

Abby Kelly Foster Charter Public School Teaching American History Grant
*Citizenship, Property, Identity, and Representation: the Historical Journey of Southern New
England's Native Peoples*

Summer Seminar July 14 – 18, 2008

Tuesday July 15, 2008

Participating Teachers Present: John Daly, Phil Hureau, Kelly Davila, Mike Penny, Andrea Bien, Nora Werme, Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Landy Johnson (Steering Committee), Jim Weeks, (for Ann Weeks; morning), Nancy Clark, Jen Connors, Sarah Kaye, Henry Zussman, Rosemarie Ward, Ed Belbin, Tim Gervais

Presenters and AAS: Jim Moran, Michelle Renihan, Thomas Doughton, Margaret Newall,

9:00-10:30 Margaret Newell, Ohio State University Indian Slavery & Servitude in New England

- Dr. Newell's interest in the place of un-free servitude began when she was looking at treasury records of the Commonwealth in 1676—was surprised to discover a very large number of Indians for sale.
- Colony was selling Indians to pay for King Philip's war
- Indian slave trade was integral to colonial economics before the 1710's—more natives being enslaved and traded than Africans up to this point.
- Indians were the largest group of non-white laborers—especially in the Northeast.
- Ideas about phenotype/race were only just beginning to be linked to intellectual and economic capabilities in this period.
- The Euro-Indian encounter was crucial to the development of English colonists' ideas about race and identity.
- Some scholars say that Europeans came with pre-existing ideas about race—others (Newell is one of them) believe that English had ideas of *cultural* and *religious* superiority but not racial/color superiority. At this time the English believed that the French were culturally and, especially, religiously inferior. After Eunice Williams was captured by Indians in the raid on Deerfield in 1704, her father was more upset that she became a Catholic than that she chose to remain with the Indians.
- Racial categorization comes somewhat later...
- **Myth of New England exceptionalism:** (*i.e. That there were fewer slaves, fewer white indentured servants, because New England had a farm and commerce based economy with a tendency to focus on individual/family labor vs. slavery*).
- Slaves were an important part of the New England economy—not on the scale of the plantations further south, but New England was very much tied into supporting African slave trade, producing goods for the South and the Caribbean.

- New England natives didn't disappear, but were often enslaved as a result of war—often (especially the men) were sold/deported to the Caribbean as a result of conflicts.
- The myth of the “last full-blooded Indian”—disappearing around the time of the American Revolution has also served to create ignorance about Indian servitude in New England.
- There was a wide spectrum (or, continuum) of independence/servitude in the New England economy at the time, ranging from complete economic independence on one extreme and chattel slavery on the other; most people fit somewhere between the extremes.
- Many Indians were enslaved through indenture (de facto vs. de jure slaves). They might start as ‘servants’ but over the course of time would find their status enforced by law and perhaps extended to a life time course—which would come to include children—a movement toward chattel enslavement. This was often the result of years being added to indenture for various infractions.
- New Englanders tended to ‘sequester’ people whom they knew—part of their own community/region.
- **The Pequot War** was a turning point—resulting in mass enslavement of native combatants and noncombatants—1/7 of the survivors were condemned to “perpetual slavery”.
- The brutality of the war was shocking to English native allies (Narragansetts) and to Europeans overseas alike.
- The English concept for a legal basis for enslavement was “just war”—slavery was seen as a lesser penalty than death; “bootie” and compensation were justly to be given to those who fought on the ‘right’ side. However, there was the problem of non-combatant women and children (was it OK to execute prisoners? was it OK to kill women and children, or to sell them into slavery?) New Englanders tended to see things in the context of Christian canons (based on the reasoning of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas). Captives taken in a ‘just war’ might be legally enslaved.
- However, the amount of discussion about the legal basis for enslavement was relatively low considering Puritan legalism and their concern that everything be done in a lawful and orderly manner.
- Motivations: labor, export commodity, social control, acculturation
- Opposition arose from: native Americans, Roger Williams, Daniel Gookin, John Eliot—for a variety of reasons—might provide reason for continuing hostility, unjust to enslave children for their “fathers’ sins” (based on Scriptural models)—one the other hand enslaving women and children might be justified because it punished the men for their ‘crimes’.
- Whites had sometimes been enslaved for ‘treason’ and other offenses, but were freed after a certain period of time when the full rights of Englishmen reverted to them. This did not occur for the most part in the case of natives.
- Pequots (after the war) did not obtain freedom after a certain period. Indeed, other Indians were coerced into turning over run-away Pequots to the colonial authorities. Pequots were seen as “murderers of Englishmen”—not traitors (or not traitors only) so their enslavement might be extended indefinitely. In Rhode Island slavery was prescribed as a justifiable punishment for theft (perhaps killing English livestock that wandered into Indian fields, etc.). However, Narragansett reaction to Pequot enslavement was quite

negative—the Narragansetts were already upset about the cruelty of the war. Certainly, Narragansetts and Mahicans were willing to take captives as slaves but they were upset about the export of captives as slaves outside the region. Narragansetts understood that captives had certain rights (to a home and place to farm, to a degree of protection from abuse). They might eventually be included within the community.

