

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

Wednesday July 16, 2008

**Wednesday, July 16 Native New England in the 18th Century: Loss of Tribal Lands or
Dispossession by Degrees; Guardians and “Children of the Forest”; and, Interactions
between Natives and African Americans**

Participating Teachers Present: John Daly, Phil Hureau, Kelly Davila, Mike Penny, Andrea
Bien, Nora Werme, Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Ann Weeks, Nancy Clark, Jen Connors, Sarah
Kaye, Henry Zussman, Rosemarie Ward, Ed Belbin, Tim Gervais

Presenters and AAS: Jim Moran, Michelle Renihan, Thomas Doughton, David Silverman

**9:30-10:30 David Silverman, George Washington University: The Wampanoags of Martha's
Vineyard**

- David Silverman told a story about a visit to Martha's Vineyard that coincidentally exposed him to the living presence of Wampanoags at Aquinah (Gayhead)....
- He learned that there had never been an Indian war on Martha's Vineyard; there had been no fighting during King Philip's war.
- *In an aside Dr. Silverman mentioned that stonewalls had not been erected until the 19th century when wood was rare (colonial fences were wooden).*
- Records in the Wampanoag language are extant (deeds, etc) from the late 17th century indicating the survival of the native community (even if in much reduced form)
- History of Martha's Vineyard:
There were repeated violent clashes between MV Wampanoags and Europeans (1600-1619). There is the famous case of Eppanough who was captured by English and who swindled them into returning him to MV by telling them that there were 'gold reserves' there. Once they arrived he jumped ship and, under a hail of arrows from Wampanoag warriors, got back to the island.
- Eppanough became chief and repaid the English by a ruse: a ship captain was tricked into returning to MV to trade in furs. When the ship arrived the Indians overpowered and killed all but 2 of the crew and ransacked the ship.
- MV was not settled by English until 1642 because of Indian hostility. Why settlement then? Partly due to plague, partly due to effect of war elsewhere on the population. In the period from 1600 and 1650 the southern New England population was reduced by up to 90% (from plagues and warfare)

- Thomas Mayhew received an English title to Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and the Elizabeth Islands; a local sachem sold him land on MV. At the opening of King Philip's war only about 200 English were on the island. In fact, pigs, horses and cows had a much greater impact on natives than people. The English told them that *they* (natives) must build the fences to keep English animals out. The English refused to build fences, as they would have customarily done back at home (in England). When natives killed wandering animals conflict arose especially as the English demanded payment for private property destroyed.
- Problem with land loss—English didn't only seize land, they bought it; often sales were made by questionable (native) leaders. At first (but only at first) the natives thought they were selling the right for the English to plant the land while natives could continue using it for other purposes (hunting, fishing). Soon they came to understand that the English understood ownership as exclusive.
- On MV in 1643 & 1645 outbreaks of disease resulted in the loss of at least half the native population. This caused a vacuum in political leadership and a loss of knowledge. In an oral culture the loss of the ones who remember was the loss of knowledge itself—knowledge that was often closely held by the oral rememberers and passed on only to selected members of the tribe.
- Both Indians and Europeans regarded the outbreak of disease as a spiritual crisis; the English said that God was punishing them for their unbelief. The natives thought it was the result of witchcraft—seeing the English as the source (because the English were not dying in large numbers, and because the disease came following their arrival).
- The MV natives converted to Christianity as a result of the efforts of Thomas Mayhew, Jr. (the son of the proprietor). Mayhew made a connection to a native outcast named Hiacooms (outcasts usually converted first). The genius of the pair was that they made a *conscious effort* to connect to native conceptions. They said that God is the source of all “manet” (power/spiritual force) in the world (the Manitou). The god of the dead (Cheepee) was identified with Satan and Jesus with the guardian spirit of the whole human race. (*Modern Wampanoags tend to be Baptists—etc..some have reverted to “traditional religions”. However, the Baptist community extends back to the 1680's and the Aquinnah community is still mostly native*)
- Hiacooms was not sickened by disease and showed no fear of the magic of the powwows (shamans)—in fact, he challenged them directly. These factors and the knowledge that the English were very powerful all came together to help move the MV Wampanoags to become Christians.
- MV Wampanoags also didn't like Pometacom (Metacomet, King Philip) to whom they had to pay tribute and saw the English as protectors against him
- By the eve of King Philip's war many MV Wampanoags had converted to Christianity but had their own ministers and congregations, worshipping in Wampanoag. This shared Christianity may have helped turn the local Wampanoags into allies. Also Thomas Mayhew did not try to disarm the Wampanoags (as colonists did elsewhere) but made them ‘guards’ on the island against mainland Wampanoags. Many English on the island were opposed but the strategy worked. Mayhew got away with this because of his power as proprietor.
- King Philip's war was not an Indian-White war but a conflict between *certain* natives and the English and their Indian allies.

