MASSACHUSETTS OFFICERS
and SOLDIERS in the
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
CONFLICTS

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A Note to the Reader

This volume represents a beginning and a consolidation. To attempt to cover the seventeenth century in its entirety is bold — and to do so within such severe time constraints is frustrating. The lack of muster rolls for these conflicts compounded the already troublesome issue of how comprehensive this project could hope to be. Primarily, this volume represents an investigation of George M. Bode’s masterful history of King Philip’s War, checked against the primary source material. A few additional names have been gleaned from the relevant town histories, volumes of the New England Historical and Genealogical Register, and contemporary histories (such as Bradford, Hubbard, and Johnson), I feel that given the primary and secondary materials, the conflicts through King Philip’s are relatively well-covered.

The story of King William’s War has yet to be told. This agonizing decade of struggle involved over 5000 Massachusetts men in eight major expeditions. Though many of the military records have vanished, a patient search of eighteenth-century land grants (there remains a wealth of unculled material at the State Archives and the Massachusetts Historical Society) rewards us with approximately 300 names not included in Walter K. Watkins’s “Expedition of 1690 to Canada.” However, as the numbers suggest, much work remains to be done on this prolonged and painful conflict. If I were to resume work on this war, I would begin with the Plymouth Colony records and the Massachusetts Archival records relating to the “usurpation” and “intercharter” periods (both available on microfilm at the State Archives Search Room, Massachusetts State House, Boston).

My claim for this directory can be only that it makes readily available archival material and serves as a guide for those who follow me into the seventeenth-century colonial wars. Those who eagerly search the pages for their ancestors and find them missing should not despair. Though military records may be ephemeral, the spirit of the warriors has not receded into obscurity.

This volume, the sixth in a biographical series published by the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the New England Historic Genealogical Society, covers the Massachusetts conflicts of 1620-1698: the early skirmishes, the Pequot War (1636-1638),
the actions against the Narragansetts (1653-1654), King Philip's War (1675-1677), and King William's War (1688-1698).^{1}

* * *

The seventeenth-century Indian wars in New England have affected more than combatants, victims, and descendants of these hostilities. These brutal encounters between colonist and native inhabitant scarred the consciousness and rhetoric of our New Canaan. As Sacvan Bercovitch notes in *The American Jeremiad* (1978):

> the development of the rhetoric was integral to the development of New England at large . . . A major example in the last quarter of the century is what the Puritans named King Philip's War . . . From the security of a later decade, the ministers gloried in "the Evident Hand of Heaven" that "Exstinguished whole Nations of Salvages" as once God had laid waste the Massachusetts tribes to make room for the first emigrants. But during the war itself the terror they shared with all other New Englanders expressed itself in a shift of rhetorical strategy.^{2}

This midst-struggle rhetorical response was merely an exacerbation of symptoms present from the start. We need not look beyond the sermons of John Cotton or the writings of William Bradford to find these fears and latent hostilities well articulated.

These works capture and dramatize the journeys of the colonizing English and, in the process, humanize the participants. How can we review these solely English-documented conflicts in a way that reveals the complex, two-sidedness of the conflicts?

Is there a method of exploring, if not explaining, the impact of these God-mediated conflicts? Why do these spiritual autobiographies, journals, diaries, and narratives continue to engage our imaginations three centuries later? As we read these wordy, worldly chronicles of life and death, we cannot help but be swept along by the tide of historical events and human cost. Human deficiencies on both sides heightened the confusion, hatred, misery, and death toll of each encounter.

We do not need an episodic rehash of what happened when: we require a scale with which to weight the human cost.^{3} A loss of humanity is an attendant risk in such a project, for vital records can be the most lifeless of

1. George M. Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War* (Boston, 1906) has been checked against the account ledger of John Hull, Treasurer at War of the Commonwealth, 1675-1678 (now in the collection of the New England Historic Genealogical Society) and the cited archival material — and found to be reliable in transcription.

The volumes examined at the State Archives include: Usurpation (1688-1689) 33-34, Inter-Charter (1689-1692) 35-37, and Military Records (1675-1703) 68-70. A detailed examination of the Plymouth Colony records remains to be done.


documents without anecdote and biography to sustain them. The narrative to these conflicts will be provided by a cross-section of commentators: from participant Benjamin Church to victims Mary Rowlandson and Hannah Dustin, from spectators Edward Johnson and William Bradford to the eighteenth-century scribbler Timothy Dwight. Finally, we will examine the enduring impact of these exploits on our national consciousness.

* * *

PRELUDE: SKIRMISHES IN THE WILDERNESS

In a curious way, conflict preceded the settlement of New England. Even as John Cotton urged the emigrants to bring “Swords, Rapiers, and all other piercing weapons” — he reassured his children that “they [would] dwell in a place of their own, and move no more.” As they drew near the shores of this New Canaan, the Pilgrims approached a land settled by non-migratory Indians — and the issue crystallized: displace or annihilate. There was never a question of if but only when the conflicts would begin.

All early accounts express relief (suggesting surprise) at the friendly reception granted them by the native inhabitants. Yet nowhere do we find a sense of acceptance of this alien culture by the Pilgrims; if it was to be assimilated at all, it would only be through conversion. As Richard Slotkin suggests (in his comparison readings of various Pilgrim accounts and Morton’s record in New English Canaan):

> It is interesting to set Morton’s account of Plymouth History beside those of Governor Bradford and other Pilgrims. The latter emphasize the nobility of their efforts to convert the Indians ... In Morton’s account, the Indian virtues are played off against Pilgrim defects.²

Was this scoundrel of Merry Mount the only ally of the Indians? Reverend John Eliot would appear to be one of their staunchest supporters; yet his need to convert was too strong for him to accept them as they were. In the end, we should not be surprised that as early as Bradford’s account, the natives are referred to as snakes and evil demons, the fit inhabitants of the howling wilderness that threatened the colonists’ very existence. Here exists a culture refusing to be assimilated — and so it awaits destruction.

