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Alternative Communities in Seventeenth Century Massachusetts

By

Marsha L. Hamilton

From a distance, whether in time or space, most societies look more homogeneous than members perceive their societies to be. Distinctions that seem clear within the culture get blurred by outsiders who use the most general characteristics to describe the whole. We make broad generalizations because the intricacies of group identity can be overwhelming and too much information can obscure larger trends. Societies, however, are shaped not only by dominant groups, but also by the accommodations that these groups make to “others” in the society. Frequently, such adjustments are subtle, not rising to the level of diplomacy or public policy, yet over time may alter the society in visible ways. This article traces this process of change in seventeenth century Massachusetts, focusing on the influence of non-Puritan residents on the society of the Bay Colony.

The distant perception of early Massachusetts is a region of small, covenanted villages, modeled on traditional English communities and composed of people holding similar religious and social beliefs: in short, Puritans. While much about this description is accurate, it does not depict the situation for a small but significant proportion of the population of the colony -- those people who arrived after the Great Migration and who came, voluntarily and involuntarily, for economic or political reasons. These residents, identified here as “non-Puritans,” came from England, Scotland, Ireland, France and the Channel Islands and began arriving in discernable numbers in the late 1640s and early 1650s when economic problems stimulated the migration of laborers to

the colony. After the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, English attempts to regulate government and trade in the colonies more closely led to an influx of merchants and appointed officials. Thus from the 1650s, the colony had a small but growing number of residents who came to the region with no connection to the religious ideals of the founding generation.

These new immigrants created alternative community forms that linked together persons of Scottish, Irish and other non-Puritan backgrounds into multi-national networks that stretched beyond geographical town boundaries. The earliest communities consisted primarily of iron and agricultural workers, but by the end of the century, significant communities of merchants and royal officials also formed. Regardless of economic and social status, many of these residents retained their national identities while becoming settled inhabitants of Massachusetts and forming ties with their fellow colonists. They, like Puritan residents, participated in several communities based on religion, nationality, craft or trade, and place of residence, and identified themselves by these associations as the context warranted. Such overlapping community ties and multiple identities in Massachusetts helped bring stability to a colony in the midst of unsettling change after 1660 by providing a web of associations that kept society from fracturing along religious, national or class lines. This “social web” also fostered the growth of “Britishness” that helped transform the early homogeneous character of the colony into a more diverse, commercial society by the end of the century -- one that began to resemble societies in other regions of the emerging British Atlantic world.¹

¹ Darrett Rutman, “The Social Web: A Prospectus for the Study of the Early American Community,” in *Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History*, ed. William O’Neill (Minneapolis, MN: Burgess Publishing, 1973), 57-89. See Nicholas Canny, “Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” in *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1-33 and Canny, “Fashioning ‘British’ Worlds in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Empire, Society and Labor: Essays in Honor of Richard S. Darnn*, eds. Canny, Gary B. Nash, Joe Illick, and William Pencak (College Park, PA: supplement to *Pennsylvania History* no. 64, 1997), 26-45 for discussions about the meaning of “British” in the seventeenth century.

Although the transition was slow, a combination of economic, political, and social pressures forged an Atlantic society by the end of the seventeenth century. But this transformation was not simply that second and third generation Puritans deviated from the ideals of the founders to develop a commercial society. The leaders of Massachusetts recognized the need for commerce and economic development from the earliest years of the colony. A fairly diverse population, drawn from the Atlantic world, developed out of economic and political changes in the colonies and in England that brought new ideas and mercantile connections to the colony.² By the late seventeenth century, a regional identity had begun to form that, while not replacing nationality, pulled colonists of different backgrounds together. Sir William Phipps unwittingly illustrated this development when he claimed in 1693 that French-speaking mariners trading in Boston were “as good or better Englishmen then the [Rhode Island-born Customs] Collector.”³

Yet the non-Puritan residents of seventeenth century Massachusetts who contributed to the development of this society have rarely been studied by historians. Relatively small numbers of immigrants from any one ethnic or national group have led many historians to consider these settlers as marginal to the community or as having assimilated quickly into Puritan society. Their position in Massachusetts was less stark than this dichotomy indicates, and their status changed over time. Many tried to straddle the line between assimilation and marginalization, becoming members of the community while maintaining distinct identities. They participated in Massachusetts society, serving in minor town offices, on juries, and in the militias, and worked with and for members of the Puritan elite. At the same time, many non-Puritans did live in marginal

² Several recent works have explored tensions within Massachusetts that helped shape society, although the focus has largely been on Puritans and other elites. See, for example, Richard Archer, *Fissures in the Rock: New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001); Louise A. Breen, *Transgressing the Bounds: Subversive Enterprises among the Puritan Elite in Massachusetts, 1630-1692* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants, 1670-1780* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

³ Deposition of Benjamin Faneuil, n.d., Photostat Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA (hereafter MHS), Box 1692-1694.

