NED BLACKHAWK

THE REDISCOVERY OF AMERICA

NATIVE PEOPLES AND THE UNMAKING OF U.S. HISTORY

Puritan Settlement upon a Widowed Land

It is unclear how Tisquantum arrived at Plymouth in March 1621. He may have been exchanged between villages within the Wampanoag Confederacy or directed as an emissary to the English settlers by confederacy leaders.[79] Wampanoag leaders understood his utility in negotiating with the newly arrived Puritans.

Once among the English, he famously helped with the settlement's survival. Praise for his assistance abounds.[80] In the Native Northeast, a mastery of languages was now as important as mastery of the sea, and the captive trade had yielded a bilingual man. He may have tried to gather together the remaining survivors of his Patuxet community and reestablish their home. But amidst the devastation, he used translation, conversion, and even friendships as strategies for survival.[81]

Tisquantum's ability to move freely within the growing settlement helped

it succeed. He gained the trust of Bradford and other Puritan leaders and advised them on agriculture, fishing, and diplomacy. He brokered the earliest agreement between Plymouth and the neighboring Wampanoag Confederacy, led by the Pokanoket leader Massasoit, an agreement we know as Thanksgiving.

The first year of settlement had been difficult. Nearly half the settlers died of disease or exposure. Under such pressures, mediation and trade, not just their unwavering faith in Providence, were key to the Puritans' survival.[82] The ability of English settlers to make partnerships grew from the region's disruptions, particularly its cycles of disease and captive taking. Death stalked Plymouth as it did Native families. It compelled unanticipated compromises, such as Thanksgiving. A curiously imagined event that mythologizes the Puritans' first year, the holiday forgets the decades of European exploration, the recent deaths, and perhaps above all the long-standing maritime economies that nourished life. It imagines poultry as the region's staple. If named at all, the Wampanoag appear as the region's only Indians and the Puritans the only Europeans. As always, "Squanto" remains a go-between, perpetually stuck in-between nations even at an event that he organized.[83]

As those gathered knew all too well, Plymouth was just one of several European outposts forming across the Atlantic world. Twelve months earlier, the *Mayflower* had missed its anticipated arrival in Virginia, ending up closer to the Dutch on the Hudson and the French farther north.[84] Other English colonies were also forming. In the West Indies, colonists settled in the Caribbean between 1624 and 1632: St. Christopher, Barbados, Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua.[85] Barbados and later Jamaica became the most profitable colonies in the English empire, key links to New England's economy.

Native powers in the lands between Massachusetts Bay, Cape Cod, and Narragansett Bay were under the jurisdiction of the Wampanoag Confederacy. They called these ancestral grounds Wôpanâank which, like all Native landscapes, were marked by place-names, familiar paths, commemorative locations, and religious sites.[86] It was a region full of bounty—but one now racked by the aftermath of disease.

To their south in Rhode Island and Connecticut, the Puritans confronted Narragansett and Pequot communities, rival confederacies that threatened both Puritan and Wampanoag authority.[87] These confederacies had survived the Great Pandemic in greater numbers the Wampanoag of Massachusetts. As Dutch trader Johannes de Laet reported in 1625, "There are few inhabi-

tants near the mouth of the [Connecticut] River," but farther up "they become numerous."[88]

Death and disease destabilized Wôpanâank to such an extent that the political and social networks that structured the region were eroding. Displaced villagers often allied together into new alliances or joined other confederations, spreading contagion and generating instability and conflict. Native communities now concentrated into more remote, fortified villages, in post-contact settlement patterns that diverged from centuries of pre-contact residential practices in which villages developed almost entirely around coastlines or watersheds.[89]

With their numbers so diminished, the Wampanoag remained vulnerable, and they became ready allies with Puritan newcomers.[90] In this era of growing conflict, Wampanoag leaders worked to keep their authority intact. Trade, diplomacy, and even alliance with Europeans offered paths of survival.[91]

Violence and warfare were, of course, well known across the Native Northeast. Ritualized forms of combat provided conflict resolution, honorific gain, and material benefit. Violence within communities was largely allowed by elite authorities, both male and female "sachems," who were entitled to leadership roles by descent.[92] These structures endured after the arrival of Europeans, but colonization displaced other forms of Indigenous autonomy. As among the Iroquois Confederacy, discussed in chapter 3, colonization bred new motivations for warfare and introduced new technologies of violence. Seventeenth-century warfare was more violent than that of previous generations, and deepened conflicts among the region's communities.[93]