Despite occasional outbursts of localized violence, the first seventeen

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Although thesis-ridden, Slotkin’s volume remains an indispensable study when confronting the cultural impact of these conflicts.
years of settlement proved relatively peaceful. This was not a time of organized threat on either side; the Indians were not being displaced by large numbers of colonists, so there was a period of reciprocity when violence was sporadic and usually linked to minor thefts. As the letter included in "Mourt's Relation" reveals:

yet by the goodnesse of God, we are so farre from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plentie. Wee have found the Indians very faithfull in their Covenant of Peace with us; very loving and readie to pleasure us; we often goe to them, and they come to us...4

A spirit of tolerance hovered over the isolated settlements during the first generation. Despite the obvious differences between the natives and English, most were guided by a common humanity. Yet as the settlements became villages and the number of emigrants grew, the English were less able (and less willing) to tolerate their presence. We would do well to remember that John Cotton had not been alone in promising this land to the settlers; it was established belief, reinforced every Sabbath: a place of your own, and you will move no more.

* * *

PEQUOT WAR (1636-1638)

Pequod, you will no doubt remember, was the name of a celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians, now extinct as the ancient Medes...

Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, "The Ship"

Melville had just cause to name his ill-fated whaling ship after that annihilated tribe (even if he relocated the Pequots in the process).7 For the Pequot War of 1637 spelled the end of an era of good feelings between the colonists and Indians, making the final confrontations of King Philip’s and King William’s wars merely a matter of time.

The Pequots served a particular purpose in this development of hostilities in that they were hated both by the English and by other Indians. They became a useful enemy; one that would prove that something must be done about the heathen now. The Puritans felt that they were merely completing the work done by God earlier in the century. Increase Mather began his account of the “troubles with the Indians” by recalling the time when the Indians were the “only Natives of this land."8 But the plague of 1616-1617 decimated the tribes of the northeast, making room for the children of the promised land. Throughout this account, occurrences such as this are seen as merely part of the grand design:

7. Melville was undoubtedly familiar with many of the fictional renderings of that war, several of which placed the tribe in western Massachusetts.
8. Increase Mather, Early History of New England (Boston, 1864), 53.
But God ended the controversy by sending the small-pox amongst the Indians at Saugust, who were before that time exceeding numerous.\(^9\)

The plague bought the English precious time to grow in numbers and settlement before the organized conflicts of mid-century began.

At the time of the war, Connecticut had been settled scarcely two years by settlers from Massachusetts. So despite the Connecticut locale, the Bay Colony had a stake in this war — in spirit as well as man. As Timothy Dwight recalled in his Travels a century later:

the government of Connecticut, although the whole jurisdiction comprised only three towns: Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield, determined to attack the Pequots in earnest, and raised ninety men for this purpose. Massachusetts at the same time engaged to send two hundred men, and Plymouth forty, to their assistance.\(^10\)

The seemingly localized outbreak threatened all of New England and was treated accordingly. For what was becoming quite clear to all was the unresolvable nature of the conflicts between the natives and the colonists, that there would never be a lasting peace until the Indians were dealt with.

Not only did the English have God on their side, but these conflicts were viewed as struggles not merely with heathen, but with the devil himself. Diverse Pilgrim accounts refer to hearing the hideous howling of the wolves — only to discover Indians in the bushes. Natives seemed threatening creatures of the feared wilderness that could destroy their settlement at any time. However helpful individual Indians might have been, as a race it was suspect — none more so than the Pequot.

The Pequot tribe had earned the fear and hatred of not only the English, but (as English accounts suggest) of all surrounding tribes. Any retrospective account offers characterizations to justify the bloodshed: Edward Johnson’s “barbarous and bloody people called the Pequods... which were bid, swollen with pride at this time,”\(^11\) or William Hubbard’s “a more fierce, cruel, and warlike People than the rest of the Indians,”\(^12\) or Thomas Shepard’s “stoutest, proudest, and most successful in their wars of all the Indians.”\(^13\) These Indians were the deadly sins incarnate and had to be destroyed if God’s people were to prosper. The Pequot’s cruel and careless assault on “hapless Stone,” “gallant Norton,”

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9. Ibid., 110-111. Mather would surely have found great significance in the 1688 smallpox epidemic in Boston.
and "generous Oldham" — English slain while sailing down the Connecticut River — unleashed the furies against the tribe.\textsuperscript{14}

Timothy Dwight noted that the sachem Sassacus and his men worried that the English would avenge the deaths of Stone, Norton, and Oldham. The tribe dispatched an "ordinary warrior" to the Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony to make the peace. This envoy was turned away, "informed that men of superior distinction must be employed by the Pequots if they expected any attention."\textsuperscript{15}

The Massachusetts Colony, not Connecticut, made the first inquiry into the murders. By the end of the summer of 1636, men under the command of Captain Endicott of Salem sailed to Pequot country. Four Massachusetts companies (ninety men) under the command of John Underhill, Nathaniel Turner, William Jennison, and Richard Davenport landed at Block Island on 31 August 1636 to search for the guilty parties. Finding no inhabitants, the soldiers destroyed wigwams and fields in hopes of driving the sympathizers from the land. In this venture (the opening of the Pequot War), the officers and soldiers served without pay.

