

**American History in Depth**

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**Colonial America  
From Jamestown to Yorktown**

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## 5 New England

Previously, they were contracted with the Virginia Company, but the problems of settling in the Virginia area where the Anglican Church was established was exactly what they wanted to avoid. Between 1618 and 1620, negotiations began with a group of London merchants lead by Thomas Weston which resulted in setting up a joint stock company. The agreement was that the Pilgrims would settle the area of the patent for seven years, at the end of which the profits would be shared between the two groups. The administration of the fledgling colony was left to emigrants to decide, which they did on route across the Atlantic. Forty-one of the male passengers drew up an agreement, what was to become the Mayflower Compact, in which laws were to be established for the 'general good of the colony.' The intent of the document was to preserve the Godliness of the separatists by setting up a church based upon the principle that God made a covenant with man to provide a way to salvation. From this precedent stemmed the political structure of the colony. They were determined to avoid any of the corruptions that had entered their lives in England and Leiden. Although two ships had started out on the voyage, the *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell*, the latter experienced problems in its first port of call, at Plymouth, England, leaving the *Mayflower* to sail across alone with 101 passengers.

In November 1620 they arrived in the New World and set up the Plymouth colony. They were lucky in that European diseases had decimated the local Indian population. In their view it was not luck, but God who had 'thinned the land' for them. Unfortunately, in their zeal to become self-sufficient by farming the land, they quickly realised that the land was rocky and lacking the depth of soil for extensive planting. After the first year, the investors in England became disillusioned and began to sell their shares. Although the colonists were allowed to extend their shareholding in the venture, their poor financial standing inhibited it. Only when a new settlement established itself up the coast in the 1630s was the Pilgrims' situation improved by the increased sales of livestock and grain.

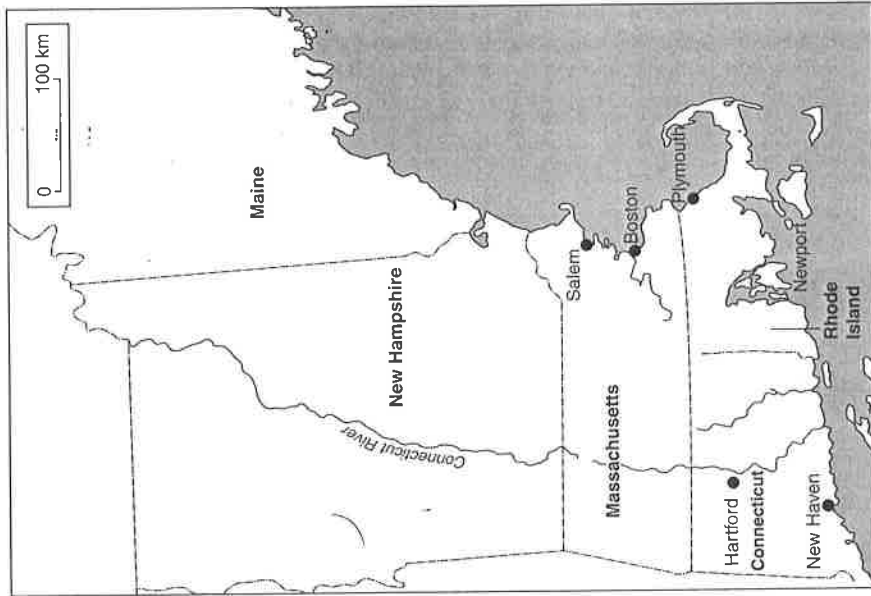
### MASSACHUSETTS

The Plymouth colony was soon eclipsed and ultimately absorbed by the more dynamic one based in the Massachusetts Bay area. Where Plymouth's population reached at most 7500, some 13,000

After Captain John Smith left Virginia, albeit under a cloud, he explored the northeastern coast of North America looking for a location for a fishing and trading venture. He found such a place on the rocky coast of New England and returned to England to persuade the investors in the Plymouth Company that a business venture there was possible. Having been stung once before in the failure of the Sagadahoc investment, the company proposed to limit the enterprise to 40 eminent persons. Of those, Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore was one and Sir Ferdinando Gorges was another. While Baltimore eventually interested himself in the Chesapeake, Gorges took the lead in the organisation of the Plymouth venture. The venture was to be set up along the lines of Virginia under Sir Edwin Sandys in 1618. Once the area was under patent, the company would grant patents to groups who would in turn settle the area. The profits would then come to the company through quitrents and payments on the development of the colony's natural resources.

