

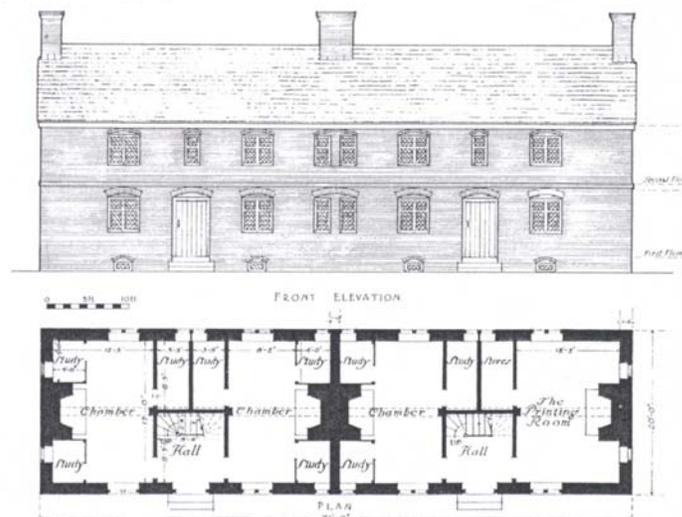
Harvard Indians

Some people dislike Harvard men on principle, and—like the college itself—this resentment is venerable. Town and gown conflicts punctuate the long history of Harvard’s existence in Cambridge. In his *Looking Glasse* Peter Folger felt free to denounce New England’s “college men” as incompetent preachers and careerists. It should not, then, come as a surprise that boys sent to the Harvard Indian College lived in considerable peril. Even preparing for admission carried the double risks of exposure to English diseases and exposure to English prejudice.

The founding of Harvard College in 1636 came just a half-dozen years after the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony itself. The Indian College did not come into existence, however, until the 1650s, and by 1698 its building—underutilized and in disrepair—was demolished.

A major figure associated with the Indian College was John Eliot, who had come from England in 1631 and set about learning Massachusett. In devising his method for teaching literacy in both Massachusett and English, his aim was that new converts should form independent Christian communities with their own native clergy, teachers, and civic leaders.

Harvard College intended to play a role in the process. In the 1640s the college sought funds within the colony and from England for education and conversion of the native peoples of the area. At the end of the decade, with the incorporation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, Harvard finally received financial support for the enterprise and also a new charter, providing for “the education of the English and Indian youth of this country.”¹ The Society proposed to begin with six scholars and agreed to build a two-story brick hall in Harvard Yard to eventually house twenty scholars and a printing press.



No painting or drawing survived the demolition of Harvard's Indian College building. It probably resembled this "Conjectural Restoration of the Indian College by H. R. Shurtleff, Esq." (reproduced with permission of Harvard University).

¹ The Harvard charter of 1650 is reprinted in Morison 1936, Part I, pp. 5-8. The charge to educate both English and indigenous youth appears on p. 6.

The Indian College was the fourth hall built in the Yard, and construction took until 1656, yet when it was completed, there were no Massachusett-speaking scholars to form a class and occupy its rooms. For the first five years of its existence it was used to house sons of the English colonists.

In the meantime, boys from Massachusett-speaking communities around eastern New England, including the Cape and islands, were sent to preparatory schools in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Cambridge to study English, Latin, and Greek, which were entrance requirements for Harvard College.²

One of the first of Eliot's protégés was John Sassamon.³ When the first English came to Massachusetts Bay in 1630, Sassamon's parents lived among them in Dorchester and converted to Christianity. Eliot is said to have known Sassamon since childhood,⁴ so Sassamon must have been at most a teenager when the Pequot War broke out in 1637. Despite his youth, he went to that war as an interpreter for the English, serving under the command of Richard Callicott of Dorchester.

Sassamon and Callicott each personally brought back a captive from the war to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Sassamon brought home a Pequot woman and Callicott a Montauk boy named Cockenoe. Cockenoe was immediately put to work as an interpreter and assistant Bible translator for John Eliot. It was not until the late 1640s that he at last managed to return home to Long Island.

John Eliot's work in Cambridge ran parallel to the work of Thomas Mayhew Jr. and Peter Folger on the Vineyard and Nantucket. During the 1640s they all acquired Massachusett-speaking associates to help with teaching and preaching, and in Cambridge Eliot commenced producing his publications in Massachusett. These were used throughout eastern New England, including the Cape and islands, notably the translation of the Bible into Massachusett. By the mid 1640s, Eliot, Mayhew, and Folger were preaching in the language, and so were some converts—Sassamon as well as Cockenoe in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Hiacoomes on Martha's Vineyard.

Next the evangelists began recruiting boys to prepare for education at Harvard. In 1649 Eliot paid the schoolmaster of Dorchester for teaching "the Children of those Indians who lived thereabout" who were "bigger and more capable." He also made an investment in some Harvard education for Sassamon, who was what today would be called a "student older than average." He probably was not a regular degree candidate, since he seems to have left his own teaching at Natick to come to Harvard for no more than one year.⁵ During Sassamon's time at Harvard, the Charter of 1650 mandating Indian education was already in effect, but the Indian College building had not been built. There was no special place for men like Sassamon, and there was not yet a special press room for the production of books in the Massachusett

² Some boys were educated by a schoolmaster in Dorchester. See Lepore 1998, p. 262, note 46. Other schools included the Daniel Weld Preparatory School in Roxbury and the Elijah Corlett Grammar School in Cambridge.

³ See Lepore 1998, *passim*, for a detailed study of Sassamon's life and the sources from which his biography can be constructed.

⁴ Lepore 1998, p. 31.

⁵ There is a 1653 Harvard steward's bill paid by Eliot for Sassamon. See Lepore 1998, p. 32 and p. 263, note 52.

language. Nonetheless, the same year that Sassamon was a temporary student there, Eliot's *Indian Catechism* was printed at Harvard.

Soon after, two boys from Martha's Vineyard were sent to Daniel Weld's preparatory school in Roxbury. Caleb Cheeshahteumuck was eleven when he left his island home for Cambridge, and Joel Hiacoomes was just ten.

The career of almost everyone who went to the Harvard Indian College during its less than half-century of existence took an unforeseen turn.

Sassamon left his position as schoolmaster in Natick and beginning around 1660 served as secretary to the mainland Wampanoag sachems, producing written documents for them in their dealings with the English. This does not seem to have been what John Eliot had in mind for him, but insofar as Sassamon could keep the English apprised of what was going on with the sachems, it was not entirely against the interests of his mentor. But Sassamon's bilingualism and ease with written documents, on which the Wampanoags had become dependent, made him an object of suspicion and resentment on both sides. When his body was found in February 1675 stuffed under the ice of a pond near Plymouth, the English demanded that the guilty parties be found and brought to justice. Three of Philip's chief counselors were accused, tried by a jury of twelve Englishmen and six Wampanoags, found guilty, and hanged. Three weeks later King Philip's War was under way.⁶

In 1666 John Wampus entered the college, but he left the next year. Of his later career, Daniel Mandell writes that residents of Natick and two other enclaves "would contest bitterly a string of land sales made by a Nipmuck, John Wampus, who apparently betrayed his position as the Indians' interpreter to sell large chunks of the territory."⁷ This was surely not what Eliot had in mind.

In the year of the outbreak of King Philip's War, a young man named Eleazar matriculated as a freshman at the college. There he contracted smallpox and died, leaving behind as an artifact of his short life an essay composed in Latin and Greek, both of which he had studied in order to gain entrance to the college.

One other Massachusetts-speaker was active at Harvard through this period without ever being a registered student. That was James Printer, Eliot's associate in the production of the Massachusetts Bible and other publications printed in Harvard Yard. In 1675 Printer was taken captive by the Nipmuck allies of King Philip. A few months later Mary Rowlandson, wife of a Puritan minister, survived an attack on her town only to be carried off by the same people. She lived and traveled with them from February to early May 1676, when she was finally ransomed and released. Once restored to her family, she wrote and

⁶ Sassamon's death and its consequences is the theme of Chapter 1, "Beware of Any Linguist," in Lepore 1998.

⁷ Little 1996a, p. 176.

published one of the best known of New England's captivity narratives. James Printer had done the writing for the Nipmucks as they negotiated her ransom. Then he managed to extricate himself from captivity. Finally back at work at the Harvard press, he set the type for Mary Rowlandson's book about the experience they had shared.⁸

Now we circle back to the other two Harvard Indian College students of the 1600s. By 1661 Caleb Cheeshahteumuck, and Joel Hiacoomes had completed their preparatory education, matriculated at Harvard, and been admitted into the class of 1665. Their studies apparently moved along uneventfully. A Harvard monitor's bill lists them both in their sophomore year. Joel Hiacoomes signed his name on the flyleaf of a book he owned in college. Governor Winthrop reported in 1663 that he had heard them take part in an oral examination conducted in Latin, where they acquitted themselves well, and that they could also express themselves in Greek. The New England Company was sponsoring their education, and to the governor of the company Winthrop sent Latin essays by each of them. Caleb Cheeshahteumuck's essay survives to this day in the archives of the Royal Society in London.⁹

But graduation time in 1665 brought tragedy. Writing years after the events, Experience Mayhew mentions the childhood death of one of the young children of Hiacoomes and his wife. He also mentions that Hiacoomes had a son named John who became a preacher at Chappaquiddick and then departed to the mainland. But oddly, in his book about the lives and deaths of Christian Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard, Mayhew doesn't mention Joel by name.¹⁰ We must turn to Daniel Gookin:

These two were hopeful young men, especially Joel, being so ripe in learning, that he should, within a few months have taken his first degree of bachelor of art in the college. He took a voyage to Martha's Vineyard to visit his father and kindred, a little before the commencement; but upon his return back in a vessel, with other passengers and mariners, suffered shipwreck upon the island of Nantucket; where the bark was found put on shore; and in all probability the people in it came on shore alive, but afterwards were murdered by some wicked Indians of the place; who, for lucre of the spoil in the vessel, which was laden with goods, thus cruelly destroyed the people in it; for which fault some of those Indians was convicted and executed afterwards. Thus perished our hopeful young prophet Joel.¹¹

⁸ The relationship of James Printer and Mary Rowland is treated at length in Chapter 5, "Come Go Along with Us," in Lepore 1998.

⁹ *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, p. 202. Morison 1936, pp. 354–55.

¹⁰ He may mention Joel and Caleb together in the introduction to his book: "They have at present no scholars among them; several that have been liberally educated, having by immature deaths been removed out of the world before they had opportunity of being considerably serviceable in it." Mayhew 1727, p. xxiii.

¹¹ Gookin 1970, pp. 52–53.

Caleb Cheeshahteaumuck marched without Joel at his side in the 1665 commencement procession in Harvard Yard and was welcomed into the company of educated men. Some months later in the Watertown lodgings where he had been placed under the care of a physician, he turned his face to the wall and died.¹²

A gallows had been erected on Nantucket in 1665, but the men who went to their deaths that year do not appear on any of the extant lists of hanged men.¹³ They are forgotten in Nantucket, and it appears that the incident was forgotten on the Vineyard as well, for why would Experience Mayhew lose an opportunity to represent Joel Hiacoomes as a Puritan martyr, killed by heathens?

Although the 1665 hangings have disappeared from Nantucket memory, another event of the year has been kept alive by its association with two place names: Gibbs's Pond and Philip's Run. A full decade before the outbreak of King Philip's War, Massasoit's son is said to have come to Nantucket to kill a local man whose Massachusetts name was Assassamough, but who had taken the English name John Gibbs. According to Eva Folger, Gibbs was educated at Harvard by the Mayhews.¹⁴ There is no record of him at Harvard College, however. Possibly he had been sent to a preparatory school in Cambridge, in the same wave of recruitment that swept up young Caleb and Joel from the Vineyard. More boys were sent to the preparatory schools than the very few who actually matriculated at the college.¹⁵

Philip's anger at John Gibbs is said to have been stirred by Gibbs's mention of Massasoit's name after his death. This is in accordance with Roger Williams's report that, "they abhorre to name the dead... In that respect I say, if any of their Sáčhims or neighbors die who were of their names, they lay down those Names as dead."¹⁶ It is also consistent with the sachem's responsibility to perform executions with his own hands.

Matters took an unexpected turn, however. Philip, who had started life as Metacom and taken the name Philip in the Plymouth court in 1660, had grown angry with English pressure on himself and his people, and he was returning to traditional Wampanoag ways. It was a time of ambivalence even as he continued to affix his initial "P" to written documents. He came to Nantucket to act as a sachem, but he was dissuaded by Peter Folger from claiming John Gibbs's life and accepted a cash ransom from the

¹² Morison gives the cause of his death as tuberculosis. Morison 1936, p. 356.

¹³ O. Macy 1880, p. 74; *Inquirer and Mirror*, July 19, 1879; Folger 1911, p. 137. The first recorded case of a Nantucket trial leading to execution is from 1704. Four Wampanoags sat on the grand jury, but only Englishmen sat on the trial jury. The guilty verdict and death sentence in accordance with English law did not have the inflammatory consequences that the trial of Sassamon's accused murders had had in Plymouth a quarter century earlier.