On 10 April 1637 Captain Underhill with his company of twenty men was dispatched to strengthen the Connecticut garrison at Saybrook (this action was sanctioned by a vote of Massachusetts Bay Colony). A week later the General Court of Massachusetts authorized the expenditure of $600 and 160 men to further aid Connecticut against the Pequot. Within two months (on 7 June 1637), Plymouth Colony gave its support to Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut: "in their warre against the Pequins Indians, in revenge of the innocent blood of the English wch sd Pequins have barbarously shed, and refuse to give satisfaction for . . ."\textsuperscript{16} The Massachusetts men led by Captain Daniel Patrick of Watertown, Captain William Trask of Salem, and Captain Israel Stoughton of Dorchester received spiritual guidance from "the reverend and zealously affected servant of Christ" John Wilson of Boston.\textsuperscript{17} Lieutenant William Holmes commanded the Plymouth regiment.

After the arrival of combined forces in Hartford, the Reverend Wilson addressed his "Fellow-Souldiers, Country-men, and Companions in this Wilderness worke" suggesting that nothing would deprive them of complete victory except perhaps "their [enemy's] nimbleness of foot, and the unaccessible swamps and nut-tree woods." The minister continued to encourage God's work against the heathen unto the point of death:

\textsuperscript{14} Timothy Dwight, "Greenfield Hill" in \textit{The Major Poems of Timothy Dwight} (Gainesville, Florida, 1969).
\textsuperscript{15} Dwight, \textit{Travels}, 3:7.
\textsuperscript{16} Charles Ord, ed., \textit{History of the Pequot War: the Contemporary Accounts of Mason, Underhill, Vincent, and Gardener} (Cleveland, 1896), xiii.
\textsuperscript{17} Johnson, \textit{Wonder-Working}, 165.
if some of his inured Servants are taken away by death in a just warre (as this assuredly is) it is not because they should fall short of the honours accompanying such nobles designs, but rather because earths honours are too scant for them . . . .

Wilson's final exhortation encouraged these Massachusetts soldiers to
inclose your enemies in your hands, make their multitudes fall under your warlike weapons, and your feet shall soon be set on their proud necks. 18

And so the seventeenth-century bloodshed began as a holy war against the hostile, arrogant, serpentine demons waged by the servants of a God of noble designs.
The death-blow was dealt to the Pequots at Mystic Fort at dawn 26 May 1637. Firing into the fortress and torching the inhabitants' dwellings, Captain Mason and company succeeded in destroying their enemies (his estimate numbered 600, Underhill noted a more conservative 300 deaths). Mason did not fail to credit the real victor: his God, who had "laughed his Enemies and the Enemies of his People to Scorn, making them as a fiery Oven . . . ." 19

The ultimate containment and annihilation of the Pequots fell to the men of Massachusetts and Plymouth. As William Hubbard noted, despite Stoughton's awareness of the Mystic victory, "it was but the breaking of the Nest, and unkenneling of those salvage Wolves. . . ." 20

Captain Stoughton, joined by Mason with forty men from Hartford, pursued the surviving Pequots to "the side of a River up the Country." 21 (Increase Mather dated this about a "fortnight after our Souldiers were returned Home from Mistick.") 22 Here the Massachusetts forces had "an Easy Conquest of some hundreds of them." The soldiers "being resolved, by Gods Assistance, to make final Destruction of them"—did just that. 23 Yet casualties mounted before the final defeat. Lieutenant Davenport with his twelve men

in an overeager Pursuit of the Enemy, rushed immediately into the Swamp, where they were very rudely entertained by those Evening Wolves that were newly kenneled therein; for Lt. Davenport was sorely wounded in the Body, John Wedgwood of Ipswich in the Belly, and was laid hold on also by some of the Indians. Thomas Sherman of the said Ipswich, in the Neck . . . . 24

In his report to Governor Winthrop, Captain Stoughton made reference to the success and cost of this venture and the "good work" yet to be

18. Ibid., 165-166.
21. Ibid., 2:30.
22. I. Mather, Early History, 144.
24. Ibid., 2:34.
done. The conquerors divided the Pequot women and children to be used as servants. Stoughton himself took a liking to the "fairest and largest" of the squaws and begged the Governor's permission to retain her as a servant.25

The year 1638 saw the treaty between the colonies, the Narragansetts, and the Mohegan. The survivors were divided between the two large tribes and forced to take the name of their captors. The extermination of the Pequot nation was complete, the survivors without name or government. Thomas Shepard saw this as a time to redirect the interest and energy of the magistrates toward the "erecting of a school or college... a nursery of knowledge."26 James Fenimore Cooper, casting a nineteenth-century glance backwards, saw a beginning:

There is reason to believe that Metacom foresaw the fate of his own people in the humbled fortunes of the Pequods.27

Despite sporadic disruptions during the quarrels with the Narragansetts, the English felt at peace, able to settle with assurance, for forty years after the Pequot War. But King Philip's War shattered that hopeful illusion.

* * *

KING PHILIP'S WAR (1675-1677)

Here, also, were the veterans of King Philip's War, who had burned villages and slaughtered young and old with pious fierceness, while the godly souls throughout the land were helping them with prayer.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Gray Champion"

Hawthorne's obvious bitterness towards his ancestors matters less than the power of his sentiment. Almost two hundred years after the fact, the misery of the conflict seems as palpable to him as it does in the contemporary narratives. This war meant more than the destruction of lives and property; it guaranteed a catastrophic loss of a way of life. No longer was there hope that colonist and native could live in harmony; it marked the beginning of the end.

