, Beverly Wright, and time and time again, Tobias Vanderhoop. My Wampanoag colleagues have taught me valuable lessons about how people's actual lives are influenced by family, community, cultural norms, historical and racial consciousness, and the universal challenge of making ends meet. They have also exposed the assumptions I brought to my research, raised numerous questions that would never have occurred to me, and reminded me that scholars of the Indian past carry an extra obligation to be sensitive in their writing and thorough in their research. I am grateful to the individuals listed above, as well as to others whom I might have forgotten, for taking the time to speak with me. I also appreciate Nan Doty for helping to arrange our meetings and for countless other contributions along the way.

My family has been a rock of support during the construction of this book. My parents, Richard and Julia Silverman, secured me a place to stay on Martha's Vineyard while I rummaged through the archives, and then kept me on track till completion by babysitting and hinting that even academics should have deadlines. My children, Aquinnah and Bela, just by being here, have taught me more than any work of history about the sacrifices people will make for the younger generations – If there is a humanistic tone to this book, I owe it to them.

Above all, I thank my wife, Linda. She has lived with this project since its inception, and even suggested an early version of the topic. As I've lugged book boxes and furniture during our several moves, I've often teased her that among Indians, women were responsible for carrying nearly all of the family's goods and children during their people's seasonal migrations, while the men went relatively unencumbered. Nevertheless, she has certainly shouldered her own burdens because of this study. She has never been anything but encouraging throughout my seemingly endless research trips and compulsive bouts of writing and rewriting, even though she has been overloaded with her own responsibilities of work, graduate school, and, now, motherhood. She has read every line of this book, often several times, and kept me ever mindful that I should be writing for an audience of educated nonhistorians. Her strength during the trying times has been a constant reminder to not lose sight of what drew me to historical scholarship in the first place – pursuit of the quiet drama of everyday lives. I will never be able to thank her enough for her loving devotion to me and our children. But as one small gesture of my enduring gratitude, admiration, and affection I dedicate this work to her.

Montgomery Village, Maryland

D.J.S.

March 2004

Introduction

Epenow's Lessons

Epenow's pulse must have quickened when he caught the first scent of pine forest drifting eastward from a land still out of view but foremost on his mind. Just days later the vessel carrying him from England approached the Maine shoreline and then plied southward past Massachusetts Bay into waters that crashed against the sand dune frame of his Wampanoag people's territory. The power of the moment would have unleashed pent up heartache and fury in a weaker man, but mastering his emotions had brought Epenow this far and he was not about to abandon the course. Patiently, he endured the long last stage of his journey around Cape Cod and the treacherous Nantucket shoals, and finally toward the island of Noepe, his home. It had been three years since a fateful day in 1611 when Captain Edward Harlow abducted Epenow from the New England coast and carried him across the ocean into an adventure bordering on the surreal. Once in London, Epenow's captors shuttled him from place to place exhibiting him as "a wonder" before gawking crowds, a humiliation suffered by dozens and perhaps hundreds of other kidnapped Indians during the previous century.¹ For Epenow, however, the city was on show with its throngs of people and livestock jamming the streets, the abject poor begging at the heels of their ornately clad "betters," and a whirling commerce in goods from nearly every corner of the globe, all in the shadow of mighty architecture sponsored by England's church and state. The spectacle of wealth and poverty, power and population, was unlike anything Epenow had ever known in the Wampanoags' village world. Yet there was hardly enough

¹ Alden T. Vaughan, "Sir Walter Raleigh's Indian Interpreters, 1584–1618," *WMQ* 59 (2002), 341–76; Harald E. L. Prins, "To the Land of the Mistigoches: American Indians Traveling to Europe in the Age of Exploration," *AICRJ* 17 (1993), 175–95; Olive P. Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), 203–32; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Indians Abroad, 1493–1938* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943).