¹⁴ Folger 1911, p. 87.

¹⁵ Attrition from the preparatory schools probably had as much to do with death from smallpox and tuberculosis, city diseases to which these students were particularly vulnerable, as to academic failure.

¹⁶ Williams 1973, p. 96. See also Kupperman 200, pp. 137–38 for additional sources on the prohibition of the use of names of the dead. Kupperman's book contains useful chapters on indigenous religion and daily life in Virginia and New England as part of a study of how the cultural preconceptions of English visitors shaped their perceptions of the indigenes they encountered.

English settlers instead.¹⁷ Escaping this close call, John Gibbs went on to serve as Christian pastor of the church at Oggawame.¹⁸

There may have been more to Philip's visit that has been lost in the retelling of the story. He apparently came to the island just when Wampanoags were hanged in connection with the death of Joel Hiacoomes. Whether or not Philip's jurisdiction extended to the island in more normal times, this appropriation by the English of a sachem's responsibility for exacting justice must have rankled. A decade later a similar act in Plymouth, the execution of three of Philip's advisors accused of Sassamon's murder, precipitated his devastating war against the English.

English Introductions

Beginning in 1659, the English introduced all sorts of new things to the island. One of the first was livestock. Having obtained rights to the grass on the island through the deed signed by the Nantucket sachems Wanackmamack and Nickanoose, the settlers brought foraging animals: sheep for wool, cows for milk, draft oxen for plowing, horses for transportation, and hogs for pork and lard. A portion of the lambs and calves produced on the island would provide more meat for the English diet. The English did not intend to eat shellfish except in emergencies. There came to be a saying among them: "First a feast and then a famine. Then out on the flats a-clammin'."

The proprietors had a plan for regulating the numbers and kinds of animals let loose on the commons, the undivided land where all their livestock grazed mingled together. In 1669 a shareholder was permitted to graze either forty sheep, six cows, or one horse per share. The proportion changed over time. At another time one horse equaled two cows equaled twelve to sixteen sheep.¹⁹ Individual horses are easy to recognize, and cows have to be brought in and milked daily, but the sheep out on the commons, left to themselves most of the year, were a herd of anonymity. In order for each shareholder to identify his own at shearing time, the sheep's ears were notched in distinctive patterns. When the adult sheep were shorn of their winter coats in early summer, the lambs were separated from the ewes and had their ears notched. According to Zaccheus Macy, writing Nantucket history in the next



Cyrus Dallin's statue in front of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was modeled on the Plains cultures, but Nantucket Wampanoags were equally enamored of horses during the half-century after English settlers first brought them to Nantucket. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association (photo by Frances Karttunen), P21260.*

¹⁷ Z. Macy, 1792a, pp. 4–5. See Appendix 1b. The stream known as Philip's Run, which meanders from Gibbs's Pond toward the south shore, is said to be the route by which Philip had to run for his life from indignant Nantucket Wampanoags, but this is likely a piece of folk etymology. "Run" is an English synonym for "stream."

¹⁸ Gookin 1970, pp. 104–05.

¹⁹ Little 1990a, p. 5.

century, the owners initially slaughtered one half the lambs each spring and added the other half to their breeding stock.²⁰

Although the Wampanoags took up the spinning and weaving of wool, they had no pastoral experience and did not aspire to keeping sheep of their own.²¹ Horses were another matter. Just as the peoples of the Great Plains took to Spanish horses that spread north from Mexico, so did the native peoples of Nantucket take to English horses. They acquired horses for themselves and demanded their own grazing rights from their sachems. Having already granted winter grazing rights for the whole island to the English, the sachems spent the next thirteen years negotiating grazing rights for themselves and some of their own people. Finally, the four major sachems in power in 1682 regranted all their grass to the English and received in return eighty-seven horse commons. Recipients of the commons were free to lease or sell them, and they frequently did so to English settlers, soon losing the advantage for which the sachems had campaigned so assiduously. Daniel Spotso alone sold off thirty-five of the eighty-seven horse commons.²²

It was over horses that some of the seeds of discord between Wampanoags and settlers were first sown. Within ten years of their arrival, the English already felt that the island had become overrun by livestock, horses being the main problem. At a 1669 town meeting they discussed “clearing the Island of horses, mares and goats or to keep a smaller number than now are.” It was decided that each household could keep one horse or mare (using “horse” to specifically mean ‘stallion’) and that the rest were to be taken off-island or destroyed. After a few months’ grace period, a warden was delegated to impound unauthorized animals and get rid of them. The town meeting also directed that “no man shall sell a Living horse, mare, or colt to any Indian on the Island.” Anyone who did so would be fined five pounds.²³

Exceptions were made. The town bent the rule to allow Nickanoose’s son to buy a horse,²⁴ but how could it not have offended the Wampanoags that a sachem’s son needed permission from the English? Nor was the local injunction against selling horses to the Wampanoags effective. They bought mares on the Vineyard and brought them home, presumably to breed. Sometimes the desire for horses outstripped the means of would-be owners. In 1729 Hezekiah Sekenuit of Gay Head took Jonathan Quaiab of Nantucket to court for failing to pay for a mare sold and delivered to him three years earlier. In 1725 Levi, a Wampanoag, complained about the impoundment of his mare, which had been found loose and grazing on the commons. The court found that Levi possessed no grazing rights and dismissed his case. The same thing happened in 1728 to Poney, another Wampanoag with a horse and no grazing rights, and yet again

²⁰ Z. Macy 1792, p. 3.

²¹ See Carpenter and Carpenter 1987, pp. 19-23, for the biography of Jeremy Netowa, a Wampanoag weaver whose estate was inventoried in 1728.

²² These four sachems were Jephtha, son of the sachem Wanackmamack; Musaquat, son of Attapeat (also known as Autopscot); Spotso, and Nickanoose. See Little 1990a, pp. 5, 7–9, 18–19. On p. 5, Little identifies the seller of thirty-five horse commons as Joshua Spotso, but Table 3 makes it clear that it was Daniel.

²³ A. Starbuck 1924, p. 26

²⁴ Nantucket Registry of Deeds, second half of Vol. 1, p. 22.

in 1733, when John Bunker—a Wampanoag despite his English name—complained to the court about the impoundment of his horse.²⁵

Nantucket court records include numerous complaints about impounded livestock, but the Wampanoags were not alone in resenting animal control; English settlers frequently complained about impoundment of their animals, too.²⁶

Wampanoags who did not have horses of their own still yearned to be up and astride. In 1715 English settler Daniel Russell took Wampanoag Tom Cain to court for riding his mare without permission. Russell wanted a large award for damages (four pounds) and had to settle for a small one (fifty shillings). The trouble wasn't over, because very soon after, Wampanoags Jo Shinny and John Moab were in court for taking and riding Russell's mare repeatedly and also burning Russell's hay, perhaps in retaliation for Russell's complaint against Tom Cain. Outraged, the English court sentenced Shinny and Moab "to be severely whipt."²⁷

Not only did the English seek to prohibit Wampanoags from having horses, but soon after arriving on the island they issued the first of repeated orders to kill all the Wampanoags' dogs on the grounds that the dogs ran down sheep and killed lambs.²⁸ The court's defense of property rights was clearly reserved for the new English proprietors and did not extend to the island's ancient proprietors, whose own domestic animals were now branded a nuisance.

The nuisance of English livestock to the Wampanoags was an order of magnitude greater. Not only did protection of the English sheep occasion the slaughter of the Wampanoags' dogs, but the foraging animals of the English—sheep, goats, cows, and horses alike—grazed their way through Wampanoag crops despite provisions written into the original deeds that protected Wampanoag fields and gardens from planting time until harvest each year. A flood of complaints appears in court records over the years. In 1672, at the suggestion of Eleazar Folger and others, the town ordered the settlers to erect a fence to keep their animals from invading the Wampanoags' cornfields and to pay the salary of a cowkeeper to watch the animals. Still, Wampanoag complaints continued.²⁹

²⁵ Nantucket Court Records 1, pp. 61, 30, 54, 89.

²⁶ A 1741–42 inventory of confiscated horses in A. Starbuck 1924, p. 146 reads: "John Quaab had a horse taken which cost him 8 pounds; Jonathan Quaab a horse he got no compensation for; James Asab a horse from his pasture which cost him four pounds; John Tashamen, two horses—one cost him 3 pounds 'In Silver' and the other 10 pounds; John Jethro, three horses which cost him 27 pounds 10 shillings, and out of the cost he got 5 pounds 13 shillings.... Joshua Mamock had a horse taken from him that cost 12 pounds, and his father also had a horse taken; Paul Quaab had two horses taken that cost him 25 pounds and he received 3 pounds; Essau Cook's father lost a horse that cost him 13 pounds.... Solomon Zachariah's father Naush Grachas and Abel Nanohoo also lost horses."

²⁷ Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 3, 1715.

²⁸ Orders were issued in 1663 and again in 1667.

²⁹ Cowkeeper became a local Wampanoag surname. There are records of both James and William Cowkeeper from just the time the English settlers mandated that there should be a cowkeeper to protect the cornfields.

Animals loose on the commons also menaced Wampanoag homes. Lightly built and easy to move, wigwams were vulnerable to trampling by cows. A petition notes that John Jethro's "wequam house" had been broken down by English cattle in 1741 at the same time that they devoured a half-acre of his crop of rye.³⁰ It's hardly any wonder that the Wampanoags early began securing lumber and nails to build English-style frame houses, which—although lacking the easy portability of wigwams—were not easily moved off their foundations.

The Wampanoags' fields planted with corn, wheat, and rye had been broken with English plows. According to James Freeman, reporting long after the fact in 1807, they were impressed by the efficiency of English plows and asked the settlers to plow land for them as well.³¹ Account books and complaints from the preceding century bear out his assertion. English settlers who owned plows and oxen bartered their labor for goods, while Wampanoags complained that the English deprived them of draft animals with which they could have plowed their land for themselves.³²

The heavy English plows brought grief to the island in unanticipated ways. In 1669 Peter Folger's son Eleazar, his daughter Bethiah, Bethiah's husband, and another young settler traveled to the Vineyard with a Wampanoag in his open boat to fetch a plowshare. As they returned home with it lashed athwart, the boat capsized and everyone drowned except Eleazar, who managed to right the boat and bail it while drifting all the way across the Sound to Monomoy Point on Cape Cod.

Subsequent to clearing and plowing land, the local court would hear trespass complaints from time to time in which one Wampanoag would complain against another about planting fields they both claimed as their own. At the same time, the English would respond to accusations that they had usurped Wampanoag land by asserting that Wampanoags had abundant land for their own use but failed to "improve it" so that it went to brush and brambles, yielding nothing. In order to keep Wampanoag women and children from starving, the settlers claimed, they had to take it upon themselves to plant and tend land for them.³³

From the moment the English proprietors established themselves on the island, we learn a great deal more about individual Wampanoags—not only the names of the sachems and their relatives, but also the names of less influential people in the island's native society. Members of elite families signed deeds, but just about anyone might come before the English magistrates and justices of the peace, and the courts kept meticulous records. So did those English men and women who imported buttons, kerchiefs, greatcoats,

³⁰ Reproduced in A. Starbuck 1924, p. 146. See Appendix 1d.

³¹ Freeman 1807, p. 36.

³² A 1718 complaint about this is reproduced in A. Starbuck 1924, p. 143.

³³ See the documents reproduced in A. Starbuck 1924, pp. 161–65.

cured tobacco, sugar, molasses, rum, wooden boards, iron nails, fishhooks, and rope—things the English considered necessities of life and the Wampanoags soon felt need of as well. The traders kept account books that balanced debits against credits. There wasn't much currency available to anyone on the island—English or Wampanoag—and much of what appears in the account books is barter: goods in the debit columns over against days of labor, bushels of grain, barrels of fish, and the like in the credit column. The value of each item was reckoned in pounds, shillings, and pence, with the sums added up on both sides of the page. Everyone doing business—English or Wampanoag—was recorded by name and credit history. When an account fell deeply into the red and remained there for a long time, resort was made to court, and then a court record came into existence as well. At death, if the deceased owned anything of value—a house, livestock, tools of a trade—an inventory was made for probate. Among the items listed in probate inventories were debts the deceased owed at death and debts owed to him by others. When it comes to information about all levels of society on Nantucket, English law and English commerce were levelers. Whether great or small, one's name was likely to be caught in the net of written documents.

