

The History of Brookfield

1660-1675

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Introduction

In 1628, King Charles the I granted the Massachusetts Bay Company a charter to encourage men from England to seek out and discover new lands for the purpose of commerce, finding natural resources, developing relationships with the natives, to purchase lands to farm, raise livestock and build homes for families coming to the new world. One man, William Pynchon was commissioned to carry out the duties of the charter and travelled to western Massachusetts. Upon arrival to the west, He began a personal and business relationship with the Quaboag Indians. He maintained cordial relations with the Indians and was prosperous in his dealings. However, due to a personal conflict, he left western Massachusetts and returned to England. William Pynchon would turn the business over to his son John who would continue to carry on the duties of the charter. He would purchase land from the Quaboag Indians and encourage families to travel west to settle and build a community. One group of men would arrive from Ipswich, Massachusetts to settle and begin a new life for their families. They would build roads, construct barns and houses, plant crops and raise livestock. In 1660 the area would contain twenty homes with one garrison (John Ayres Tavern) located on Foster Hill (presently off of route nine on the Brookfield/West Brookfield line). "It had the designation of being the most

isolated area in the Massachusetts colonies.” Douglas Leach suggests that, “indeed, scarcely a town in all of Massachusetts could claim the dubious distinction of being more isolated than Brookfield.” (King Philip pg 156)

This did not deter people from moving to the area known as Quaboag Plantation. Soon, more people arrived allowing the town to petition the General Court for incorporation into the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In December of 1673 the court granted township and the name Quaboag Plantation became Brookfield. In its’ infancy the town would build and expand, establish a local government, militia and a church. The men would hunt and fish on Wickabaug Lake, North Pond and South Pond. They would learn to plant and harvest from the Quaboags and the Nipmucks. Families would travel Old Bay Path, New Bay Path and the Nipmuc roads. They would purchase goods from John Pynchon’s Trading Post; travelers who were visiting or passing through would spend the night at John Ayres Inn and Tavern. Brookfield was growing as were the hostilities with the Quaboags and Nipmucks resulting in Wheeler’s Surprise, the siege of Brookfield and abandonment of the town in 1675. The town would remain an outpost for soldiers for a period of eleven years when in 1686 the General Court granted occupancy rights to families willing to return to Brookfield.

The Charter

Of the Massachusetts Colony

Charles By the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. To all whom these Presents shall come greeting;

“Whereas Our most Dear and Royal Father, King James of blessed Memory, By his Highest, Pattents, bearing Date third day of November, in Westminster, hath given and granted to the Council at Plymouth in the County of Devon, for the Planting, Ruling, Ordering and Governing at New England in America, and to their Successors and Assigns forever: All that part in America lying and being in the Breadth from Forty Degrees of North Latitude from the Equinolia Line, to the 48 Degree of the said North Latitude, inclusively, and of length of and within all the breadth aforesaid throughout all the Main Lands from Sea to Sea, together with all the firm Lands, Soyls, Grounds, Havens, Ports, Rivers, Waters, Fishings, Mines, Minerals, as well as Royal Mines of Gold and Silver, as of all Mines and Minerals whatsoever; Precious Stones, Quarries and all and singular other Commodities, Jurisdictions, Royalties, Privileges, Franchises and Pre-eminences both within said Tract of Land upon the Main, and also within the Islands and Seas adjoining.”

(Copy of King’s Charter, 1689, American Antiquarian Society)

This Charter was exclusively granted to men of wealth and stature in England. One such man was William Pynchon who disembarked in Boston and traveled west to seek his fortune. Upon arriving in western Massachusetts in 1636, he met with the local tribes (Quabaogs) and developed a business and personal relationship with them.

His primary goal (according to the charter) was to search for natural minerals discovered a more lucrative commodity...furs. He negotiated with the

Sachems an agreement to hire Indians to trap animals and acquire furs for profit. The partnership was very successful allowing Pynchon to build a trading post along the Connecticut River. The amount of furs collected was so great that Pynchon constructed a ware house to store the pelts before being shipped to Boston. Furs that William Pynchon would obtain were fox, squirrel, otter and the choice commodity; beaver. William Pynchon's success, wealth and relationship with the Native Americans allowed him the luxury of obtaining land from the Quaboags for the purpose of selling the land to settlers coming west. What once was a vast sea of land would be parceled out and settle eventually being incorporated as the town of Springfield, Massachusetts. William departed for England and his eldest son, John assumed responsibilities of the fur trade.

John Pynchon

Continuing his father's success and dealings with the Indians, John Pynchon found other ventures for profit. While his father abandoned the search for minerals, John took an interest in them. Entries found in his account book dated November 9, 1658 refer to items such as cheese, bread and salt which he sold to one William Denis and others "at the lead mine". The lead mine (graphite) was

located in Sturbridge called Tantinsques (Tantasqua) by the Indians, Pynchon's relationship to the lead mine spans from 1656 to 1659. (Quaboag pg 16)

The mine was purchased from the Quaboags by the Massachusetts General Court later sold to John Winthrop, Jr. who wanted to obtain silver from the graphite. The purchase would not have been possible without John Pynchon whose relationship with the Quaboags helped settle the transaction. He notified the miners that the Indians were friendly and were eager to continue a personal and business rapport with them.

But the main source of John Pynchon's wealth came from furs especially beaver pelts. Between 1652 and 1674, John Pynchon would ship more than 9,000 beaver pelts, other furs and skins to England (Quaboag pg 7). In return, he invited the Indians to his trading post to purchase an array of products unfamiliar to them. The Natives purchased "metal knives, cotton materials, tobacco, buttons, needles and thread, pots, cups, dishes and silverware." (Quaboag pgs 11, 17)

As more people settled in the Connecticut Valley and western Massachusetts, John Pynchon would help the settlers become acquainted with the area, the natives and resources offered from his trading post for building and farming. John Pynchon (with agents Thomas Cooper and Thomas Parsons) would

assist the new settlers in purchasing land from the Indians by finding an agreeable price. By negotiating with the Sachems he was instrumental in developing the land which would give rise to Quaboag Plantation. His knowledge gained from his father William and his relationship with the Quaboags, prompted the General Court to appoint John Pynchon Magistrate of western Massachusetts and Treasurer of Hampshire County granting him power to settle disputes, form alliances and hear grievances from settlers and natives in the area.

In his position as Magistrate he would hear cases, decide verdicts and impose fines. A riot broke out in Hadley, MA, Nathaniel Warner (resident of Brookfield) was a soldier sent to subdue the riot, but failed to carry out orders in arresting the ringleader. He was brought before the Magistrate and was found guilty and fined five shillings.

John Pynchon would gain military status as well. In 1662, every settlement was required to muster a militia. Quaboag had a small detachment associated with the Hampshire County Militia. The "Trayned Band of Springfield" was under the command of John Pynchon. On October 8, 1662 the General Court declared "for the encouragement of raising a troop of horse in Hampshire," that "6 and 30 horses shall be counted a troop, and have liberty and choice of Captain,

Leftenant, Cornet and other officers according to law.” John Pynchon was elected to be Captain of the Horse. He would later be promoted to Major on May 31, 1671. (Quaboag pg 148)

John Pynchon would remain in western Massachusetts until his death on January 17, 1703 at the age of 76. (Quaboag pg 15) He would be active during King Philip’s war sending correspondence to Governor John Winthrop, Jr., John Allyn of Connecticut and his son Joseph in England on the state of affairs in western Massachusetts during the attacks by the Nipmucks.

The Men from Ipswich

John Warner Samuel Warner William Prichard John Prichard

Thomas Wilson John Younglove James Younglove (Quaboag pg 29)

These men along with John Pynchon would be the forefathers who would shape and mold the wilderness into Quaboag Plantation. The petition was sent to the General Court in Boston on May 20, 1660 made this request:

“At a Great and General Court of Election at Boston 20th of May 1660.

In Ansr. To the petition of several the Inhabitants of Ipswich, the Court Judgeth it meete to graunt the petitioners sixe miles square or so much land as shall be Contained in such a Compasse in a place nere Quaboag ponds, provided they have 20 familyes there resident within three years, &

that they have an able minister settled there within the said terme, such as this Court shall approve, and that they make due provision in some way or other for the future, either by setting apart of land, or what else shall be thought meete for the Continuance of the ministry amongst them: And that If they shall faile in any of these particulars above mentioned, this Graunt of the Court to be voyd and of none effect.” (dated May 31, 1660)

(Quaboag pg 28)

As more people from England came to the Massachusetts shores they began to travel further west to seek new land and new opportunities for their families. They would meet with John Pynchon and his agents to discuss the purchasing of land, resources and whether the Natives were friendly or not. In order to accomplish this, John Pynchon used his own finances to purchase land from the Indians and sell it to men willing to come west. Hearing of the new settlements a group of men from Ipswich, Massachusetts decided to pull up stakes and the security of their homes to travel west and settle in the area later known as Quaboag Plantation. Their reasons were personal, political and religious. William Prichard was one of the men from Ipswich willing to take the risk and move his family out west. His father was a member of the king's court from Essex, England. Due to political disagreements with the King, William's father (fearing reprisals) took his son in the dead of night from his castle and hid him in the country side until William departed for America. William would arrive

in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1636 and later moved to Ipswich in 1641. He would rise to prominence in Ipswich; however he lacked the status of a freeman. According to Cotton Mather, "Here was a renowned church consisting mostly of illuminated Christians, that their pastors in the exercise of their ministry might judge that they had to do not so much with disciples as judges." But in spite of these glowing descriptions of the inhabitants of Ipswich, it is notable that of the prominent men of Ipswich who were later to become founding fathers of Quaboag Plantation, not one was a freeman of the Colony at the time of the petition for a grant of land at Quaboag in 1660." (Quaboag pg 19)

In order to attain the status of Freeman, a man must acquire an application of acceptance and forward it to the General Court of Boston, criteria to become a Freeman was "virtue of religious tenacity, wealth and influence." (Quaboag pg 140)

Once the court reviews the application and approves the petition, the men take the Freeman's oath. When William Prichard arrived in Quaboag in 1665 he still had not obtained the status of Freeman.

