

Citizenship, Property, Identity And Representation: The Historical Journey Of Southern New England's Native Peoples

MAY 16, 2008

MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM

Tom Doughton; Henry Zussman; Tim Gervais; Phillip Hureau, Kelly Davila, Sarah Kaye; Sandra Gibson-Quigley Nora Werme; Mike Penney; Richard Latham, Andrea Bien, Anne Weeks, James Moran (not present: *Rosemarie Ward; Jennifer Connors; Thomas Doughton*)

*Any mistakes or misrepresentations in these notes are the sole responsibility of the scribe! Please feel free to contact me with clarifications and additions at: [jdaly@akfcs.org](mailto:jdaly@akfcs.org)*

Introductions: Trudy Lamb-Richmond, the Director of Education for the Mashantucket-Pequot Museum set the tone for the day by stating that, "**whose** history is taught is as important as **how** history is taught".

Among the goals and expectations that were set by the participants at the beginning of the day was: *to learn more about local Native American history; to learn the Native perspective on historical events; to have a deeper understanding on the Pequot War, King Philip's War and other, more modern, chapters in the Native American experience; to see the Race & Race Relations exhibit; to learn how to better utilize the museum for Special Needs students; to be a "student for a day"; to come up with new ideas for teaching.*

The "trade triangle" of wampum, furs, and European finished goods was discussed and participants received a number of hand-outs on the "Clash of Cultures".

We also viewed a diorama of a pre contact Pequot village and then went on to look at exhibits that presented English, Dutch, and Pequot understandings of their relationship prior to the Pequot War. Clearly, the Dutch focused on trade while the English were more interested in settling the area and "improving" the land. The Pequots, decimated by disease, seemed exasperated by the pressures put on them.

There was a brief discussion of 'just war' and how the English felt that they might apply the concept to the Pequots in order to justify their attack on the Pequot community at Mystic. A combination of religious and racial prejudices (including the Pequot inability or unwillingness to distinguish between the Dutch and the English—but especially the English unwillingness to make any distinction at all among the Pequots regarding 'guilt' for the killing of the English trader, John Stone) led to a series of confrontations that ultimately resulted in the English/Narragansett assault on the Mystic village and the death of 600 men, women, and children.

The "Pequot War" was presented through the eyes of a story-teller who had been a young man when the war occurred. "The Witness" described the conflict between the English, helped by their

Indian allies, and the Pequot people which led to the 1637 massacre and 'out-lawing' of the tribe by the "Treaty of Hartford".

Following the movie, we went through the 'Life on the Reservation' exhibit, which traced the history of the tribe from the period following the Pequot war to the present.

During our working lunch discussion we compared and contrasted what we learned at Mashantucket with what we learned at Plimoth Plantation last October. Conversation continued with questions for Trudy about how wampum was made and used, changes in warfare practices after contact that resulted in fortified Pequot villages.

Following lunch, Jason Mancini, Mashantucket's Senior Research expert, gave a presentation entitled, "*Beyond Reservation: Indian Mariners and Communities of Color from New London County, Connecticut, 1710-1870*".

The focus was on Indians that didn't live on the reservation (or didn't live on the reservation for long periods of time).

As Mashantucket Pequots were dispossessed of their land during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many of the men found permanent or seasonal employment off the reservation.

Dispossession, however, did not go without resistance. Legal remedies were sought through the court system and physical resistance (tearing down foundations and stone walls erected by outsiders who were sold reservation land by 'guardians', who sometimes had personal interest in the land).

After the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht ending Queen Anne's War between the British and French the rate of dispossession quickened. The Pequot lands at Noank were taken. The following illustrates the dispossession of the Mashantucket reservation.

1666—approximately 2500 acres of land in Pequot possession

1721—800 acres of the best land taken

1733—a further 700 acres taken

1856—the reservation is reduced to about 200 acres

The dispossessions were accompanied by a decline in population. Where did the people go? Some died in the recurrent plagues, but many left because the acreage was insufficient to support a larger population. Many men left to work in the shipping and whaling industries. Furthermore, censuses taken during the colonial period frequently changed racial categories of the persons in question. The Pequots were said to have (almost) disappeared, the remaining Indian population in the area being a 'mix' of Narragansett, Niantics, etc.

Colonial censuses between 1756 and 1774 indicated that the Indian population of Connecticut more than doubled—but this appears to have been because of changing criteria for 'race'.