At least a thousand different Wampanoag individuals are documented by name in the various written records of the town. The majority of the names are themselves English introductions. English record-keeping required given names plus family surnames, and there were several different ways of making them. Some combined Christian baptismal names with fabricated surnames such as Harry Britain, Simon Dutchman, James and William Cowkeeper, and Mary Seahorse. A longer Algonquian name such as Nickanoose, Wannackmamack, or Wannanahumma might be shortened for that person's descendants, yielding names such as Paul Noose, Hannah Mamack, and George Humma.³⁴ Another type was what is known as a patronymic: the sons of a man might have "son" added to his name. Peter MUSAQUAT's son Isaac was known as Isaac Peterson, and other families took the names Samsson, Thomasson, and Jephthason. Algonquian family names ending in -son (Nosson, Pampusson, Suppason, Weyapasson, Womhomasson, and Wunnohson) are probably also patronymics. Yet another strategy was to approximate the sound of an Algonquian name to an English word or phrase: Peekeyes, Toughskin, Short Chin, Turkey, Scotsbonnet, Orange, and Pumpkin. Alternatively a person might just take a wholly English name, as ASSASSAMOUGH did upon baptism, exchanging his Algonquian name for John Gibbs. The records also identify George and John Bunker, Micah Coffin, and Joe Starbuck as "Indians." Occasionally a place name was attached to a given name. There was Tuckernuck Dave, who got into trouble for an unauthorized salvage operation, and Madequecham Micah, who had an English-style house, ran an account with an English merchant, and left enough of an estate to have it go through probate.³⁵

³⁴ The name of Paul Noose appears on a pair of land documents written in Massachusetts in 1691 and 1703 (Goddard and Bragdon 1988, Part 1, pp. 182–89). Hannah Mamack appears in Justice of the Peace George Bunker's ledger, because a question was raised about whether her domestic service could be transferred from one English family to another. George Humma appears in Mary Starbuck's account book, 1687 (Nantucket Historical Association MS. Collection 10, AB 475).

³⁵ Tuckernuck Dave appears in the court records for taking property from a vessel on the shore of Tuckernuck in 1745. In the Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 4, there is a certification that prior to his death he made an oral statement that

Zaccheus Macy wrote of the Nantucket Wampanoags that, “some of them were weavers, some good carpenters,”³⁶ and probate records show them owning looms and carpentry tools, signs of their early integration into the labor force for the English settlers’ business enterprises. This integration was problematic, however. When a creditor took a Wampanoag to court for unpaid debt and brought an account book along as evidence, it was common for the defendant to insist that the debt simply couldn’t be as great as the creditor said it was. The justice of the peace invariably believed figures in the account book rather than the protestations of the debtor, who then was required to pay the outstanding debt and the court costs as well.

The court records are full of accusations of the theft of sugar, molasses, and astonishing quantities of rum, all products of the sugar trade with the Barbados. The sugar cane plantations of the English-held Caribbean islands operated in part on the labor of indentured servants and convicts from England and Ireland. A person might voluntarily sign a contract to work without pay for a period of years in exchange for debt forgiveness or to get a new start in life while learning a new trade. By the same token, the courts found a productive alternative to prisons by sentencing people convicted of crimes—whether major or minor, common or political—to transportation overseas and years of unpaid labor. Since neither of these practices provided anything like the labor force needed for large-scale cultivation and processing of sugar cane, the English—like the Spanish and the Portuguese—relied on buying people who had been taken captive in Africa and shipped across the Atlantic for sale. Not all of the African slaves were destined for the Caribbean, however. Some were bought as house servants and ended up in New England. Along with sheep, plows, looms, account books, molasses, and rum, African slaves were regarded as another English commodity introduced to Nantucket, appearing in estate inventories along with furnishings, tools, and livestock. Their children, born into slavery on Nantucket, gave rise to a new community of Nantucketers of color, at first separate from the Wampanoags, but destined, a century later, to merge with them.

The First Half Century of Coexistence

When the ominous events of 1665 took place—murders, hangings, and King Philip’s visit to Nantucket—the number of English settlers living on the island was minuscule. They remained outnumbered by Wampanoags for a half century or so until the high birthrate and the longevity of the English intersected with diminishing fertility and life expectancy of the Wampanoags to bring their respective numbers to parity. During the first fifty years the Religious Society of Friends did not yet have a foothold on the islands, and, with the exception of Peter Folger, the settlers did not evangelize. They appear to have been

his property should go to his wife and son (p. 18). Madequecham Micah was a whaleman and a carpenter. An inventory of his estate appears in Nantucket Probate Book 2, pp. 34–36 and is reproduced in Little 1980.

³⁶ Z. Macy 1792b; O. Macy 1880, p. 258; A. Starbuck 1924, p. 123.

typical frontiersmen—intensely individualistic, resistant to outside interference, and tenacious of their personal rights. Although they quarreled among themselves and with the half-share men they had brought in, in large measure the share-holding proprietors left one another alone, and they left the Wampanoags alone, relying on Peter Folger and his offspring to serve as intermediaries. Early English passions on Nantucket were for making a living, not saving souls. There was more concern for shearing sheep than for seeking God’s lost lambs. Only as the island gradually revealed itself as a poor and limited place for agriculture did the English settlers begin to emulate the Wampanoags in exploiting gifts from the sea.³⁷ At about the same time the settlers’ children and grandchildren experienced a spiritual attraction to the tenets of the Religious Society of Friends.

During the last decades of the 1600s, while English-speakers were still a minority of the population, Massachusetts continued as the principal language on the island. In their meeting houses, the Wampanoags gathered to hear their own ministers preach in their language, and at home they read and reread their Massachusetts Bibles. Under the influence of Eliot’s translation, their language was changing. On-island and off-island, Massachusetts was becoming more like the language of their Bibles, and this standardization facilitated communication among speakers from different places. The Nantucket variety of the language was less distinctive than it had been, more readily understood by off-islanders from Mashpee to Natick.³⁸

As other English settlers learned Massachusetts and their children grew up naturally bilingual, Peter Folger and his family no longer had the monopoly on intergroup communication. Zaccheus Macy recorded the conversation in Massachusetts that went on between Nathan Coleman and Justice of the Peace Corduda, and J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in his famous description of Nantucket claimed that “The young Europeans learn it with the same facility as their own tongues and ever after speak it with ease and fluency.”³⁹ The settlers learned some of the traditional stories told in Massachusetts and incorporated them into their own oral history, telling and retelling them until they were finally written down in English.⁴⁰

A remnant of Wampanoag rhetoric unmediated by retelling in English can be found in documents written down in Massachusetts—documents that are apparently verbatim records of speech.⁴¹ As an example, Paul Noose, son of the sachem Nickanoose, and Quequenab, a Christian minister, made two declarations that Ukkahdeahohamun and his brother owned a particular piece of land, which they located in terms of its boundaries and the name of land that lay adjacent to it. The first time they did this, in October

³⁷ Z. Macy 1792a, p. 3, remarked on the degradation of the environment brought about by the cutting of wood and brush and the decreasing yield of the land.

³⁸ In the latter half of the 1700s Crèvecoeur found it remarkable that the indigenous people of the Cape and islands spoke the same language as the people of Natick and speculated about whether the original aboriginal peoples had been replaced at some time by a wave of mainlanders. Crèvecoeur 1986, pp. 119–20.

³⁹ Z. Macy 1792b reproduced in O. Macy 1880, 253 and A. Starbuck 1924, p. 122; Crèvecoeur 1986, p. 120.

⁴⁰ Philbrick 1998 makes thematic use of Wampanoag stories as transmitted through English to structure his account of “The Native American Legacy of Nantucket Island” (the subtitle of his book).

⁴¹ Little 1981b, pp. 1–2.

of 1691, Wuddashioo transcribed their declaration. A dozen years later they made the same statement again, and this time Quequenab wrote it down himself, and six Wampanoags witnessed it. The first-person statements, the naming of the adjoining pieces of land, the mention of forefathers, and—in the second event—the affirmation of the truth of what was said by six other Wampanoags probably reflect the way sachems had traditionally made public proclamations. English innovations include the recording of the spoken statements in writing, the dates given according to the European calendar, the borrowed English word “witness,” and appeal to the authority of the King of England, who is, however, referred to by the Massachusetts word *ketahsoot* ‘great man’—a word John Eliot had chosen to use in the translation of the Old Testament First Book of Kings.⁴²

A dozen such Nantucket documents written in Massachusetts survive.⁴³ They are dated between 1667 and 1729 and record statements about ownership or transfer of land and whale rights among Wampanoags. They differ from English-language documents signed by the sachems, such as the 1659 deed by which Nickanoose and Wauwinet transferred land and rights to the English settlers. In the Massachusetts-language transactions, owners, donors, recipients, and witnesses are all Wampanoags. Forefathers are mentioned but, in accordance with Wampanoag practice, not by name. Places are designated by Massachusetts names mostly long since forgotten on Nantucket such as Kupanachasuh and Potupootupummeh. Donors state that they are transferring land because of their love for the recipients. English presence goes all but unacknowledged. In his capacity as chief magistrate, Tristram Coffin certified one document and William Worth certified another. Eleazar Folger made a copy of one at the request of the recipient of some land. A small number of English loanwords appear repeatedly: *acre*, *witness*, *day*, *month*, and the names of months. Others only come up once: *judge*, *wheat*, *barley*, *money*, *half*. In one document the English phrase “at Nantucket” stands in the middle of a sentence otherwise in Massachusetts. The most significant English influence to be found in these documents produced by and for Wampanoags in the late 1600s is the fact that they were written down.

The English kept order among themselves and settled disputes (or attempted to settle them) by a system of constables and magistrates or justices of the peace.⁴⁴ The constables were sent to bring people accused of wrongdoing before the magistrate or justice, who heard the case and made a ruling with or without a trial by jury. On Martha’s Vineyard and then on Nantucket, the English sought to replace the sachems’ traditional rule of law with their own English-style system in which authority descended to the local level from the King of England. They chose native magistrates and constables and gave them imported staffs of

⁴² Documents 51 and 52 in Goddard and Bragdon 1988, Part 1, pp. 182–89; 1 Kings 1:15, 22, 23.

⁴³ Goddard and Bragdon documents 71–81 as well as 51 and 52 in Part 1.

⁴⁴ In the first decades of English settlement Tristram Coffin held the office of chief magistrate, but shortly after 1700 local cases were handled by justices of the peace such as George Bunker, while capital cases were referred to mainland courts.

office bearing the King's arms.⁴⁵ In principle, the Wampanoag and the English judicial systems should have operated independently, but from as early as the 1665 hangings, Wampanoags were subjected to trial and punishment imposed by English judges and juries even if no English settlers were directly involved.

In 1704, a jealous husband named Sabo hacked his wife Margaret to death in their wigwam at Madequecham. Abigail Gardner was first on the scene and saw the victim's body. Then Edward Coffin came upon Sabo burying the murder weapon in the sand. Everyone else who had contact with Sabo as he fled to Tuckernuck and Muskeget was Wampanoag, which is hardly surprising given that at the time the Wampanoags considerably outnumbered the English settlers on the island.⁴⁶ A grand jury was called that included four Wampanoag men, but the trial jury was entirely composed of Englishmen. Besides Abigail Gardner and Edward Coffin, eight Wampanoag witnesses (including one woman) testified, as did a Wampanoag constable. Sabo was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.⁴⁷

As many as nine other Wampanoag men would follow Sabo to the gallows in the years to come, but their trials were not recorded on Nantucket. From 1671 on, the island's court had been authorized to sentence convicted offenders to be pilloried or whipped, but capital cases were supposed to be referred to mainland courts. The Sabo murder trial, carried out on the island with Wampanoag participation, was unique. Subsequent murder trials were recorded off-island with the sentences returned to the island and carried out at Gallows Field beyond the Newtown Gate, which separated the English town from the open commons.⁴⁸

Environmental Degradation

Herman Melville, writing in the mid-1800s, enumerated some of the tall tales that people told about Nantucket: that it was nothing but a sandheap, "all beach and no background," treeless and grassless, where weeds had to be imported, mushrooms served as shade trees, and people carried around bits of wood as holy talismans.⁴⁹ The island is not like that today nor was it before the 1650s, but old photographs from soon after the time when Melville wrote *Moby-Dick* bear out the view of Nantucket as treeless, sandy, and barren. What had happened to the Wampanoags' island home?

When they first arrived, the English settlers had not yet settled on sheep as their source of livelihood. They expected to carry on diversified farming with grain crops and dairy cattle as well as

⁴⁵ Anderson 1940, pp. 233–34.

⁴⁶ One population estimate for the time is approximately 500 Wampanoags versus twenty-seven English heads of households. English settler families were large. If the average household had six members, the Wampanoags still outnumbered the settlers by more than three to one.

⁴⁷ The court record of the Sabo case is in the Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 3, pp. 117–121. A transcript appears in Little 1981a, pp.18–22.

⁴⁸ Newtown and New Guinea have been used interchangeably for the southern edge of town.