John Ayres a man of high status in Ipswich, Captain of the Militia, and son-in-law to Mark Symonds (leader of Ipswich) decided to leave the confines of

Ipswich and make his way west with his family. By making this bold decision, he would forfeit his commission of Captain in the Ipswich Militia. This caused great displeasure from his father-in-law, but John Ayres believed it was worth the risk. Along with his wife and eight children he would move west to become a key figure in the history of Brookfield.

John Warner was a man of great respect and a leading figure in Ipswich. He would come to Ipswich along with his father William and his brother Daniel in 1637. His family would acquire much wealth and land, but due to disagreements with the Church leaders of Ipswich he would depart upon hearing of great opportunities in western Massachusetts. His great influence and wealth would help build Quaboag Plantation. He would be influential in the incorporation of Brookfield. For this, he is called the "Father of Quaboag". (Quaboag pg 20)

Richard Coy was originally from Wenham not Ipswich. However, he maintained business interests in the town of Ipswich and familiar with the residents and politics of the town. While in Wenham, Richard Coy held many positions of influence. Coy obtained a liquor license in Wenham in 1658 "to keep an ordinary (tavern) and draw wine and strong water." (Quaboag pg 20) Other positions included fence viewer and road surveyor. His talent for raising money,

and his connections with members of the General Court in Boston helped Wenham secure funds for the construction of a meeting house. Although he held many important positions and was respected by the residents of the town, he was still listed a commoner and never reached the status of Freeman. He would leave Wenham with his family and at the age of forty, travel to Quaboag arriving in 1667. When the militia was formed, he would achieve the rank of Corporal.

While some of these men left their towns to seek new opportunities and fortune, others left for religious reasons. Thomas Wilson had problems with authority particularly the Church of Ipswich who had too many regulations. As a member of the Ipswich Militia he was ordered to stand watch. During the watch he became tired and decided to sojourn to a barn nearby. He was discovered asleep and brought before the court to face charges of failure to carry out his watch. He was given the opportunity to depart Ipswich (much to the pleasure of the church and leaders of the town) and headed west for a more carefree and less oppressive lifestyle. But his attitude and laid back approach would bring him more grief. In 1675, he was brought to Hampshire County Court and charged with slander accused of directing insults and threats towards Mr. Younglove. Wilson was again brought to court for disobeying the curfew of the town. When he was

told to observe curfew, he made threats and obscene gestures towards Samuel Warner.

Though it was difficult to leave the safety and security of Ipswich it was necessary in order to preserve the right of men to be free to question and disagree with political and religious leaders. A meeting was held by the town of Ipswich on February 25, 1655 to vote whether or not to provide the sum of 100 pounds to build or find a home for Mr. Corbett the minister of Ipswich. Some inhabitants disagreed with this proposal and made strong efforts to deny the funding. The town was divided and the case was forwarded to the Salem Courts on July 1, 1657. The Salem Court agreed to hear both sides of the case and the final decision would be made in the General Court of Boston. In the fall of 1657, after hearing both sides of the argument, the General Court of Boston agreed with the party to support Mr. Corbett granting him the necessary funds to purchase or construct a home.

This decision by the court prompted these men (Warner, Ayres, Coy and Prichard) to depart Ipswich and head west.

Early Settlement of 1660

While the petition was being filed, King Charles II ascended the throne of England. The colonies were notified of Charles ascension which came with mixed reviews. Recognition of Charles II enthronement was delayed believing that his monarch would fail due to rival factions in England. Rumors began to spread that the new Crown was sending agents to the colonies to inspect, hear requests and complaints. When the rumors became true, the Colonial Government began to pay homage and sent notes of praise and congratulations to the new Monarch in August of 1661. When the commissioners arrived, the colonies discovered that the new Monarch of Charles II wanted more control of government and religion. The policies were to be enforced both civil and religious, and follow all doctrine dictated from the King and the Church of England. The Colonial Government protested informing the commissioners they would not enforce nor follow policy of the new Crown. Their protests were so vehement it forced the commissioners to return to England. As the turmoil subsided, the Colonial Government and the colonies would resume business. The men of Ipswich could finally begin the process of purchasing land. John Pynchon would send his agent Lieutenant Thomas Cooper to meet with the Shattoockquis Indians to procure land for the function of farming, raising livestock, hunting, fishing and trade. He also

employed Thomas Parsons a distant relative from Windsor, CT to handle business for him on Quaboag Plantation. The land would encompass three miles north to south and three miles east to west. The area would include the river of Quaboag, Wickboag Pond and what are currently North Pond and South Pond. The deed was witnessed by Lieutenant Thomas Cooper, Elizur Holyoke, Samuel Chapin and Japhett Chapin signed with the mark of the Shattoockquis Sachem Mettawompe on November 10, 1665 (Quaboag pgs 32-33)

Although there were some men already occupying the area, some of the men from Ipswich that filed the petition had not arrived yet due to the controversy with Charles II. Once the deed was witnessed and official, the migration to the west began. John Warner upon hearing the news sold his property in Ipswich and moved with his family to Quaboag in late 1665 as did John Younglove, William Prichard and Thomas Wilson. Thomas Parsons the agent for John Pynchon from Windsor, CT would follow en-route in 1665 as a single man but would eventually marry and settle in Quaboag. Within a period of ten years more families and individuals departed from the east and traveled west to settle in Quaboag and the Connecticut Valley area, Richard Coy in 1666, followed by John Ayres in 1667. During this period the number were 19 adults and 34

children, a total of eight families inhabited Quaboag Plantation by 1667 (Quaboag pg 36)

The Regrant of 1667 gave power to John Pynchon and his agents to encourage people from Boston and surrounding areas to relocate to Quaboag Plantation. The Regrant of 1667 appoints John Pynchon (Chair), John Ayres, William Prichard, Richard Coy and John Younglove, authority to carry out the orders of the court. They would be granted the power to: admit inhabitants, grant lands and carry out doctrines and rulings issued by the General Court of Boston handed down to the Magistrate of Hampshire County. By increasing the inhabitants of the plantation the court would then decide whether Quaboag is eligible for township. Failing to increase population within Quaboag would result in forfeiture of lands to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The court requires that the plantation will have installed a minister who will enforce the laws of God, a local government to carry out the laws of the Commonwealth, and punish those who violate the laws. The final part of the grant excused all taxes and fees for a period of seven years to the country allowing the plantation the freedom to settle inhabitants, increase their treasury and meet all requirements set forth in this petition. (Quaboag pgs 36-37)

Nevertheless, by 1667 the total number of families was eight, twelve less than required by the petition of 1660 (“provided they have 20 families there resident within 3 years.”) (Quaboag pg 37) This was cause for concern with the General Court. The failure to increase inhabitants would mean the lands purchased by the settlers of Quaboag would be taken by the Court. Realizing the situation and fearing government control of land, Pynchon along with the Regrant Committee persuaded families to write to other family members to leave their present homes and come west to live. Soon, more people would venture to Quaboag and settle. In 1668, the family of Deacon Daniel Hovey, originally from Ipswich would settle with his wife Abigail and their children. James Travis and his wife Mercy along with their newborn daughter Elizabeth would arrive. Judah Trumble a recent widower from Rowley, Massachusetts came also to settle in Quaboag. During this time, Judah would dwell in the house of Samuel Warner (he was married to his sister-in-law Ann Swan). After Ann died, Judah would wed Mary Prichard on September 19, 1672 and purchase land a few months after the wedding (Quaboag pg 39)

The population would continue to grow with the arrival of Samuel and Thomas Kent and their families in 1671. The total number of families grew to ten. But for three years no other families came to Quaboag. In 1674 an older couple

settled in Quaboag, Thomas and Mary Millett from Gloucester, MA. Thomas would assume the duties of the ministry in Quaboag; however the Milletts left Brookfield in 1675 prior to the siege.