areas of towns, such as the waterfront districts or on poor agricultural land removed from town centers. Within these regions, and while working within the constraints of New England Puritan society, non-Puritan residents created kinship networks among themselves. They became enmeshed in the “familial and familiar” web of early modern life, living in many ways parallel to, but not separate from, Puritan society.⁴

When taken together, those residents who came to the colony primarily for economic reasons may have composed twenty to forty percent of the population, depending on place and time. Although population figures are notoriously difficult to compile for the seventeenth century, these numbers include resident fishermen in areas such as Gloucester and Marblehead, sailors and other maritime workers living in the port wards of the larger towns, prisoners of war from Scotland and Ireland sent over as laborers and, later in the century, merchants involved in Atlantic trade. In general, then, the seaport towns of Boston, Salem, and Newbury had more non-Puritans than inland agricultural villages, and their numbers were greater in 1690 than in 1650. The concentration of non-Puritans in the political and economic centers of Massachusetts and their overseas connections may also have given them greater visibility in the seventeenth century than they have had in later historiography.⁵

⁴ For studies of non-Puritan residents, see David Thomas Konig, “A New Look at the Essex ‘French’: Ethnic Frictions and Community Tensions in Seventeenth Century Essex County, Massachusetts,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 110: 3 (1974): 167-180; Konig, *Law and Society in Puritan Massachusetts: Essex County 1629-1692* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), especially chapter three; Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), particularly chapter three; and Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Colonial New England* (New York: Norton, 1995). “Familial and familiar” web comes from Rutman, “The Social Web,” *passim*.

⁵ I have taken numbers from my own research and combined them with figures given in other works, such as Daniel Vickers’ fishermen in *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work In Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) and sailors and maritime workers in Richard Gildrie, *Salem, Massachusetts 1626-1683*:

Many kinds of communities exist. The most recognizable, of course, is the idealized small town, perceived by many people as the bastion of American virtues, and idealized as beginning in Puritan New England. Yet, as recent historians of the Chesapeake have shown, community can be found in widely-scattered farms and plantations. Community can also be a group of people sharing a set of beliefs or a similar heritage, such as religious or national communities. Each kind of community can be found in early Massachusetts. Puritans and non-Puritans alike belonged to many communities simultaneously.⁶

The community that most closely shaped the daily lives of non-Puritans is defined by Thomas Bender as “a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds...involving a limited number of people in a somewhat restricted social space or network held together by shared understandings and a sense of obligation.” Most non-Puritans, especially those who arrived before 1660, lived in such a “restricted social space;” they began as servants, whose activities were closely controlled by employers and their chances of moving out of this subordinate status was limited by their ability or desire to become church members. Marriages generally occurred within this social group of servants and laborers, their children married within the same network, and they had intimate knowledge of each others’ activities. Yet these relationships stretched across geographical and political boundaries. For agricultural workers and tenant farmers, such communities could span a county; for merchants, they could encompass an ocean.⁷

Non-Puritan communities began to form in the 1640s, as Puritan leaders struggled to diversify the Massachusetts economy. An economic

A Covenant Community (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1975).

⁶ The idealization of the New England town developed in the nineteenth century. For a concise description of how this happened see Stephen Nissenbaum, “New England as Region and Nation,” in *All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions*, eds. Edward L. Ayres, Patricia Newlson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum and Peter S. Onuf (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 38-61.

⁷ Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978; reprint Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 7.

decline brought on by civil war in England and a sharp drop in immigration caused the General Court to encourage merchants to find new overseas markets for Massachusetts' agricultural products. The Court also began to award monopolies to investors who could develop manufacturing and mining industries. To attract English investors, the Assistants even relaxed some taxes and religious requirements for new settlements. In 1641, for example, the magistrates authorized John Winthrop, Jr., to recruit English investors to develop an ironworks. He organized the Company of Undertakers of the Ironworks in New England in 1642 and 1643, which planned to construct a highly sophisticated plant equal to the best iron manufactories in Europe. In return for their substantial investment, the Undertakers expected concessions from the Massachusetts government. They obtained tax exemptions for the ironworks and its laborers and a promise that full-time employees would be "free from trainings and watchings." Massachusetts, in turn, asked that if the plant was built "remote from church or congregation" the undertakers would provide a minister for the employees. Two years later however, in response to another petition, the General Court agreed to delete the requirement for a minister, potentially allowing non-Puritans to live without the watchful eye of a church nearby. And so, within fifteen years of the colony's founding, Puritan leaders were moving toward the diversified economy that sustained Massachusetts throughout the colonial period, a change that encouraged immigration from many Protestant regions of Europe.⁸

The first identifiable groups of non-Puritan European settlers came to work in this nascent iron industry at Saugus and Braintree in the 1640s. Iron was an important commodity in the early modern world and an industry that the General Court was particularly interested in developing. Massachusetts leaders believed that an iron industry would provide much-needed products locally as well as for export. The Company of Undertakers first established a forge and foundry in Braintree, south of Boston, but finding the water supply inadequate, soon moved their operations to Saugus, in Essex County between Boston and Salem, where they constructed an elaborate plant. The site contained a furnace, two refining forges, a finishing forge, a water-powered hammer,