The human valor and sacrifice can best be understood by coupling the accounts of combatant and victim. By this means we can tally the cost, view the disruption of the very fabric of the theocracy. We will discover the life of a militiaman through the writings of Benjamin Church of Plymouth Colony and that of sufferer, survivor through the wanderings of Mary Rowlandson. These testaments provide the keenest introduction to an otherwise characterless catalogue of names.28

26. McGiffert, God's Plot, 68.
28. For those desirous of a narrative by military unit, see the Bodge text.
The title-page of the first edition of Benjamin Church's diary (1716) reveals much of the chronicler's personality and outlook: *Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War Which Began in the Month of June, 1675, as also of Expeditions More lately made Against the Common Enemy, and Indian Rebels, in the Eastern Parts of New-England: with some Account of the Divine Providence Towards Benjamin Church, Esqr.* Over seventy years of age, too feeble to continue service in the militia, Colonel Benjamin Church settled in his Little Compton home and sorted through the "minutes" of his military career. With the loving aid of his son Thomas, these scattered and scrawled minutes grew into the hours and days of battles and lulls. We learn much about the militia life through these reminiscences.

When we first consider the effect of King Philip's War on the fledgling society, home and family capture our attention immediately. This war ruptured family and community, sweeping away men, women, and children. Church logically began his story with the establishment of his home in Little Compton. This Duxbury colonist left Plymouth Colony to build a plantation in a sparsely settled corner of the region; in so doing, he became the first Englishman to settle in the midst of this Indian settlement. He confessed that his only desire was to keep himself "from offending Indian neighbors all around me." (p. 65)

We have no sense of family disruptions in this account, for these are militia minutes. Church committed the welfare of his "broken-hearted" wife and two children to "Heaven's protection" and set out for a parley with the Sogkonate Indians. (p. 113) There remain only two other mentions of family matter, and both are suggestive. At one point, he dashed through the door, the horses untethered and ready to ride; his wife, he related, "must content herself with a short visit when such game was ahead." (p. 150) After the death of Philip, he briefly reunited with his family so that they could accompany him to Plymouth. Surely the brevity of those family interludes suggests that those are not the "Entertaining Passages" Church wished to preserve; he wanted stories of combat and courage.

Church's account, more than other historical narratives of the period, shows first-hand knowledge of Indians as people. Church lived among them, and in the case of the Sogkonate tribe, trusted and admired them. As Philip attempted to consolidate his forces in the spring of 1675, Church received a commission from the governor to negotiate with Awashonks, the squaw-sachem of the tribe. She told Church that English homes and livestock would be destroyed unless she joined forces with him. Awashonks feared English reprisals if that occurred. Persuaded by

29. All page citations refer to: Thomas Church [and Benjamin], The History of King Philip's War, Commonly Called the Great Indian War, of 1675- and 1676: Also of the French and Indian Wars at the Eastward, in 1689, 1692, 1696, and 1704... (Exeter, N.H., 1829).
Church to side with the English, she begged him to represent her people to the Plymouth government. Despite Church's obvious concern for the welfare of this tribe, he concealed the virtual annihilation of the Pequots by the English, representing the colonists as conciliatory "protectors" — and so the past is misrepresented to salvage the present:

he knew that if their proposals were reasonable, the Government would not be unreasonable, and that would use his interest in the Government for them. And to encourage them to proceed, put them in mind that the Pequots once made war with the English, the English became their protectors and defended them against other nations that would otherwise have destroyed them. (p.116)

And so history bends with the prevailing winds.

As with his own life, Church allowed only a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes life of the Indians. Of the enemy, Church saw: "they exercised more than brutish barbarities, beheading, dismembering, and mangling." (p. 75) He did not mention that at this time English law required beheading for treason, and that dismemberment and mangling often accompanied that punishment. Church's admiration for Indian combat tactics, however, drew his attention from the atrocities. Captives schooled Church in the ways of the wilderness, revealing a key tactical advantage. He discovered that the Indians scatter in the woods — and the English do not, making them easy targets. (p. 140) Like his Alonquin foe, Church admired the skilled warrior; and so he continually challenged, captured, and won the enemy to his side.

Church's selective (and heightened) memories of these campaigns give us some idea of a soldier's process of recollection. These passages reveal the intimacy of this struggle. On several occasions, Church recorded that he was "impatient" being taken away from the battles and would rather help his friends. In contrast to the blow-by-blow narrative in the Bodge text, Church favored a tale that would demonstrate how well he fought at Pease Field or the Great Swamp. With the exception of rare citations of fellow officers, Church celebrated himself. What emerges then is a portrait of a seasoned militiaman in action. Each episode seems less to canonize and more to illumine Church's expertise. He loved the fight, the friction — and even relished the recall of his own wounds:

Mr Church ran right on till he was struck with three bullets, one in his thigh, which was near half of it cut off as it glanced on the joint of the hip bone; another through the gatherings of his breeches and draws, with a small flesh wound; a third pierced his pocket and wounded a pair of mitten that he had borrowed of Captain Prentice, being wrapped up together, had the misfortune of having many holes cut through them with one bullet. (p. 99)

The intervening years dulled the pain of the bullets invading his body, leaving only the insult and amusing cluster of detail.