During this time, other families departed Brookfield and moved to surrounding areas. John Warner, Jr. left in 1689 and settled in Hadley, Thomas Hovey followed. Other family members departed also. Daniel and wife Abigail Hovey moved to Hadley to help Thomas settle the town. William Prichard, Jr. and John Prichard along with their families left to build and put down roots in Suffield, MA.

Once more people arrived and settled in Quaboag. But controversy arose when it was exposed that the legitimacy of the sale of land from the Shattoockquis was suspect. While the men from Ipswich (John Warner, John Ayres and William Prichard) were purchasing land from John Pynchon and securing possession of the land they failed to obtain a title from the Shattoockquis (Nipmuck pg 147). The purchase price was also suspicious. According to the transaction found in John Pynchon's account books an entry was made for "Lt. David Wilton Cr. November 28, 1665. By Shattoockquis 100 fad wampa for Quaboag at 09 00 00". (Quaboag pg 46)

Wampum also became an issue. There are two types of wampum, the white wampum of lesser value, and black wampum of higher value, wampum's are made with sea shells. The General Court allowed this to be legal tender when dealing with the natives yet John Pynchon took advantage of the situation and commenced making his own currency flooding the market with bogus wampum. Just like today, printing too much money can cause inflation. Pynchon used the bogus wampum to pay the Shattoockquis for the purchase of Quaboag using both the black and white sea shells. In later years this would be one of the tipping points to King Philip's War. Upon completion of the land transaction and approval by the General Court, John Pynchon began selling land to the people. The average lot consisted of a meadow, a planting field, and land to build barns and homes. The price per lot was one pound five shillings, most inhabitants purchased one lot. Wealthier men purchased between two to four lots.

Planter	Acres	Price
Deacon Daniel Hovey & Sons	100	06 05 00
John Ayres	90	05 12 06
William Prichard & Son	64	04 00 00

Richard Coy	60	03 15 00
John Younglove	40	02 10 00
Samuel Kent	40	02 10 00
Samuel Ayres	30	01 17 06
James Travis	30	01 11 03
Thomas Wilson	21.2	01 06 06
Other families	20	01 05 00

(Quaboag pgs 61-62)

When all sales were complete and the parties satisfied, John Pynchon tallied up the total sales. He made out pretty good for himself with a total of 32 pounds, 2 shillings and 9 pence. (Quaboag pg 51) John Pynchon still owned quite a bit of land which he would eventually build a grist mill. John Ayres with all his land would build a tavern and Inn which doubled as a fortified garrison. But still Quaboag needed more people to inhabit the area. They would petition the court again in 1670 to increase the land grant allowing more people to purchase land. The men petitioning the General Court of Boston were Richard Coy, John Ayres and William Pritchard. Unfortunately, they made a fatal error, by not adhering to

the original petition of 1660 which stated that all issues and requests were to be channeled through the chair of the committee which was...John Pynchon. The court refused to take action on the request for three years. Then in 1673, 17 men from Quaboag Plantation, including the original men from Ipswich petitioned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Court to “receive town privileges and requested the name of the plantation to be changed to Brookfield.” (Nipmuck pg 149) On October 11, 1673 the motion was passed, at this period time there were 18 families with a population between 82 and 100 people. (ibid)

Final confirmation of ownership of lands by inhabitants and the acknowledgement of the deed from the Indians was made on December 19, 1673, making the incorporation of Brookfield complete.

Roads and Paths

There were two paths that were commonly travelled during the early stages of Quaboag Plantation. When William Pynchon came to the area he followed the Nipmuc Path which ran parallel to the Connecticut River. The Nipmuc Path passed through Sturbridge, Brimfield and towards the Connecticut River. The Nipmuc Path went through Norwich and Woodstock, CT (Webaquasset Tribe), Southbridge and Sturbridge where it crossed the Quinebaug River and

divided into two branches. One, to Springfield, via lead mines (Tantiusques) and the other to the Great Falls at Holyoke via Brimfield and Steerage Rock. As it passed through the Quaboag Area, it coursed east and west.

(www.westbrookfield.org)

The other path was known as the Old Bay Path which went through North South Barre, New Braintree's West and Padre Roads following a path into West Brookfield to Wickaboag Valley Road to Wickaboag Pond. This path would lead to the Quaboag River and Long Hill Road eventually to Warren and Brimfield. All these roads today are adjacent to route 9 and route 67.

(www.westbrookfield.org)

In 1673 a new Bay path Road was constructed. Today the road runs off of route nine in Brookfield to what is presently route 148. The path was a windy road which includes "Devil's Elbow Road" which leads to present day North Brookfield or West Brookfield. Heading west on the Bay Path the inhabitants crossed over Quaboag River via Long Hill Road. (www.westbrookfield.org)

The purpose of these roads was for accessibility to new lands it opened a new trade route for merchants and families coming from Boston or Springfield it allowed better communication between towns in relaying information concerning

arrivals of dignitaries or government officials travelling to the area. The new roads and paths would become vital to the militias during the attack and siege of Brookfield.

Types of Homes

The first homes that occupied Quaboag Plantation were temporary living quarters. Some families arrived later in the year and had to get provisions prior to winter. The settlers constructed temporary living quarters called “English Wigwams” composed of sturdy branches and hay (thatch) that covered all the branches. This idea adopted from the Indians allowed them shelter during the winter until spring arrived. (Quaboag pg 65)

The homes built on the plantation were constructed from heavy oak for the frame, while pine and birch were used for the clapboards. The roof was covered with thatch and the windows were made of glass, however some houses used shutters. At this time glass was a luxury exclusively for wealthier people because it was an export from England. The average house contained a hall, parlor, bedroom, kitchen and porch. The more wealthy homes had an upstairs with more rooms. The larger homes served different purposes. Thomas Millet’s home was also the Meeting House for church services, but the largest home on the

plantation was John Ayres. John Ayres home consisted of a stable, barn and brewing house (Ayres had petitioned the General Court for a license to make and sell beer and hard liquor) the home was also a tavern and inn where people coming from Boston and Springfield would stay en route to their destinations. The home consisted of a tavern room and dining room, while other parts of the house were for the family members only. A large hall was to the rear of the building where weary travelers would assemble for food and drink. The second floor consisted of rooms for the more distinguished guests. John Pynchon was a regular to John Ayres Tavern while travelling from Springfield to Boston. The Tavern was fortified and designated a garrison in the event an attack was forthcoming.

While John Pynchon sold land, he also supplied the materials and labor for the homes. The following information comes from the account books of John Pynchon on a house built for William Brooks on June 27, 1668:

Timber and Framing of House	3 pounds 10 shillings
Sawing of Timbers	2 pounds
3 100 foot boards'	1 pound 13 shilling 6 pence

Labor	3 pounds
1,000 6 penny nails	10 shilling 6 pence
500 hob nails	1 shilling 8 pence
Total	10 pounds 15 shillings 8 pence

(Quaboag pg 75)

John Pynchon also owned a trading post where he sold such items as tea kettles, linens, fabrics, tools, cooking utensils, furniture and toys. He also maintained a Grist Mill near Quaboag Plantation on Wickaboag Pond in West Brookfield. In 1669, Pynchon petitioned the people of Brookfield to construct a Grist Mill powered by water. He hired John Ayres to oversee the construction of the mill. Most of the men in Brookfield along with men from Springfield participated in the project. Money was provided by Richard Coy, John Ayres and William Prichard with major funding by John Pynchon (Pynchon would buy out the other three becoming sole proprietor of the Mill). Upon completion of the mill, William Prichard was employed as the first Miller followed by John Ayres who continued as Miller until his death during King Philip's War. Inhabitants of the town were required to bring their grains to the mill and have them grinded by

the Miller. The only person that could grind his own grains was William Prichard.

An excerpt of the agreement with John Pynchon and John Ayres is as follows:

“Nov 28.72 Agreed with Goodman Aires to keep mill at Quaboag & tend it, to grind ye corne brought there for one yeare, he to take ye tole allowed viz $\frac{1}{2}$ a peck out of a bushel on all ye corne that shall be ground by one & all, & for his tending ye Mill, he to have one 3d of ye Tole (total): I am to have ye rest for my part. He is to grind all of ye corne at the Mill except Goodman Pritchard having liberty to grind he own corne only.” (Quaboag pg 132)

Other than Miller the most common trade was farming and each family was responsible for upkeep and maintenance of their land. The General Court enforced these requirements with the following edict established in 1633:

“It is further ordered, that no person, house holder or other, shall spend his time idly or unprofitably under pain of such punishment as the court shall think meet to inflict; and for this end it is ordered, that the Constable of every place shall use special care and diligence to take knowledge of offenders in this kind especially of common coasters, unprofitable fowlers, and tobacco users.” (Quaboag pg 102)

Men were employed in trades of master carpenters, joiners, thatchers, tanners, masons, mowers and sawers. The role of the women on the plantation was the making of clothing, preparing meals, tending to the children, maintenance of the home, sewing and weaving and would work alongside their husbands in the fields. The children would participate too, when they were not in school. The farmers were responsible for the health and well being of their livestock and when they could not determine the illness of the animal, Jedediah Strong a professional veterinarian from Springfield would be called upon to care for the animals.