⁸ Margaret E. Newell, "Robert Child and the Entrepreneurial Vision: Economy and Ideology in Early New England," *New England Quarterly* 68: 2 (June 1995), 223-256.

a slitting mill, and a complex water system that powered seven water wheels. An ironworks on this scale required many highly skilled workers, who were not readily available in Massachusetts and so had to be drawn from an English and Welsh labor force in England and Ireland that was not known for its piety.⁹

Given ironworkers' reputations for wild living, Massachusetts leaders viewed the earliest recruits for the Saugus ironworks with trepidation. Yet since their labor was seen as important to the colony, even the worst offenders were rarely treated harshly. Most were punished with fines and stern lectures; at times, the Quarterly Court even neglected to follow up on complaints. In 1647/ 8, for example, Esther Pinnion charged her husband Nicholas, a skilled forge hand, with "killing five children....one of them being a year old." The court issued presentments and called witnesses, but took no further action. There is no record that the witnesses even gave their testimony. By March 1656, Nicholas, Esther and their children had been in court so many times that when they were once again "presented for absence from meeting" and did not appear, the court levied neither a fine nor a lecture. The Pinnions left Massachusetts voluntarily in the early 1660s when John Winthrop, Jr. recruited Nicholas for his new ironworks in New Haven. For all of the consternation this family caused Essex County authorities, they were never threatened with expulsion or severe treatment.¹⁰

In another case in 1647, John Turner, a forge specialist at the ironworks, was presented for "stabbing Sara Turner, his daughter-in-law, and swearing by the eternal God that he would kill John Gorum [another ironworker], and for being overtaken in drink, etc." For these very serious crimes, the court sentenced Turner to be "severely whipped in Salem," then imprisoned in Boston, and later to be whipped again at Saugus. The sentence, however, was revoked. John Turner continued to live in Essex County until the early 1650s, and then moved to Plymouth to work in the Taunton ironworks. In the end, even though the Essex

⁹ See E. N. Hartley, *Ironworks on the Saugus* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 29, for the complete story of the Saugus and Braintree ironworks.

¹⁰ George Dow, ed. *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts* 9 vols. (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1911-1975), 1: 135, 414 (hereafter *ECR*).

County Quarterly Court kept a close watch over the ironworkers in the 1640s and early 1650s, only a few families caused most of the problems, and even these families were tolerated for their skills and labor. The majority of the early ironworkers settled into Massachusetts life relatively easily.¹¹

By 1650, the indentures of the earliest ironworkers were ending and financial problems forced the Undertakers to look for cheaper labor.¹² Fortuitously for the Company, England and Scotland went to war in 1650, this time over Scotland's proclamation of Charles II as king after the beheading of Charles I. In September 1650, Scottish and English armies fought a pitched battle at Dunbar, south of Edinburgh. The English won decisively, capturing almost ten thousand Scots with another three thousand men killed. The next year, on the same date of September 3rd, the English and Scots fought a battle at Worcester, in central England, with the same results. The English routed the Scots and captured another ten thousand men.¹³

The English government did not know how to dispose of the Dunbar captives, and so welcomed the proposal of John Becx, a principle investor in the Company of Undertakers, to ship several hundred prisoners to Massachusetts. He planned to train some of the men to work in the ironworks to reduce both skilled and piece-work labor costs. Becx expected to sell surplus laborers to farmers and mill operators in New England, thereby reaping a double dividend for the Company.¹⁴

The first cohort of one hundred fifty Scottish prisoners arrived in Boston in December 1650. The ironwork's managers divided them up

¹¹ *ECR I: 130*; Hartley, 273-274.

¹² Employees of the Saugus ironworks were able to command high salaries because of their skills and the general shortage of labor in the region. All laborers commanded high salaries. See, for example, Richard Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle, eds. *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 102,345 for Winthrop's complaints about wages.

¹³ Charles Edward Banks, "Scotch Prisoners Deported to New England by Cromwell, 1651-1652," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society 61* (1927-1928), 4-29.

¹⁴ Hartley, 199-200; Banks, 11-12.

immediately, sending thirty-five to Saugus, keeping seventeen at the Company's Boston warehouse, and allocating a few to the Braintree furnace. The rest of the men were quickly sold throughout coastal Massachusetts. The plan worked so well that after the battle of Worcester in 1651, Bex contracted with the English government to send another two hundred fifty captives to New England. Most of these men were sold to sawmill operators in New Hampshire and Maine.¹⁵

The indentures of the Scots lasted four to five years, during which they lived and worked closely with free (wage-earning) ironworkers and other members of the Saugus community, forming work and social networks. English workers trained several of the Scots to be specialized craftsmen, as well as working with them in unskilled jobs. In addition, ironworks managers frequently boarded the Scots out for months at a time to English families living in company-owned houses. When not boarding with families, the Scots lived in the "Scotch House," a dormitory on ironworks property where many free ironworkers also frequently ate. Some of these relationships led to more long-term unions. John Clark, for instance, a Scottish prisoner trained as a blacksmith at Hammersmith, married the daughter of Francis Perry, an English carpenter and general handyman at the ironworks. James Moore, another Scot, married Ruth Pinnion, daughter of Nicholas, a skilled forge hand and among the first laborers recruited from England in the 1640s.¹⁶