No single episode is as carefully drawn as the death of Philip. For here
Church confronted the cause of the conflict and challenged the worthiest of opponents. Despite his commanding presence, Philip failed to command much attention in these jottings until this final appearance. His family seized, Indian followers deserting — Metacomet stood alone. Militiaman Church heightened his closure by an account of the spiritual resignation of the heathen as early as August 1676:

Some of the Indians now said to Captain Church, "Sir, you have now made Philip ready to die, for you have made him as poor and miserable as he used to made the English, for now you have killed or taken all his relations." (p. 147)

From this point, Philip belongs to the ages; the tale turns into a saga. As the Wampanoag chief was dragged from the swampland that has so often served as sanctuary, he forfeited his humanity, becoming a "doleful, great naked, dirty beast." (p. 154) Church declared that Philip’s body must suffer the same indignities he inflicted upon countless Englishmen. Therefore he bid his Indian executioner to decapitate and quarter the body. For this each man earned four shillings, six pence and the "honour of killing Philip." (p. 156)

Throughout his account, the Plymouth government "nominated, commissioned, and empowered" Church "to discover, pursue, fight, surprize, destroy our Indian Enemies." (p. 128) Small wonder that Church expected a hero's stipend as well as greeting when he arrived in Boston at the behost of Governor John Leverett. The ailing governor, after hearing Church's stirring account of the war, pledged £100 advantage from Massachusetts Bay and a proportional share from the other colonies: "But he [the governor] died within a fortnight after, and so nothing was done of that matter. . . . "(p. 173) From the General Court of Plymouth, Captain Benjamin Church "received their thanks for his good service." (p. 174)

Mary White Rowlandson's (c.1635-c.1678) captivity narrative supplies what we most miss in Church's "Entertaining Passages": the awareness that a way of life perished in the struggle. As we are forced to study the collapse of Rowlandson's life and enter that "vast and howling wilderness,"30 we begin to understand the toll on the family, Christian and Indian. This record of the lives of her captors (as well as her life as captive) forces us to recognize just how human a struggle this was.

Rowlandson divided her tale into a series of "removes," departures from a way of life — and, in the process, a loss of her identity. As we travel with her from Lancaster, west to Northfield, north into New Hampshire, and finally to her family reunion in Boston, we witness a test

of endurance and faith. Her eleven-week, five-day captivity never dulled her perceptions of the world.

How different is the view of this wife and mother from that of Militiaman Church. On “the dolefullest day that ever [her] eyes say,” the “bloody heathen” set fire to the house over her head. (p. 33) As a non-combatant, she witnessed the destruction of all she held dear: relations and home. Forced into the role of spectator, she was a more attentive witness than Church. We return again and again to the explosion of the nuclear family, the deceptions of her captors:

All was gone: my husband (at least separated from me, he being in the Bay, and to add to my grief, the Indians told me they would kill him as he came homeward), my children gone, my relatives and friends gone, our house and home and all our comforts within door and without, all was gone except my life, and I knew not but the next moment that might go too. (p. 36)

She sacrificed her child: “like a lamb departed this life on Feb. 18, 1675/76, it being about six years and five months old” (p. 39) to that wilderness condition that threatened all the English. She soon heard from a captive Englishman, Thomas Reed, that her husband was “well but very melancholy.” Recognizing that many Indians merely taunted her with lies brought courage and a strange peace of mind, enabling her to withstand various ordeals:

I had not seen my son a pretty while, and here was an Indian of whom I made inquiry after him and asked him when he saw him. He answered me that such a time his master roasted him and that himself did eat a piece of him as big as his two fingers and that he was very good meat. (p. 52)

Random contacts with her children failed to allay this mother’s anxiety at any point during her captivity.

Rowlandson’s concern for her own physical and psychological well-being surface repeatedly in this narrative, creating an urgency absent in Church’s account. Perhaps the soldier’s participation in combat had a positive psychological effect. Feeling that she was being tested on all levels, Rowlandson coaxed herself into stability. She mused on her past life, recalling how “careless” she had been of “God’s holy time,” the Sabbath “lost and misspent.” (p. 39) She found herself (early in her captivity) suicidal, recounting:

I have thought since of the wonderful goodness of God to me in preserving me in the use of my reason and senses in that distressed time that I did not use wicked and violent means to end my own miserable life. (p. 39)

She measured up to her own severe creed, but continued to suffer a crisis of displacement:

And here I cannot but remember how many times sitting in their wigwams and musing on things past I should suddenly leap out and run out as if I had been at home, forgetting where I was and what my condition was. (p. 62)
Her captivity from the outset had been a sleeping and waking horror, and her psychological nightmare compounded her physical insult. Suffering from a bullet wound — “the same (as would seem) through the bowels and hand of my dear child in the arms” (p. 34) — she was carried along this road by God.

We are most grateful to Rowlandson for her first-hand glimpses of her captors. As we witness the transformation from “pagan” to “merciless enemies,” and “hell-hounds” (pp. 35, 38), the inability to find “friend-Indians” remains a constant. After suffering numerous indignities at the hands of her captors, Rowlandson lashed out against these “praying Indians” (those previously at home in the English villages):

There was another praying Indian who, when he had done all the mischief he could, betrayed his own father into the English hands thereby to purchase his own life. Another praying Indian was at Sudbury fight, though, as he deserved, he was afterward hanged for it. There was another praying Indian so wicked and cruel as to wear a string about his neck strung with Christians’ fingers. (pp. 62-63)

Church’s diary is silent on these traits of his useful converts.