⁴⁹ Melville 1982, p. 157.

sheep.⁵⁰ In their first decade on the island, they found that grain could be grown on the plains on the south side of the island, and they could cut hay from the stonier north side and from the salt marshes.⁵¹ This sort of subsistence farming yielded no surpluses, however, so in 1672 they voted to concentrate on sheep raising and the export of wool.⁵² The number of sheep on Nantucket rose to between eight and ten thousand, and at one point even little Tuckernuck Island sustained a herd of about a thousand.⁵³

Plows and sheep remade the landscape, cutting through and gobbling up the native vegetation. Saws and axes made quick work of denuding the island of trees, depriving homesites and livestock of windbreak protection. Exposed to the salt-laden wind, the sandy soil became less fertile than it once had been. Zaccheus Macy wrote of the changes he had witnessed in the course of his long lifetime that “our farming business is become poor by reason of hard winters and wood all gone and shrubs almost gone so there is no shelter to keep off the hard cold winds.” He went on to say that corn yield per acre had dropped by a third and that rather than reserving half the spring lambs each year for breeding stock, it had become necessary to keep 70 per cent or more.⁵⁴ Fifteen years later, that number was approaching 85 per cent, indicating high annual mortality for animals out on the open moors without shelter.⁵⁵

Wampanoags and English settlers alike were increasingly enclosed and immobilized by the sheep industry. Instead of being penned in, the animals were fenced out of places where they were not to graze. They were fenced out of fields and gardens; fences were put up to keep them from roaming onto Wampanoag land; and the whole town was fenced around, with gates controlling access to and from the commons. All this fencing limited access to resources the Wampanoags had traditionally used, and in any case, the sheep were busily nibbling many of those resources to oblivion. Bit by bit the Wampanoag population was concentrated into year-round villages and kept from traditional foraging. Although they themselves had largely given up on farming in 1672, the English settlers were, nonetheless, of the opinion that the Wampanoags still had plenty of land to support themselves and their families if they would just settle down to planting and harvesting crops in the English fashion.⁵⁶

The island’s damaged ecosystem could no longer support the Wampanoag way of life nor could it enrich the burgeoning English population, much less do both. Local legend has it that before the end of the 1600s, a settler watching whales off the south shore remarked to a companion that their descendants’ green pastures lay out there on the sea.⁵⁷ In the same year that the town had voted in sheep, it had also extended

⁵⁰ The Elizabeth Islands were noted for their fine dairies, as Crèvecoeur noted in the 1700s (Crèvecoeur 1986, p. 132)

⁵¹ Z. Macy 1792a, p. 3.

⁵² Byers 1987, pp. 42–43.

⁵³ O. Macy 1880, p. 36; Freeman 1807, pp. 20–25.

⁵⁴ Z. Macy 1792a, p. 3. Spelling modernized for clarity.

⁵⁵ Freeman 1807, pp. 20–25.

⁵⁶ See A. Starbuck 1924, pp. 148, 157, for statements about land available to Wampanoags and the assertion that it was underutilized.

⁵⁷ O. Macy 1880, p. 45.

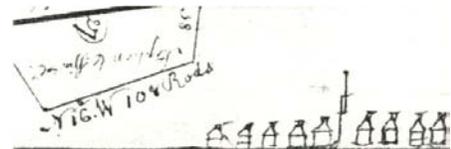
an invitation to a Long Islander named James Loper to come to Nantucket to set up a whaling operation.⁵⁸ As the mainland slid into King Philip's War, Nantucket would have been safe for Loper, but he did not come immediately upon receipt of the invitation, and then it was too late. Whaling did not get a start on the island until after New England emerged from the maelstrom of that war. When it did, it engaged every part of the island's male population: English, Wampanoag, and African.

Whaling

The sea had always cast up useful things on Nantucket's beaches. Until the arrival of the English settlers, the Wampanoags, under their sachems' regulation, had made use of anything and everything that came ashore, including dead whales. In a document written in Massachusetts in 1696 we can see such regulation in action. By it the sachem Matekekin conveyed whale rights as well as land at a place called Pukquotanussut on Nantucket to fellow Wampanoag Koshkuhtukquainnin.⁵⁹ But Englishmen and Wampanoags had long since begun to contend for drift whales.

The sachem Musaquat and Eleazar Folger took a dispute over such a whale to court, and Eleazar was ordered to pay a cash settlement to Musaquat.⁶⁰ Despite the confirmation of Musaquat's claim to that particular whale, however, as early as 1668 Peter Folger was engaged in negotiating on behalf of the English town for "all the whales that come on shore on the island."⁶¹ Nor did the English stop at the appropriation of drift whales. They also proclaimed in 1672 that they reserved for themselves all goods washed ashore from shipwrecks "to be equally divided to the English inhabitants."⁶²

The Wampanoags did not readily acquiesce to being cut off from salvage as well as from land resources. Tristram Coffin and his associates made a great profit from their first salvage operation and expected those in the future to be equally lucrative. But when a cargo of cattle hides washed on shore from a wreck, the Wampanoags carried off a share of them for themselves. The New



Early whaling on Nantucket was carried out by lookout teams who manned rudimentary whale stations on the south shore and kept watch for drift whales from an observation mast. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, P17000*



A sperm whale washed up on the beach at Siasconset in 1998. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, P21264.*

⁵⁸ Recorded in Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 1, June 5, 1672. Loper's fame was enduring in the whaling industry. At least two Nantucket whaling ships carried his name in the 1800s, the *Loper* (which sailed in 1829 with an all-black crew) and the *James Loper*, which operated in the 1840s.

⁵⁹ Document 74 in Goddard and Bragdon 1988, Part 1, p. 257.

⁶⁰ Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 2, back section, unnumbered page, court meeting on December 29, 1679. This is reproduced in Little and Andrews 1982, pp. 33–34.

⁶¹ Entry for July 13, 1668, in back section of Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 1, pp. 8–9.

⁶² Byers 1987, p. 43.

York admiralty court held Coffin, as chief of the salvage operation, responsible for the whole cargo, which he was unable to deliver, resulting in painful financial reverses for him.⁶³

Coffin was taken aback by this fiasco, but surely no more so than was Tuckernuck Dave when he was haled into court and sentenced to be whipped for helping himself to rum and pork from a boat cast ashore on his island.⁶⁴ How could the English have so thoroughly usurped the Wampanoags' traditional rights? How could the Wampanoags take the English claims seriously?

Between 1700 and 1750 whaling practices evolved rapidly. From staking claim to dead whales that washed up on the beach or stranded ones dying in the shallows, the islanders moved on to killing live whales. To begin with, this was a shore-bound operation. Stations were set up along the ocean side of the island and manned by crews of six who took turns watching from a lookout mast. When whales were sighted, the crew would launch their boat from the beach, row out, and attempt a kill. The kill was accomplished by first harpooning the whale and forcing it to drag around a heavy weight (a "drug" or "droge"), then lancing the exhausted animal until it bled to death.⁶⁵ If successful, the crew would tow the huge carcass to land and strip it of its blubber, which was carted off to tryworks located at people's homesteads. Oil extracted from the blubber would turn up on the credit sides of account books, having been traded locally for goods and services and ultimately shipped off-island, commonly to London.

While drift-whaling involved little risk, alongshore whaling, practiced in light twenty-foot boats against huge living animals out on the water in cold winter weather, was another matter. More hazardous still was the next development: offshore whaling. As whales became scarce close in to shore and those surviving more wary, sloops with crews of thirteen or so started carrying pairs of whaleboats out to "the deep," searching for right whales and the even larger and more lucrative sperm whales. Voyages to the open sea south of Nantucket and the Vineyard lasted as long as six weeks. Now the islanders began to pay for their new industry in money, in social reorganization, and in lives.

Building, outfitting, and provisioning sloops to spend weeks at sea was a costly business. Only the most prosperous of Nantucket men could afford the investment to become an owner or a partner in ownership. With the development of offshore whaling, Nantucket male society divided into those who stayed on land and sent their sloops out after whales and men who went to sea for a percentage of the take. The owner or the partners kept half the profits, and the crew shared in the other half, with the captain and the harpooneer receiving double shares.⁶⁶ As in agricultural sharecropping, this "lay" system rewarded productivity, but it paid least to the people who did the heavy work while providing the owners with the capital to expand their investments. Of the nascent whaling industry Obed Macy wrote, "The Indians, ever manifesting a disposition for fishing of every kind, readily joined with the whites in this new pursuit, and

⁶³ Anderson 1940, pp. 395–399, 405–09.

⁶⁴ Nantucket Court Records I, p. 155.

⁶⁵ Little 1981c, pp. 49–54.

willingly submitted to any station assigned them. By their assistance, the whites were enabled to fit out and man a far greater number of boats than they could have done of themselves.’⁶⁷

Nantucket sachems became valued whalers, but not a one had the capital to acquire and operate a sloop. To be a working Nantucket man—Wampanoag or English—was to spend much of one’s life out on the water apart from one’s family and in peril of not returning.⁶⁸ According to Obed Macy, Wampanoag men about to go to sea plowed as much land as their wives and children could manage in their absence, and English settlers assisted in plowing Wampanoag land for the benefit of absent husbands and fathers. Despite their dependence on Wampanoag crew members in their boats, the English settlers considered providing for the welfare of whalers’ families a burden they should not have had to take on.⁶⁹ They expected English women and Wampanoag women to manage for themselves in their husbands’ absence, temporary or permanent. The relatively high number of female heads of households on Nantucket—widows and never-married women of all ethnicities—began in the early 1700s and persisted as long as Nantucket men went to sea.

Wampanoag men had few practical alternatives to this work. Half or more of the thirteen-member crew aboard a whaling sloop was usually Wampanoag.⁷⁰ They were excellent boatsmen and so highly valued for their whaling skills that the English sloop owners exerted intense economic pressure to keep them out on the water. Going to sea certainly must have had its attractions. On the deep a man could be a man among men. On land, English settlers—remembering the horrors of King Philip’s War—felt threatened by displays of strength and courage by non-English men and did what they could to discourage them. At sea, on the other hand, courage and skill were positively rewarded. In the mutual dependence of men in a small vessel there was an egalitarianism not to be found on land. Practically speaking, whaling was a way of acquiring cash to function in the money economy that had replaced subsistence and barter on the island. Nonetheless, whaling was a carrot-and-stick situation. The rewards for going were backed up by English penalties for refusing to go, straitening the already limited options of the Wampanoags.

During the period from 1700 to 1750, the number of vessels going to sea after whales doubled and redoubled. With this growth of offshore whaling came losses of life such as had not previously been experienced on the island. A private record of Nantucket deaths lists a dozen or so whaling-related losses

⁶⁶ In a 1726 list of 28 whaleboat captains, only one Wampanoag appears, a man named Staples. Little 1981c, pp. 32–33, 65.

⁶⁷ O. Macy 1880, p. 42–43.

⁶⁸ From estimates based on size of crews and numbers of vessels operating, Little 1981b, p. 30, concludes that “nearly the whole able-bodied male population, English and Indian, must have been involved in along-shore whaling in the early period.”

⁶⁹ O. Macy 1880, pp. 33, 54.

⁷⁰ On Cape Cod the native Potawamaut community owned and operated some whaling vessels, and—in a reversal of the usual situation—Captain Sam Cooke operated one of them with an all-English crew. Mandell 1996, pp. 139–40.

between 1722 and 1756, ranging from a single man struck by lightning to ten boats lost with all hands “at sea,” “in the shoals,” and—most frequently—“awhaling to the southard.”⁷¹

Except for one notable case, the Indians, Africans, and “strangers,” who drowned when Nantucket whaling boats went down remain anonymous in the record. They were counted but not named. In 1731, for instance, all thirteen members of a crew lost their lives: “Thomas Hathaway, Benjamin Starbuck, W^m Burgess, & one Stranger with one Negro and 8 Indians lost awhaling to the Southard.” In 1743 Daniel Paddack, Obed Bunker, and Joseph Trott went down with their fellow whalers, “the Remainder of the Crew being strangers and Indians.” The years 1755 and 1756 each saw the loss at sea of three whaling crews with the usual complement of strangers and Wampanoags. Isaac Coffin was moved by one of the losses in 1755 to make a note on the front page of his record that “Ebenezer Corduda was the Great Indian Justice. He was lost with Peter Bunker in the year 1755 and his Son James Corduda was lost with him at the same time.”⁷² Whaling had carried off the authority of the Wampanoags’ own court, not just for a season of offshore whaling, but father and son forever.

Transformations

Sometime between 1710 and 1720 the English population on Nantucket surpassed the Wampanoag population. From a tiny group of first settlers, there had proceeded a population explosion almost entirely by natural increase. From the first, the English proprietors had maintained control of who might join them from off-island. Participation in their Nantucket enterprise was by invitation only. This did not keep down the English population, however, because the settlers enjoyed large families, low mortality, and remarkable longevity. Tristram Coffin, whom Zaccheus Macy referred to as “the old grandfather of almost all of us” by virtue of his seventy-five grandchildren,⁷³ himself attained the age of 76, dying on Nantucket in 1681. Peter Folger outlived him by nine years, dying in 1690 at the age of 73, and Peter’s wife Mary survived into the new century, living until 1704. Of their nine children, Bethiah drowned with her husband soon after their marriage and four others moved off-island, but the remaining four contributed thirty-three more Folgers to the English population. Zaccheus Macy was the great-grandson of another first settler couple, Thomas Macy and Sarah Hopcott Macy. Four of the six children of Thomas and Sarah produced island families. Zaccheus was one of eleven children, while his uncle John and John’s wife Deborah Pinkham Macy provided Zaccheus with eight first cousins. Zaccheus and his wife added fourteen more children to

⁷¹ Private Record 63, Nantucket Atheneum. A list of deaths from the first English settlement on Nantucket until the nineteenth century, kept by Isaac Coffin, judge of probate.