Scots at the ironworks also had connections to the larger communities of Lynn and Saugus. They frequently kept cattle for townspeople and worked for local men during slow times at the ironworks. In addition, they traveled between Saugus and the Undertakers' other furnace at Braintree, sailed on company boats shipping iron throughout the region, and at times worked in the company's Boston warehouse. Many of the Scots became very familiar with coastal New England and formed ties with other servants and laborers, which became the foundations for non-Puritan communities throughout Essex County.¹⁷

¹⁵ Banks, 13.

¹⁶ *ECR VIII: 201; ECR II: 96, 291; ECR IX: 339; Vital Records of Lynn, Massachusetts to 1849* 2 vols. (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1905-1906), II: 255 William Emory deposition, *ECR II: 96-97*.

¹⁷ *ECR II: 96-97*.

Geographically, these Essex County communities centered in three towns, Lynn/Saugus, Salem, and Ipswich, but the ties among members of these communities stretched across such governmental boundaries. At Lynn, the non-Puritan community focused on the Scottish ironworkers at Saugus, but also included many of the early ironworkers from England and Wales and other lower-status English laborers. The communities near Salem and Ipswich were more diverse; the Salem community included many French-speaking servants from the Channel Island of Jersey and the Ipswich community incorporated many Irish inhabitants in the region. Social, economic, and national ties connected these non-Puritans, and many moved easily and frequently among the communities.

In Lynn, many ironworks Scots stayed near Saugus when their indentures ended, frequently maintaining close contact with each other. John Clark, for example, married the daughter of Francis Perry, purchased land next to ironworks property and established an independent blacksmith shop, but also continued to do piece-work for Hammersmith. Allester Dugglas and Macam Downing, Scottish prisoners from the ironworks, lived near Teague Brann (nationality unknown, but perhaps Irish) on the outskirts of Lynn. The Brann, Dugglas and Downing families were quite close; in fact Dugglas and Downing split the bulk of Brann's estate after he died fighting in King Philip's War. Another beneficiary of the estate was Oliver Purchase, a former clerk of the Saugus ironworks and a man who had remained close to many of the Scottish workers. In addition, in the 1670s, Downing put his daughter Hannah to service with Henry Leonard, a Welsh ironworker recruited for Saugus in the 1640s. By the time Hannah went to live with the Leonards, the family had moved to the Rowley ironworks in northern Essex County.¹⁸

The more diverse community in northern Essex County and connections among the various regions of the county can be traced through the activities of Philip Welsh and his wife Hannah Hagget. Philip was an Irish servant of Samuel Symonds, a large landowner and

¹⁸ John Clark also served as a marshal's deputy in Saugus. *ECR* III: 21, *ECR* IX: 338. For Teague (Thaddeus) Brann, see *ECR* VI: 383-385. The land that these families occupied was far enough from town that Elisha Fuller was paid 5s "to fetch the goods" after Brann's death. For the Downings and Leonards, see *ECR* V: 326, 351-355.

magistrate in Ipswich, while Hannah was an English woman from a lower-status family that had been in the area since the 1640s. Welsh first appears in the records in 1660 when, as a servant to Symonds, he was sentenced to a term in jail for “stubbornness and other offenses.” Symonds had this sentence suspended “until he has cause again to complain of him.” This cause arose fairly quickly, since the next year Welsh and his fellow servant William Downing came before the court for refusing to serve Symonds any longer. The two men complained that they had served for seven years, which was longer than most English servants, and that the sale of their labor had occurred without their knowledge or consent. The men argued that they, and many others from their village in Ireland, had been taken by force, placed aboard a ship, and brought to New England. George Dell, the ship’s captain, then negotiated the terms of their indenture contracts with Symonds without consulting the Irishmen. Despite reservations expressed by the jury, the magistrates decided that the contract between Symonds and Dell was valid and the two Irishmen had to serve out their time. Based on information provided by other depositions in this case, it is probable that many of the early Irish residents of northern Essex County arrived there by the same means as Welsh and Downing.¹⁹

Welsh worked for Symonds until 1663 and three years later married Hannah Hagget. The family then oscillated between Ipswich, Wenham and Topsfield for the rest of the 1660s and early 1670s, working for English merchants and landowners. Yet they always remained attached to non-Puritan communities in Essex County. For example, in 1667, Hannah appeared as a witness on behalf of Deliverance, wife of Scot Alexander Tomson of Ipswich. That same year, Hannah’s mother Ann Hagget testified with Deliverance Tomson in another case. And in 1678, Welsh was one of four Irish men, all with social and economic connections throughout Essex County, who petitioned the court to distribute the estate of another Irishman who was presumed dead. Each of these cases includes depositions from many Scottish and Irish settlers in the greater Ipswich area and the connections that can be made among the people appearing in them reveal a community of lower-status

¹⁹ *ECR II*: 197-198, 294-297.