As the town and the surrounding areas grew, governments would be formed, laws would be enacted and families would grow as expansion continued in western Massachusetts.

Customs, Culture and Religion

The life of a Puritan Family was based on religion, family, hard work and education. Although many people left England to escape the laxity of the Church of England, families still abided by laws handed down from the governor and the General Court of Boston. Some laws seemed harsh by today's standards. One law handed down in 1649 by Governor Endicott was the proper length, appearance

and grooming of men's hair. The length should be short and well cropped. The leaders would not tolerate the men of Massachusetts to look like "roughians and barbarous Indians" which the Magistrate deemed "contrary to the rule of God's work which says it is a shame for a man to wear long hair." (Quaboag pg 76)

In 1675 a law handed down by the General Court denouncing the wearing of wigs. While these were laws on the books, the men from Quaboag dismissed them as they did in Ipswich and continued to wear their hair long. As for women the use of powders and facial creams a practice which was normal in England was frowned upon in Massachusetts. People of the commonwealth were to present themselves in accordance with the laws of the Puritan religion and the General Court of Boston. However, being so far away from the clutches of the court and the church most rules were disregarded.

The clothing the settlers wore was common. Women and children wore material "made from blue linen lockram (coarse linen), linsey Woolsey (mixed wool and flax), mohair (mixture of wool and cotton), and Holland materials (a glazed linen or cotton fabric used for children clothes)." (Brookfield pg 7)

The clothing for the men when they labored was made of leather cloth and homespun. Their shirts were made of leather and their trouser made of a rough

wool material. Their stockings were made from wool and leather and their boots were also made of thick leather cloth. During the winter, the men wore a “short coat” and a pair of gloves. (ibid)

On Sundays, when families “go to meeting” they wore their Sunday best. Men would wear colorful clothing of the best material their “doublets” (close fitting jackets) appeared in colors of green, purple or blue. The sleeves on their shirts were slashed and were laced trimmed with large collars. The trousers were baggy and they wore colorful stockings. Black buckle shoes were worn and if you were wealthy and of high standing you were able to wear large black boots known as “great boots”. The wealthy were also allowed to wear silk, gold and silver buttons and lace and all that could be afforded. However, being wealthy had its drawbacks. Being wealthy also meant paying higher taxes to the commonwealth. (ibid)

The diet of the inhabitants of Brookfield consisted of vegetables from their gardens, grains from their fields, meats and poultry from their livestock. The men hunted for deer, turkey, pheasant, quail, squirrel and other small animals. The techniques used for farming and hunting were adopted from the Indians. The women would prepare hasty pudding made from cornmeal, milk and water,

porridges made from boiled salt pork. They would make bread from cornmeal, wheat and rye. John Ayres produced beer from hops and barley and served them in his tavern, John Pynchon provided rums and wines imported from England. Food played an important role in bringing the family together and at times brought all families together when a home was being constructed and during Thanksgiving.

Religion played a seriously important role in the community. At three o'clock on Saturday afternoon all work was ceased and families gathered together for bible readings and religious instruction. Sunday mornings all families gathered to "go to meeting" where they attended church services for most of the day. In order for people to gather a man would go through the town beating a drum to alert people that services were about to begin. Some of the more wealthy towns had a bell, while some towns hoisted a red flag to summon people to meeting. The laws of the church were harsh the Puritan Church outlawed any observance of Christmas and Easter due to their close relationship to the Catholic Church and the anti-Christ the pope. Failing to follow the laws of the Puritan Church would result in fines or severe punishment. Goodman Granger's wife being absent from worship resulted in punishment on September 26, 1676.

Rough housing and foolish acts resulted in the punishment of James Brown and Daniel Hoot on March 30, 1675,

“James Brown and Daniel Hoot complained of for profaning the Sabbath, laughing and sporting in time of public ordinances, were set in the stocks in Northhampton, in court time for two hours.” (Quaboag pg 95)

During the Sabbath it was forbidden to use carts for transportation or drive cattle or anything involving labor. Lustful conduct on the Sabbath was prohibited much to the dismay of Widow Killom,

“Widow Killom of Enfield for breaking the Sabbath and for lascivious carriages in that she was found upon the bed, under the bed clothes, with a man who was a stranger, upon the Sabbath day morning about a month since.” (ibid)

The use of musical instruments was also outlawed both at home and in church. Hymns were sung by the congregation, without the use of an organ or any other musical instrument. Men could not smoke tobacco within two miles from the meeting house coming or going.

Education played an important role in the Puritan community. Those that received a good education and respect in the community were given the title of “Mr. or Mrs.” and were also reserved for the clergy and the medical profession. Wives of these men also received the title of respect. If a man received an undergraduate degree he was given the title “Sir” and a graduate degree was given the title “Mr.” (Quaboag pg 81)

The inhabitants of Brookfield were held responsible for the teaching of their children. The children were required to read the bible, write, add and subtract. If the towns failed to meet the educational requirements the General Court would step in. Towns with 50 or more households the Massachusetts government sent them a teacher. Quaboag lacking the sufficient population of families were required to teach their children at home.

Leisure time on the plantation was limited as families worked most of the time planting and cultivating crops, taking care of livestock, building homes and barns and tending to the needs of the family. When families came together it was for a barn raising, going to meeting on Sundays and Thanksgiving. Gambling (cards and dice) were banned and subject to a fine or punishment. As I mentioned before, musical instruments were prohibited even in homes. Beer,

wine, rum and other spirits were allowed but limited. A man found drunk and disorderly could end up with a fine and a few hours in the stocks. All tavern keepers were licensed by the General Court and subject to fines and loss of license if they could not control the amount of liquor distributed. Tavern Keepers were forbidden to sell alcohol to Indians, but unfortunately they would, causing further hostilities to grow between natives and settlers.

Town Government

By 1672, Quaboag Plantation's population was growing as many people migrated to the west. The call for local government was needed to collect taxes, hear suggestions and complaints and to provide representation to the General Court in Boston. In its' infancy, Quaboag Plantation had no Freeman which were men of wealth, religious determination and influence that took an oath of fidelity to the government. Freeman had the privilege of holding office, sitting on juries and representing their towns in the General Court. As Quaboag Plantation began showing expansion, residents of the town wanted accountability in Boston. In order for this to take place, the people of the town filed a petition for incorporation into the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. John Pynchon being a man of authority and wealth in Springfield and the architect of Quaboag

Plantation was elected and reelected as representative from Hampshire County to the General Court in Boston (Quaboag Plantation is part of Hampshire County). Not only was John Pynchon the representative for Quaboag Plantation, he was also the county treasurer collecting taxes for the plantation. John Pynchon held other positions in Hampshire County. He was the Magistrate for the Court hearing cases, holding weddings and issuing licenses. He held the rank of Sergeant Major in the militia and would eventually rise to Captain during King Philip's War. With all these designations it is no wonder he was to be called the "Prince of Springfield." (Quaboag pg 138)

Once the local government of Quaboag Plantation took shape and the settlement began to resemble a community, the committee petitioned the General Court of Boston for incorporation into the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Court granted this request on December 15, 1673 and the settlement was no longer Quaboag Plantation but the town of "Brookefeild". Incorporation was based on the requirement that the town increased their populations to 40-50 families and the land be divided among new settlers with 200 acres per family. In the winter of 1673, there were 10 families (64 people) residing in Brookfield. (Quaboag pg 39)

Unfortunately, once incorporation was granted, any land not already claimed or occupied was taken (mostly by committee members and wealthy land owners).

After the incorporation, the prudential committee was disbanded and elections were held for the offices of selectman, constable and fence viewer. Below these offices were, town measurer, leather sealer, sealer of weights and measures and drum beater all appointed by selectmen. The first elected officials to the office of selectmen were William Pritchard and Samuel Kent. Two years after their terms, John Ayres and Richard Coy filled the office.

The other office of importance was the office of Constable. The responsibility of the Constable was enforcement of the law, incarceration of criminals, and extradition of criminals in flight. He was responsible for detaining and punishing criminals for the following criminal activities: "Sabbath breakers, vagrants, night walkers, common coasters, unprofitable fowlers, tobacco takers, drunks, thieves, rioters and rabble rousers." (Quaboag pg 143) His other duties included escorting law breakers to the Hampshire County Court House in Northampton or Springfield. The Constable collected all taxes, fines and annual returns to the County Treasurer. He served writs and scheduled personnel for the

town watch. The Constable controlled the weights and measures of the town, called juries for cases and ensured organized and smooth elections reporting results to the selectmen. Richard Coy held the position as first Constable of Brookfield followed by John Ayres and later William Pritchard. Richard Coy resumed the position of Constable March 1675. During this period he was called to witness the case against William Pritchard and Samuel Kent concerning the destruction of pewter dishes belonging to John Ayres, John Pynchon presiding.