time to get his bearings, for when audiences tired of gazing at a bona fide “savage,” he was transferred some 200 miles westward to the port town of Plymouth and the custody of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, a prime mover in England’s first colonization efforts and a collector of informative Indians.²

However disoriented Epenow might have become during the unfolding of these events, eventually he regained his footing and transformed himself from a puppet to puppet master. Somehow he gained a rudimentary command of the English language, perhaps enough to free his words from the strained translations and editorial comments of another captive Indian, a Wabenaki from Maine named Assacomoit, and certainly enough to learn something of his captors’ strange behavior. The Englishmen’s greatest motivation turned out to be so foreign yet simple that one imagines Epenow shaking his head and laughing in disbelief when he uncovered it. One also can picture the smile crossing Gorges’ face as Epenow began to spin tall tales about Noepe’s gold mines and offered to lead an expedition to them. The Wampanoag’s stories attracted enough investors to outfit a 1614 voyage under the command of Nicholas Hobson. In a change of fortune nearly as incredible as his captivity, Epenow was heading home.³

Onboard, both the crew and their Indian passenger were excited by the promise of future rewards, but nervous that either party could destroy the other’s plans. Consequently, when the ship anchored off Noepe, which the English called Martha’s Vineyard, Hobson placed Epenow under close watch and clothed him in long garments, “fitly to be laid hold on, if occasion should require.” Wampanoags canoeing out to investigate were equally suspicious, since violence had marred all their recent encounters with Europeans. Yet the astonishing reappearance of Epenow eased their caution and drew them to shipside. Reveling in the sound of his mother tongue, Epenow told his people to come back in the morning to trade, or so Hobson thought. Accordingly, the next day a flotilla of canoes approached the craft, and once they were within bowshot, Epenow threw off his guards, leapt into the water, and swam to safety while his tribesmen pinned down the sailors with a barrage of arrows. “[The Indians] carried him away in despite [despite] of all the Musquetteers aboard,”

² Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675*, 3d ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 1–10; David B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 412–13; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (New York: Oxford, 1982), 95.

³ Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Complete Works of Captain John Smith (1580–1631), in Three Volumes* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1986), 1:433, 2:403; James Phinney Baxter, ed., *Sir Ferdinando Gorges and His Province of Maine*, 3 vols. (Boston: The Prince Society, 1890), 1:209–11, 2:21–23. Prins, “To the Land of the Mistigoches,” 185–6, tells the fascinating story of the Wabenaki captive, Assacomoit.

a stunned Gorges was told.⁴ The English had sailed to Martha's Vineyard blinded by the prospective shine of gold. Instead, "they lost [Epenow]; and not knowing what to do, returned againe to England with nothing."⁵

Epenow exhibited his flair for dramatic reappearance again in 1619. That year Captain Thomas Dermer coasted southern New England at the request of a passenger named Squanto, another Wampanoag who had fallen into Gorges' possession after Thomas Hunt snatched him and twenty-six other Natives from the mainland in 1614.⁶ While mooring at Martha's Vineyard, the crew was shocked to be greeted by none other than Epenow, who in "indifferent good English" recounted his earlier captivity with Gorges, Dermer's very sponsor, "laughed at his own escape, and reported the story of it." To the sailors' relief, he offered no sign of lingering hostility, but rather played the gracious host and even encouraged Dermer to return to the island on his way back north from Virginia, the captain's destination. Like Gorges chasing gold, Dermer took the bait, unaware that Wampanoags yearned for revenge against his nation for the repeated crimes of men like Harlow and Hunt.⁷ The captain stopped again at the Vineyard and "going ashore amongst the Indians to trade, as he used to do, was betrayed and assaulted by them, and all his men slain, but one that kept the boat."⁸ Gorges believed, "a war has now begun between the inhabitants of those parts and us."⁹

⁴ Baxter, ed., *Sir Ferdinando Gorges*, 2:25.

⁵ Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 2:403. For another full account of Epenow's story, see Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytas Posthumus, or, Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and Others*, 20 vols. (Glasgow, 1907), 19:272–5.