English, Irish and Scottish residents that stretched over a fairly wide region.²⁰

Philip and Hannah Welsh moved to Marblehead in 1676, after Welsh's service in King Philip's War. Although they were tenants of Moses Maverick, a town leader, they also associated with George Darling, a Scot from Saugus who owned a tavern on the Marblehead-Salem road, and Ingram Moodie, probably the son of a Scottish captive from Dunbar who may have worked for Darling. While in Marblehead, Philip and Hannah fostered the infant child of John Blaney, a tailor who did piece-work for Hammersmith in the 1650s and whose wife had recently died. The custody battle over the child included a wide range of middle-status residents of southern Essex County, illustrating the ties between poor residents such as the Welshes and the larger community. By 1681, the family was back in Ipswich, living near and working with their former Scottish and Irish neighbors. And so although the Welshes moved from one end of the county to the other and back again, they were accepted into and supported by non-Puritan communities in both locations.²¹

The northern community that accepted the Welshes back in 1680 can be outlined through Scot Alexander Tomson. Tomson did not work at the Saugus ironworks, but was apparently a prisoner from Dunbar or Worcester. By 1663, he had established himself as a tenant on lands owned by the Whipple family of Ipswich, and was a near neighbor of fellow Scot Daniel Davison, who was a tenant of Daniel Ringe of Ipswich. Four years later, he appeared even more closely entwined in the non-Puritan community. He testified in a case involving Daniel Grasier, an Irish tenant of Edward Colburne, a large landowner near Ipswich. Grasier threatened Colburne, and may have destroyed his corn, because

²⁰ *ECR* II: 310; III: 384; IV: 86, 124, 125, 254, 441; III: 430, 438; VII: 37-38. See, for example, John Ring *ECR* II: 22; *ECR* III: 278-279; *ECR* V: 155, 158; William Danford *ECR* II: 242-243; *ECR* IV: 223; *ECR* VIII: 95-96; and Edward Deere *ECR* II: 242-243; *ECR* III: 448; *ECR* IV: 98; *ECR* VI: 234; *ECR* VIII: 287, 315, 405.

²¹ *ECR* VI: 192, 360-361; *ECR* VII: 336; *ECR* VIII: 179; *ECR* VIII: 187; *ECR* IX: 581. Many of the men studied here, or their sons, fought in the war. See George Madison Bodge, *Soldiers of King Philip's War* (Boston, 1906; reprint Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1967) for lists of soldiers. Welsh fought in the Narragansett campaign. Bodge, *King Philip's War*, 167.

he believed that Colburne had cheated him. Also giving depositions were John Morrill, an Irishman, and Daniel Black, whose nationality is unknown but who had ties to many Scottish, Irish and English tenants and laborers in Essex County, and Ann Hagget, the mother-in-law of Philip Welsh. The non-Puritans appearing in this presentment are associated with each other throughout the Essex County records. They had clearly developed a closely-knit community.²²

Non-Puritan residents created bonds with each other, even when being countrymen was their only connection, as in the case of John Upton, a Scot from Saugus. Upton moved to Salem Farms when his indenture ended and became a landowner, apparently breaking most connections with other ironworks Scots. Yet in 1665, he was brought before the court, charged with aiding and abetting Henry Spencer, a runaway servant from Boston, and for concealing clothes that Spencer had stolen from his master. Upton claimed that he met Spencer in Salem, and “being his countryman, brought him to his house and entertained him.” Upton was tried by a jury, but apparently presented no defense of his actions except that he felt bound to help Spencer as a fellow Scot. The jury found him not guilty, although the magistrates did not agree. Any punishment that Upton may have received was not recorded.²³

The inhabitants of Topsfield illustrate ties among non-Puritans and between non-Puritans and the larger community, as can be seen by tracing the regional connections of Daniel and Faith Black. Daniel Black arrived in Massachusetts sometime before 1659 and by 1661 was living in Topsfield. He was a poor laborer who cut wood and did piecework for the Rowley ironworks in the 1670s. Black therefore worked with many former employees of Saugus, who were also plying their trades in the smaller ironworks that opened after the Undertakers’ monopoly at Saugus ended in the early 1660s.²⁴

²² Davison was also probably a captive from Dunbar or Worcester. Tomson and Davison may have been among the Scots purchased by John Endicott to work his land near Ipswich. *ECR IV*: 393.

²³ *ECR III*: 264-266.