### PLYMOUTH

One of the first groups to apply was an English dissenting sect who resided in Holland. They had left their homeland after believing that the established Church was beyond redemption and themselves ostracised from society for their separatist activities. They left their homes in Yorkshire to live in Leiden, but the worldliness of the place was affecting their young. Also, the 12-year truce between Holland and Spain was due to expire and it was feared that the Spanish would once again threaten the people with the Inquisition. Their disillusionment and concern for their own safety led them to look across the Atlantic. The Dutch had already sent an expedition to the Hudson Bay area, but the Separatists wanted to create their own society.



Map 2 New England

settlers moved to the Bay in the 'great migration' of the 1630s. The Massachusetts Bay Company was dominated by Puritans within the Anglican Church who found little satisfaction to their demands for a purer church. Trends in Europe did not look promising for Protestants in general, whose faith seemed to be threatened by the Catholic Counter-Reformation, while in England the rise of Arminianism posed a local threat to them. These Puritans, rather than cutting themselves off from the Church of England as did the Separatists at Plymouth, decided to make their new society an example for the

world to follow, and hoped that the established Church would reform itself. In their view, toleration was not the answer, but conformity to one way, their way. The colony's origins stemmed from earlier attempts by a group of merchants who were also interested in the fishing grounds of the north. Their initial project, however, failed. One of the settlers, Reverend John White, moved to the area of Salem, known at the time as Naumkeag, where he was able to interest others in England with similar religious leanings. Ultimately, a patent was secured from the Crown in 1629 establishing the Massachusetts Bay Company. Most of the adventurers came from the vicinity of London and East Anglia.

One individual who was acutely aware of the climate in England was John Winthrop. A Justice of the Peace and member of a gentry family, Winthrop shared the view of many of his class that the established Church was headed in the wrong direction. He objected to the increasingly ornate rituals associated with its services. His views were proving detrimental to his own career when he was deprived of an attorneyship in the Court of Wards and Liveries. The combination of financial necessity and spiritual zeal probably decided Winthrop to take his family across to America. For him, the Massachusetts Bay Company was not just a trading venture. For the likes of White and Winthrop, keeping the corruption of the Church from their doors was paramount. The Puritan element which invested in the venture was able to buy out any who were not of the same religious leaning.

Luckily, the charter did not specify any requirement for keeping the company headquarters at home in England. Winthrop was instrumental in the decision to set it up in Massachusetts Bay and use the charter as the constitution of the new colony. The governor and general court of the company were transformed into the governor and legislature of Massachusetts, and the freemen who voted for them as investors became the voters for the lower house.

In March 1630, seven ships with some 700 passengers set off with Winthrop, elected as the colony's first governor, on board the *Arabella*. The Puritans had taken note of problems of previous settlements and had prepared themselves well by making sure they had enough supplies and foodstuff to make a successful start. In June, the group first set down in the area of Salem where there had been an earlier settlement, but the majority of the passengers decided to continue further down the coast. They eventually chose an area set on a peninsula situated near the Charles River. The settlement was

named Boston after the home in Lincolnshire of some of the emigrants. Settlements spread out organised in congregations. Land was distributed through the council set up in Boston. Winthrop had made it clear in a celebrated lay sermon he gave to the passengers on the *Arabella* that there was to be no levelling of social distinctions in the Bay colony. A hierarchy was established where divisions of land were parcelled out according to rank. Gentlemen were given 200 acres while others were granted anywhere from 30 to 100 acres. Within the next decade, the number of towns expanded to over 20. The colonists' practical approach toward trade made their settlement self-sufficient and financially viable. Concentrating on lumber and fish and grain, they exported to the West Indies and southern Europe. Winthrop's sermon had held out the vision of Boston becoming a 'city upon a hill', a Puritan beacon to the world. But its burgeoning prosperity was soon to pose a challenge to that ideal.