“June 18th, 1675. John Aires Sen. Of Brookfeild plaintiff (according to Replevy) against William Pritchard & Samuel Kent, Selectmen of Brookfeild: for unlawfully distreining some pewter dishes of his, which Constable did by their order;

William Pritchard and Samuel Kent appearing & putting it upon, profess that they gave order for the distress, and plainly not owning it, and John Aires not proving it: I allowed their charges viz., for 3 days each, which is six shillings apiece, in all 12 shillings for John Aires to pay to William Pritchard and Samuel Kent, and likewise six shillings for Corporall Coy as a witness by warrant:” (Quaboag pg 227)

The Fence Viewer's job was the building of fences and pens ensuring that livestock did not escape and destroy land owners crops. The Town Measurer helped establish boundaries for property owners. He was assisted by two chain men to mark off the appropriate boundaries between land owners.

The only position that was not appointed by the Selectmen was the Clerk of Writs which was assigned by the Clerk Magistrate (John Pynchon). Duties involved the issuing of warrants and summons, notification of births, death and marriages, posting of new laws from the General Court of Boston handed down to the Court of Hampshire County. Laws may involve the proper maintenance of road and bridges and controlling livestock. One decree which came down on October 14, 1668 concerned the prevention of stealing and reselling livestock:

“That there shall be a toll book kept in town by the Clerk of Writ, wherein all horse kind and other cattle as aforesaid bought of any person, shall be entered with their age, color, and marks, the peril of the buyer, with the name of the seller, and such seller shall have two vouchers to testify that the said seller to be the proper owner of any such horse kind or other cattle sold.” (Quaboag pg 147)

While the government was taking shape in Brookfield, the need for a well trained militia became priority for Brookfield. All towns within the county were obligated to have militias for defense of their towns and be set to assist other settlements in the event of an attack. The General Court of Boston required that “all towns must muster men between the ages of 18 and 60, to be properly trained on scheduled days, once a month, 8 times during the year.” (Quaboag pg 149) The men from Brookfield fell under the Hampshire County Militia which was commanded by John Pynchon. The militia of Brookfield was commanded by John Ayres with Richard Coy and William Prichard as his assistants. The militia would muster on Saturdays for training and instruction, beginning with a prayer by the minister of the town. The men dressed in their everyday work clothes and stood in line to hear the plan of the day and were inspected to ensure all equipment was in working order. The officers appointed a Clerk of the Band to ensure that all men had “the proper amount of powder (1 pound), twenty bullets, and two fathom of slow match with a musket and sword; a bandoleer worn over the shoulder to hold ammunition; a priming wire, a worm and a scour.” (Quaboag pg 149)

All companies contained a drummer and flag bearer carrying the colors of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. All men mustered in a militia received an allowance

of three shilling and six pence, if they were to travel to other locations for combat that received an additional three shilling as a travel allowance. The strength and preparedness of the militias of Hampshire County and Brookfield was significant for they would soon find out if they could withstand what was to come in the summer of 1675.

The forming of a local government, the raising of a militia, the need for elected officials for the town of Brookfield were part of the requirements for incorporation into the Commonwealth. Failure to comply with these measures would force the General Court to take control of Brookfield which would lose its incorporation. The General Court would parcel land out, enact laws and collect revenues for the town. The town would lack representation in the colonial government and decisions on local complaints and issues would be decided by the government not the officials of the town. Troops from other parts of Massachusetts would be sent to Brookfield and garrisoned in homes of the inhabitants. A Military Court consisting of high ranking officers would dictate laws and delegate the duties of Constable and other town officials to lower ranking members of the garrisoned troops. They would also hear cases, enforce laws and decide punishments. This is not what the town officials and inhabitants of Brookfield desired making all efforts to meet and follow the criteria of the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The positions established in Brookfield were similar to positions held in England; they performed a necessary system to maintain order in town. The positions provided leadership for the town and representation in Boston. People were given a forum to speak and come together to discuss concerns, neighbors could be heard and their suggestions and complaints could be settled by the town, the Magistrate or the General Court in Boston. The requirement of having a standing militia was necessary due to the location of Brookfield being isolated vulnerable to Indian attacks. Constant drills and instruction gave the town the experience on what to do in the event of an attack, where to go and how to communicate with other towns to warn and notify them. During King Phillip's War, the people of Brookfield knew that John Ayer's tavern was the best fortified garrison and went there when the Nipmucks approached the edge of town. John Pynchon's correspondence with Governor Winthrop and John Allyn on the status of the fighting, the need for troops, food and ammunition helped the town during the siege. Without leadership, a forum, representation, organization, training and communication, Brookfield would never exist. If there was no training, drilling, instruction, preparedness, direction and no militia, the Nipmucks would have succeeded in overrunning the town and annihilating the inhabitants leaving no survivors.

The Nipmuck

The word Nipmuck meaning “Fresh Water People” were a group indigenous to the southern part of Massachusetts, the pioneer valley (western Massachusetts), Rhode Island and the Connecticut River Valley. The Nipmuck Indians belong to the “Eastern Woodlands” Algonquin Family. The primary language of the Nipmuck was the Massachusetts dialect.

The Nipmucks located their tribe in the inland part of Massachusetts and were not salt water fishermen. They located their communities along river banks, lakes and ponds. The main staple for the tribes consisted of fish, corn, venison, turkey, and squirrel, large and small animals. The Nipmucks built domed shape lodges called “Wetu” also known as “Wigwam” constructed of saplings that were bent in a u-shape, covered with woven cattail sheets of peeled hardwood bark. (www.westbrookfield.org/thenipmuc.htm)

The tribes would arrange their villages according to the seasons. During the spring, they would set up their communities on fertile lands to commence the growing season. As the summer approached, they would cultivate some of the plants and the men would hunt and fish. Towards the middle and end of the summer they would plant their corn and prepare for the fall and winter. During

this time, the Nipmucks were storing and preserving food for the winter months. Later in the fall and the approaching of winter, the tribe moves to a more southern climate (into Rhode Island and southern Connecticut) and continued to hunt and fish.

There were four major Nipmuck tribes located in and around the western and southern part of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, “the Nashaways also known as the Weshakim Indians,” the “Quaboag,” the Webaquassets,” and the “Nipmuck Indians,” the focus will be on the Quaboag Indians. (Nipmuck pg 9)

The Quaboag Indians were located on the Quaboag River which runs through the Brookfield’s through Warren and further west. The Quaboag tribes set up their villages along the Quaboag River, Wickaboag Lake and North and South ponds. Quaboag tribes were located all over western and southern Massachusetts. The areas they covered were, New Braintree, Brimfield, Sturbridge, Warren and Barre.

Early relationships with the Quaboag Indians were cordial. William Pynchon developed personal and good business relations with the natives and passed on his information to the people arriving west. After his return to

England, John would continue the personal and business relationship with the Nipmucks. The friendly relations would be abandoned as settlers and political leaders of the government and communities continued to take more land while attempting to assimilate the Nipmucks into the lifestyle of white society. As time went by and more land and lifestyle was taken from the Indians, resentment and hostilities would surface turning them against their white neighbors.

The Growing Tensions

Relationships between the Nipmuck Tribes and the Massachusetts government began to erode. By 1675, two years after the incorporation of Brookfield, rumors of war spread among the villages in southern and western New England. The first and foremost reason was the taking of ancestral lands, according to Nipmuck, "The natives perceived this to be an infringement on one of their basic rights, the aboriginal right of tenure to ancestral lands." (Nipmuck pg 120)

The confusion between the English and the Natives boiled down to the definition of land. Indians were migratory, they moved with the changing of the seasons. Their interpretation of land was it is to be used by all according to the needs and during a certain period of time, "But villages were not fixed

geographical entities; their size and location changed on a seasonal basis, communities breaking up and resembling as social and ecological needs required.” (Changes pg 38) The English believed that once land is purchased it becomes a commodity and property to be divided up, fenced in and developed according to ones needs and not encroached upon by others. According to John Winthrop, “there were two ways of owning land, one natural and one civil.” (Changes pg 56) Winthrop’s theory believed there was a natural right to the land, “when men held the earth in common every man sowing and feeding where he pleased.” However he furthered his argument by pointing out that, “this natural ownership had been superseded when individuals began to raise crops, keep cattle, and improve the land by enclosing it; from such actions, Winthrop said, came a superior, civil right of ownership.” (Changes pg 56) The argument Winthrop presents was that the Natives were doing nothing to improve the land and were unable to stay in one area excluding them from rightful ownership allowing settlers the right to purchase land and maintain it. The General Court of Massachusetts outlined the definition of ownership by stating, “What lands any of the Indians, within the jurisdiction, have by possession or improvement, by subduing of the same, they have just right thereunto, according to that Gen: 1:28, chap: 9: 1, Psa: 115, 16.” (Changes pg 63) The General Court declared that clam

banks, fishing ponds, berry picking areas, hunting lands could not be claimed as sole property of the Indians. (ibid) There was also a misunderstanding between the English and the Indians concerning ownership and sharing of land. On July 15, 1636, William Pynchon met with Indians in the Connecticut Valley to acquire land to resell to settlers arriving from the east. He purchased an area of land five miles long from the Agawams along the Connecticut River. The land deal was witnessed and signed by thirteen Natives which two of them, Commucke and Matanchon were sachems. They sign the agreement on behalf of Cuttonus, his mother Kewenusk who was the wife of Wenawis, and Nairum the wife of Coa stating, "That both men and women had rights to the land being transferred." (Changes pg 66) While Pynchon and his associates believed the land was now in their possession, the Indians believed that the land was to be used by all to hunt, fish, and plant and harvest crops. The term used was "usufruct" which meant, "the legal right to use and enjoy the benefits and profits of something belonging to another." (Webster Dictionary pg795)

This is what the Indians believed they were agreeing to, "the Indians conceived of this sale as applying only to very specific uses of the land. They gave up none of their most important hunting and gathering privileges, they retained right to their cornfields, and evidently intended to keep living on the land much as

they had done before.” (Changes pg 67) The Indians assumed that the settlers would come in establish their own villages and co-exists with the Natives sharing in the bounties of the land. The English assumed that they had purchased sole ownership of the tract of land to be parceled, sold and developed by newcomers to the area. The Indians interpretation was that the land was being allotted to the settlers and whatever was hunted or gathered within the area was shared by all. The English had their own ideas and interpretation of land, “what the Indians perceived as a political negotiation between two sovereign groups the English perceived as an economic transaction wholly within an English jurisdiction.”