- *(On the other hand, Roger Williams identified a group of people among the Narragansetts as “mean people who had no name”—who were not included in the clan structure—perhaps captive slave/laborers. Slavery within New England native tribes varied and has not been sufficiently documented. There is uncertainty about the role and nature of slavery among New England natives prior to contact. On a continental level there was a very wide range of practices (Cahokia having a rigid caste based system)*
- Pequots were traded as slaves to the Caribbean following the war (and some Indians had been traded before –as early as 1634—just 4 years after the settlement of Massachusetts Bay).
- Indians were needed as servants in New England because of the difficulty getting immigrant servants to come from England due to the reputation of Puritan New Englanders in the homeland (life in the Puritan colonies was seen to be too harsh, too restrictive, etc.).
- After King Philip’s War the native population of the region had been reduced to about 12,000 (from 120,000 on the eve of contact—before the plagues of 1616-1619) large numbers of survivors were enslaved—including some who were taken in raids from camps where Christian Indians had been interned (Deer Island, etc.).
- King Philip’s War, like the Pequot War before it, resulted in mass enslavement (more than 1/10 who survived the war), group sales by local governments
- There was also internment and kidnapping of “friend Indians” by the English. This was, perhaps, the result of the Colonists’ security concerns and confusion over the legal status of captives.
- There was a mixed response by colonists to Indian slavery in New England which generally resolved itself by concluding that conquered Indians were ‘subjects’ with legal rights. This ultimately led to the banning on Indian slavery in Rhode Island and restrictions on it elsewhere. Indians became (incomplete) citizens/subjects with the legal right to petition. Rhode Island technically banned enslavement after 1676—but did allow long periods of indentured servitude (especially for children).
- During this period of confusion families of Indian men fighting on the side of the English were often taken as captives while the men were away and enslaved.
- New modes of controlling Indian labor: ‘judicial enslavement’ (151 cases in 6 counties, scattered dates 1650-1783 (Essex, Bristol, Dukes, Plimoth, MA; Newport, Providence, RI; New London CT); ‘peonage’—“apprenticeship”, pauper indentures.
- In the later period laws appeared to give Indians the same process as whites for indenture, rules for judicial oversight, limits on time but the actual application of the law was generally much harder on Indians.
- **Black or Indian?** By 1720 (?) the ratio of females to males among Indians of New England was 12:1—more men had been exported than women, men often went to sea, etc. As a result, Indians were increasingly being identified as ‘black’ because of ‘intermixture’. Indians were highly resistant to this redefinition because it resulted in them losing their identity (*according to legal definition*). When referred to as mixed

race/mullato they lost their Indian identity in the eyes of the colonists and thus thus, their exemption from laws against Indian enslavement); Issues of local tribal identity were complicated by the importation of native slaves from outside southern New England—‘Spanish’ and Carolina Indians (as well as Pennacooks and Abenakis from the north).

- **Experience of Servants and Slaves**: serial servitude over generations; slippage into slavery: Ben Indian, Patience Boston, Hannah, and others are examples of this
- **Resistance & Freedom Suits**: We find protests against enslavement in cases such as those of Betty Coyhees (RI), Sarah Chauquum (RI & New London), Phebee Indian (Bistol), Ceaser (New London).
- A movement from voluntary to involuntary servitude—imposition of time penalties on servants who commit crimes by the courts (often increasing the period of service to the ‘owner’ or selling to a third party). It was hard to move out of the system, children of indentured servants were often included in the indenture and exchanged/sold
- Changing the ‘racial category’ of Indian indentured servants to black or ‘musty’ could make them legally liable to permanent (chattel) slavery.
- A linkage between Indian servitude/slavery and African servitude/slavery was made in New England (especially Connecticut) and ultimately allowed for suits to be brought in court by blacks
- newell.20@osu.edu (contact for Margaret Newell)

10:45-12:00 Thomas Doughton, Holy Cross College Narratives of Executed Indian Servants and Slaves