The Puritans were determined that their city on a hill was to exemplify the work of God. They believed that God had made a covenant with men through which they could be saved. The first such covenant or contract had been with Adam, whereby in return for obedience to God's will he was to have eternal life. But this covenant of works had been broken by Adam and Eve. This was because of man's nature. Following the Fall, and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, nothing men did in their lives could merit salvation. Left to their own devices they were literally beyond redemption. Only the unmerited gift of grace could save. God had therefore made another contract with them, the covenant of faith. Justification could only be based on faith, not on works. Faith that His grace alone could ensure salvation was what He demanded of men now. Those who were recipients of His grace would experience 'saving faith'. Since good works were a concomitant of grace, those who experienced its gift would become 'visible saints'.

From this flowed the notion of a church covenant. The will of God was extended to the Puritan form of government. Only those persons who had received grace were fit to govern. The church tested its members for evidence of saving faith. Those 'visible saints' who demonstrated that they had received grace were alone admitted to communion, thereby becoming full members of the church who could vote in elections to the general court. Winthrop's sermon the 'Model of Christian Charity' made explicit that society was to be ruled by those marked out or selected by God to be their guides.

These 'high and eminent in power and dignity' were to be the 'visible saints' who would lead Massachusetts colony down the path of righteousness. Although the clergy did not hold secular office, their influence, especially in tests for church membership, was so great that political decisions, for the most part, were made after consultation with the divines. Church and state were intertwined. Laws were passed which required meeting houses to be built, preachers' salaries to be paid through taxation, and regular church attendance to be enforced. Blasphemers and divergent religious views were punished. There was no room for Quakers, Baptists, not to mention Roman Catholics. Consequently, many were banished and some were hanged.

The prime illustration of such intolerance occurred in the mid-1630s when Anne Hutchinson, the wife of a Boston merchant, questioned the authority of the church on the issue of salvation. She holds a central place in what has become known as the Antinomian controversy. Antinomianism is the belief that, since the covenant of works had been replaced by the covenant of faith, then the law is not binding on believers. The elect, those who have received God's grace and are thereby saved, can break all ten commandments with impunity. Anne was to be accused of this heresy when she herself attacked the ministers of the Bay colony for preaching that good works were not just a sign of salvation, but could contribute to it. This came about because the stark Calvinist doctrine that there was nothing the individual could do to be saved, since men are predestined to salvation or damnation before they are born, created doubts and anxiety in the laity. To alleviate these the preachers developed the notion that the heart could be prepared to receive grace. Though there was nothing men could do to merit it, if God extended it to them, it was like a seed which would germinate and thrive provided the ground were well tilled and fertilised. Hutchinson insisted that those who preached this, who in her view included all the clergy in the colony except one, John Cotton, were bringing in good works by the back door.

The ensuing controversy had political and social implications. Anne's belief that only the individual could tell whether or not he or she was saved was directly opposed to the ideas of the ministers, who played a key role in examinations of those who claimed to have saving faith. When she was asked how she knew this, her reply that it was due to direct personal revelation was included among the many errors of which she was found guilty. As a woman, she was also

accused of acting outside of her station in life. Anne had held meetings after church services to discuss the sermons, and this was viewed with suspicion by the authorities. Moreover, her ideas challenged the structure of beliefs and hence the authority invested to maintain that structure. Recent scholarship contends that Hutchinson was only the catalyst to a larger debate involving a political power struggle and a spiritual one. John Cotton, for instance, was a Puritan minister whose differences with the other ministers arose over the question of salvation. Did God reveal directly to the person his state of grace or could it be determined only through those that were already in a state of grace? In order to determine who was in a state of grace an examination took place, where the candidate had to declare that only God could save humanity. This was followed by convincing the examiners of true repentance, a desire to be saved, then justification. This last step was the most difficult because the candidate had to prove that the Holy Spirit had entered them making them ready for God's grace. If the candidate was successful, sanctification would follow which meant that they were one of the visible saints or elect.