Although Rowlandson makes occasional reference to bestial behavior, this narrative remains largely a record of what she later called “common mercies.” (p. 64) These took many forms: a proffered (though plundered) Bible and various foodstuffs (from venison to bear, peas to groundnuts). Often Indians offered such prizes in return for English handcrafts (such as knitting and sewing). She pictured them “with their black faces” mourning for their own losses in the war even as they “triumphed and rejoiced in their inhuman and many times devilish cruelty to the English.” (p. 68) Though she brings herself to the very brink of acknowledging common humanity, she can go no further. In direct confrontation with the central (though unarticulated) concern, Rowlandson is without peer:

I had been in the midst of those roaring lions and savage bears that neither feared God nor man nor the devil, by night and day, alone and in company, sleeping all sorts together, and yet not one of them offered me the least abuse of unchastity to me in word or action. (p. 70)

Detractors would have us believe that this was less a matter of civility and more one of cultural aversion to Caucasians. Given Rowlandson’s ample documentation of fellow-feeling, we would do well to consider the behavior civil if not chivalrous.

Finally, this narrative shows a non-combatant Metacomet. During her captivity, Rowlandson crossed paths with Philip on three separate occasions. The Wampanoag sachem extended every courtesy to the reverend’s wife — including tobacco “(a usual compliment nowadays among saints and sinners).” (p. 47) Philip became the one to facilitate Rowlandson’s physical and emotional release. Sensitive to her
psychological exhaustion, he reassured her that soon "she shall be mistress again." (p.67) And as her captors haggled over the details of her release, Philip took control:

Then Philip, smelling the business, called me to him and asked what I would give him to tell me some good news and speak a good word for me. I told him that I could not tell what to give him. I would anything I had and asked him what he would have. He said two coats and twenty shillings in money and half a bushel of seed corn and some tobacco. I thanked him for his love, but I knew the good news as well as the crafty fox. (p. 67)

Unlike the shaggy corpse Church and company pulled from the swamp, this Philip exists on Rowlandson's pages as a complex human being.

Mary Rowlandson accounted for this cultural clash in ways that develop and humanize the conflict (and by extension, earlier conflicts as well). As the English encroached on the tribal lands, violence became inevitable. Mutual lack of comprehension bred fear and prompted atrocities on both sides.

The minister's wife, though re-united with her family, cannot return to the world left behind. Not only was the landscape of her village destroyed, but she lost a vital sense of order as well:

I can remember the time I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts whole nights together, but now it is other ways with me. When all are fast about me and no eye open but His who ever waketh, my thoughts are upon things past, upon the awful dispensation of the Lord towards us, upon His wonderful power and might in carrying us through so many difficulties in returning us safely and suffering none to hurt us. (p. 74)

Rowlandson will carry her captivity with her forever.

The predictions of the Mathers came true. The English could neither embrace nor accommodate the natives. The wars would continue until New England was finally safe for its new natives.

*   *   *

**KING WILLIAM'S WAR (1688-1698)**

Now, 'tis a dismal Uncertainty and Ambiguity we see ourselves placed in. And indeed our All is at the Stake; we are beset with a Thousand Perplexities and Entanglements. The Questions which we have now before us, in short is this, Whether we will venture All, with a Hope to Preserve All, or Whether we will Keep All, With an Assurance to Loose All, by doing so.


As the seventeenth century drew to a close, the Puritan settlers discovered a reality harsher than the feared howling wilderness. By the 1680s, the greater world began to close in upon the colonies and threaten not merely their religious exclusiveness but their very survival. As witchcraft, war, and charter difficulties threatened the founding assumptions of the theocracy, smallpox and a rapidly rising suicide rate
assaulted the physical and psychological well-being of its inhabitants. In every sense, the Puritan family was under siege. In a letter to his uncle John Cotton, Cotton Mather recorded these rents in the social fabric and fractures in the earth’s surface:

Reverend Sir,—

Our Good God is working Miracles. Five Witches were Lately Executed, imprudently demanding of God, a Miraculous Vindication of their Innocence ... In the morning we were Entertained with the Horrible Tidings of the Late Earth-quake at Jamaica, on the 7th of June Last. When on a fair Day, the sea suddenly swell’d, and the Earth Shook, and broke in many places. ... 31

The events of these final years crushed Mather — and his world.

King William’s War (earlier known as Castine’s War) 32 became more than the last of the seventeenth-century Indian wars or the first of the French and Indian wars; this conflict cannot be viewed as simply a final frontier stand against the “indians at Eastward” — for as Mather suggested, the chaos was so extreme that “the Earth Shook, and broke in many places ... .” This seemingly endless struggle forced New England into an internationally complex eighteenth-century world. It is curious that the century which would close with the Age of Enlightenment should see such a start.

The longest of the seventeenth-century wars, King William’s drew Massachusetts officers and soldiers away from home for protracted periods as they ventured north to coastal Maine and Quebec. Unlike King Philip’s War, this was not merely a cultural clash; these conflicts were truly international in scope and achieved the status of “holy” wars. For not only did the Indians continue to plague the English, but Protestantism itself was threatened by French Catholicism in Canada. The world rapidly became incomprehensible to those who clung to the past design. The conflict struck at the hearts of cultures — and families. Men, women, and children were taken captive; militiamen died or suffered fates similar to that of Eliezer Rogers of Plymouth:

[In a petition to the Honorable William Stoughton, Governor]: Your Petitioner being a soldier under the Comand [sic] of Capt. Thomas Dymock did on the ninth day of September last (1697) received several wounds in an Engagement: with the French and Indians at Winangants. particularly he was shott through the thigh, and through the right side of his head which put out his Eye, and has made him in great measure incapable of his Employment. 33