Arriving with firm ideas of cultural, religious, and racial difference, Puritan leaders looked askance at their Indian neighbors. They believed that they had to rectify the providential misfortune of the Natives' religion, so opposed to Puritanism.[94] Governor John Winthrop, who led the Great Migration of 1630–42, chose Massachusetts Bay in part because he believed that "god had consumed" the Indians "in a miraculous plague."[95] As he wrote to his wife in England, Providence both protected and provisioned his settlement: "My dear wife, we are here in a paradise. Though we have not beef and mutton . . . yet (God be praised) we want them not; our Indian corn answers for all."[96]

A decade after settlement, Puritans still remained a small percentage of the region's population. Fourteen thousand came during this migration while one hundred thousand Englishmen migrated to the Chesapeake and the Ca-

ribbean throughout the century. By 1650, more colonists lived in the West Indies (forty-four thousand) than in Virginia (twelve thousand) and New England (twenty-three thousand) combined.[97]

Demographically, the Puritan colonies resembled other seventeenth-century confederations, such as the Wendat in Ontario, the Iroquois of Iroquoia, and the Powhatan of Virginia. Each of these powers consisted of tens of thousands and controlled expansive territories. Collectively, they all shaped the emerging economy and diplomacy of eastern North America.[98] While powerful, Puritan New England by 1634 was contained along the coastline.

Events of the mid-1630s transformed Puritan colonization into an eventual engine of Indigenous dispossession. Following a dozen years of settlement, internal divisions bred a religious crisis that spilled out of the colony's boundary. Led by Roger Williams, groups of separatists broke from Massachusetts and established in 1636 other "united colonies" to the south.[99] Simultaneously, rivalries between English and Dutch traders brewed along Long Island Sound. These divisions and conflicts soon initiated more permanent forms of colonization while breeding regional wars that targeted Indigenous communities.

As opposed to resource-based or extractive colonial systems—from the French fur trade to the Spanish silver empire—Puritan colonization sought to transform American landscapes. Land enclosures, imported domesticated livestock, and invasive crops remade the Northeast's ecology.[100] Moreover, unlike other colonies, Puritan settlements revolved around the labor of families—not servants, company employees, or slaves who had to be contracted, imported, or enslaved. While village economies were tied to the empire, family-run farms nourished Puritan bodies and spirits.[101]

As a chosen people, Puritans interpreted their "good works" as signs of a predetermined salvation. Successful harvests, new congregations, and growing settlements all became further evidence of the righteousness of their values and their providential fortune. Puritan separatists like Williams may have argued about the forms of the spiritual practices necessary to achieve salvation, but none questioned the forms of labor needed to build their kingdom. Religious ideology fueled economic growth and justified the expropriation of Indigenous lands.

The sheltered coast of Long Island Sound became the primary site in the struggle for the region's future. As with Williams's settlement in Rhode Is-

land, Puritans looked south to expand. They eyed the Sound, its nearby islands, and interior waterways, particularly the Connecticut River, which drains much of the Native Northeast. Moving south, Puritans expanded along the coast and then into the interior. As in other colonies, expansion occurred for economic reasons and generated violence.

Wampum and Anglo-Dutch Rivalry on Long Island Sound

In the 1630s Long Island Sound remained a center of Indigenous economic, political, and cultural power. It sheltered Pequot villages from the North Atlantic and attracted European traders, including early seventeenth-century Dutch explorers such as Adrian Block. Block had come to New Holland to trade but saw his fur-laden ship catch fire in New York in 1613. He decided to build a smaller vessel, the *Unrest*, to traverse the Sound before returning to Holland. He landed on Block Island in 1614. Like John Hunt, who captured Epenow the same year, Block also enslaved Indians, taking them back to Holland to aid colonization.[102]

Despite such intrusions, the Sound remained comparatively removed from colonial disruptions, particularly diseases. Both the Pequot and the Narragansett escaped the worst of the Great Pandemic. Pequot villages were drawn into the orbit of Dutch traders who came seasonally to trade furs. For over a dozen years, the Dutch also monopolized one of early America's most profitable resources, *wampumpeag*, or wampum, which, brought an economic revolution to the Northeast. The economic power of the Dutch and Pequot over this trade soon initiated Puritan reprisals.[103]