The controversy became a major political issue when Anne's cause was taken up by Henry Vane, son of a leading politician in England, who arrived in Massachusetts at this time. Vane challenged the authority of John Winthrop. Winthrop, who also fancied himself as a theologian, had the flaws of one who is convinced that he knows what is best for the community. Any decisions taken to that end were justified. Winthrop tried to ensure that his decisions and those who supported him would prevail by getting a mandate to do so. At the second general meeting in October 1630, it was decided that, though the charter stipulated that freemen had the right to elect the assistants, only the assistants would elect the governor and deputy governor. Also, laws would be promulgated by the governor and assistants, and key officers were to be chosen only by them. Subsequently, Winthrop and his magistrates controlled the government in an arbitrary manner for they did not call a meeting of the general court for a year and a half. The mandate stood on shaky ground because not all communities had equal representation, and the wording of the charter was at odds with Winthrop's claim that the passing of laws was within his remit. After some argument, Winthrop agreed to two representatives from every congregation, while the freemen's right to elect the governor and deputy governor was re-established. The greatest embarrassment for Winthrop, however, came at the annual meeting

of the general court in the spring of 1634 when some members of the council, Thomas Dudley, Israel Stoughton, and Roger Ludlow, demanded to see the charter, which revealed the right of the general court to make laws. Winthrop's credibility was so tarnished that he was defeated by John Haynes at the next election in 1635. The following year, he tried to get re-elected but was again defeated, this time by the newcomer from England, Henry Vane.

Hutchinson therefore had the powerful support of the new governor as well as that of John Cotton, one of the leading ministers in the colony. Unfortunately for her, Vane left for England and Winthrop was re-elected. With his new election, Hutchinson lost support. Even Cotton deserted her. Winthrop was able to bring the full force of the law on her and banished her from the colony. Anne and her family went to Rhode Island where she was killed by Indians in the growing conflicts between them and the settlers. Winthrop ascribed her fate to a punishment by divine providence.

From the beginning of the settlement, the relationship between the New England settlers and the Indians was guarded. They knew from the Virginia experience that circumstances are often not what they appear. Negotiations with Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag nation resulted in a treaty in 1621. This proved to be beneficial for both sides. Massasoit obtained an ally in his nation's contest with the rival tribes of the Narragansett and Massachusetts peoples. For the settlers, the treaty meant some security and an outlet for trade. Because of the cordial and at times helpful relationship with the natives, the Pilgrims learned to plant native food, such as squash and corn, thereby enabling them to lay up enough store for the winter. About half of them had survived the first winter by the discovery of stores of food abandoned by Indians. In the spring a friendly native, Sancho, showed them how to cultivate land which his fellow natives had cleared beforehand. The harvesting of this crop in 1621, which they shared with local Indians, was the basis for the celebration of Thanksgiving Day. Nevertheless, because they had allied themselves with one group of Indians, they became involved in the conflict with others and they never felt at ease with the Wampanoags. By the time the Puritans arrived, there was a fragile coexistence between the various natives and settlers. The murders of two white traders in the years between 1634 and 1636 and subsequent vicious attack on the Pequots significantly brought the other Indians into line under the English. The tables were now turned. No longer did the Indian

nations control the terms of the relationship, now the English dictated the conditions upon which the natives could go to war with others. The reason for this turn about was the fact that the numbers of settlers, along with their defensive measures, outnumbered the Indians. The Pequot War, as it became known, served the purpose of uniting the colonies from Massachusetts, Plymouth and Connecticut into a Confederation of the United Colonies of New England. Although these colonies had religious differences, they shared the common necessity of survival.

As Massachusetts became more secure in its establishment, there were attempts to educate the native population. This pressure emanated from England, where advocates of colonisation always promoted the effort to 'civilise' the savages through educating them. After all, the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company depicted an Indian and bore the legend, 'come over and help us'. The Puritans were somewhat lax in this mission, partly due to their tenuous beginnings. By 1646, however, the Indians had been subdued and thoughts turned toward their education. The Reverend John Eliot established a mission where the Pequots and Massachusetts peoples were organised into 14 'praying towns'. The mission was somewhat of a success because by 1660, the main congregation of Natick was admitted to the main church at Roxbury.