A similar pattern can be seen in the post colonial period when Seaman's Protection Certificates were issued to identify American seamen during a period when Great Britain was seizing American sailors under the pretense that they were actually British. Interestingly, blacks and Indians were identified as American citizens, though they did not enjoy the rights of citizens at home. Following the end of the War of 1812 and impressments, ship's manifests continued the identification of sailors by race. Often the same man will be identified at one time as "Indian", at another as "black", "mullato", "yellow", "copper", and so on. Occasionally the tribal identification might be used or such interesting notations as, "Indian medicine man", "Indian chief", etc.

With regard to where the Pequots (and other Indians) went, it becomes clear through the manifests that many of the men joined the whaling and other maritime businesses that were the economic life-blood of the New London area during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these men eventually found homes as far away as New Zealand, while a significant number of others returned to lands on or near the reservation when they 'retired'.

The myth of tribal/ethnic extinction (as in, "The Last of ..." narratives) is exposed by actual reality. A somewhat uglier subtext emerges when one realizes that the larger (white) community assumed that 'mixture' with other ethnic groups (blacks, whites) deprived the Pequots and other Indian people of their Indian identity. This line of thinking is basically one which defines identity through purity of blood and appearance (one must 'look' like and Indian to be an Indian).

Jason Mancini's talk was a good lead in to the Race & Race Relations exhibit, which was opened up to project participants a day before the official opening to the public. The exhibit, which directly addresses perceptions of race and identity along with commensurate issues of wealth, housing, health, and a host of other issues, will be at the museum through September 7, 2008.

Participants returned to the workshop base to complete evaluations shortly after 3 P.M.

Some of the remarks included in the evaluations are as follows:

### **What are you taking away from this session?**

- I have a greater understanding of the trade triangle and will be able to share that w/ future students. Also, saw a lot that was "kid-oriented" which is great because children relate better to information about people their age. LOTS to think about!
- I enjoyed the museum tour and the exhibit. The idea that Native Americans did not just fade away but rather really did integrate into the local communities was explained. I also learned about how some folks became occupied in the maritime industry.
- First, I want to include information about the trade triangle & issues leading up to the Pequot War for my U.S. History classes so that students can understand relationships between natives & settlers. Secondly, the information about Indian mariners and the diaspora is great to incorporate into my U.S. History class.

- Better understanding of Pequot War & its catalyst. Role of natives in maritime industry. The use of wampum in Pequot society.
- I take an increased understanding and a greater depth of understanding.
- A greater understanding of the Pequot War. Also, the interesting number of Native people in the maritime industry.
- A very good understanding of Pequot people and how the Pequot War affected their tribe and resulted in their diminished numbers.
- The native perspective of how Pequot Indians lived during the 1630's. Native Americans working on ships---1830's + returning and purchasing land.
- I found the information about the role of Native Americans in maritime work interesting. The race exhibit was fantastic---I could have spent hours more there. The movie ("Witness") was surprisingly fair---and very sad.
- Better understanding of what happened to Native Americans as their tribal lands were reduced and they were marginalized. Outstanding exhibit on Race---really thought-provoking.

#### **What remains unaddressed?**

- We covered so much today---I have more questions than ever about race & "identity."
- This was the Best session to date.
- How they rebounded and were federally recognized.
- None
- How to best address the grade 5 standard, specifically, the King Phillip War.
- I hope to learn more local history.
- The action/interaction between all the people in the area---native and European over later parts of the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### **Thinking about the design of today's session, what worked BEST for you?**

- Seeing the exhibit w/ housing, roles of Native Americans in various time of history.
- I enjoy lectures very much. The Q & A with the lecturer, although brief, was good. The museum tour and race tour was great.
- The variety was good. I liked the mix of guided tour, video and power point.
- I enjoyed the film & the RACE exhibit.
- The film and the 3 perspectives all offered broad understanding.
- I really enjoyed the walk-through portion of today's session.
- The tour of the museum and film were fascinating. I learned a wealth of info about the Pequots and the session on mariners was great.
- The broadness of it---the time flew by for me. Specifically, the movie, the race exhibit & the after lunch talk. The impromptu lunch time talk was good, too.
- Lecture by Jason was great. Race exhibit is wonderful! Great lunch!

Submitted by John Daly 5/20/2008