⁶ Neal Salisbury, "Squanto: Last of the Patuxets," in David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash, eds., *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 228–46.

⁷ Accounts of these clashes are found in Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements*, 385–416; James Axtell, "At the Water's Edge: Trading in the Sixteenth Century," in his *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 144–81; Axtell, "The Exploration of Norumbega: Native Perspectives," in his *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 75–96; Prins, "To the Land of the Mistigoches"; and David J. Silverman, "Conditions for Coexistence, Climates for Collapse: The Challenges of Indian Life on Martha's Vineyard, 1524–1871" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2000), 10–11, 17–22.

⁸ Dermer's story can be traced in George Parker Winship, ed., *Sailor's Narratives of Voyages along the New England Coast, 1524–1624* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1905), 251–7 ("indifferent good English" at 255); Barbour, ed., *Complete Works of Captain John Smith*, 2:441; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 82–3 ("going ashore . . ."); Baxter, ed., *Sir Ferdinando Gorges*, 2:29 ("laughed . . ."). Gorges' account of these events should be read with care because he wrote it forty years after the fact and seems to have suffered from a clouded memory about certain details. See Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 265–6, n. 15.

⁹ Quoted in Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 16. See also Dwight B. Heath, ed., *Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth* (1622; Bedford, Mass.: Applewood Books, 1963), 52; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 83; Purchas, *Hakluytas Posthumus*, 19:279.



FIGURE 1. The Wampanoags' Early Contacts with Europeans. The Wampanoags had steady contact with European explorers during the early seventeenth century. Usually they met in the context of trade, as depicted in Theodore de Bry's drawing of Bartholomew Gosnold's 1602 visit to Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands. However, almost invariably these sessions degenerated into violence, as in a drawing of Samuel de Champlain's 1606 clash with Wampanoags at Monomoy on Cape Cod, and involved Europeans carrying Indians away into captivity. This pattern led the Vineyard Wampanoags to avoid English colonists until the 1640s, twenty years after the founding of Plymouth colony.

Island Wampanoags retained their belligerent reputation for years to come. In 1622, they were implicated in a regional Indian conspiracy to cut off the young Plymouth colony, and even after they signed a treaty of friendship, the settlers still considered them "mortal enemies to all other English."¹⁰

¹⁰ Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 82–8; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1975), 186–7; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 129; John Pory to the Earl of Southampton, January 13, 1622/23, in James, ed., *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth* (quote). See also John H. Humins, "Squanto and Massasoit: A Struggle for Power," *NEQ* 60 (1987), 54–70.

FIGURE 1 (*continued*)

Emmanuel Altham wrote in 1623 that since Dermer's murder at the Vineyard, "no English hath been there," although he intended to try "well armed."¹¹ When Thomas Lechford returned to England in 1641 after three years in Boston, he remembered "an Island called Martins Vineyard, uninhabited by any English, but Indians, which are very savage."¹² Lechford's contemporary, John Josselyn, heard that Vineyard Wampanoags once "seized upon a boat that put into a By-Cove, kill'd the men and eat them in a short time before they were discovered."¹³ Fact or fiction, the point was clear: Englishmen were not welcome on Epenow's island.

Yet the early 1640s called for a new strategy. Epenow had disappeared from the historical stage, and although he left little record of his political career, undoubtedly his people's hostile isolationism had been influenced by him. But the island's saltwater moat struggled to contain the forces raging outside. Between 1616 and 1618 and then again in 1633, European epidemics tore into New England, dropping the Native population along the mainland coast and the Connecticut River Valley by some seventy-five percent or

¹¹ Emmanuel Altham to Sir Edward Altham (1623), in James, ed., *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth*, 27.

¹² Thomas Lechford, *Plain Dealing, or Newes from New-England* (London, 1642), MHSC 3d ser., 3 (1833), 100.