(Changes pg 68)

English law not Indian law was to be followed, “Land purchases like Pynchon’s were thus interpreted under English law, and so were understood as a fuller transfer of rights the Indian communities probably ever intended.” (ibid)

Another misconception was the way in which the Europeans and the Natives viewed animals and natural resources. The Indians looked at the resources as their needs to live and survive especially during the winter months while the Europeans looked at resources as “commodities” and “profits”. “What was a “merchantable commodity” in America was what was scarce in Europe.”

(Change pg 20) Indians would hunt and fish to fulfill the needs of the village, the women would plant corn and vegetables to feed their families and store the rest for winter. Once this was accomplished they would limit their hunting and fishing to allow the animal population to replenish itself in order to continue abundance throughout the years. The fields where crops were grown would be abandoned after the season and left unoccupied to prevent soil exhaustion. The English settlers would almost hunt the beaver and the deer into extinction and the farmers would reuse the soil to the point of exhaustion. This had an effect on both the settlers and the natives causing disease and starvation.

While it is true that some lands were purchase from the Indians lawfully, lands that were off limits and maintained by the tribes were taken by the settlers. John Pynchon who purchased land from the Quaboags obtained the land by using counterfeit wampum made from black marine shells. Land was unlawfully taken by conning the sachems into signing bogus deeds or getting them drunk and forcing them sign a forged document, granting land to greedy merchants.

The General Court of Boston used questionable methods to secure lands for settlers in the early 1600's. After the Pequot War of 1637, the smaller and weaker tribes were often harassed by larger tribes (Narragansett's and

Mohegan's) in order to fend themselves from the larger tribes, the smaller tribes sought protection from the Puritan Government in Boston. The Massachusetts General Court in Boston agreed to provide protection for the smaller and weaker tribes by issuing an agreement in 1643 stating that if the Indian Leaders agreed they would, "place themselves, their subjects, and their tribal lands under the jurisdiction of the colonial government." (Nipmuck pg 58) The Indian Leaders placed their trust in the agreement believing that they would be citizens and residents under the government of Massachusetts enjoying the same rights as the white citizens. However, they would never be treated on the same level as white citizens and would eventually be segregated into what was known as "Prayer Villages" later called reservations. The purpose of the Prayer Villages was to assimilate the Indians into white society while educating and converting them to the Christian religion. In the early stages Indians eager to learn the ways of the Christian faith could volunteer for the program, but as years went by this became mandatory. Daniel Gookin had for sometime represented the General Court of Massachusetts as an Indian agent. For many years Gookin along with Reverend John Eliot travelled among the Nipmuck tribes, learning their language and representing them in Boston concerning tribal issues. Gookin and Eliot's main duty was to convert the Indians to Christianity and assimilate them into white

society. It was Gookin's idea to establish "Prayer Villages" for the Indian tribes. The General Court endorsed the Prayer Villages but for different reasons. The Court believed that by segregating the Indians from the white society they were protecting them from "destruction of planting fields by roving English cattle and other livestock, malicious acts against settlers and their property by some of the young, usually intoxicated, braves, and theft of property. Segregation, officials believed would prevent future incidents of violence from occurring." (Nipmuck pg 264)

Actually, what segregation revealed were the overall racism of Puritan people and the leaders of the Commonwealth. They failed to educate themselves on Indian religion and culture refusing to learn their language and way of life believing them uneducated heathens in need of redemption and etiquette. Puritans believed that it was divine intervention that had sent them to the new world to educate, civilize, and provide art and culture to them, but once assimilated they would never achieve equal status among white society.

While the Puritans went about converting and placing the Indians in the Prayer Villages they continued to covet more land. Using Gookin's plan they located the Indians onto selected areas (usually a small area of land) while the

larger land masses were purchased by greedy land merchants and government officials. Although Gookin was sincere in his motives for converting the Indians, the merchants and government officials saw a great potential in procuring large amounts of land for disbursement to new settlers coming from Europe.

During this period the General Court of Massachusetts was constantly amending and adding laws concerning land. In 1674, Daniel Gookin and Reverend John Eliot met with Nipmuck representatives in one of the Prayer Towns. They informed the Indian leaders of the town of “The Indian Land Grant of 1652” which stated that the “law required them to apply to the General Court for legal title to the land on which they were living.” (Nipmuck pg 265) The purpose of this law was that if any territory was not being occupied or used for farming, planting or livestock, if the land was not maintained or inhabited, the land becomes property of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This was a surprise to many of the Indians who believed the land was for everyone to partake in. The native’s lived by the seasons and moved with the changing of them. They were never notified of the law (now 22 years old) even by Gookin and Eliot.

The lack of understanding of “The Indian Land Grant of 1652” had an effect on the Shattoockquis in western Massachusetts. During the summer of 1660, John

Warner, John Ayres and William Prichard traveled to Quaboag to purchase land to build a settlement for their families. They were to meet with John Pynchon to discuss the amount of land bought and the purchase price. However, the deal fell through due to rumors of the Mohegan and the Sachem Uncas causing problems with the Quaboags in the area. Five years later, the men from Ipswich (Warner, Ayres and Prichard) returned to the area and settled on Foster Hill two miles from Lake Wickaboag. They began the process of clearing land, building homes and notifying their families to come west. The controversy grew when it was revealed that the men failed to seek permission from the Quaboags to obtain a deed and settle the land. They turned to John Pynchon who hired Lieutenant Thomas Cooper to negotiate and secure a deed for the area settled. On November 10, 1665, Cooper obtained a deed from the Shattookquis on behalf of the settlers of Quaboag Plantation. "for a tract containing 23,040 acres (six square miles), the transfer included land on both sides of the Quaboag River from Quaboag Pond west to Wickaboag Pond. The Quaboags would keep the land on the southern end of Quaboag Pond and another on "Indian Hill" to the west of Wickaboag Pond, which were "by the terms carefully excluded" from the purchase for the price of three hundred fathoms of wampum." (Nipmuck pg 147)

The deed was witnessed by Cooper and the Shattoockquis (Quaboag) sachem Mattawomppe and was filed with the Magistrate John Pynchon in Springfield who submitted the filings with the General Court of Boston. However, the Indians believed that the land was to be used by all both settlers and themselves. The deed was wrote up in English and loosely translated by Cooper to the natives who were not familiar with English Land laws. Their misunderstanding of the deed would cause frustration and hostilities towards the inhabitants of Brookfield. Similar incidences of loosely written titles, land squatting by settlers occurred around Massachusetts. These misunderstandings and confusion of land ownership put the Indians at the mercy of the colonists and the government. While their populations decreased through disease, death and war, the colonists, military strength and the power of the Puritan government increased. While the Indians tried in vain to petition the courts for return of their lands, the General Court refused to hear their argument telling them it was too late. Through greed, racism, false promises, forced assimilation and conversion, destruction, coveting of land the Indians could no longer put up with Puritan Pilgrim's Pride. The older Sachems tired of fighting with the colonial government wanted to comply, but the younger braves would have none of that. Along with

King Philip (Metacom) these young braves would rise up and attempt to reclaim their ancestral rights to the lands so honored by their forefathers.

King Philip's War

Prior to the attacks on Brookfield and western Massachusetts, negotiations were underway to prevent hostilities between the Nipmucks and the inhabitants of Brookfield and the surrounding areas. The meeting was to be held in the beginning of August, to discuss land, boundaries, crops and livestock. A contingency of men from Brookfield and soldiers stationed in Brookfield from Braintree set out to meet with the Nipmucks (Quaboags) to settle any disagreements. But the Nipmucks were in no mood to negotiate, they had other ideas and there was no room for discussion. John Pynchon would provide a narrative of the attacks in a series of letters and reports to his son Joseph, the Governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop, Jr. and the Magistrate of Connecticut, John Allyn.