⁷² In *Vital Records of Nantucket V*, p. 219, this son’s name appears as Peter Corduda instead of James Corduda, but this is a transposition from Peter Bunker’s name in the original source.

⁷³ Z. Macy 1792b, last paragraph (reproduced in O. Macy 1880, p. 259). Gardner 1949, p. ix counts 1500 descendants of Tristram and his wife Dionis Stevens Coffin in the first four generations.

the English population. Zaccheus's eighty-four years spanned most of the 1700s, making him a fit eyewitness historian of his century.⁷⁴

The English population on Nantucket had grown from eleven in the winter of 1659–60 to 3,000 by the mid-1700s. This was the size the Wampanoag population is said to have been a century earlier. In the meantime, the ancient proprietors had dwindled to fewer than a thousand. In their lifetimes they had gone from majority status, to parity with the English, to being outnumbered three-to-one. For them something had gone terribly wrong. Everyone, then and after, agreed that the lethal enemy was rum. Experience Mayhew wrote of the ravages of rum on Martha's Vineyard, and on Nantucket Zaccheus Macy wrote that by drinking so much rum the Wampanoags decayed very fast.⁷⁵

Early on, the proprietors had sought to prevent Wampanoag access to "spirits," but this colonial-period selective prohibition was no more effective than the modern experiment with prohibition that tried and failed to dry out the nation between 1920 and 1933.⁷⁶ In both cases, the effect was to enrich rumrunners and bootleggers, to clog the courts, and to criminalize the behavior of people whose lives had already been rendered wretched by alcoholism.

The quantity of stolen rum mentioned in court cases is staggering. One wonders how Tooth Harry and Jo Bone managed to carry off eight gallons of rum with one stolen bucket in 1713. In another case, four Wampanoag men were convicted of making off with fourteen gallons. Then four other men were found guilty of stealing thirty gallons. In 1717 a constable with a search warrant for illegal liquor impounded eighty-one gallons of rum found in an Englishman's house. Clearly, anyone—Wampanoag or English—with a container and a strong arm had access to practically unlimited quantities. Rum was stolen from storehouses, from vessels in the harbor, and from homes. It was run from Rhode Island to Tuckernuck, where Wampanoag men gathered in the winter months to hunt ducks, drink, and avoid their creditors. The Wampanoags themselves brewed "very good strong beer" according to Zaccheus Macy.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Genealogical information from the Eliza Starbuck Barney Genealogical Record, Nantucket Historical Association manuscript collection, number 186. Freeman 1807, pp. 31–32, lists two Nantucket residents living at the time of his writing who were in their nineties. During Zaccheus Macy's century, he lists five other English nonagenarians. Eliza Mitchell describes the career of Nantucket midwife Rachel Bunker, who died in 1795 (E. Mitchell 1894–96, unnumbered page). In the course of her eight decades of life, she assisted other women in the delivery of 2,994 babies and gave birth to twelve of her own. At her death she had contributed 128 grandchildren and 98 great grandchildren to Nantucket's population.

⁷⁵ Mayhew 1727, p. xvii: "But what has the worst aspect of all upon them is, the love of intoxicating liquors, which marvellously captivates them, and bewitches them; and which, notwithstanding all the bars laid by our laws in the way of both sellers and buyers, finds the way to come at them as such a rate, as greatly to hinder the interest of religion among them." Z. Macy 1792a, pp. 3–4, about decay caused by rum.

⁷⁶ General laws covering both Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard were made at Edgartown on June 18, 1672 (recorded November 9, 1674), prohibiting alcohol sale to the islands' Wampanoags and also prohibiting all traffic with them by nonresidents of the islands. The text of these statutes is reproduced in Mooney and Sigourney 1980, pp. 202–3.

⁷⁷ Z. Macy 1792a, pp. 3–4.

English men and English women served rum, cider, and beer illegally by the dram and by the quart from their homes and were frequently turned in by their Wampanoag customers for a bounty.⁷⁸ Generally the court simply records that a Wampanoag individual accused an English man or woman of selling cider, beer, or wine to him (or sometimes her), and the court fined the seller. In 1726, the alleged seller was Africa, “a free negro.” Africa denied that he had sold rum to his accuser, Tupasha, but in the end he confessed and was remanded to jail until he paid his fine.⁷⁹ In 1730, Isaac Aosawa accused Nathan Chase not only of selling rum to him and his friends but of overcharging them. Chase said he had no recollection of having done so, but the court fined him anyway. Also in 1730 one Wampanoag came to court to accuse two others of stealing rum from him. It turned out that the putative theft had taken place a year previously on the Vineyard, and there were no witnesses to the theft on Nantucket. Under the circumstances, the court directed the three men to sort out the matter among themselves.

When English women were found to have made illegal sales, their husbands usually appeared in court in their stead and agreed to pay their fines. When Ann Coffin was called to court in 1708 for selling a quart of cider to Shriktime, however, she simply failed to appear and couldn’t be found.

Now and then a case was dismissed for lack of evidence or because the accused cleared himself or herself by taking an oath. On the other hand, sometimes the collection of evidence was documented with particular care. In 1749 Sarah Humphrey accused an Englishman of selling her cider and rum. He denied it, but Sarah had three Wampanoag witnesses to the sale. They came as a group to testify in court, and the Englishman had no choice but to pay his fine. Leah Corduda, one of the witnesses, then made an accusation of her own in 1751. She also brought along a couple of witnesses who testified that they had not only been present at the sale, but they had tasted what was sold her and confirmed that it was rum. The English woman defendant’s plea of not guilty was untenable, and she was fined. In the most detailed set-up, in 1755 Abraham Weenhop took three witnesses—two men and a woman—with him when he went to buy rum from an English woman. The witnesses testified that they saw the woman put the rum into jugs for Weenhop, who then carried the jugs directly to the house of the justice of the peace, who tasted the contents. The woman could offer no defense and was found guilty.

The court records also witness the consequences of alcoholism—from the nuisance of public intoxication to matters more grave. In 1718 Tooth Harry was brought before a justice of the peace for violently taking the hat of another Wampanoag and refusing to return it.⁸⁰ Drunken brawling resulted in beatings and stabbings that put men out of work for months at a time. Micah Phillips had the bad luck to be

⁷⁸ In 1729, Lizzy Diamond, who had turned in several women who had sold her rum, came back to court because one of them had failed to make a payment to her as directed by the court. In 1737 Joe Towady accused an English woman of selling him rum. It turned out that they were in on some sort of scam together, and the court fined her. Court cases from 1701 to 1720 are recorded in the back of Vol. 3 of Nantucket County Deeds. Court cases from 1721 to 1785 are recorded in Nantucket Court Records 1.

⁷⁹ Nantucket Court Records 1, p. 37.

⁸⁰ George Bunker’s ledger, page numbered 38, following section numbered 18–120.

stabbed on two occasions three years apart.⁸¹ Drunkenness led to domestic violence and invasions of other people's homes. In 1736 Ben Jusap broke into a house at night and terrorized the English family who lived there. By the sober light of day he could offer no explanation beyond that he had been drunk at the time and didn't know why he had done it.

Nor was alcoholism and its attendant violence solely a male tragedy. One day in 1734 two Wampanoag women, Susanna Corane and Patience Nosson, were seen by several people leaving the meeting house together. Patience was carrying her infant. A while later she was found sitting by the side of the road nursing her baby while Susanna lay on the ground a little way away. Patience said that her companion was napping, but Patience had blood on her hands. When Susanna was found to have been beaten senseless, Patience denied that they had been fighting. Patience would later offer in her defense that she had been drunk as she left church. Others testified that the two women were engaged in a long-running jealous quarrel. Susanna, somewhat recovered, requested that the court permit Patience to be bailed out of jail until the trial, and two men, Joshua Mamack and one of the Tashamas helped come up with the bail bond. At the trial Susanna confirmed that it was Patience who had beaten her. The court directed Patience to pay for Susanna's medical care and to reimburse Susanna's husband for loss of his wife's services (although only by half of what he had requested). Patience also had to pay court costs, and she was sentenced to be whipped. Nothing further was recorded about her baby, last noted at the crime scene suckling from an intoxicated mother.

The English settlers who were so fearful of the effects of alcohol on the Wampanoags and so anxious to keep it out of their hands, nonetheless felt it to be an absolute necessity to themselves. They imported rum and made beer and cider in great quantities for themselves and to sell to each other. Before their move to Nantucket Tristram Coffin's wife Dionis had been in trouble with the authorities of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for brewing premium beer for her paying customers in Salisbury.⁸² Captain John Gardner had been invited by the English proprietors in 1672 to come to the island to set up a codfishing enterprise, but within three years he was in trouble with the local magistrates because—at the height of King Philip's War—he felt it right and necessary to provide a drink to every man, Wampanoag as well as English, first thing in the morning before they all went out to fish.⁸³

There was no practical way to reserve the plentiful supply of strong drink to the English population alone. Prohibited from buying it, Wampanoag men broke into the places where it was kept and helped themselves, and while they were at it, they carried off other things as well. Sometimes things went badly wrong. Entering Thomas Bunker's house to steal rum and a bucket, Tooth Harry and Jo Bone broke

⁸¹ Nantucket Court Records 1, pp. 81, 104.

⁸² Philbrick 1994, p. 226. Colonial licensing limited the strength and quality as well as the quantity of beer offered for retail sale.

⁸³ Thomas Macy's letter of May 9, 1676, to Governor Andros is reproduced in Hough 1856, p. 100.

Bunker's windows. The same year John Challins forced his way into Jabez Bunker's house and smashed a window and a mirror while he was there.

Englishmen drank and brawled too, often in and just outside houses that retailed strong drink. Some had reputations as black as Tooth Harry's. A couple of English troublemakers were John Harper and William Percy, who teamed up with Wampanoag Andrew Bone to steal from vessels in the harbor and make off to the mainland in someone else's fishing boat. Nantucket's justices of the peace were kept busy year in and year out with cases great and small. With considerable variability from year to year, from 1700 to 1763 roughly half the cases before the English court involved Wampanoags. They were in court for drunkenness, violence, theft, sheep rustling, and debt. Sometimes they brought complaints against each other. On rare occasions they won a case against an Englishman. Beginning around 1745, nearly two decades before the epidemic, the percentage of court appearances by Wampanoags began to fall because there were proportionally fewer of them, and because a rapidly expanding English economy engaged the court in two new types of business: the granting of licenses for public houses, inns, and tea and coffee houses on the one hand, and on the other the expulsion of English men, women, and families from off-island who tried to take up residence and do business on Nantucket without an invitation from the proprietors.⁸⁴

Endgame

In the first half of the 1700s Nantucket's economy evolved rapidly as English enterprise expanded in several directions. The sheep industry provided employment for spinners (or "spinsters" as the women were called, regardless of their marital status) and weavers—English, African, and Wampanoag. Wool and woven cloth were stored and shipped off-island, and dealers came to Nantucket to buy directly. The whaling industry needed every able-bodied man available, and men came over from the Vineyard and the Cape to fill out the crews of "Strangers, Blacks, and Indians." Whale oil was processed on the island and coopers were kept busy making barrels for its export to London. Codfishing, originally set up to pay Nantucket's taxes to New York, continued with fish-drying racks spread out along the beaches. The English town, named Sherburne from 1673 to 1795, had relocated from little Capaum to its new waterfront on the big harbor, and was growing rapidly with new homesteads, wharves, oil sheds, and warehouses. To meet the demand, Wampanoag men had become skilled carpenters as well as whalers. Sarah P. Bunker's home on the Cliff and the mill that still stands on the south edge of town, both built in 1746, may have been framed by Wampanoag builders.

⁸⁴ In 1760, 1761, and again in 1763 recently arrived people were ordered to leave the island. Nantucket Court Records 1, pp. 201, 204, 211.

As the Wampanoags erected frame houses for themselves, they furnished them with the same sort of utilitarian items to be found in the English households: chairs, tables, chests, beds, and looms.⁸⁵ But between 1700 and 1750 the inventories of English households expanded to many pages in length, including large mirrors, curtains, bed spreads, tablecloths, pewterware and chinaware, silver spoons, chocolate ladles, and collections of books (especially dictionaries).

As in the merchants' account books, everything in the probate inventories was assigned a value in English pounds, shillings, and pence. Nantucket was now a thoroughgoing money economy, and the Wampanoags were failing in it. The value of their labor was figured in pounds, shillings, and pence, and they had to buy lumber, nails, rope, meat, flour, and even tobacco with the same currency. In the new economy they seldom earned enough to cover their needs, much less their wants. The endless theft of rum manifests their cravings, but other types of theft reveal their unmet needs. More and more, as the century progressed, Wampanoag men and women were brought to court for stealing food. They broke into mills and carried off grain. They broke into warehouses and homes for mutton and pork. Wampanoag men were ever more often brought in for butchering Englishmen's sheep. Many a man and many a woman was cited for receiving, cooking, and consuming illicit mutton.