¹³ John Josselyn, "The Second Voyage," in Paul J. Lindholdt, ed., *John Josselyn, Colonial Traveler: A Critical Edition of "Two Voyages to New-England"* (1674; Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 91.

more, but apparently sparing the Vineyard.¹⁴ Meanwhile, English numbers grew exponentially from a few hundred settlers in 1629 to over 15,000 a decade later, driven by streams of immigration to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.¹⁵ If these trends were not enough to shift the balance of power to the English, the Pequot War of 1636–1637 certainly was. Even Indians hardened to forest warfare were shocked by the colonists' torching of a Pequot village and slaughter of hundreds of innocents who tried to escape the flames. Captain John Mason's order to his troops, "we must burn them," reverberated throughout Indian country.¹⁶

As colonist William Hubbard wrote, the Pequot War "struck such a terror into all the Indians in those parts (some of whom had been ill affected to the English before) that they sought our friendship and rendered themselves to be under our protection."¹⁷ Wampanoag sachems on Cape Cod who had

¹⁴ On the first outbreak, see Timothy Bratton, "The Identity of the New England Indian Epidemic of 1616–1619," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988), 351–83; S. F. Cook, "The Significance of Disease in the Extinction of the New England Indians," *Human Biology* 45 (1973), 485–508; Dean Snow and Kim M. Lanphear, "European Contact and Indian Depopulation in the Northeast: The Timing of the First Epidemics," *Ethnohistory* 35 (1988), 15–33; Catherine C. Carlson, George L. Armelagos, and Ann Magennis, "Impact of Disease on the Precontact and Early Historic Populations of New England and the Maritimes," in John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker, eds., *Disease and Demography in the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 141–52; and Brenda J. Baker, "Pilgrim's Progress and Praying Indians: The Biocultural Consequences of Contact in Southern New England," in Clark Spencer Larsen and George R. Milner, eds., *In the Wake of Contact: Biological Responses to Conquest* (New York: Wiley-Liss, Inc., 1994), 35–44. On the second, see John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, eds. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 101, 105–6, 108–10; Edward Johnson, *Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence, 1628–1651*, J. Franklin Jameson ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 79–80; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 190–92; and William A. Starna, "The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," in Hauptman and Wherry, eds., *The Pequots in Southern New England*, 46.

¹⁵ Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England's Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁶ The authoritative account of these events is Arthur A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). See also Vaughan, "Pequots and Puritans: The Causes of the War of 1637," in his *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 277–321; and the recent debate over the English massacre of Pequots: Ronald Dale Karr, "'Why Should You Be So Furious?': The Violence of the Pequot War," *JAH* 85 (1998), 876–909; Adam J. Hirsch, "The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England," *JAH* 47 (1988), 1187–212; Steven T. Katz, "The Pequot War Reconsidered," *NEQ* 64 (1991), 206–24; Michael Freeman, "Puritans and Pequots: The Question of Genocide," *NEQ* 68 (1995), 278; Katz, "Pequots and the Question of Genocide: A Reply to Michael Freeman," *NEQ* 68 (1995), 641–9.

¹⁷ William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England, From the first Planting thereof in the Year 1607 to the Year 1677* (1677; Boston, 1775), 39. See also John Strong, *The Algonquian Peoples of Long Island from Earliest Times to 1700* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Empire State Books, 1997), 156–8.

previously rebuffed the English suddenly began to welcome them as neighbors, leading to the establishment of the towns of Sandwich (settled by the English in 1638), Yarmouth (1638), and Barnstable (1639).¹⁸ As the colonists' newfound allies, these Indians could breathe easy even when Boston threatened in August of 1642 to "strike some terrour into the Indians" because of a rumor that "the Indians all over the country had combined themselves to cut off all the English."¹⁹ But island Wampanoags shuddered at these words, since the English had long suspected them. They needed to make a peaceful gesture and fast. Just then, within months, if not weeks, of Boston's warning, a proverbial *deus ex machina* appeared in the form of a colonist named Thomas Mayhew, who had recently bought the previously worthless English title to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, and now wanted "to obtain the Indian right."²⁰ Tawanquatuck, sachem of the east-end territory, Nunnepog, took this opportunity to distance his people from the supposed conspiracy and sold Mayhew land for a settlement, believing that this concession was the price of peace.