Known for their beauty and sociopolitical power, wampum "strands" or "belts" consist of woven strings of small, symmetrical purple and white beads made from the quahog and whelk shells that flourish along the Sound.[104] The use of wampum is recorded in the epics and diplomatic accords of the Iroquois Confederacy. Its cultivation across the Native Northeast remains less recognized.[105]

The process of producing wampum was complicated, requiring an incredible amount of artisanal labor featuring strict divisions along lines of gender and age. Throughout the 1600s, Native women and children collected shells from within ocean beds, clam banks, and deep waters, while men drilled and assembled them. The painstaking craftsmanship that wampum required meant that before contact it was never made in large quantities. The market of the fur trade, however, accelerated its production. The arrival of European

metal tools also brought adaptations that led to more and more intricate forms of beadwork.[106]

Once woven, wampum strands became signs of social and political power. Leaders amassed and displayed them, distributing belts as symbols of their authority. Belts also conveyed spiritual power and were used for ceremonial purposes in tribes across eastern North America. Some, such as the Iroquois Confederacy, were particularly invested in their use: Iroquoian epics require annual and ceremonial recitation, and wampum belts assisted such presentation and documentation.[107]

Throughout the 1620s, the trade in wampum exploded. As one Dutch official wrote, Indian traders arrived at their many posts "for no other reason than to get *sewan* [wampum]."[108] Dutch traders increased wampum's production and circulation, linking it with the fur trade, which the Dutch and their Iroquois allies dominated. The Dutch quickly used wampum to attract more furs.[109]

Initially, the trade benefited Pequot producers and their Dutch partners alike. Dutch traders traveled north to Pequot communities, bringing with them the most desired goods in the Americas: metals, cloth, wares, and quality guns. Never large in numbers, Dutch traders undertook the arduous interregional journeys between Fort Orange (Albany), New York, and the Sound and returned with stacks of furs bound for Europe.

The wampum trade facilitated the Dutch monopoly and allowed for more complex exchanges.[110] Initially, Dutch traders ferried manufactured goods to Pequot and Mohawk villagers, who incorporated metals, wares, and cloth into their village economies. Pequot villages could offer mainly wampum for Dutch goods, while the Mohawk offered furs. As European traders discovered the shells' desirability with their many Indigenous partners, transportation costs plummeted. Instead of ferrying manufactured goods to the Mohawk, the Dutch added wampum to their manifests. Soon, along with guns, wampum became the most desired Dutch trade good. It weighed far less than other goods. It did not require transatlantic shipment. The Dutch, essentially, provided a more advantageous route for this once overland trade, expanding its production and distribution. Famous as middlemen in Europe, the Dutch became similarly positioned in the Northeast, ferrying Indigenous resources—wampum and furs—between the Pequot and Iroquois.[111]

Like minerals drawn from the earth, shells only possess the values attributed to them. Their economic and symbolic powers are culturally and socially determined.[112] Such strands held centuries of sociocultural value and

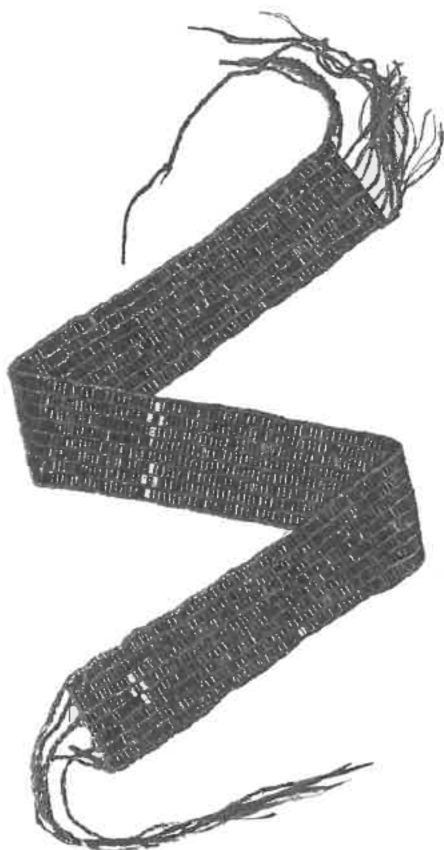
stretched dozens and even, on occasion, hundreds of feet in length. Collectively, the belts consisted of millions of quahog and whelk shells. Their circulation was so common that in 1637 Puritan leaders collected tribute from Native villagers on Block Island of "100 fathoms of beads annually."[113] Decades of similar payments followed, and by 1657 one tribute payment included a million shells, valued at £700.[114] Wampum provided one of the earliest universal equivalencies of value—or currencies—across colonial America. It came to be used in all forms of transactions from tribute to trade and from debt relief to war bounties.[115]