On October 20, 1675, John Pynchon now residing in Springfield wrote to his son Joseph on the attacks on western Massachusetts (particularly the burning of Springfield), the reasons for the attacks by the heathen hordes and his reluctance in granting passage for his son from England to Massachusetts, "The sore

contending of God with us for our sins, unthankfulness for former mercies, and unfaithfulness under our precious enjoyments hath evidently demonstrated that he is very angry with this country: God having given the heathen a large commission to destroy this people.” (CVHS Pynchon Letters) John Pynchon believes that the attacks are the result of the sins committed by men and their lack of respect and gratitude to All Mighty God. The many bounties he has given man; land, food, natural resources have all been taken for granted by committing sins of drunkenness, greed, violence towards other men, treatment of the Native American and other sins that force the Indians to rise up to be the rod that punishes the settlers for their treachery.

In his letter, John Pynchon describes to his son the destruction of homes, the burning of crops and barns, the taking of livestock and the murder of people. He points out that the destruction is so horrific that the heathen hordes leave “and not anything have I left of food for man or beast.” (ibid) He believed that God had done this to remove the stain of sin within him and replenish his soul, “I have not the least cause to murmur and repine at the wise dispose of a gracious God and loving father: but desire to acquiesce in his good pleasure, & to lie at his foot in holy submission to his blessed will.” (ibid)

John Pynchon due to his many sins is willing to accept the punishment that has been laid upon him and his family to acknowledge the devastation and destruction of his home, land and livestock and his willing to submit no matter how much is lost and allow God's will to be done.

In the second part of his letter, John Pynchon tells Joseph that at this time although his father and mother wish to see him, he believes it would be better to delay his journey to Massachusetts until such hostilities are quelled, "Though I and you mother should be exceeding glad to see you, yet as times are, question whether it be best to come over yet (I mean now) and how God may dispose of us I know not. We are yet here at Springfield: My house garrisoned with soldiers: and full of troubles and hurries." (ibid)

It is clear that John fears for his family in Springfield and for his son requesting that he delay his arrival to Massachusetts for fear that he may arrive in the middle of the conflict and would be killed. He is unsure whether he himself or his family would survive the attacks on western Massachusetts and pondered how God would determine him and his family's demise.

In a series of letters to the Governor of Massachusetts (John Winthrop, Jr.) and the Magistrate of Connecticut (John Allyn), John Pynchon outlined the attacks

on Quaboag and other towns in the area. His first letter (August 4, 1675), he reports that Indians friendly to him bring news of the attack on Quaboag, "Our Indians have now brought me news of a fight between English and Indians two days ago at Quaboag and about 11 English and some house burnt, and all English got to one house (John Ayres)." (Pynchon Papers pgs 138-139)

John Pynchon notifies Governor Winthrop of the status of the attack on Brookfield, the date of the attack, how many homes lost and the location of where the inhabitants went for safety knowing that John Ayres Tavern is the most fortified garrison on Foster Hill. This will allow soldiers coming to the area the direction to concentrate their assault on and to relieve the siege.

As the letter continued, John writes that Richard Coy's barn was burnt to the ground along with two other homes. He cannot determine the strength and numbers of the Indians, but the situation is of dire need, "We earnestly request that you would please to send what force you may judge needful to relieve the English, yet lest if any be alive at Quaboag; to pursue those Indians." (ibid)

John Pynchon requested that a force of fifty or more soldiers be sent on August 4 to be in Brookfield and western Massachusetts by morning (August 5,

1675). He acknowledges the situation to be ominous and expediency is needed fearing that the siege may be broken by the Nipmucks.

In his next letter (August 6, 1675), John Pynchon graciously thanks the governor for acknowledging his request for reinforcements to the besieged town of Brookfield, "Honored Sirs, We most thankfully acknowledge and accept of your great love and respect to us in speeding soldiers to us for relief of Brookfield, who are in great distress as we have since had certain intelligence, being all in one house cooped up by some hundreds of Indians." (Pynchon Papers pgs 139-140)

He comments in the letter that he had sent some 30 soldiers along with Captain Wait and Lieutenant Cooper to Brookfield. The governor, according to Pynchon had sent 40 soldiers thus bringing the total to 70. Pynchon believes that the situation is depressed, "We hear more Indians are coming after the Pequots. Let them make all possible speed to come quickly as a further relief and they may overtake them presently after they get to Quaboag, for the forces went not hence till near noon by reason your Indians could not come up over night and the English were within night ever they got to us." (ibid) In this request, I notice that John Pynchon becomes more fearful, almost in a state of panic that unless the troops get to the area, likely, there will be no survivors.

According to further reports from friendly Indians, rumors of Philip's brother was present along with another Indian named Mattoolos. The first initial sighting of the Indians was by people coming to the area. The witnesses discovered the Indians on the border of the town and promptly turned east and heading back to Boston. The presence of a major Indian figure Mattaloos caused great concern for Pynchon fearing that this could be a major engagement. The reinforcements being a couple days from engaging the enemy worried Pynchon fearing it may be too late for the inhabitants of Brookfield.

John Pynchon continued to provide information to Governor John Winthrop, Jr. on the progression of the battle, the strength of the attackers and the conditions of the people during the siege, "I have just now intelligence brought to me by our Indians that an Indian from Wabaquassick brings certain intelligence that Philip with forty of his men is now at a place called Ashquoach a little on the side of Quaboag somewhat to the southward of our way thither, and not much, being a little of the way, and suppose not above 23 miles of this town; and thereabouts he resolves to settle if he be not disturbed, because it is a place of food." (Pynchon Papers pg 140)

Report of this news brings a sliver of hope for John Pynchon. Hearing that Philip and his warriors had stopped to replenish their food supplies and rest, would give the troops time to reach the area, secure it and prepare for the attack.

The intelligence by the Indian spies reported that Philip had set up a command post northwest of Brookfield in Memenimisssee (possibly the Ware/Palmer areas) joining his brother and Matoomas and about 200 warriors. Along with Philips 40 warriors the troop strength would be 240 men. With this kind of strength the troops from Springfield combined with the troops from Boston would be unable to withstand Philip's attack, more troops were needed. The Indians also reported that Philip had left his swamp in Rhode Island some seven days ago along with 300 men, women and children. The group would travel up the Narragansett, however, due to the heat, mosquitoes and rough terrain, some Indians died along the way. The heavy burden was too much and Philip left the tribe taking forty men to western Massachusetts. Philip met with the Wabquassett Indians (Pynchon's spies) and they reported back to Pynchon that they had 30 guns and 10 bows and arrows, "These forty men that fled with Philip have but 30 guns, and the other 10 bows and arrows, and are now weak and weary and may easily be dealt with, whereas if we let them alone (say the Indians) they will burn our houses and kill us all by stealth." (ibid)

The information by the Indian spies was all based on the fact that if Philip does not meet up with his brother and Matoomas with 200 warriors they could defeat them and destroy the morale of Philip's brother and Matoomas. John Pynchon requested that an additional 50 to 60 men be sent without delay as the situation in Brookfield became tenuous. He made another request that food and other provisions be brought to Brookfield as their supplies begin to diminish, "Be pleased, Gentlemen, that your men which you send may bring bread with them; our mill having been out of order renders it extreme difficult here." (Pynchon Papers pg 142) Realizing that his mills have been destroyed, the grain taken and food and supplies have been depleted; he makes a desperate request for supplies to the beleaguered garrison at Brookfield.

The friendly Indians reported that nine people were killed during the siege but could not convey any more information on the condition of the people inside the garrison. They were unable to get close to the garrison because the area was overrun by the Nipmucks. As for the 10 people that witnessed the approaching of the Nipmuck warriors on the outer areas of Brookfield, and fled, Pynchon was hoping that they could dispatch the information to Boston. Other information that Pynchon received from the Indian spies was communicated to his commander, Captain Hinchmen warning him of Philip's presence in Quaboag, the

amount of men with him and pass on the information to Indian allies and other forces in the area, “I suppose it would be good use to convey some intelligence to Captain Hinchsmen that Philip is at Quaboag and to order the Pequot Indians to pursue him thither. If the Pequot Indians and the Mohegan’s would now pursue Philip while he is faint and weary it would be best service and so likewise for our army.” (ibid)

The correspondence John Pynchon writes provided much needed communication to the government in Boston and his officers. The location of Philip and Matoomas, the amount of warriors traveling with him, supplies and weapons being carried and what was needed to aid and relieve the garrison helped prevent total destruction and loss of life in Brookfield. It showed the leadership, courage, faith and love John Pynchon had for the people of Brookfield and especially for his son Joseph who desired to be with his father and mother in Springfield but for his father’s affection and caution pleaded with his son to delay his journey to Massachusetts.