- There is no overestimating of the importance of understanding concepts of race/color and their relationship to servitude during the 17th//18th century.
- The stories of indentured Indian servants and slaves who were executed during this time period is illustrative of both their status and their personalities in relationship with society as a whole at the time.
- On March 21, 1733—during a blizzard one “Julian” was taken to the Brattle Street Church (Boston) to hear a sermon about the penitent thief (given by the Rev. Coleman) before his execution for murder. The Brattle Street Church which was the church for ‘people of color’. From there he was taken to the place of his execution where he behaved with “great decorum and penitence”.
- Yet, Julian was a ‘jokester’ who manipulated the press and ministers over the course of several months—including choosing the sermon topics and Scriptural quotes to be used by the learned ministers of Puritan Boston.
- And there are other narratives: Patience Boston (alias Samson), Joseph Quasson, both executed for murders in the 18th century.
- These are examples of a genre of literary types of confession of a badly lived life, the committing a capital crime and coming to repentance before death. The genre was very popular and rated a significant place in the newspapers of the time and in the sale of cheap pamphlets and booklets. The role of the subjects of these writings in their production is at least as interesting as what was printed.
- **Joseph Quasson** came from an important Indian family (from a line of sachems) who was bound to indentured servitude in order to pay off his mother’s debts. Though

landless, the family was prominent and had its own indentured servants (not rare among high status Indians). The family fell deeply into debt (resulting in Joseph's own indenture). He lived an upright life while young—warned by his 'mistress' (master's wife) that he will come to a bad end if he sinned.... Joseph became afraid of sin and resisted it—refusing to steal, swear, etc.... While an indentured servant in the Sturgis household he had done well, but after his indenture ended he fell into bad ways—no longer attending the English church and going back to the Indian (Wampanoag) church out of shame (for lack of good clothing). He had lost his knowledge of the Wampanoag language during his growing up years in servitude to the Sturgis' and was unable to connect with the community there. He later joined the militia and in Maine got into an altercation with a cousin (John Peter). In the fight a gun accidentally discharged, leading to Peter's death—he was then charged with murder and later executed, after having repented and converted.

- **Patience Boston** murdered a white child (by throwing him down a well), which she confessed immediately. She had been bound out as a child because her father couldn't take care of her. When she got older (and had completed the terms of her original indenture) she bound herself out in order to marry an African man (it was a lifetime commitment—so long as they both lived). Her life was 'extraordinarily demented' --- alcoholism....violence...etc. Her story is further compounded by the strangeness of the minister who acted as her guide during her last days. His coded diaries, kept in Latin, revealed a life obsessed with masturbation—an obsession that was so overwhelming that it led to his own insanity (presumably out of a truly Puritanical sense of guilt and not from the act itself).
- **"Poor Julian"** produced several narratives of his life which he later repudiated (and a final one which he claimed to have given to the newspaper the very day before he died). He selected several ministers to preach on his case and even selected passages to be read from Scripture. It is not clear whether Julian wrote his narratives or whether he dictated them (Patience Boston was literate, and it seems that Julian was also). Julian was unique in that he persistently denied that he committed the crime of stabbing his master (he said it was accidental)—all others had admitted their crime and thrown themselves on the mercy of the court. Julian maintained his own innocence to the end.
- Julian's accounts would have raised fears about 'people of color'. His self-confessed wildness and 'sinfulness' supported the prejudices of the white Puritan population of the time. (Background: Carolina Indians were suspected of poisoning, had a reputation for arson, mayhem, murder, conspiracy). Are Julian's "revelations" intentional subversion of the dominant culture? (playing the press....).....
- Julian's crime was portrayed as 'barbarous'—he had run away and a reward was posted for him. (See the detailed press account....) While acknowledging that he deserved to die, he denied some of the things he was accused of (burning his master's barn). Julian claimed that the knife had been open in his jacket (at trial) and that Rogers (his pursuer) had fallen on it....after his two hour 'fair trial' he confessed his crime. He attributed his bad actions to drunkenness and Sabbath breaking—though he had been brought up in a good home. Evidently he didn't think he would be found guilty because when the verdict came in he fainted. Between his condemnation and execution he heard several sermons by the well known clergy of Boston (the sermons focused on guilt and repentance). He became something of a cause célèbre. It appears that he orchestrated the sermons himself

and used them to further obscure what had truly happened. There were several broadsides warning children and servants to repent and do right and to avoid Julian's fate. According to some accounts he was manipulating for time (a couple of weeks) but became concerned over the state of his soul once he became convinced that he would die.

- Julian claimed to have turned over a hand-written, final, account of what happened to the newspaper the day before he died (it is no longer extant).
- Julian's writings did incite contention in New England about Indian slavery....
- **12:00-12:45 Lunch with scholars: Discussions related to the morning and other previous presentations.**

12:45-2:45 AAS Session Images of Indians (Council Room) Georgia Barnhill, Andrew W Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts

3:00 – 3:45 We took a close look at one image in small groups (a different image in each group) with pedagogical discussion of how to apply the use of the image in the classroom.