Wampanoags also took tools they needed and could not afford. In 1731 a handsaw belonging to Richard Macy disappeared. Nine years later Zaccheus Macy took Panchame (Benjamin), a Wampanoag elder, to court for being in possession of it. He pointed out his father's initials, R.M., on the recovered saw, and other witnesses testified that they had seen it in Panchame's house. A jury convicted Panchame of theft and fined him.⁸⁶ In 1734 Betty Pon, a young girl, was accused of taking three files from a shop. Her only response was that she had taken only one file, and the other two had been taken by a Wampanoag boy named Caleb. After continuation of the case for deliberation, the court ordered that Betty pay triple restitution for the files, that she should be whipped (ten stripes on her back), and thereafter that she should be bound in service for a year to the shopkeeper whose files she had taken.

Sheep rustling grew to epidemic proportions. To begin with, it amounted to a lamb here and a lamb there, a sheep or two now and then. By the late 1740s sheep were being taken and slaughtered twenty at a time on Coatue, and in the 1750s a gang of three with a juvenile sidekick was operating on Tuckernuck.⁸⁷

And then there were the saddest of petty thefts: a coat, a quilt, a blanket—signs of misery and desperation. That sort of pilfering didn't inspire pity among the English Nantucketers, however. They were purely outraged and blamed the Wampanoags bitterly for failure to keep their heads above water in the sink-or-swim economy. Many of the English proprietors were inclined then and for long after to regard the

⁸⁵ Little 1980, *passim*.

⁸⁶ Nantucket Court Records 1, p. 134.

⁸⁷ Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 3, back section, p. 152; Nantucket Court Records 1, pp. 70, 116, 129, 168, 177, 193, 197.

descendants of the ancient proprietors as vermin who would make off with anything that wasn't nailed down. In reporting the discovery of a list of the Wampanoag victims of the 1763–64 epidemic in an old Bible sold to a “Cliff Cottager” in 1890, a writer for the *Inquirer and Mirror* remarked, “very likely there is more sentiment lavished upon the Indians of to-day, out upon the Western Plains, than the great grandparents of the present Islander bestowed upon his dirty, thriftless and thieving Indian neighbor.”⁸⁸

As Wampanoags were confined ever more frequently to jail to await trial or punishment, their distraught friends and families resorted to breaking in and letting them out. In 1723 Sam Hews, who had just been found guilty of stealing a quilt, admitted he had broken into the jail and set the prisoners free. It turned out that his sister was among them, and neither she nor Sam were able to appear in court when summoned, because they were both sick. Their father, Panchame—who was to have his own problems in court later on—posted bond for the two of them until they were sufficiently recovered to go before the justice of the peace. Sam shielded his sister by taking sole responsibility for both the quilt theft and the jail break and was fined and incarcerated until he made restitution.⁸⁹

William Lay, the Wampanoag magistrate at Chilmark, had told the Mayhews that since his people were not so inclined to shame as the English were, they had to feel punishment in their bodies. On this point he and Nantucket's Justice Corduda were in agreement, as they laid on whippings for offenders among their people. But how were the English to deter drunkenness and theft? Branding was tried for a while. Before the practice was given up around 1730, a half dozen or so Wampanoag men and boys convicted of burglary—Tooth Harry and Jo Bone among them—were branded in the middle of the forehead with the letter “B.”

Whipping went on without respite. It was dealt out in stripes—ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty stripes laid on the bare backs of men and women, boys and girls. Some people were simply sentenced to be “severely whipt.” Between 1707 and 1760 about seventy people were sentenced to whipping. A few were English men and women—John Harper and William Percy, for instance, for stealing a boat in 1718—but most were Wampanoags. In 1708 Alice Jude was found guilty of being an accomplice to theft and sentenced to ten stripes. She begged for mercy, however, and was given the alternative of a fine, which her fellow Wampanoag, John Bunker, paid for her. In 1726, Sarah Paine, wife of Benjamin Tashama, was also sentenced to ten stripes for participating in a large-scale meat theft, and once again, because of the intercession of a number of people, the court allowed substitution of a fine.⁹⁰ By the 1740s the option of paying an additional fine to avoid whipping had become more the rule than the exception. For people with no money of their own, however, the only way to avoid the pain was to agree to work for free for someone else who would pay the fine.

⁸⁸ “An Interesting Old Document,” *Inquirer and Mirror*, June 21, 1890.

⁸⁹ Nantucket Court Records 1, pp. 11, 12.

Eliza Mitchell wrote in her memoirs of what she believed was the last use of the town whipping post. She and her neighbor Benjamin Franklin Folger agreed that it was located where the Civil War monument now stands on upper Main Street, close to the residence of Zaccheus Macy.⁹¹ The occasion of the whipping—the false report of an intended Wampanoag insurrection—is dated by Obed Macy to September 1738.⁹² There is no court record of the matter, however, and if, as Mitchell believed, the post itself was removed soon after, then another was put up elsewhere. The Nantucket court continued to sentence people to whippings for decades to come.

In the time of the branding and the whipping, the Society of Friends was assuming its pervasive influence on the island. How, it has been asked, did people committed to pacifism, square their consciences with the bloody slaughter of thousands of large marine mammals for their own enrichment? How, too, it might be asked, did people who were coming to the conviction that involuntary servitude violated universal human rights manage to live with a court that mandated the brutality of the whipping post?⁹³ And what about the gallows? How could these things be part of a community in which Quakers dominated nearly every institution? In 1835 Friend Obed Macy weighed the question of capital punishment, made some arguments against it, concluded that the topic required greater persuasive powers than he possessed, and mildly expressed the hope that the practice would be given up.⁹⁴

The Nantucketers had apparently been taken aback by the death sentence they had meted out to Sabo in 1704. A Quaker visitor, Thomas Story, recorded in his diary that several of them approached him in private to discuss whether there was any way that—having properly reached the verdict by jury trial and having sentenced Sabo according to the dictates of English law—they could now avoid actually hanging him.⁹⁵ Story offered them two loopholes, and he says ambiguously that the Nantucketers took the former way. This might mean that they went ahead and hanged Sabo or that they made use of the first of Story's loopholes. Since Sabo turns up on all the variant lists of men hanged on the island, it appears that the English Nantucketers felt constrained to go through with his execution. It is significant, nonetheless, that they were troubled and sought Friend Story's thoughts on the matter.

The early abandonment of branding and the increasingly frequent practice of letting people buy their way out of whipping may reflect the Friends' scruples. But the gallows did stand, and Wampanoag men were taken there to be dropped even after the epidemic, when not many Wampanoag men remained

⁹⁰ Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 3, back section, pp. 161, 178; Nantucket Court Records 1, p. 43.

⁹¹ "Formerly a whipping Post in our midst—But many years ago." E. Mitchell 1894–96 (unnumbered page).

⁹² O. Macy 1880, p. 59.

⁹³ Besides conviction for theft and other similar offenses, the Nantucket court also sentenced newly delivered mothers of children born out of wedlock to be whipped. Unmarried women who found themselves pregnant faced coercion to identify the child's father, so the town at large would not have to pay for support of the child. If the woman did not come to court on her own and denounce the father of her unborn child, midwives forced her to reveal his identity during the duress of labor. Postpartum she faced whipping unless she could pay her way out of her predicament. See Nantucket Registry of Deeds, Vol. 3, back section, p. 175 concerning Hannah Skiffe in 1713 and Nantucket Court Records 1, 165, about Mary Flood in 1747.

⁹⁴ See Appendix 1c.

alive. Subsequent to the Sabo case, Nantucketers seem to have taken more readily to capital punishment. They employed Wampanoag Sam Humphrey as hangman.⁹⁶

Nantucketers were a practical lot, and it was obvious that branding and whipping only served to make people sullen and unproductive, while fines and restitution were meaningless when cash was absent and what had been stolen had also been consumed. Court practice was to turn the loaded docket to advantage by sentencing those convicted of crimes to periods of servitude in English households and aboard whaling vessels. The same sentencing served for instances of insurmountable debt. Those who had run up accounts entirely beyond their means to pay were made to work the debt off by uncompensated labor. The time of service was meted out in months and years, but for people over their heads in debt as well as for those convicted of serious crimes, the years of service extended before them into old age and to the grave.

“Indian debts” were a commodity to be traded, inventoried in probate, and passed on in wills. Bound servants, too, were subject to probate and inheritance. In 1762 Hannah Wyer wrote in her will, “I give unto Isaac and Mercy Chace my Indian girl.” She also bequeathed to Mercy a silver chain and a quilt.⁹⁷

Wampanoag children were bound into servitude for the debts of their father. In 1717 Richard Macy made a loan of 40 shillings to Ephraim to be repaid within two months. Written into the agreement was the proviso that if Ephraim failed to repay the money on time, his son Jacob would be bound to Macy for “whaling and fishing on this shore.” Ultimately it came about that “2 young sons” of Ephraim were bound to fish on the shoals for Macy “until they are of the age of 21 years of age.”⁹⁸

The prospect of being bound in service to an English master for all one’s young life was more than some Wampanoags could bear. In 1734 John Cheges, servant of Samuel Coffin, and Deborah Hews, servant of Richard Folger, planned their escape. When they were apprehended, they had stolen a boat, a compass, warm clothes, and a bucket of sugar for their flight from the island. Both were sentenced to fifteen stripes at the whipping post and a fine. Samuel Coffin paid his servant’s fine in exchange for an additional eight years of Cheges’s bound service. Deborah was sentenced to an additional twelve years of service to Richard Folger and others.⁹⁹

The return of bound servants to households from which they had fled was certainly awkward. When more than flight was involved, one cannot but wonder how everyone managed. It is hard to imagine

⁹⁵ Little 1981a, p. 22.

⁹⁶ Samuel Humphrey is identified as “hangman” in a document conveying a horse common to his son-in-law. Nantucket County Deeds, Vol. 5, p. 220. This is repeated in Little 1990a, p. 19.

⁹⁷ Nantucket Probate Book 3, p. 457.

⁹⁸ Richard Macy account book (Nantucket Historical Association MS. Collection 10, AB 422), pp. 85, 88.

⁹⁹ Nantucket Court Records, pp. 101, 102. The problem of fleeing servants had become an issue already in the second decade of English settlement. A. Starbuck 1924, p. 127, reproduces the following order from 1670: “If any person

the dynamics of Peter Coffin's household in 1709 after his servant Ned knocked Coffin's wife down with an iron tool and then took several shots at Coffin himself. The court extended Ned's term of service to Coffin for an additional year, but who would dare to take such an attacker back into service on land? Surely the only thing to do was to keep him at sea continually with no shore leave.

The institution of servitude for debt and for crime on Nantucket gave rise to a new generation of *patrones*, English businessmen who attended trials, paid debts and fines for those convicted, and put them to work in their enterprises. One of these men was Zaccheus Macy: a highly successful businessman in his own right, Nantucket politician, Quaker elder, town bonesetter, and eventually the Nantucket historian of his century. The great-grandson of one of the first English settlers to reside on the island, Zaccheus Macy was said to be the last of the settlers' descendants to speak Massachusett. Eliza Mitchell wrote that he was "the only person of that time who understood the Indian Dialect. He could converse freely with them and consequently could influence them in many ways for their good."¹⁰⁰ When Jonathan Tony was convicted of breaking and entering and theft in 1760 and the court awarded twenty-five years of Tony's labor to the plaintiff, the plaintiff immediately made a deal with Zaccheus Macy to take Tony off his hands. Macy benefited from fewer than four years of Tony's service, however, before the epidemic carried him off.¹⁰¹

Another of the men who attended court looking to take charge of the lives of Wampanoag debtors and criminals was Zaccheus Macy's contemporary, Cromwell Coffin, great-grandson of Tristram and the first of the many Cromwells in his family. By the 1740s three men—Peter Folger's great-grandson Abishai Folger, Jonathan Coffin, and Richard Coffin—were, moreover, serving as "Guardians for the Indians" in Nantucket despite the Wampanoags' protest to the General Court of Massachusetts that they did not want Folger or any other Englishmen living on the island to be in a position of authority over them.¹⁰²

By their nature, court records paint a dark picture of a community. In their pages one learns of failure, destructive behavior, and social isolation. Despite Zaccheus Macy's short list of "the most Respectable Indians" and Crèvecoeur's report of literacy and strict piety among Nantucket's Wampanoags,¹⁰³ other Nantucket sources hardly present a bright picture. Men's long absences at sea left behind on land old people, women, and children unable to cope with the heavy work of planting and harvesting. The loss of men to alcohol, drowning, and the gallows unbalanced the ratio of Wampanoag

English or Indian shall at any time carry in any vessel any Indian servant to any English on the Island, whosoever shall carry any such person off the island without orders from his master shall be fined twenty shilling."

¹⁰⁰ E. Mitchell 1894–96 (unnumbered page).