Tawanquatuck's people were so opposed to this bargain that he was forced to divide his jurisdiction and grant the dissidents independence. However, even the Wampanoags' long and troubled history with the English could not have prepared them for the vast tumult about to enter their lives – epidemic diseases, a new religion, land loss, and political upheaval, followed by debt peonage, exogamous marriage, racial castigation, and much more. Mayhew's colonists were quite unlike the roughneck crews that the Wampanoags had confronted during Epenow's time, but they came with an agenda far more threatening, if also more subtle: they were not interested in seizing the Indians, but they did intend to subjugate them to English authority and religion; they had no plans to force the Indians into slavery, but they did want them as servants; they would not ship the Indians to distant lands, but they did encroach upon the Natives' very lands. And what was more, the colonists intended to stay, not to strike quick and sail off. Remarkably, the two parties never came to blows, but English good fortune was bought at the Wampanoags' expense, leading to the gradual disintegration of several Native communities over the course of two centuries and more.

Yet not all of them, and this book aims to explain why. Recent scholarship contends that during the opening years of colonization, and on the edges of empire where the fur trade thrived and Europeans were scarce, Natives

¹⁸ Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 245, 252, 299; Frederick Freeman, *The History of Cape Cod: The Annals of Barnstable County and Its Several towns, Including the District of Mashpee*, 2 vols. (1858; Yarmouth Port, Mass: Parnassus Imprints, 1965), 1:chap. 8; H. Roger King, *Cape Cod and Plymouth Colony* (Landham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), 44–5, 53.

¹⁹ Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 157; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 260–1 (quote).

²⁰ Charles Edward Banks, *The History of Martha's Vineyard, Dukes County, Massachusetts*, 3 vols. (Boston: George H. Dean, 1911), 1:84.

and newcomers were linked by economic interdependence, growing political ties, and in some cases, earnest missionary activity, producing exchanges of material culture, ritual behavior, and, to a lesser extent, even beliefs.²¹ This was the case even in New England, long held to be a bastion of uncompromising colonial expansion, between the Pequot War of 1636–1637 and King Philip's War of 1675–1676. This interpretive emphasis on cooperation and negotiation, rather than just on exploitation and brutality, brilliantly modifies the long-standing view of an unbridgeable cultural gap between peoples that automatically degenerated into bloodshed. Nevertheless, in one case study after another, Indian–European communion implodes, often in a murderous orgy, usually within decades of inception – a track record that is especially grim for English regions. In this sense, the new scholarship has reinforced the narrative of inevitable warfare and Indian dispossession even though it has successfully complicated and delayed its trajectory. The history of Martha's Vineyard, where the two peoples managed to live in close proximity for hundreds of years without slaughtering one another, demands explanation in this context.

Along similar lines, current scholarship offers few positive assessments of Indian attempts to use Christianity to negotiate colonial systems over the long term. Historians of New England agree that Indians who gathered into the region's "praying towns," or Christian reserves, during the

²¹ On New England, see Salisbury, "Social Relationships on a Moving Frontier: Natives and Settlers in Southern New England, 1638–1675," *MNE* 33 (1987), 89–98; Robert James Naeher, "Dialogue in the Wilderness: John Eliot and the Indians' Exploration of Puritanism as a Source of Meaning, Comfort, and Ethnic Survival," *NEQ* 62 (1989), 346–68; Harold W. Van Lonkhuysen, "A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646–1730," *NEQ* 63 (1990), 396–428; Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); James D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675–1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

Among many works on other colonial regions, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992); Axtell, *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Peter C. Mancall, *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700–1800* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Colin G. Calloway, *Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika Teute, eds., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1998); Jane T. Merriitt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2003).