The decade of the 1640s proved dangerous for the colony, not just internally with the Indian problems, but with an external threat from attempts to revoke the Massachusetts charter. An earlier attempt had not unduly alarmed the colonists. In 1634 the Privy Council had created a committee to look into the colony's affairs. Because the charter was not being held in England, the Council of New England, which was responsible for the charter, was disbanded. Forthwith, the King ordered a *quo warranto*, questioning by what authority the Massachusetts Bay Company claimed jurisdiction over the colony. He appointed Gorges as governor, but Gorges declined on account of age. Therefore, the *quo warranto* was never taken over to the colony. Also, the King's attention was on the troubles at home, so the colony's charter remained safe for the moment.

A more serious attack upon the charter came from a Presbyterian minister in 1646. Dr Robert Child visited Massachusetts in 1641 and discovered that the colony's laws did not conform to England's laws. He also charged that his rights as an Englishman were infringed there. Child noted that the Puritan Church, which after all claimed

to be part of the established Church, did not conform to church regulations. Most of the colonists could not share in the sacrament and children were not allowed to be baptised. It was true that the colony had yet to devise a code of law and this accounted for the arbitrary behaviour of Governor Winthrop. The only thing they had was a quasi-legal code based upon religious tenets written in 1636 by John Cotton. It was later revised in 1639 and finally issued as the 'Body of Liberties' in 1641. With the new and more substantial attack on Massachusetts, a second edition was published based upon legal precedents set out in volumes imported from England. For the first time, Massachusetts law defined the political framework and the liberties of the individual. The result was that the new constitutional polity, as laid out in the *Book of General Lawes and Liberties* of the colony was making inroads into its theocratic stronghold. Recognising the significance of this new direction, the ministers drew up the Cambridge Platform in 1648, which essentially warned the secular authorities, and Presbyterians in particular, not to meddle in the religious welfare of the colony. Although the secular and spiritual lines were now clearly drawn, the Cambridge Platform made no concessions with regard to church membership. However, with the growing population and not enough freemen, the 1648 code did provide for lesser offices such as constables, jurors and highway surveyors to be filled without the requirement of church membership.

The decline in the number of church members alarmed the ministers, who convened a synod in 1662 to consider it. Previously only full church members could have their children baptised. The second generation of settlers, however, were marrying and having families, but could not get their offspring christened without becoming communicants in their parish churches, even if they were themselves the sons and daughters of visible saints. That they were not seeking full membership has been attributed to a declension in mid-century Massachusetts. Certainly ministers castigated them for not living up to the high standards of their parents. But it could be that despair at not being worthy rather than indifference accounted for their attitude. Whatever the reason, the synod decided that there was a real problem, which it solved by proposing what became known as the 'half-way covenant'. The adult children of full members were to be allowed to have their offspring baptised without becoming visible saints. They could not, however, take communion or vote. This proposal was not endorsed immediately by most of the churches to whom it

was conveyed by the synod for approval. Gradually, however, it was generally adopted.

Following the restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660, many Dissenters left for New England. Massachusetts experienced an influx of Baptists, Presbyterians and Quakers. The initial reaction of the Puritans was hostile. Four Quakers were hanged in Boston between 1659 and 1661. Pressure from England, not least from the King, was brought to bear upon the Bay colony to relax its intolerant laws. Although the colony's laws prohibited the establishing of public worship for these divergent groups without express approval, they were allowed to hold private meetings.