¹⁰¹ "John Toney" on the list of epidemic victims is probably Jonathan Tony. After the epidemic there is no further record of Jonathan.

¹⁰² Petition of August 9, 1747. See A. Starbuck 1924, p. 155, and also Appendix 1d.

¹⁰³ Crèvecoeur: "Mr. Eliot, an eminent New England divine and one of the first founders of that great colony, translated the Bible into this language in the year 1666, which was printed soon after at Cambridge, near Boston; he translated also the catechism and many other useful books, which are still very common on this island and are daily made use of by those Indians who are taught to read" (p.120), and "they were early Christianized by the New England missionaries...and to this day they remain strict observers of the laws and customs of that religion, being carefully taught while young." (p.122)

men to women, and there was no way to reconstitute Wampanoag families.¹⁰⁴ Christianity had imposed monogamy, and—contrary to what happened on the Cape and Vineyard—no marriages were formalized on Nantucket between the Wampanoags and the English. At the end of the 1700s, after the epidemic and after the last hanging, Wampanoag women outnumbered Wampanoag men by four to one.¹⁰⁵ The 1770 probate inventory of the estate of schoolmaster Benjamin Tashama, an epidemic survivor, lists fifteen chairs, silent witnesses of the school where Wampanoag children had learned to read and write Massachusetts, back in the days when there had been children.¹⁰⁶

Following King Philip’s War, Wampanoags on Nantucket had begun sending petitions to mainland authorities complaining that the island’s sachems had deeded to the English proprietors land that they had no authority to sell. From then until the late 1750s such petitions continued to be posted off-island, expressing ever more distress.¹⁰⁷ The substance of the most fully developed of the petitions made the following assertions: The English had usurped Wampanoag land and stripped the island of wood; they had evicted the Wampanoags from the land and cultivated it for themselves; they charged rent from the Wampanoags for use of their own land; and they were forcing the Wampanoags off their traditional land in Squam to live in an area—Miacomet—where corn would not grow. Moreover, the English limited the Wampanoags in how much livestock they were permitted to keep; they impounded and killed the Wampanoags’ animals; and the Englishmen’s animals consumed Wampanoag crops. Wampanoag houses had been knocked down, and the English threatened to demolish others. The English forced Wampanoags to take to their boats after whales, cut up those that were killed, put codfish out to dry, and butcher dead sheep on the Sabbath. And finally, the English prevented the Wampanoags from having their own justices.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ The Hews family had a particularly hard time with the English justice system. Prior to conviction for stealing a quilt and letting his sister out of jail, Sam Hews had already taken ten stripes at the whipping post for stealing clothes and been sentenced to another whipping (not to exceed twenty stripes) for stealing linen. The year before Deborah Hews and John Cheges tried to flee Nantucket, Simon Hews was convicted of theft, sentenced to twenty stripes at the whipping post, and bound for four years’ service on a vessel. Before the four years were up, Simon was again convicted of theft, took a whipping of fifteen stripes, and was bound for an additional four years’ service, this time to a fellow Wampanoag. Decades later, having survived the epidemic, he died on the gallows according to Obed Macy 1880, p.74. Comparing the various lists of men hanged, it appears that in addition to Sabo and Simon Hews, others included Finch, Jo Noby (probably Nobynash), Happy Comfort, John Comfort, Joel Elisa, Henry Jude, and Nathan Quibby. The lists of ten include Tom Ichabod, but his name also appears on the list of people who perished in the epidemic.

¹⁰⁵ Z. Macy 1792a, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ The inventory of Benjamin Tashama’s estate appears in Nantucket Probate Book 3, p. 165. It is reproduced in Little 1980, p. 62. In 1917 the boulder that had marked the site of Benjamin Tashama’s house and school near Bean Hill on the Milestone Road was moved to the grounds of the Nantucket Historical Association’s Fair Street Museum. It is to individuals such as Benjamin Tashama that Bragdon (2000, p. 181) refers when she writes, “Natives instructed according to Eliot’s methods and using Eliot’s materials taught hundreds of others in turn.” That Eliot’s teaching materials remained extant more than a century after they were printed is confirmed by Crèvecoeur. Writing about Nantucket in the eighteenth century (1986, pp. 164–65) he stated, “the Bible and a few school tracts, both in the Nattic [Massachusetts] and English languages, constituted their most numerous libraries.”

¹⁰⁷ The relevant documents are reproduced in A. Starbuck 1924, pp. 137–75.

¹⁰⁸ For three examples of the petitions of the 1740s, see Appendix 1d.

The English selectmen rebutted the Wampanoags' petitions point by point. They said the Indians had more land for their own use than they knew what to do with; that far from taking the Wampanoags' wood, the English had allowed the Wampanoags to have the stumps the English cleared from their own land; that the deeds transferring the land from the sachems to the English settlers were all in order; that they did not run their livestock on land they did not own; that the only Wampanoag animals they had killed were sheep-killing dogs; and that rum and evil-minded non-Wampanoag agitators lay behind the complaints.

The General Court of Massachusetts was unresponsive to the petitions it received, but apparently in the 1750s a judge finally came to Nantucket, listened to all sides, and upheld the position of the English proprietors. As Obed Macy wraps up his description of the proceedings: "On this conclusion the court rose, the Indians withdrew, and, though not satisfied with the decision, were never very troublesome about it afterwards."¹⁰⁹

With only a few years left until the coming of the epidemic of 1763–64, the Wampanoag population on Nantucket had fallen to 358.

The disease—whatever it was—descended upon Miacomet like a bolt from the blue. Because it killed its victims in a matter of a few days, during which time they became jaundiced, it was described as "yellow" fever. Two hundred twenty-two Wampanoags died, while the English remained unaffected.¹¹⁰ Even at a remove of nearly two and a half centuries, the fact of over two hundred people dying on Nantucket in the course of six months is unprecedented and absolutely terrifying.¹¹¹ The apparently little attention most English Nantucketers paid to what was happening seems callous until one looks further into the historical record. There one sees, as did Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur at the time, that epidemic disease with huge mortality among indigenous populations was the rule rather than the exception wherever Europeans had set themselves down near or among them.¹¹² Isolated though Nantucket had been before its active maritime economy evolved in the 1700s, the sort of epidemic that had emptied the coastal mainland and strewn its shores with exposed bones was overdue in Nantucket. By the time Experience Mayhew

¹⁰⁹ O. Macy 1880, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Z. Macy, an eyewitness to the epidemic, wrote a short account of it in 1792a. Six years later Christopher Starbuck and Shubael Coffin wrote accounts in letters to Moses Brown (Nantucket Historical Association MS. Collection 126, Folder 2). Almost a century later Eliza Mitchell wrote of Z. Macy's role in relief to the Wampanoags during the epidemic. O. Macy 1880 and A. Starbuck 1924 both contain accounts of it, and most recently Little 1990b and Philbrick 1998 examine the contemporary sources and modern analytical tools to try to reach some understanding of the cause of the epidemic and how it was handled by people living on Nantucket at the time.

¹¹¹ Never before or since have the living on Nantucket had to arrange burial for 222 people in the course of a half a year, and to dispose of personal effects and housing that might still harbor a deadly infectious agent. A modern comparison would be the deadly outbreak caused by the Ebola virus in Kikwit, Zaire, in 1995. In spite of modern medical management, that epidemic killed 245 people and caused anxiety around the globe.

¹¹² In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur wrote about Nantucket shortly after the epidemic. He accurately described the factors of both disease and demoralization as well as the role of rum in the population decline

wrote in the 1720s about the deaths of godly Wampanoags, the Vineyard had already suffered badly.¹¹³ In 1753 the native minister of Mashpee, Solomon Briant, lost all eleven of his children to an epidemic there.¹¹⁴ In 1759 an infectious disease said to have been brought back by Nipmuck men serving as soldiers in the English army spread through Natick, lasted for three months, and killed twenty people.¹¹⁵

As for Nantucket, the island had grown less salubrious for everyone in the 1700s. The private record of deaths among the English Nantucketers maintained by Isaac Coffin notes that between 1753 and 1756 sixty-nine English people had died, fifty-five of whom were children. Then, in 1759–60, eighty-eight English Nantucketers died, sixty-nine of them children. Diphtheria had reached the island in 1741, small pox and measles in 1759. In 1765 thirty-two English children died, while in 1768, the toll of infant mortality was thirty-six. The big families of the settlers that had built the English population for four generations were now being relentlessly culled. Isaac Coffin recorded nothing of the epidemic at Miacomet, perhaps with reason. Death was visiting almost every English family at the time, and English parents were nursing their dying children and mourning their dead.

In Miacomet, where the “Indian sickness” struck all ages, there was hardly anyone left to care for the sick, much less to mourn. According to a later account, Richard Mitchell found two starving children vainly trying to wake their dead parents, begging to be fed.¹¹⁶ The English feared to go to see what was happening to their Wampanoag neighbors. Physician Benjamin Tupper, who was also sheriff, warned of contagion comparable to the bubonic plague that had ravaged Europe, and stayed away. Most of the townspeople heeded his example and did likewise.

Eliza Mitchell claims that Zaccheus Macy was one of the few exceptions. Throughout the epidemic, she says, he had his own sheep slaughtered and boiled down into nourishing mutton broth, which he daily delivered to a place at the edge of Miacomet village where anyone ambulatory could fetch it back to feed the sick and the survivors.¹¹⁷ Richard Mitchell went further and carried food straight into the homes of the stricken.¹¹⁸

The compassionate efforts of these two Quaker men seem to cast Dr. Tupper in a bad light, but it is worth remembering that Macy was himself a medical practitioner with particular knowledge of

of indigenous people on Nantucket and throughout North America, wherever they came into contact with Europeans (Crèvecoeur 1986, pp. 119, 121).

¹¹³ Between the Mayhews’ arrival in 1642 and the end of the century the Martha’s Vineyard Wampanoag population fell by a third, from an estimated 1,500 to 1,000. By the winter of 1763–64, when Nantucket’s population of 358 was reduced in a matter of months to 136, the Vineyard’s total Wampanoag population had fallen to 313. Had the full force of the epidemic struck the Vineyard, the consequences there would have been what it was on Nantucket. Instead, the population gradually grew to 360 in 1807 and 393 in 1861. See Speck 1928, pp. 8, 110.

¹¹⁴ Goddard and Bragdon 1988, Document 50, Part 1, pp. 176–81.

¹¹⁵ Mandell 1996, p. 131.

¹¹⁶ Philbrick 1998, pp. 220–21, reprints an 1833 account from the *Nantucket Inquirer* about Mitchell and the Miacomet children.

¹¹⁷ E. Mitchell 1894–96 (unnumbered page).

Wampanoag herbal medicine and that Macy and Mitchell were both speakers of Massachusett. These facts in themselves are compelling reasons why they should have been the ones to attempt to minister to the sick in Miacomet, while Tupper kept away in order not to risk becoming a conduit of infection to the residents of the English town.

The possibilities of what the sickness might have been, how it had arrived, and how it was transmitted among the people of Miacomet have been exhaustively examined. In the end, we cannot know for sure what it was, only what it did. From Nantucket it spread to the Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard, where fifty-two people were infected and twenty-nine died.¹¹⁹ A Wampanoag woman from Nantucket and a man from Mashpee who had the misfortune to visit Nantucket in the fall of 1763 carried the disease to Mashpee, where there were fatalities as well. Nonetheless, the virulence of the disease in Miacomet seems to have decreased with time and distance.

When it was over, according to Zaccheus Macy, there were only 136 Nantucket Wampanoags left. In Miacomet village thirty-four who had been sick recovered, and thirty-six escaped infection altogether. The disease that had traveled from Nantucket to the Vineyard and to Mashpee had not spread out across the island of Nantucket. All eight Wampanoags who lived in Madaket were uninfected. Ironically, being in service to the English proved to be the greatest saver of life. The eighteen men who were safely at sea during the epidemic and the forty Wampanoags who were living as servants in English households were unscathed. Records of deeds, wills, and probate inventories provide us with the names of about half the survivors and the eventual death dates of about a third of them. Two children born after the epidemic eventually came to be reckoned as the last Nantucket Indians.¹²⁰

Although there were surviving individuals, there was no longer a social context in which they could continue as a people. The documented survivors form almost no family groups. Sam Robin moved with his wife and child to Mashpee.¹²¹ Wampanoag seamen went back to work. A few years later, aboard the whaling schooner *Sally*, two of them—Peleg Titus and Isaac Jeffrey—died at the hands of another, Nathan Quibby. While they were locked up together in Nantucket's jail, Quibby turned on his shipmate John Charles and killed him too. Convicted of multiple murders, Quibby went to the gallows in Nantucket.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Two letters from Christopher Starbuck to Moses Brown, November 23, 1797, and January 1, 1798, reprinted in Stackpole 1975, pp. 9–13., mention Richard Mitchell going into houses of the infected and Dr. Tupper's warning of the danger to public health.

¹¹⁹ A 1764 report on the epidemic by Governor Andrew Oliver of the Massachusetts Bay Colony describes the death toll on both Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. This report is reprinted in Stackpole 1975, pp. 8–9.