For those who had not lost their lives, the future nonetheless seemed in

31. Cotton Mather, The Diary 1681-1708, Massachusetts Historical Society Collections (Boston, 1891), 142-143.
32. A succinct account of King William’s War may be found in Howard H. Peckham, The Colonial Wars, 1689-1762.
jeopardy. The faith that had sustained and encouraged settlement of the wilderness failed them. By 1697, a legal measure that had been an emergency act had to be re-instated; it read: "An Act For Reviving the Act to prevent the deserting of the Frontiers." 34

We need look no further than Benjamin Church's "Entertaining Passages" to resume the front-line chronicle of the war. This seasoned Indian fighter, whose very name suggested doom to the heathen, 35 found himself summoned to lead expeditions eastward in 1689, 1690, 1692, 1696, and 1704. No better guide exists to lead us into the eighteenth century. This American born and bred soldier tamed the wilderness and its inhabitants, leading Philip's former troops against a new enemy in these final expeditions. Church embodies the contradictions and confusions of the age. A man born into (but not of the faith) found himself able to appreciate the challenges of the new world and age in ways forbidden to Cotton Mather. This soldier-frontiersman provides a self-canonization (quite unlike Mather's portrait) painted in bold strokes, the old soldier always in center stage.

This final chapter of Church's career begins with Sir Edmund Andros pleading with Church to "raise forces and go east." (p. 151) We find this warrior less robust and anxious to go off to war than the Indian fighter we left at the death of Philip. And yet with a little persuasion, Church raised 250 men and received a commission from Governor Thomas Hinkley for the first expedition eastward. Commissioned to be "Major, and commander in chief of all the forces, English and Indians," Church received instructions from Simon Bradstreet to see:

that [his] soldiers' arms be always fixed and that they be furnished with ammunition, provisions, and other necessaries, that so they may be in readiness to repel and attack the enemy...[and] that the worship of God be kept up in the army; morning and evening prayer attended as far as may be, and as the emergencies of [his] affairs...admit..." (pp. 158-159)

The commissioners of the Colonies of Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Connecticut also provided a "reward of eight pounds per head, for every fighting Indian slain by them, over and above their stated wages."

The first expedition to Casco (as with all subsequent ventures) rallied the English and Indian soldiers to fight this newly defined Enemy. Church's volunteers numbered approximately 250 men in addition to two other companies: in all about 400 men. Church inspected the garrisons at Black Point, Spurwick, and Blue Point, ventured up the Kennebec

34. Massachusetts Archives, Vol. 70, 20 October 1697, 364.
35. Cotton Mather believed that Church's name "might suggest unto the miserable salvages, what they must be undone by fighting against." Magnalia Christi Americana (Hartford, 1820), 2:499. For Mather's account of King William's War, see the Magnalia, Book 7 with "An Appendix of Remarkable Occurrences which New-England had in the Wars with the Indian Salvages, from the year 1688, to the year 1698" and Decennium Luculentum: An History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Long War, which New-England hath had with the Indian Salvages, from the year 1688, to... 1698 (Boston, 1699).
River — but found only shadows of an ill-defined enemy. By winter, orders came from Massachusetts Bay to settle the garrisons and send the soldiers home (p. 171) The settlers of the Casco Bay region felt deserted by Church and begged him to stay or at least promise to return early in the spring. This hearty soldier left with great reluctance and some guilt knowing that the eastern settlements required permanent protection. The General Court turned a deaf ear to suggestions for “they said they were very busy in sending home Sir Edmund, the ship being ready to sail.” (p. 173) Church then wrote to the Commissioners on 6 February 1689, in hopes of forcing a reappraisal:

I leave to mature consideration, the loss of trade and fishery; the War brought to the doors. What a triumph it will be to the enemy; derision to our neighbours, beside dishonour to God and our Nation, and grounds of frown from our Prince; the frustration of those, whose eyes are upon you for help, who might have otherwise applied themselves to their King. . . . (p. 175)

From the start, Church placed himself in opposition to those removed from the battle and committed himself to the victims. For him, this served a two-fold purpose: help was dispatched to the areas of greatest need, and Church got to fight.

Throughout these final expeditions, Church depended on his reputation as the hero of King Philip’s War. But though that glorious struggle guaranteed him repeated commissions, Church no longer enjoyed the unquestioned authority he had in those earlier, simpler engagements. As smallpox and social unrest plagued the established communities, the soldiers became increasingly reluctant to leave home for long periods. Rifts between officers and Church caused dissensions at the front, and false rumors to trickle home. “The frown of God” glared upon Church for the first time and forced him to attempt to counter these falsehoods in a letter of 27 November 1690:

Your honour was pleased to give me some small account, before I left the bank, of some things that were all represented to you, concerning the eastward expedition, which being rolled home like a snowball through both colonies, was got to such bigness, that it overshadowed one from the influence of all comfort. . . . (pp. 203-204)

Church, stunned by innuendo and immobilized by thoughtless officials, chronicled not an exciting war well-waged but a world of political intrigue and scrambled messages.

On 25 July 1692, Governor William Phips honored Church with not only another commission (“Reposing special trust and confidence in your loyalty, courage, and good conduct. . . .” [p. 208]), but with his presence as well. This third expedition eastward took the party to Pemaquid, with a stop “at Casco to bury the bones of the dead people” (p. 209), then on to Penobscot, and a return along the Kennebec River. Despite the political upheaval in Massachusetts Bay, little changed in the type of expedition Church led.
For the reader swept along by the brisk narrative of King Philip’s War, these appended episodes concerning King William’s engagements must be disappointing. Yet the characterless confusion of Church’s narration mirrors the characterless uncertainties of King William’s War. The political intrigue (at home and abroad), the remoteness of intermittent conflict, and the societal confusions at home displaced our hero. No longer could he conduct affairs from center stage. For as the theocracy telescoped crushing a way of life, the world expanded beyond the vision of Benjamin Church.