²⁴ *ECR II*: 189; *ECR V*: 134. Black, for example, cut wood for Henry Leonard, the Welsh manager of the Rowley ironworks and one of the earliest employees at Saugus in the 1640s. He delivered this wood to Thomas Tower,

Black also had ties to William Danford and Edmund Deere, Irishmen who, with Philip Welsh and John Ring, petitioned for the distribution of their countryman Robert Dorton's estate in 1678. Black's association with these men appears in a 1660 presentment for courting Faith, the daughter of Edmund Bridges, a prosperous blacksmith in Topsfield, without his consent. Black enticed Danford "from his master Pritchett's work" to go with him to Edmund Deere's house. Danford then went to the Bridges house and brought Faith to see Black while Deere and his wife were out. Daniel and Faith later married, against the wishes of her father, but did not live easily together. In 1664, they were both sentenced to sit in the stocks, he for abusing her and she for "gad[ding] abroad."²⁵

The witnesses and deponents in this case outline a mixed neighborhood of families in Topsfield, which included respectable church families and town leaders, such as the Hows, the Goulds, and the Perkins, the rather more contentious and numerous Bridges clan, and apparent newcomers, such as Luke and Katherine Wakeline. The Wakelines had acquired land only in 1663, but Katherine, an Irish woman, had been a servant of John Fuller, another resident of Topsfield and neighbor to Irishman John Ring. The depositions in the case do not break down along church or ethnic lines: the Bridges men (not church members) defended Faith, as did the Wakelines (Irish background) and John How, a church member. Lining up in defense of Daniel Black were church members William Smith, Zacheus Curtis and Thomas Dorman, as well as John Danfed (Danford? perhaps related to William). The core issue of the case was Faith Black's behavior, stemming from disobedience first to her father and then to her husband, rather than any deeper rift in the community. Yet the image that emerges is of a poor man, not a church member, with close ties to Irish and Scottish laborers and the non-Puritan alternative communities, yet who is defended by the respectable and church-going circles in Topsfield. Thus, while providing support and stability for the lower stratum of society, these alternative communities did not exist apart from the larger "Puritan" society.

a Scottish collier, and Thomas Looke, an English collier, both formerly of Hammersmith. *ECR V*: 227. See also *ECR V*: 130.

²⁵ *ECR II*: 22, 242-243; *ECR III*: 192-194; *ECR V*: 133.

By the mid-1660s, the non-Puritan community in northern Essex County included many stable, respectable families as well as those less rooted in any particular place. Yet this community did not exist in perfect harmony with its neighbors. Daniel Davison, for example, had a series of disputes with his neighbor Samuel Lomas in the early 1680s. Lomas was on bad terms with many of his neighbors, but he made a point of calling Davison a “Scotch rogue” and a “limb of the devil,” adding that “all the Scotchmen were hypocrites and devils.” Other ethnic tensions also appeared in Essex County, associated especially with the Jersey community. In 1672, for instance, merchant John Brock of Marblehead was accused by the town’s constable of being a “Jerse Cheater” in a dispute over the weighing of fish, and in 1681, in another Marblehead dispute over fish, an English woman agreed to mediation with her husband’s Jersey partner, as long as the mediator was not from Jersey.²⁶ Non-Puritans had become accepted, and even respected, residents of Massachusetts, but their ties with countrymen were strong enough to be suspect, and could be perceived by English colonists as being the focus of their ultimate loyalty. Such tensions can be found in any society, and there is no evidence that in the official records that non-Puritans were treated differently from English Puritan settlers.

And so, although not marginalized from the town community, non-Puritan settlers frequently lived in marginal areas, such as Marblehead, a poor fishing village, in uplands with less fertile soil, or among “questionable” residents, such as Quakers. Why these inhabitants settled on the outskirts of town is not clear. They may have deliberately settled near other non-Puritans or simply arrived too late or with too few resources to obtain good farmland. Many may have wanted to straddle, metaphorically as well as physically, social boundaries. Irishman Edward Neeland, for example, purchased a house and land from his countryman Anthony Carroll that sat atop the Topsfield/Ipswich town line. He avoided paying the Topsfield minister’s rate by being “in Ipswich” when the constable came to collect it.²⁷

²⁶ *ECR* VII: 360-362; *ECR* V: 92; *ECR* VIII: 194.

²⁷ George Francis Dow, *History of Topsfield, Massachusetts* (Topsfield, MA: Topsfield Historical Society, 1940), 47.

Alternative mercantile communities also began to form as early as the 1650s. These merchants, from Scotland, Jersey and France, had connections with the West Indies and other mainland colonies, as well as to Scotland, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands, and were part of an increasingly active Atlantic trading community. Thomas Dewer, a Scottish merchant in Boston who arrived from Barbados around 1650, illustrates this early non-Puritan merchant community. Letters written by Dewer in the mid-1660s to Barbados merchant Robert Scott refer to commercial connections that stretched from Barbados to Virginia, Boston, and Piscataqua (New Hampshire), as well as to northern Ireland and probably western Scotland. Much of the trade was in provisions, particularly fish from Piscataqua, in exchange for sugar in Barbados. The sugar would have been sold to distillers in Massachusetts or sent to Scotland, where sugar houses were beginning to be established. In Scotland, merchants may have picked up refined sugar or Scottish linen.²⁸