¹²⁰ Abram Quary died in late 1854 and Dorcas Honorable died in early 1855. There are minor discrepancies in the reports of their birth dates and ages, but it is safe to say that at the time of their deaths both were around eighty years old.

¹²¹ Hawley, vital statistics for Mashpee.

¹²² Guba 1965, pp. 144–147. The account in Mooney and Sigourney 1980 is based on the fictionalized version in Joseph Hart's 1834 novel *Miriam Coffin, or the Whale-Fisherman*. Guba refers to the defendant as "Nathan Quibbett"

Who could think of marrying anyone among the dwindling group of survivors? Thankful Micah married Seneca Boston, whose parents were both Africans. According to her brother-in-law, many of the other survivors also found spouses in the African community. In Newtown—or New Guinea as it came to be called—a village situated between the English town of Sherburne and the now all-but-defunct village of Miacomet, Wampanoags and Africans began merging into a new community of people of color

Despite the universal agreement of English Nantucketers and such off-islander observers as Crèvecoeur that rum had been the agent of destruction, the seeds of annihilation had been sown before alcohol became readily available to the island's native people. The ecological system of which they had been a functioning part was radically altered from the moment English livestock were brought over from Martha's Vineyard to graze on Nantucket's sandplain grasses. The subsequent fencing off of parts of the island, restriction of access to natural resources, stripping of trees and ground cover, and the gradual hemming-in of the Wampanoags made it impossible to subsist as they had. At the same time, they were denied the possibility of full adaptation to the new lifeways that had been introduced to the island. Their exclusion was a product of the appropriation of more and more of the island's resources by the English and of the profound mutual cultural incomprehensions that existed between the indigenous people and the newcomers. With only their labor left to sell, the Nantucket Wampanoags could not compete in the developing money economy. In the first half of the 1700s, as the rapidly increasing English population grew prosperous from the evolving whaling industry, the difference between the material circumstances of the English proprietors and that of the descendants of the ancient proprietors precipitated a crisis. From the beginning of English habitation on the island, rum had always been present for the taking. With the passing decades, access to food, money, and personal freedom became ever more desperate issues for the Wampanoags. And then the "Indian sickness" delivered the coup de grâce.

Elegies

The end of Nantucket's own indigenous people was oft-heralded.

In 1790 Zaccheus Macy compiled a list of seventeen vessels in which he had owned shares, concluding with the comment, "Now all gone and worn out excepting the sloop Friendship and the schooner Dianne and all the Indians excepting old Peter Micah and old Isaac Tashama, and myself almost 77 years old and cannot expect to stay much longer."¹²³ Two years later he admitted that there were a few more than just the two old men: four men, in fact, and sixteen women.¹²⁴

and does not cite sources, which are apparently the original court records, since his account provides detailed names, dates, and testimony.

¹²³ Z. Macy 1790. Spelling and punctuation modernized for clarity. A contributor to the *Nantucket Inquirer* (April 1, 1853) misunderstood the way Zaccheus Macy referred to himself after Peter Micah and Isaac Tashama, and—writing of Macy's bone-setting practice—described him as "a Sagamore or Indian Chief" and concluded, "This honest, worthy

Fifteen years after that Freeman wrote, “At present there are only two Indian men and six Indian women left on the island.”¹²⁵

Obed Macy believed that with the death of Abigail Jethro in 1822 the descendants of Nantucket’s ancient proprietors had come to an end.¹²⁶ Of her ancestors’ experience with his own he wrote a devastating summation: “. . .they [the Wampanoags] opened to them [the English settlers] their stores, bestowed upon them their lands, treated them with unfailing kindness, acknowledged their superiority, tasted their poison, and died. Their only misfortune was their connection with Christians, and their only crime, the imitation of their manners.”¹²⁷

Then Abram Quarry, who lived until 1854, became celebrated as the “Last Nantucket Indian,” memorialized by his portrait in the Nantucket Atheneum as a solitary, pensive hermit sitting barefoot by the fireplace of his house.¹²⁸ As an old man he supported himself by pit-steaming quahogs for visitors and weaving baskets for sale. Hezekiah Pinkham, Sarah P. Bunker’s father, once bought a basket from him and painted his initials “HP” on it. In the Atheneum portrait an almost identical basket, filled with berries, is on the table next to Quarry and through the window one glimpses the harbor where he went clamming at low tide. By the early 1850s the age of photography had arrived, and we have another image of Abram Quarry, in which he returns the camera’s unblinking stare with his own grave, penetrating gaze.

But was he “the last”? There is a photograph as well of Dorcas Honorable, who outlived Quarry by several months. The way Quarry had passed the last years of his life, however—living alone and carrying on traditional foodways and crafts that he made available to the public—appealed to the sensibilities of nineteenth-century people as appropriate to “the last of his race.” By contrast, Dorcas Honorable, as her mother before her, had worked as a domestic servant in Nantucket households. She was a Baptist in life and received burial from the Baptist church at death. Eliza Mitchell, who pasted a photo of Dorcas into her manuscript of “Reminiscences,” wrote Dorcas’s story as she understood it down the sides and across the page below it:¹²⁹

She was daughter of Sarah Tashma. Sarah was the last Indian female and a daughter of the famous Preacher and Teacher who lived before my time. Sarah was called Manta in Miriam Coffin, or the Whale Fishery. Imbert probably the father of Daucas.

Indian, died in November 1797, at the advanced age of 84 years,—a remarkable instance of native ingenuity and humanity.”

¹²⁴ Z. Macy 1792a, p. 4.

¹²⁵ Freeman 1807, p. 36.

¹²⁶ Abigail Jethro was descended from the sachem Nickanoose through his son Joshua Jethro.

¹²⁷ O. Macy 1880, p. 58.

¹²⁸ Oil painting by Herminia Dassel, 1851.

¹²⁹ Mitchell confused fiction with personal memory, since an illicit relationship between the characters Manta and Dr. Julius Imbert is a major crux of Joseph Hart’s 1834 novel. For an example of Hart’s appalling appeal to nineteenth-century popular racism and sexism, see his characterization of “Judith Quarry” on p. 86.

Sarah was a true Indian but was never known to smile after her visit from Imbert. I remember her well as she worked for my mother when I was very young. Been dead about 70 years or more.

Dawcus lived many years in the family of Capt' John Cartwright. 6 feet tall, a noble woman of her Tribe, always kept aloof from bad company, lived to be over eighty.¹³⁰

Mitchell's personal memories of Dorcas and her mother were intermixed with bits from Hart's 1834 novel and a fictionalized story about Sarah Tashama that had been printed in the *Nantucket Inquirer* in 1833. There probably was no Imbert, and the phrase about Sarah's never smiling again originally had to do with her surviving the epidemic of 1763–64. Neither mother nor daughter led solitary lives. The 1830 census shows Dorcas living at home in New Guinea with Thomas Honorable, the last of her several husbands.

Were Abram Quarry and Dorcas Honorable then, finally, the last? There are marriages recorded for both of them and children were born to their marriages.¹³¹ After their deaths, moreover, Wampanoags from the Vineyard and Cape Cod came to live on Nantucket from time to time. A report to the governor of Massachusetts "Concerning the Indians of the Commonwealth" listed two large families—the Dennisons of Herring Pond and the Amoses of Mashpee—resident on Nantucket in 1859. Charles Vanderhoop of Aquinnah was assistant lighthouse keeper at Sankaty Light for a year beginning in 1912 and came back in 1919 for another year's service before going home to be keeper of Gay Head Light.¹³² As recently as 1952 the *Inquirer and Mirror* ran a photo of "Mrs. Ruth West Coombs of Nantucket, known as Princess Red Feather among her people, and a descendant of Massasoit of the Wampanoag Tribe."¹³³ Her husband, Darius Coombs of Mashpee, was a descendant of Hiacoomes.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ E. Mitchell 1894–96 (unnumbered pages).

¹³¹ *Vital Records of Nantucket* IV indicates two marriages for Abram Quarry: to Abigail Dingle in 1793 and to Fanny Hall in 1810. It appears that before marrying Thomas Honorable in 1820, Dorcas had been married four times previously, the first time as a teenager in 1792. Philbrick 1998, p. 286, traces Dorcas Honorable's descendants through her daughter Emmeline Honorable.

¹³² Stackpole 1943. A photo of Charles Vanderhoop was published in the summer 1988 issue of the lighthouse publication *The Keeper's Log*, p. 11.

¹³³ *Inquirer and Mirror*, February 23, 1952. A second photo appeared on July 10, identifying her homes as Nantucket and New Bedford.

¹³⁴ Genealogical information from Franklin Dorman, personal communication.

What is more, back in 1822, the year of Abigail Jethro’s passing, Essex Boston—born the son of African slaves on Nantucket—had joined with others in Nantucket’s New Guinea community to write that “We hereby certify that there are among the coloured people of this place remains of the Nantucket Indians, and that nearly every family in our village are partly descended from the original inhabitants of this and neighboring places.”¹³⁵ As we shall see, members of the Boston family would identify with Nantucket’s indigenous heritage as well as with their African roots for decades to come.

There is a way, however, in which Abram Quarry and Dorcas Honorable were truly the last. Solitary as they became in their old age, the spoken language of their ancestors survived only as long as they did.¹³⁶ They were the last fluent speakers of Massachusetts on Nantucket, and their deaths took their language—the language of the care-worn Massachusetts Bibles—forever from the island.

As a people with their own language and their own community, the Wampanoags shared the island with English settlers and their progeny from 1659 until the diabolically selective winter epidemic of 1763–64 carried off whole families. The bones of the epidemic’s victims lay in the sandy soil under pines at the head of Miacomet Valley as the years passed—a year for each of the dead and a couple more for good measure—until the southward spread of Nantucket town accidentally unearthed them.

The treatment the remains of Nantucket’s ancient proprietors have received in the past should discomfort us. An account in the *Inquirer and Mirror* of those found by Albert Folger in 1882, just up the street from Sarah P. Bunker’s home, reports that “Relic hunters are eager for pieces of the bones.”¹³⁷ It was an improvement on this that Mr. Nevins turned over the remains from his property to the Nantucket Historical Association, but in retrospect it is painful to learn

***When a Language Dies*
(*Cuando muere una lengua*
by Miguel León-Portilla)**

When a language dies,
the divine things:
--stars, sun, and moon--
the human things:
--to think and to feel--
no longer are reflected
in that particular mirror.

When a language dies,
everything there is in the world:
--oceans and rivers,
animals and plants--
are neither thought about nor given
voice
with the scrutiny and the enunciation
that no longer exist.

Then there closes
to all the peoples of the world
a window, a door,
a particular outlook
on things divine and human
with regard to being and living on earth.

When a language dies,
its words of love,
expressions of pain and desire,
perhaps old songs,
stories, speeches, prayers--
come what may, no survivor will ever
utter them again.

When a language dies,
many things have already died
and many more are likely to die;
mirrors forever broken,
ghosts of voices
forever silenced:
humanity is the poorer.

English version by Frances Karttunen.

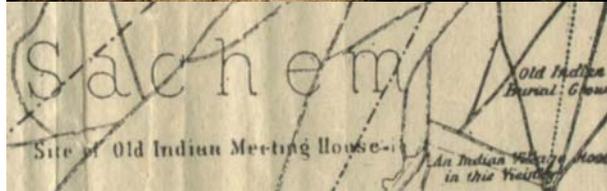
¹³⁵ Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Collection, Box 1, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

¹³⁶ Speck 1928 reports that at the age of 93 Mrs. R. H. Sturgis of Mashpee recalled visiting Abram Quarry when she was about fifteen years old and that he could “speak Indian” (p. 113). Philbrick 1998 repeats this in a caption to a photo of Mrs. Sturgis (p. 11).

¹³⁷ *Inquirer and Mirror*, Sept. 2, 1882. An advertisement for arrowheads to be brought for sale to an address “opposite Sea Cliff House” followed. *I&M*, Aug. 4, 1888.

that a skull was placed on exhibit.¹³⁸ How, indeed, would Sarah P. have felt if the foundation hole of a summer mansion had intruded on the Old North Cemetery where her father was laid to rest, and Hezekiah's venerable skull had ended up on public view?

By contrast, in 1987, when the Miacomet cemetery was disturbed, work was stopped, construction plans were revised, the cemetery was fenced and marked, and Wampanoags came from the Cape and the Vineyard to rededicate it. Then, in 1996, the Nantucket Historical Association transferred the human remains in its collection, fifteen sets in all, to the Commission on Indian Affairs for reburial in the earth from which they had come to light. Their return followed a strange odyssey through twentieth-century Nantucket, a world as alien to their people's imaginations as the spiritworld of the Wampanoag powwows is to ours.



The location of the Miacomet burial ground was mapped in 1869 but subsequently forgotten. When it was relocated, the area was fenced and identified by a large stone. *Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, (photo of stone marker by Frances Karttunen) P21261 ; Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association, photo of Ewer map, P21257 detail.*

¹³⁸ *Inquirer and Mirror*, Sept. 20, 1894.