#### RHODE ISLAND

Dissenters, especially Quakers, were more welcome in Rhode Island. The colony had been established as a result of the banishment of Roger Williams, one time Plymouth colony separatist, from the Massachusetts colony. In 1633 he had objected to the extent to which the general court exercised its powers in spiritual matters. His advocacy for the separation of church and state and disavowing any connection with the established Church of England, was tantamount to challenging the authority of the colony's government. His radicalism extended to physical acts such as tearing the English flag because it smacked of popish idolatry with the cross of St George emblazoned upon it. In 1635 the Puritan authorities' response to this challenge was to banish him. Williams and his supporters left Boston and travelled south of Plymouth to negotiate a purchase of land. They settled in an area on the Blackstone River, named it Providence, and set up a government whereby the separation of the secular from the spiritual was put into affect. Other settlements were established within striking distance of Williams's colony. Anne Hutchinson, who was also banished, along with a friend of Williams's, William Coddington, established Portsmouth. Coddington went on to establish yet another town, Newport. The central premise of the governments was freedom of conscience. While they believed in the freedom of individual beliefs, they were not advocating salvation for all. They believed in predestination and that nothing could be done for those who were damned anyway. They also believed that in order to survive, 'a democracy or popular government' in which freemen had the right

to make laws and enact true religious toleration had to be put in place. One other town, Warwick, was established at this time by Samuel Gorton.

Williams recognised the necessity of getting a patent for his colony and went to England, where his friend the Earl of Warwick, influential in colonial affairs, supported his claim. Williams's view of toleration found favour in the current political climate. His pamphlet, 'The Bloody Tenent of Persecution', was an attack on orthodoxy such as the one exhibited by the Massachusetts Puritans. The idea that civil authority should be vested in the people and not from some divine authority was in keeping with the views of Parliament. In March 1644, he received his patent from Parliament which gave the colony corporate status. In 1663 the Crown reissued this as a royal charter.

#### CONNECTICUT

Connecticut was also established in this period. Although the area was explored both by the Dutch and English for exploitation of the fur trade, the migration by Thomas Hooker in 1636 began the permanent settlement of the colony. Hooker and his congregation moved there from Newton in reaction to the Antinomian controversy. Hooker objected to the arbitrary actions of the general court, though he was not in sympathy with either Hutchinson or Williams. He particularly disliked John Cotton, clashing with his view that only the regenerate could be admitted to communion. Hooker argued that it was not for the church to decide who was and was not elect, and that the sacraments should be available to all. He settled in Hartford. Later, Windsor and Wethersfield were established and a frame of government was drawn up with the Fundamental Orders accepted in 1639. Laws similar to those operating in Massachusetts were introduced. Connections with Massachusetts were continued when John Winthrop junior was elected as the colony's first governor.

New Haven, which was absorbed into Connecticut in 1665, started out as an independent colony. John Davenport, a Puritan minister, and Theophilus Eaton, a London merchant, went to Boston from England, arriving there when the Antinomian controversy was at its height. They were not impressed at the Bay colony's attempt to set up a city on a hill, and moved to Quinnipiac, an Indian inlet off Long Island Sound. Finding it unsuitable to use as a port, they moved



a few miles west to a better location they called New Haven. Unfortunately, they failed to get along with or to attract many settlers before becoming part of Connecticut.

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Another New England colony which initially failed to develop was New Hampshire. After acquiring land along the Merrimack and Piscataqua Rivers in 1622, Sir Ferdinando Gorges and John Mason sent out settlers to establish settlements there. These did not really take off until colonists from Massachusetts moved to them in the 1630s. Massachusetts then disputed the claim to the area, a dispute which was not finally resolved until 1679, when Charles II took it over as a Crown colony. This rounded off the establishment of colonies in New England, for Maine remained part of Massachusetts during the colonial period.

#### KING PHILIP'S WAR

By the 1670s, New England had acquired a distinct identity. Puritanism was only one aspect of it, albeit one which stamped its mark on the character of Connecticut and Massachusetts. A story told by Cotton Mather early in the eighteenth century recounted how a preacher went from Boston to Cape Cod, where he met with indifference to his preaching from people who told him they had gone there 'to catch fish'. Fishing, indeed, became a leading industry in a region where thin rocky soil and impenetrable forests made farming difficult. Although settlements spread quickly after the arrival of colonists from England, they expanded principally along the seacoast and up rivers rather than overland. Fish were consumed not just locally, but exchanged for goods from a surprisingly wide market, which included the Azores, the Canaries and Madeira. Above all, New England became closely tied to the West Indies once sugar began to be produced in Barbados and Jamaica. Fish, meat and wood were sold and molasses and sugar bought for use in the distillation of rum. Lucrative though the maritime economy was, however, most people in New England were employed in agriculture. Family farms dotted the coastal strip and the fertile lands of the river valleys.