Dewer was also a founding member of the Scots' Charitable Society (SCS), an organization started in 1657/8 by Scottish residents of Boston and Essex County. Many members were prisoners from Dunbar and Worcester recently released from their indentures, while others, like Dewer, were established merchants. The purpose of the society was to provide charity for indigent Scots and their families in New England. Although the SCS declined in the mid-1660s, the organization was revived in 1684 and included members throughout the Atlantic world. Scots in New England, New York, Virginia, the West Indies, Scotland,

²⁸ Dewer's letters to Scott were preserved because of an extensive lawsuit over Scott's estate and constitute one of the very few collections of personal papers from seventeenth century Scottish merchants that I have found. The letters date from the mid-1660s, but the tone clearly indicates a long-term social and business relationship. See, for example, Letter, Dewer to Scott, n.d., Photostat Collection, MHS; Letter, Dewer to Scott, 21 Sept. 1667, Photostat Coll., MHS; Letter, Dewer to Scott, 24 October 1667, Photostat Coll., MHS; Letter, Dewer to Scott, 20 January 1667/8, Photostat Coll., MHS; Letter, Dewer to Scott, 22 May 16 --, Suffolk Files, 40: 9, Judicial Archives, Boston, MA; Letter, Dewer to Scott, 20 January 1667, Suffolk Files, 40: 10, Judicial Archives; Letter, Dewer to Scott, 2 July 1668, Suffolk Files, 40: 11, Judicial Archives. For the sugar industry in Scotland, see T.C. Smout, "The Early Scottish Sugar Houses, 1660-1720," *Economic History Review* XIV: 1, 2 & 3 (1961-1962), 240-253.

and Ulster joined, facilitating trade and commercial connections among merchants, yet poor Scottish laborers living in the North End of Boston were also encouraged to become members, revealing an affinity with the original purposes of the society. The SCS, in fact, resembled the charity hospitals formed by merchants and craftsmen in Glasgow, providing an important link with Scottish culture, and functioned much like the commercial networks developed by Scottish merchants in Europe. These merchants established themselves in peripheral markets in Europe, where they faced less competition from metropolitan merchants, and began trading with their countrymen in other marginal regions. Members of the SCS operated primarily in European out-ports and North American markets, following this Scottish pattern.²⁹

The Scots' Charitable Society is perhaps the clearest example of a non-Puritan community in early Massachusetts. The SCS sustained an active Scottish community, helping immigrants and their American-born children maintain their identities as Scots. Ned Landsman notes that Scots "maintained a rather complex sense of nationality, and Scotsmen were never simply those who lived in Scotland."³⁰ The SCS illustrates this idea, embracing long-term Scottish residents of New England, temporary residents, such as merchants and mariners passing through on voyages, new arrivals and the New England-born sons of Scottish immigrants. While encouraging the continuation of Scottish identity in the Americas, however, members of the SCS played active roles in their local communities. They were not sojourners, but residents. Scots in Boston, for example, became church members, held local offices, joined the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company (a key marker of status in Massachusetts), married locally and established families. Their sons and

²⁹ Scots' Charitable Society, *Constitution and By-Laws of the Scots' Charitable Society* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson, 1878); T.C. Smout, "The Glasgow Merchant Community in the Seventeenth Century," *Scottish Historical Review* XLVII (1968), 53-71; Ned Landsman, "Nation, Migration and the Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800," *American Historical Review* 104: 2 (April 1999), 463-475.

³⁰ Landsman, "Nation, Migration," 468.

grandsons considered themselves Massachusetts-men, but also joined the Scots' Charitable Society.³¹

Like non-Puritans in Essex County, these Scottish merchants did not just have connections with other Scots. They entered into commercial partnerships with merchants of all nationalities operating in Atlantic markets. John Borland provides a good example of the extent of the Boston Scot mercantile community. Borland arrived in Boston in 1682, after serving an apprenticeship with one of the leading overseas merchants in Glasgow. He had already made several trips to Boston for his master, making connections with New England merchants, thereby establishing himself in the community. His move to Boston probably was intended to expand his former master's trade with the region, and by extension, Glasgow's trade, since Borland's extended family included several other local merchants. Shortly after arriving in Boston, he set out on a year's voyage to Surinam and Holland. Within a month of his return in 1683, he married Sarah Neale, the daughter of a prosperous Scottish innkeeper in Boston.³²

Borland continued his pattern of long overseas voyages for many years. He had close commercial connections with Andrew Russell, the primary Scottish factor in the Dutch trade centered at Rotterdam. Russell and Borland traded in a wide array of goods, from iron pots to textiles to provisions and their commerce took them to North America, Scotland, Ireland, the West Indies and Surinam. Yet Borland also owned parts of ships with Boston's English, Scottish and French merchants: Andrew Belcher, Giles Dyer, Joseph Bridgeham, Samuel Lillie, Samuel Vetch, Thomas Steel, and David Dewer (son of Thomas). He was also a friend and associate of merchant and diarist Samuel Sewall and Massachusetts governor Joseph Dudley. Borland was, in fact, arrested in 1706 on suspicion of trading with the French enemy in Canada during Queen

³¹ Although the wives and daughters of Scots were entitled to charity if their husbands or fathers were members, only two women joined the SCS in their own names during the seventeenth century. See SCS, *Constitution and By-Laws*, 93-97.