Increasing values, however, created conflicts between colonists and their Native allies. In 1626 one of the earliest Dutch reports about Plymouth stated that the English newcomers "come near our places to get wampum."[116] Unlike the Dutch, Puritan settlers initially sought limited trading relations with regional Native powers and mainly traded corn. Corn, however, was hard to transport, and its value fluctuated relative to the size of annual harvests.[117] The English needed different trade goods to compete with Dutch traders.

Wampum provided the alternative. Its desirability prompted English leaders to encourage its circulation, because wampum also helped to foster debt or dependency on English trade. The more Puritans required wampum payments, the more many smaller tribes became indebted, and indebtedness facilitated land cessions. From its limited pre-contact circulation, wampum flowed across the Northeast. Puritan leaders understood this exchange system and began to exploit it.[118]

During the first years of the Great Migration in the 1630s, Puritan settlements remained relatively isolated. A dozen church communities from Salem to Plymouth threatened neither New Holland nor the Pequot Confederacy. Between 1633 to 1636, however, demographic changes altered the balance of power: a smallpox outbreak hit, facilitating Puritan expansion into Narragansett lands in Rhode Island. As with the Great Pandemic earlier, diseases preceded English expansion and once again aided the rise of British North America.[119]

As Native villages suffered, English ambitions grew. The Dutch were a formidable trading power, but they were hardly a threat to Puritan colonists and their Native allies—including eventually Narragansetts, Mohegans, and other allies in Massachusetts. Many of these Native communities vied for access to the Pequot-dominated shell beds of Long Island Sound and also looked to exploit the fur trade along the Connecticut River where Dutch posts were established. Furs and wampum remained the region's primary trade goods,



This wampum belt, composed of buckskin and primarily dark purple quahog shells, was crafted by a Haudenosaunee artist circa 1775–1800 and belonged to the Miami chief Shepoconah (also known as Deaf Man). For centuries before and after European contact, quahog shells circulated widely across eastern North America, conferring social and political authority and cementing multilateral commitments between eastern North America's many nations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. (Cranbrook Institute of Science, Photographer: Michael Narlock.)

and interior Puritan settlements held the potential to not only displace Pequot hegemony but also extend English influence into the fur trade.

Unlike the Great Pandemic, the Epidemic of 1634 hit Native villages already in conflict with settlers. Diseases from this outbreak killed an estimated three thousand to four thousand soldiers across the Sound. This loss combined

with the arrival of several thousand new settlers continued to destabilize Pequot spheres of influence. Indigenous political authority across the region was eroding, particularly as the stream of English settlers increased during the Great Migration.[120]

Nonetheless, for nearly a generation after 1620, conflicts between Puritans and Native peoples were more often civil than violent. Debates over land title, destruction of crops by livestock, theft of goods, and terms of exchange comprised the quotidian nature of these conflicts. Even though the threat of violence simmered beneath such disputes, mechanisms for adjudication—particularly compensation—had emerged.[121] With extreme infractions such as murder, however, when mechanisms of restitution no longer worked, the potential for violence escalated.

Dutch, Puritan, and Native leaders understood that enslavement—like murder—created conflicts. Mediation, compensation, and redress became forms of resolution. However, as the wampum trade deepened existing Indigenous rivalries and imperial competitions, a series of English murders at sea increased conflicts on land.

In 1634 John Stone, a Virginia-based trader, arrived at the Sound after being exiled from Massachusetts following his assaults upon a married woman. This crime had led to his conviction, a £150 fine, and the lifetime prohibition "upon pain of death to come here no more."[122] Like other Virginians, he was more interested in profits than Providence and had heard of the wealth to be made in furs and wampum. Arriving in Connecticut, he captured two Pequot men to show him the way up the Connecticut River.[123] As his ship docked that evening, Pequots and their Niantic allies boarded. In the ensuing melee, Stone was killed and his ship destroyed.