Families, indeed, were the nuclei of society from the start. Unlike the Chesapeake, where young single men were initially attracted as indentured labourers, typical migrants to early Massachusetts were middle-aged married couples and their children. Again, where life expectancy in the early days of Virginia was low and people died like flies, in seventeenth-century New England the environment was so healthy that the settlers lived longer than those they left behind in Old England. This, coupled with the tendency to marry younger than the English did, made the average family bigger. Consequently the population grew rapidly not just from immigration, but naturally. Between 1640 and 1700 it expanded from 14,000 to 90,000. Between 1675 and 1676, however, the physical expansion of New England was halted in devastating attacks on over half its towns, 12 of which were destroyed, in what became known as King Philip's War.

Relations between the Wampanoag Indians and the English settlers had changed since their joint celebration of the harvest in 1621. When Massasoit, the Wampanoag chief who had joined in the first thanksgiving with the Pilgrims, died in 1662, he was succeeded by his eldest son Wamsutta. Wamsutta, known to the English as Alexander, distrusted the English who seemed intent on driving the Indians from New England. When he succeeded his father, there were about 40,000 whites and perhaps half that number of natives in the region, and the imbalance was becoming greater every year. Wamsutta's suspicions of the colonists brought him to the attention of the authorities at Plymouth, who summoned him there for questioning. While being interrogated, he fell ill and was allowed to go home, on condition he left two of his sons as hostages. Shortly after leaving Plymouth he died, which his people took to be sinister, some believing he had been poisoned by the English despite their denials.

Wamsutta was succeeded as leader of the Wampanoags by his younger brother Metacom, whom the colonists called King Philip. Metacom was even more hostile to the settlers than his brother. He objected not only to their geographical, but also to their cultural imperialism. For Puritans were so intent on imposing Christianity upon the natives that they tried to stop them hunting or fishing on the Sabbath and tried to get them to marry in church. Such attempts to impose Massachusetts laws upon the Indians eventually led to the incident that determined Metacom to resist. In 1675 three of his followers were hanged for the murder of an Indian who had been



converted to Christianity. This was the last straw, as Metacom protested against what he saw as an unwarranted extension of the jurisdiction of the colony over natives. For some years he had been constructing a coalition between the Wampanoags and other Indians, involving almost all the Algonquian-speaking peoples. They were now persuaded to strike to drive the English from the continent.

Hostilities commenced in June 1675 with raids on Dartmouth, Middleborough, Rehoboth, Swansea and Taunton, which were destroyed by fire. Over the summer some 52 towns, over half those in New England, were attacked. Panic swept through the colonies. Even Indians converted to Christianity were suspected of supporting Metacom. Those at Natick were removed to an island in Boston harbour where they spent two years in appalling conditions. Neutral Indians like the Narrangansetts of Rhode Island were attacked and in Cotton Mather's words 'terribly barbaikew'd'. The killing of 600 Narrangansetts, including women and children as well as men, forced them into alliance with the Wampanoags with whom they had previously been hostile. As winter set in, Metacom's drive against the English was contained and then reversed. The settlers found allies in other Indians, notably the Mohawks of New York. The retribution was severe. Some 3000 Narrangansett, Nipmuck and Wampanoag Indians were killed, while hundreds were shipped as slaves to the West Indies, including Metacom's wife and son who were captured in a raid on his camp in August 1676. He himself managed to escape, only to be shot a few days later by an Indian paid as a mercenary by the colonists. His head was severed from his body and put on public display in Plymouth for the next 20 years.