Wheeler's Surprise

On August 2, 1675 a devastating and horrible defeat would occur among a group of men searching for a Nipmuc Tribe to negotiate a peace treaty. Instead only a few would escape with their lives, while others would be slaughtered. It begins in Brookfield where a group of men led by Captain Edward Hutchinson were given the duty of working out an agreement with the Nipmuc Tribe concerning employment of natives to assist settlers with hoeing and plowing of their lands. Captain Hutchinson had a personal reason himself, for he employed several of these Indians to help on his large estate. The purpose of the treaty was more out of fear than peace. The colonists feared if they did not sign an agreement with the Nipmucs, Philip would persuade them to join his ranks and continue to plunder and destroy the colonist's land. Unfortunately, this mission was suicide to begin with, Mendon, Massachusetts was already overran and destroyed by the Nipmucs as Philip had eluded the English at Pocasset and was continuing to move north. By negotiating with the Nipmucs, Colonial Officials hoped Philip and the Wampanoag could be contained within the southern part of New England. Captain Hutchinson a shrewd and talented negotiator was adept to this circumstance and assumed he could reason with the Nipmucs. Hutchinson had already dealt with the Narragansett Indians in forcing them into a treaty to

remain neutral during the conflict. Among the force that accompanied Captain Hutchinson were “three friendly Indians; three men from nearby Brookfield, including John Ayres; Ephraim Curtis, an able and courageous scout who built the first home at Quinsigamond, or present-day Worcester; and Captain Thomas Wheeler, whose mounted force consisted of twenty men.” (King Philip pg 149)

On July 28, 1675 Wheeler and his men rode from Cambridge to Sudbury, making their way west to Nipmuc territory. Most the men that were with Wheeler were from different parts of Massachusetts, mostly Billerica, Chelmsford and as far as Concord. These men had a disadvantage; they were not familiar with the area and had never dealt with the Nipmuc Indians. The force arrived in Brookfield territory (Foster Hill Section, present day Brookfield/West Brookfield) on Sunday, August 1, 1675. The plan was for Ephraim Curtis and three men to be sent to talk with the Nipmucs and coordinate a time and place to begin negotiations with Captain Hutchinson and eventually sign an agreement. Curtis met with the Nipmucs at their camp (ten miles from Brookfield) and agreed to meet with Hutchinson the following day around eight o’clock in the morning. The meeting was to take place in an area only three miles from Brookfield. The next day (Monday) Hutchinson and his men moved on to the area where the Nipmucs

would meet. However, when Hutchinson arrived there were no Nimpucs at the meeting site. In 1871, Ebenezer Price researched the area and concluded:

“The scene was almost entirely changed from that of one hundred and ninety-six years before. True, the pond {Wickaboag Pond} occupied the site it did then, and the soil of the plain was yet there, but all else, how completely changed! I suppose that I passed over the identical ground on which it was proposed to meet and make a new treaty with the Indians.”

(King Philip pg 149)

When they reached the area, Hutchinson asked his men whether they should return or continue on to the Nipmuc’s camp. Captain Wheeler who kept a diary of the ordeal wrote:

“But the three men who belonged to Brookfield were so strongly persuaded of their freedom from any ill intentions toward us...that the said Captain Hutchinson, who was principally entrusted with the matter of Treaty with them, was thereby encouraged to precede and march forward towards a Swamp where the Indians then were. When we came near the said Swamp, the way was so very bad that we could march only in a single file, there being a very rocky hill on the right hand, and a thick swamp on

the left, in which were many of those cruel blood-thirsty heathen, who their way laid us, waiting an opportunity to cut us off; there being so much brush on the side of the said hill, about sixty or seventy rods, the said perfidious Indians sent out their shot upon us a shower of hail, they being, (as we supposed,) about two hundred men or more.” (King Philip pg 150)

The carnage was complete, after the first volley from the Indians eight men laid either wounded or dead among them the three men from Brookfield who persuaded Hutchinson to continue on. Five men, although wounded, made their way out of the brush and swamp. But the Indians made their retreat difficult by closing off the entrance from which they came. To make matters worse, the three men from Brookfield were dead. In order to make their way out, they scaled the rocky and steep hillside, then along with the wounded that could move, unable to return the way they came, they made a roundabout way (avoiding dense woods and Indians) ten miles back to Brookfield. Captain Wheeler, his son (who saved him) and Captain Hutchinson managed to make it out, however, because of the severity of Captain Hutchinson’s wounds he died a few days later and was buried in Marlboro, MA.

Siege of Brookfield

August 3, 4, 5 1675

After the ambush in New Braintree, Captain Wheeler and what was left of the negotiating party made their way to the English Settlement located on Foster Hill in what is today Brookfield, MA. Upon arriving at Quaboag Plantation, the settlers, shocked by the sudden return and loss of men (including Sergeant John Ayres, killed and left at the New Braintree site), sounded the alarm and made their way to the fortified garrison of John Ayres. Inside the garrison they prepared for the Nipmuc attack armed with muskets, while reinforcing the garrison. Henry Young along with Ephraim Curtis mounted their horses and tried to make haste to Marlboro, but were stopped short when the Nipmuc were approaching. They barely made into the garrison when the Nipmuc attacked. Under the command of the Nipmuc Sachem Muttawmp, they began to burn all the homes on Foster Hill, except the fortified garrison. They would surround the garrison and continue to attack it for a period of forty-eight hours. According to William Hubbard's account,

“Assaulted the poor handful of helpless people, both night and day pouring in shot upon them incessantly with guns and also thrusting poles with fire-

brands, and rags dipped in brimstone tied to the ends of them to fire the house; at last they used this devilish stratagem to fill a cart with hemp, flax, and other combustible matter, and so thrust it back with poles together sliced a great length, after they had kindled it; But as soon as it had begun to take fire, a storm of rain unexpectedly falling, put out the fire, or else all the poor people, about seventy souls, would either have been consumed by the merciless flames, or else have fallen into the hands of their cruel enemies, like wolves continually yelling and gaping at their prey.” (King Philip pg 157)

The men and women inside the garrison made every effort to repel the Nipmucs. Henry Young firing from a window leaned out to fire but was severely wounded. Sergeant William Pritchard’s son noticed supplies were extremely low, made an effort to get to his home to obtain food, water and first aid; he was captured and killed making the attempt. The Nipmucs decapitated him and mounted his head on a pole, to intimidate the people in the garrison. (His father, Sergeant William Pritchard had been killed in New Braintree) Thomas Wilson made another attempt to obtain water from a nearby well, he was shot in the jaw and fell dead at the well (a stone marker was placed at the site of his death). Through all the

death and the destruction in the melee, two sets of twins were born inside the garrison.

The settlers fought courageously, and frustrated many attempts for Muttawmp and his Indians to gain entrance to the garrison. Through all the chaos and confusion, Ephraim Curtis escaped through a rear opening in the garrison and traveled thirty miles to Marlboro for reinforcements. Reinforcements did arrive; Major Simon Willard and forty-eight men from Lancaster made their way to Quaboag after hearing of the siege from people on the road to Lancaster. Major Willard and his men drove forty miles to Brookfield and reached Quaboag on the night of August 3. With lightening speed and ferocity they subdued the Nipmuc guards (who fired warning shots) and made their way to the garrison, finally being uncovered by the warriors. Increase Mather would write of their plight,

“The Indians were so busy and made such a noise about the house that they heard not the report of those guns; which if they had heard, in all probability not only the people then living at Quaboag, but those also that came to succor them had been cut off.” (King Philip pg 158)

Unable to breach the fortification, the Nipmucs burned the remaining buildings and retreated. After the siege broke off, more reinforcements entered Brookfield

increasing Major Willard's militia to three-hundred and fifty men along with Mohegan Indians. He would remain for several more weeks conducting operations in the area, however due to the amount of damage and devastation, and only temporary support, the people of Brookfield would leave, abandoning the isolated settlement. The area would be reoccupied twelve years later by a small group of settlers and soldiers; however it would not be established as a town for another forty three years.

Conclusion

What began as a small settlement with a few families would end with death destruction and abandonment. Tired of being exploited, harassed, duped, inflicted and forced off their ancestral lands, the Indian tribes of New England would rise up and would terrorize, burn, destroy, kill; people, property, crops and livestock. When at one point the Indians felt victorious, the English militias along with Indian allies, would fight back, increase their forces and overrun the enemy with ferocious ability. Once victory was obtained, many tribes moved north to Canada or west joining other Indian tribes. This was the beginning of the westward expansion in the infancy of the United States. The Indian would no longer be a dominant force in America; they would be forced off more territory,

starved, murdered, tried and hung for defending their ancestral lands. The ones that remained were assimilated into white man's culture and his way of life. Others chose to be renegades always on the move, attacking, ambushing and trying to regain the land so cherished by their ancestors. Though their efforts were valiant and bold, sadly they would be captured, placed on display, tried and executed. The days of hunting, fishing, planting of the land would become progress, profit and property for the white man. The Indian of New England and the west would no longer roam freely; they would be forced off their lands and confined to reservations for their own safety and the safety of the colonists, telling them that it is "God's Will" their land be taken and they must be educated and catechized. Peace returned to Brookfield and other parts of New England but at the cost of bloodshed, violence and death of Natives and colonists. Failing to learn the culture and lifestyle of the Natives, the hubris of colonists and the Puritan government, unwilling to hear the injustices inflicted upon the Indians and refusing to compromise and co-exist was a terrible price the Indians would pay as the white man expanded and the Indian declined.