Despite his banishment, Massachusetts officials responded to Stone's killing. They made growing demands for compensation. The Pequots, as was their custom, attempted to make restitution for Stone's murder with payments of wampum.[124] But the English saw his death as an opportunity to make larger demands on a Native power weakened by smallpox. Governor Winthrop declined compensation, envisioning more punitive forms of redress.

When another English trader, John Oldham, was killed sailing toward Block Island in July 1636, Winthrop mobilized a hundred-man militia to exact punishment, even though Oldham's death had already prompted a retaliatory attack that had killed ten Native soldiers and rescued Oldham's remaining crew. The militia sailed from Boston under John Endicott, to whom Winthrop gave a "commission":

> To putt to deathe the men of Blocke Iland but to spare the woemen & Children & to bringe them away, & to take possession of the Iland. & from thence to goe to the Pequodes to demande the murders of Capt. Stone & other English & 1000: fath[om] of wampum for damages . . . & some of their Children as hostages: which if they should refuse they were to obtaine it by force.[125]

Few directives in American history have been so forthright. Winthrop ordered Endicott to kill the men at Block Island, enslave the island's women and children, and then seize Pequot wealth. As he remarked, "No man was impressed for this service, but all went voluntaryes."[126] The histories of wampum, enslavement, and English ambition now converged. The battle for Long Island Sound had begun.

The Battle for Long Island Sound: The Pequot War (1636–37)

Endicott failed to enslave Block Island's Narragansett women and children or to kill its men. He spent two days in August "searching the Iland, & could not finde the Indians."[127] He had orders to follow wherever they had gone and hurried to reassemble his militia for the coming encounter. Before leaving, he reported on the island's geography, noting that it had become "all ouer growne with brushe."[128] Diseases, growing conflicts, and Puritan invasive species had already reconfigured the island's ecology, and Endicott punished resident islanders even further, setting ablaze sixty of "their wigwams & all their mattes, & some corne & staved 7: Canoes."[129] As his officer John Underhill reported, "Wee burnt and spoyled both houses and corne in great abundance."[130]

Within weeks of the invasion, Narragansett leaders from across the Sound traveled to Boston to negotiate. Miantonomo, "the sachem of the Narragansett," met with Winthrop in October and pledged his full support for Puritan operations.[131] In addition to confirming that the Narragansetts "would deliver our enemies to us, or kill them," the two leaders drafted a nine-article treaty.[132] The first three articles made preparations for war. They established "a firm peace between us . . . and their confederates"; ensured "neither party to make peace with the Pequods without the other's consent"; and required both "not to harbor the Pequods."[133] The third article was ominous, as earlier forms of diplomacy and compensation were now changing. A war of annihi-

lation had begun. Not only would this war remake the Native political world, it also laid the foundations for the future expansion of English authority.[134]

As they arrived at Pequot villages on the Connecticut River, Endicott and Underhill were welcomed. The murder of Oldham, let alone Stone, had occurred seasons beforehand and among distant people. As Winthrop later suggested, the convicted Stone, "for whom this war was begun . . . [was] none of ours."[135] Surely, trade and diplomacy would continue; however, Stone's death became justification for conflict. When Pequot leaders attempted mediation, the English issued ultimatums, the severity of which caught the Pequot off guard. According to Underhill, "They [were] not thinking we intended warre."[136] Then Endicott issued the only remedy the Puritans would accept for their grievances: the decapitated heads of those who had killed Stone.

Bodily dismemberment remained a symbol of power in both England and New England. The punishment was used to extend authority over poor, Indigenous, colonized, and enslaved peoples and provided a public warning against challenging imperial power.[137] For the Puritans, skulls also conjured the authority of an omnipotent god whose capacity for vengeance was deeply imprinted upon their theology.[138] When asked, "What doe you come for?" by Pequot leaders, the English replied that they required human skulls; otherwise, Underhill warned, "Wee will fight."[139]

Fight they did, but they did not receive Pequot heads. When the Pequots did not submit, the English attacked. They pillaged their town, destroyed its fields, and ransacked homes before setting them ablaze.[140] "The Narragansett men told us after that thirteen of the Pequods were killed, and forty wounded."[141] This August 1636 attack and the Pequots' counterattacks at Fort Saybrook became the opening theaters of the Pequot War.