King Philip's War was over. It has been seen as the most devastating ever fought on American soil, including the Civil War, in terms of the numbers who died in proportion to the population. Some 600 colonists were killed, while 1200 of their houses were destroyed. Although Metacom did not succeed in his aim of driving them into the sea, it was not for another 30 years that they reoccupied all the areas of New England that they had settled before 1675.

#### WITCHCRAFT

The devastation was seen by Puritans as but one of many judgments of God on their endeavours. They had been weighed in the

balance and found wanting, having declined from the fervour and piety of their parents in the first generation of settlement. Their preachers harangued them constantly with jeremiads on this subject in these years. The impact of the Glorious Revolution on Massachusetts, when church members lost their privileged place in the colony's polity, seemed to fulfil their worst predictions (see below pp. 130-1). These crises affecting the rule of the saints formed the backdrop to the drama of the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. Massachusetts had been invaded by the Indians in King Philip's War, by agents of popery and arbitrary power during the Dominion of New England, and now by the Devil.

Early in 1692, some girls in Salem Village amused themselves by playing a game in which they looked in a glass, serving as a crystal ball, to see if they could discern the likenesses of their future husbands. The game passed harmlessly enough until one thought she saw a coffin. This apparition induced hysteria which came to be diagnosed as diabolic possession. They accused the slave who had suggested the game, a West Indian called Tiuba, of bewitching them. Eventually, Tiuba confessed, the first of 43 accused of being witches who were brought to confess to being in league with Satan in the trials provoked by the outbreak, which were held between February and August. While there had been previous proceedings against alleged witches in New England, only four had confessed to being possessed by the Devil before this. All manner of bewitchments were divulged, including the making of a poppet to represent an adversary, who would suffer when pins were stuck into it. Those who claimed to be victims of the witches alleged that they had visited them in the guise of spectres. While their corporeal bodies were in one place, their spectral bodies could be in another. This was taken by the court to be evidence of diabolical possession, on the grounds that the Devil could only assume somebody's shape with that person's permission. It was only when doubts arose on this score, and that Satan could appear as spectres of human beings without their permission, that this kind of testimony was ruled out, and the cases then collapsed. Before that, however, some 19 of the accused had been executed, while five had died during the proceedings, one from the tortures inflicted when under interrogation, and four in prison.

Much scholarly ingenuity has been expended on trying to interpret this episode as historians have endeavoured to distinguish between the accusers and the accused. One very sophisticated analysis

identified the 'victims' with Salem Village and the 'witches' with Salem Town, attributing their antagonism to economic tensions between the two communities. The village was mainly agricultural and associated with traditional Puritan values, whereas the Town was becoming increasingly commercialised and secular. More recently, it has been argued that the Devil appeared mainly in the shape of a woman. Most, though not all, of the alleged witches were women, while those who claimed to be their victims were mainly young girls. The women tended to be middle-aged or elderly, often widows, who violated gender norms by living independently rather than having a male head of the household. At first, they tended to be on the margins of society, but increasingly ladies from the colonial elite were drawn into the accusations. It has been claimed that as the charges began to involve the establishment, pressure to drop them grew. The girl victims were teenagers or even younger. Brought up in a repressive Puritan society, which quashed rather than encouraged individual expression, let alone rebellion, they suddenly found themselves encouraged by their parents and other adults to indulge their wildest fantasies against people they disliked. Psychologically, the temptation proved irresistible. In the final analysis, however, the phenomenon can only be explained in its own terms. People in seventeenth-century New England believed in witchcraft and practised magic. The collapse of the cases did not mark the triumph of secular ideas over beliefs in the supernatural. All those involved accepted that Satan had visited Massachusetts. They only disagreed about whether the witches were his agents or his victims.

The episode was finally brought to an end by the intervention of Sir William Phips, the first Governor of Massachusetts to be appointed by the King under the new charter of 1691. Phips arrived in Boston in May 1692 while the hearings were being held. Although he was a local man and a friend of Cotton Mather, who took a leading part in the proceedings, he was sceptical about the accusations of witchcraft and when Mather expressed doubts about the spectral evidence, he decided to bring the trials to a close.