- After the war, though, the MV Wampanoags became second class people at best—the English would come to outnumber the natives and also came to see Indians as potential enemies or at least as *inherently incapable of being civilized* (even if Christianized).
- On MV Wampanoags adopted Christianity and adapted it to their ways—this was not acceptable to the English but a sign to them of Indian limitations. (Also, the English were well aware that not all Christian Indians had sided with the English during the war on the mainland)
- The main challenge to native people was always land loss and the resulting debt to English merchants for supplies (food/clothing/etc) that became necessary once direct access to the land was lost. The problem was not just one of supply (less land to use or sell) but also of the demand on the land by the two unequal communities.
- Sachems had been important arbitrators of disputes and purveyors of ‘welfare’ for poor and needy (local sachems) and diplomacy (the regional sachems). Once land was alienated sachems lost tribute supplies (due to population loss and land loss on the part of people who used to give them tribute). In response sachems began to sell even more land to acquire the money required to help their followers pay debts. The land sales offered temporary short term respite to the crisis, but in the long term only exacerbated it.
- In order to put a stop to this the MV natives in the various communities on the island overthrew their sachems and replaced them with a council (which had already existed as an advisory body). The councils termed themselves as “town meetings” so that the English could understand them as legal entities and have a cultural referent. The English had understood sachems as kings (not a native concept) with the power to negotiate treaties. Aquinah survived because the sachem (Josiah Mittar) sold his “sachemship” (ie. all the ‘wild land’) to a missionary body in New York (which controlled the island at the time). The council rejected his power to do so and overthrew him and the missionary group determined to keep the land as a native reserve (inalienable) which paradoxically preserved it.
- Cultural changes: 1/3 or more of the native children were being raised as indentured servants by English and were losing their language and customs—this was seen by the natives as a serious crisis; an equivalent was happening as native men went to sea on whaling ships (loss due to shipwrecks—moving elsewhere—etc).
- As a result of the very high female to male ratio in the community native women begin to marry outside the community (marrying whites, blacks, Cape Verdeans—etc.)—but 1/3 to 1/2 the marriages were to blacks which played into English racial concepts. The English had a ‘one drop’ rule—blackness outweighed ‘Indian-ness’. Once the amount of ‘Indian’ blood was reduced the lands they held were no longer protected by treaties. Also, outsiders marrying in (the vast majority being men) wanted to exercise property rights (including the right to sell land—common land thus being alienated). Meantime, language and culture were being lost as more outsiders married in.
- After the civil war Wampanoags who still retained the language (some of whom had inter-married less with outsiders) rejected state citizenship (which had been given to blacks) out of fear that they would lose land (for indebtedness, etc.). Those who had fought in the war and were more ‘inter-married’ tended to want the right to vote and hold property (still keeping Wampanoag culture to some degree—but wanting to fit in and compete with the main-line community). While the majority seem to have been in the first (resistant) camp—the other position won out and Massachusetts ended community

ownership of the land and giving (males) the right to vote. (*Indians received Massachusetts citizenship on June 23, 1867*). Paradoxically, very little land in Aquinah was sold. Families tended to meld together in terms of land holding and it de-facto returned to communal land. Though whites could move into the community as landowners, the town meetings were held in the winter when absentee (mostly white) landowners were away. The Indian community managed to survive against tremendous odds.

- In the 1980's the tribe received Federal recognition. The community has built low income housing for its people and has invested in businesses. A long history of literacy (early on in their own language, and later in English) and a high value for education has also helped.
- *The Wampanoag language died out mid to late 19th century. (Wampanoag was a dialect of Massachusetts). Recently there has been a revival of the language through native language texts and comparisons with knowledge of other Algonkian languages, grammar, etc. (comparison with Delaware, etc....)*
- *There is not one marriage on record between whites and Indians on MV during the colonial period (English were willing to sleep with Indians but didn't accept progeny—so Indian identity continued). Since whites wouldn't marry into the community and there were fewer Indian men available—Indian women often married blacks, Cape Verdeans, etc. This was an advantage to men in these groups because they were able to acquire land, but their progeny lost their “Indian” identity and became black (at least in the eyes of the majority population).*
- Quotas of Indian (and black) blood quantity were created in order to reduce Indian property rights (and to expand blackness in the slave economy for economic and property exploitation by the white power).
- Under this system, identity was passed on through mothers (if they were blacks) and fathers (if they were Indians). Thus, if an Indian woman married a black her children lost their Indian identity and became black. But if a black slave woman married an Indian man her children were, once again, considered black. “Blackness” always trumped “Indianness” because it favored the white economic/racial system.