³² "Diary of Francis Borland," selected pages 1673-1700, MHS, Microfilm P68; original diary at University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Anne's War, a scandal that ensnared not only several Boston merchants and mariners, but Governor Dudley himself.³³

Borland's commercial connections spanned the Atlantic, as did his social network. He kept in close touch with his family in Scotland and northern Ireland, many of whom were also commercial partners. But yet his home was in Boston. He joined the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in 1692, Boston's First Church in 1702, and served as constable and tithing-man throughout the 1690s and 1700s, and his children were born and buried in Boston. His wife Sarah was the Boston-born daughter of Andrew and Millicent Neale, innkeepers whose date of arrival in Boston is unknown. Andrew joined the Scots' Charitable Society in 1659, the year after its founding, but does not appear in town records until 1665, with Sarah's birth. Millicent joined the revived SCS in 1684 (as did her son-in-law Borland), shortly after her husband's death, perhaps indicating that Millicent was one of the few Scottish-born women in Massachusetts at this time. Regardless of how and when the Neales' arrived in Boston, their inn was well furnished, boasting several feather beds and chairs, many sets of linen tablecloths, napkins and sheets, curtains and carpets, silver plate and "a Negro maid." At his death, Andrew left his three daughters a total of £350 in cash rather than in moveable goods, since Millicent continued to run the inn. The Neales' inn, in the center of Boston, clearly catered to upper-status clients, most of whom were probably Atlantic-world merchants.³⁴

³³ Andrew Russell Manuscripts, Scottish National Archives, Edinburgh; Ship Licenses, Suffolk Files, Mass. Arch, 7: 120, 7: 126, 7: 127, 7: 138, 7: 156, Judicial Archives; Isaac Addington to Giles Dyer, 13 July 1706, Misc. Bound Collection, MHS; for references to Borland, see M. Halsey Thomas, ed., *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 2 vols. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), *passim*; Richard Johnson, "Adjustment to Empire," *The New England Colonies 1675-1715* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981), 343.

³⁴ "Diary of Francis Borland," MHS; SCS, *Constitution and By-Laws*, 93, 94; Reports of the Records Commissioners, *Boston Births, Marriages and Deaths, 1630-1699*, vol. 9 (Boston, 1883), 97; Will of Andrew Neale, Probate Docket # 9: 215, Suffolk County, Judicial Archives; Oliver Ayres Roberts, *History of the Military Company of Massachusetts, 1637-1888*, 5 vols. (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1895), I: 292; Richard D. Pierce, ed., *Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630-1868*, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston, 1961),

John Borland's social and commercial connections were not uncommon by the early eighteenth century. Political events in the last half of the seventeenth century had altered the colonial world. In Massachusetts, the Restoration, the Glorious Revolution and the new charter of 1692 diminished and then ended Puritan political control. Status became connected to wealth and political connections in England, rather than from Congregational church membership. Scottish merchants and Huguenot refugees, among others, served in high offices in the colonial government with the descendants of Puritan families. National origin became but one facet of identity that did not necessarily override loyalty to the colony.

And so, by 1700, Massachusetts, originally envisioned as a Puritan refuge from God's wrath on England, had evolved into a commercial entrepot, home to people from four continents. The colony had a society dominated by English government, law, and religion, but it was not simply English or Puritan. Massachusetts society consisted of a complex mix of European Americans (along with Africans and Native Americans) with strong national identities who also saw themselves as colonials. Many colonials wanted closer relations with England, but many saw themselves as having interests distinctly different from those of the home government. The growing recognition of Massachusetts' place in the commerce of the Atlantic world, a place that had been carved in part by the activities of Scottish, Irish, French, and Channel Island settlers, gave residents a regional or provincial identity that in the eighteenth century coalesced around the idea of "British."

The social and economic networks established by non-Puritans in early Massachusetts provide a different perspective on the Bay colony. Along with the traditional pictures of covenanted towns connected by similar religious and social beliefs, we can imagine towns joined at their margins by these non-Puritans, providing a web of relationships among the lower ranks of society. Merchant communities provided similar ties throughout the Atlantic basin, providing Massachusetts with another "familial and familiar" web, one that spanned the ocean with connections not necessarily centered on London. This web was not always easy, was not a cocoon; at times, it may have felt more like a spider web. There were many disagreements, among towns, among trading partners, within

39:101; Reports of the Records Commissioners, *Boston Town Records, 1660-1701*, (Boston, 1881), 7:205, 234, 239.

the colony, and between the colony and England. Yet the society that existed by the early eighteenth century had been shaped by Puritans and non-Puritans, and their descendants, all of whom contributed to the growing awareness of the colony as a distinctive place with an important role in the developing British empire.