Within a year, the Pequot Confederacy had been destroyed. Most men were either killed or enslaved, and many women and children were also captured. Hundreds retreated farther into the interior, finding shelter among communities less reliant on the Sound.[142] On May 25, 1637, "the general defeat of the Pequods at Mistick," according to Winthrop, became the single deadliest conflict in the region's history.[143] Surrounding the second-largest Pequot fortification along the Mystic River, Underhill, a hundred Puritan militia members, and several hundred Narragansett allies annihilated the village of four hundred. Returning east, they then "fell upon a People called the Nayanticks, belonging to the Pequot, who fled to a Swamp for refuge."[144] Many died. The Mystic Massacre, according to Winthrop, became another sign of providential glory. It "happened the day after our general fast," he wrote, and initiated "a

day of thanksgiving kept in all the churches for the victory obtain[ed] against the Pequods."[145] The massacre became the most commemorated moment in the Puritan settlement of North America.

When the war ended, the central forts of the confederacy lay in ruins. The Pequots fled south along the Sound and north into the interior. The killing continued because no one would harbor them. The English continued their demand for skulls, and threatened any tribe providing refuge with a similar fate. Days after the Mystic Massacre, Wyandanch, a Montauk sachem from Long Island, canoed to Fort Saybrook to ask Puritans if they were at war with all Indians. The fort's commander replied that they were not, but warned, "If you have Pequits with you . . . we might kill all you . . . but if you will kill all the Pequits that come to you, and send me their heads, then . . . you shall have trade."[146] Puritan retribution was now feared across the Sound. Pequot "heads and hands" had become simultaneous trophies of war and signs of allegiance.[147] As one English official exalted, "The Pequots now become a Prey to all Indians."[148]

In August Winthrop recounted the last vestiges of Pequot resistance and detailed the efforts of those who still pursued them:

> Eighty of their stoutest men, and two hundred others, women and children, were at a place within twenty or thirty miles of the Dutch, whither our men marched, and, being guided by Divine Providence, came upon them, where they had twenty wigwams . . . by a most hideous swamp, so thick . . . men could hardly crowd into it. Into this swamp they were all gotten. . . . Then our men surrounded the swamp . . . and shot at the Indians, and they at them, from three of the clock in the afternoon till they desired parley and offered to yield. . . . So they began to come forth, now some and then some, til about two hundred women and children were come out . . . then the men told us they would fight it out; and so they did all night. . . . Not one of ours was wounded. . . . Them as were left . . . escaped.[149]

From the captured Pequot women, the English learned that they had slain half of the remaining Pequot sachems. Among the survivors, fifteen of the boys and two women were enslaved and taken to Bermuda. Many were divided among Puritan homes as slaves. Since the war began, Winthrop concluded, "we had now slain and taken, in all, about seven hundred" as well as seized most of the Pequot's remaining "kettles, trays, [and] wampum."[150]

Shortly after the war, Puritan forces arrived at Block Island and contin-

ued their assaults, killing whomever they could find and burning their property. Once dialogues of peace began, Native leaders recognized the new realities of power in the region. Much had changed since the Oldham conflict two summers prior. Now they submitted "themselves to become tributaries [and to pay] one hundred fathom wampompeague."[151] A few weeks later in Boston, Miantonomo met with the settlement's governor, deputy, and treasurer. He too understood the realities that the war had established, acknowledging "that all the Pequod country and Block Island were ours [the Puritans'], and promised that he would not meddle with them but by our leave."[152] Puritans now controlled access to Block Island, the northern Long Island Sound, and its central watershed, the Connecticut River.

The battle of Long Island Sound continued after 1637. Pequot sovereignty diminished not only because of Puritan campaigns from the north but also due to southern Dutch advances. An imperial vise squeezed the Sound's Indigenous peoples, strengthening each zone of European settlement.

The expansion in Puritan hegemony generated increased opportunities for English settlement, trade, and missionization. Many interpreted English triumph as divine intervention, especially as the Puritan population grew. Of the fourteen thousand who journeyed to New England by 1640, less than 5 percent had died from disease, and only one English ship out of nearly two hundred was lost at sea.[153] While in England Oliver Cromwell disparaged the Northeast as "poor, cold, and useless," the New English, as they called themselves, were consolidating power over an expanding commonwealth.[154] By 1700 Boston boasted fifteen shipyards that produced more ships than all other English colonies combined; in a nautical world, the city was second only to London.[155] Moreover, the Puritans' diversified farming, fishing, and trading dominated England's inter-regional trade across America's coastline, stabilizing British North America throughout the 1600s.