10:15-12:00 Thomas Doughton, Holy Cross College Nipmuc Indians and Dispossession 1685-1785

- *We had a brief review of information from Tuesday's talks on slavery and servitude: A significant difference between the southern model of slavery where the whole person was owned and slavery/servitude in Massachusetts where labor but not the person was owned. Thus, slaves and servants had recourse to the courts in New England and owners were limited in their rights over slaves (the courts took care of punishment—the owner had no legal right to lay hands on a slave/servant and slaves/servants could sue if he/she did).*
- *Indians and Blacks in New England had high literacy rates (slaves, too) because of the requirement that they be able to read the Scriptures in order to join the church.*

The Dispossession Of The Nipmucs And Their Purported Disappearance:

- The two major post King Philip's war land-holdings were in Hassanamissit/ Grafton and Webster/Dudley. The Grafton holdings were about 7.5 thousand acres; Webster/Dudley about 10,000-12000 acres. These holdings had been guaranteed by the General Court. By 1786 these holdings had been reduced to 28 acres in Dudley/Webster and less than 10 acres in Grafton (held by 2 families). How did this happen (a reduction from almost 20000 acres to about 35 acres)?
- There was no 'tribe' at Grafton (at Webster/Dudley there was a tribal 'entity')—but, both were part of the larger Nipmuc people. When Grafton was incorporated land was bought from individual Indian proprietors. In Grafton the General Court itself decided to alienate the land (through the white 'guardians' for the 10 native families). Hassanamissit was one of the 'praying towns' (Christian towns) created before King Philip's war. During the war many Nipmuc were carried off by King Philip's fighters, sent off to Deer Island, or otherwise removed. It was almost 2 generations before native people moved back after the war. There was contention over ownership in this later period; native people had adopted European ways/housing/clothing/tools/medical care which were expensive.
- The loss of both old people and young children in the epidemics (both groups were hit hard) meant the loss of traditions in both direction (oral traditions and ways of doing things from the old—people to pass things on to in the young)
- Much of the land that had been set aside was poor (they were moved from 'Bright Meadows' to "Stinking Plant Place"—a 'waste land' and not good for farming.
- In order to get draft animals, pigs, etc. one had to have money. To acquire money land had to be sold (it was the most valuable commodity—far more so than labor).
- But, who sold the land? The guardians sold the land in the name of the Indians
- The guardians themselves were wealthier and often were purchasing the land themselves (perhaps through proxies) or to pay off debts to merchants
- Guardians were connected to the power structure in the towns (were part of it) and could abuse the interests of their charges by purchasing land, binding out, exchanging gold for paper (at a much devalued rate as happened in Hassanamissit)
- Land was sold to provide for the welfare of parents, bondsmen, widows, veterans (see Hassanamisco documents distributed).
- The estate of Ammi Printer, a Nipmuc resident at Hassanamesit/Grafton) in 1740 was quite extensive and valuable. The estate was valued at nearly £1500 but after land sales and legal costs a lot of money and land went missing. Within 3 years most of his descendents were penniless and in trouble with the courts. The value of Printer's estate compared with those of wealthy Euro-Americans in town, but its disbursement among his heirs had to be taken care of by guardians.
- There was an annual spring disbursement of money (out of which creditors were first paid off, or, assembled on the payment date to collect their debts).
- Thus, over the course of 100 years the vast majority of the land was alienated and only 2 families retained very small plots.
- *(The Dudley's "purchased" the Nipmuc lands in what is now Webster/Dudley within days of the 'eternal' donation of the reservation. The deed 'came to light' in the 19th century with the family's claim that they had permitted the Nipmucs to live there but that*

they (Nipmucs) didn't need it because they had never bothered to 'improve' it... (This will be discussed in greater detail next year)).

- *(Note: tracing Nipmuc families is often difficult because surnames were paternal names---David Munilow—Abimalech David—Natty Abimalech, etc. which causes some confusion in family line)*
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12:00-12:45 Lunch with scholars: Discussions related to the morning and other previous presentations

12:45-2:45 Review selected primary source documents “The Indian Girl Who Ate Her Little Brother”

- *Background: There was no culture of cannibalism among natives in Southern New England (There were fears of Mohawks-makqua (man-eaters) in upstate New York on the part of natives of Southern New England). Had there been there would have been lots of reports about it before 1733. It should have been surprising—especially to the Magistrate who had long been involved with the Indians.*
- The family (Petome) of the young girl in this story was high status within the native community.
- In Natick—the family wetu was located within walking distance of neighbors, family, church, etc. Also, it was a very old Christian community.
- There appear to have been serious problems with the deposition in the way that questions were asked.
- Why would anyone believe the story?
- Small groups carried on discussions about how to interpret primary source documents and how to present them to various grade levels, about how to use such documents for critical thinking skills and how to connect to current issues. These discussions were then brought to the large group.