During the final years of King William’s War, the French lowered the bounty on English scalps, preferring to raise it on live captives. In many ways, this dealt a death-blow to frontier settlements already on an ever-receding rim of civilization. And so each conflict became a war for Christian life (read “order”) against the heathen (read “chaos”). Because of the heavy-handed orchestration of amanuensis Cotton Mather, the captivity narrative of Hannah Emerson Dustin (1657-1736) yields a rich glimpse of this society on the verge of collapse. For not only do we see the vitality of Mrs. Dustin in every passage, but we see Mather continually struggling on every page to re-order his world.

Unlike Rowlandson’s first-hand narrative, this story is continually polarized by Mather’s faith. Nevertheless, a similar tale emerges of a family fractured by the enemy, a journey, and a survival. Unlike Rowlandson, Mather did not allow any humanization of these “veriest ruins of mankind.” The pious preacher branded the savages with vicious appellations that underscored their inhumanity: “furious tawnies,” “raging dragons,” “those whose tender mercies are cruelties.”

On 15 March 1697, Hannah Dustin’s trial began. She witnessed the destruction of Haverhill and the flight of her family (her husband and seven children). Taken captive by twelve Indians, Dustin and her nurse were led away, “but ere they had gone many steps they dashed out the brains of the infant against a tree.” In the retelling, Mather refused to see these actions as other than “hideous designs to carry on the bloody devastations.” (p.162) Mather viewed the cruelties of these Indians as not merely violations of humanity, but of the faith:

And several of the other captives, as they [began] to tire in their sad journey, were soon sent into their long home. The savages ... presently [buried] their hatchets in their brains, and [left] carcasses on the ground for birds and beasts to feed upon. (p. 163)


37. Henry David Thoreau dealt with the Dustin narrative a bit differently in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. In the “Thursday” chapter, we are told that:
She had seen her infant’s brains dashed out against an apple tree, and left her own and neighbor’s dwellings in ashes. [Italics mine]
Thoreau doesn’t hesitate to interweave that earlier Fall into the narrative.
We will recall that even the battle-weary warrior Church paused to bury the bones. These differences between the cultures fueled the conflicts to the bitter end.

Mather sketched Dustin's journey as a trial endured, a literal "pilgrim's progress." Withstanding the hardships of travel, lodging, and diet seasoned Dustin for her final act of revenge. This narrative, compressed to its tolerance, cannot embrace the day as Rowlandson's did. This journey will not accomodate us.

Mather (and by silent approval, Dustin) orchestrated the final day with theatrical expertise. On 30 April, 150 miles from their destination (Penacook, an Indian village near the present-day Concord, New Hampshire, where the captives were to be forced to run the gauntlet[^38]) "a little before the break of day" when her captors lay "in a dead sleep" (surely this is Mather's grim pun):

She thought she was not forbidden by any law to take away the life of the murderers by whom her child had been butchered. (p.164)

Hannah, her nurse, and fellow-captive Samuel Lenorson grabbed their captors' hatchets and "struck home-blows upon the heads of their sleeping oppressors. ..." (p. 164) These ironically named "home-blows" revenge the deaths brought to many homes over the seventeenth century. And Dustin found a monetary reward in her actions as well: the General Assembly authorized a reward of £50 for the 10 scalps.

As Mather's fragile piety collapses around Hannah Dustin's story, her narrative appropriately concludes this century. Unlike Benjamin Church, whose world outgrew him, Hannah Dustin recovered her faith and freedom when she became an actor, not merely a witness, in her own life. She resembles the fiesty Captain Church of that earlier war — neither of them afraid to leap into the fray. These seventeenth-century conflicts attacked the heart of the Puritan family — and Hannah Dustin, our first woman warrior, appropriately not only survived but executed the guilty as well.

* * *

TWENTIETH-CENTURY ECHOES

These seventeenth-century conflicts scarred the landscape and the mind of New England. Given the limitations of the age, these were "total" wars in an unusually modern sense, providing eighteenth-century New England with a seasoned militia ready to assume command in the struggles ahead. The psychological wounds, rather than the historical events, have travelled intact across the centuries. From

Timothy Dwight's eighteenth-century treatment of the Pequot War, "Greenfield Hill," to the fevered romances churned out by Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville that recast the past to suit their vision, these wars claim a permanent place in our cultural as well as our social history. Even Hawthorne's twentieth-century descendant, that fellow Puritan Robert Lowell, found imaginative nourishment in the tragedy of King Philip's War. Lowell echoed and amplified Hawthorne's response in his own "At the Indian Killer's Grave":

. . . When the great mutation racks
The Pilgrim Fathers' relics, will these placques
Harness the spare-ribbed persons of the dead
To battle with the dragon? Philip's head
Grins on the platter, souls in pantomime
The fingers of kept time. . .

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Carole Doreski
Boston University
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Key to Symbols

Gen. — General
Col. — Colonel
Maj. — Major
Capt. — Captain
Lt. — Lieutenant
Ens. — Ensign
Sgt. — Sergeant
Pvt. — Private
Clrk. — Clerk
Drum. — Drummer
Surg. — Surgeon
Comm. — Commissary
Co. — Company
Regt. — Regiment

* * *

Unlike the previous volumes in this series (which follow that format established by the muster rolls), most entries have not been taken from strictly military records. Letters, narrative histories, land grant records provide (at best): name and occasionally rank, ships’ names, date of accounting, infrequently place of residence, name of conflict, commanding officer, or company. These then provide the categories for the following directory.