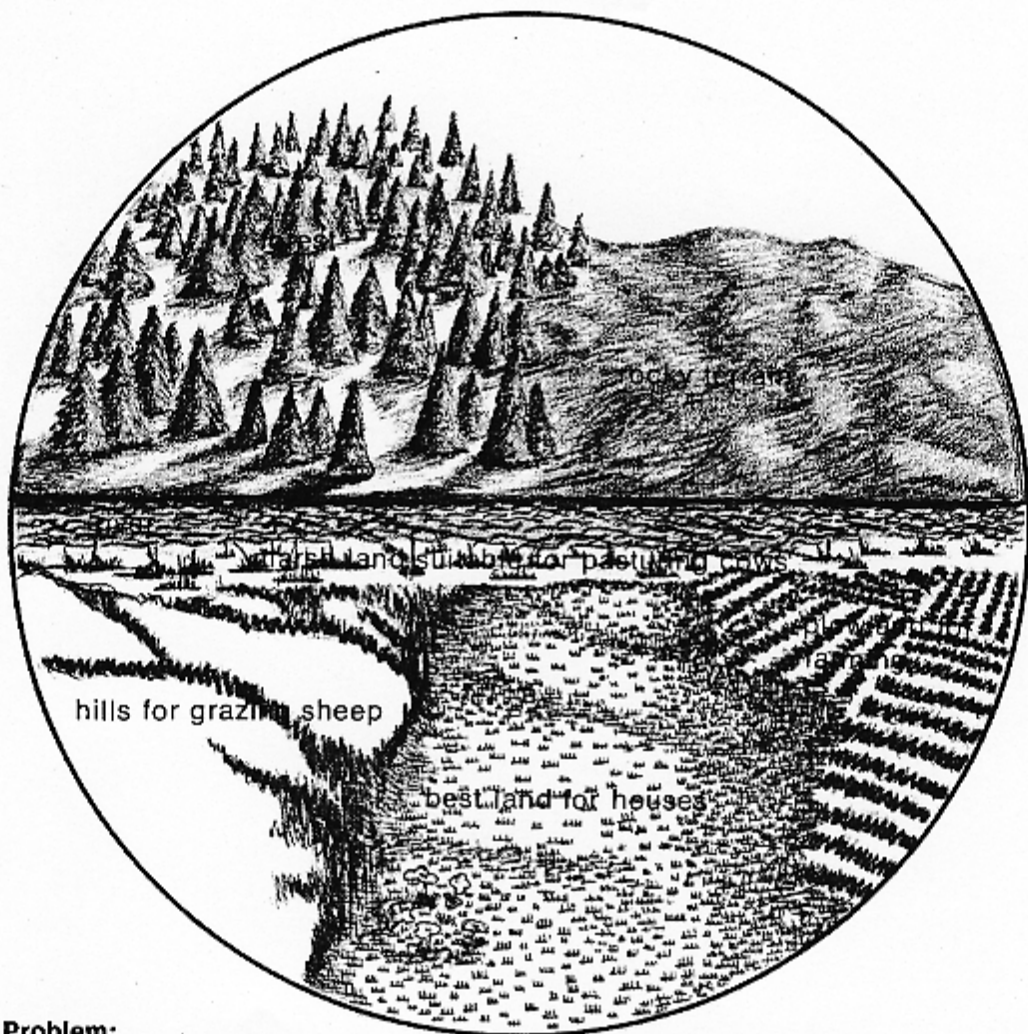


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Land, Men and Society



Problem:

Ten farmers need wood, pasture, grazing land, and land for farming.

Question:

How would you divide this land area? As one of the ten farmers, which land would you want?

Group Questions:

Can you agree on one plan of division?

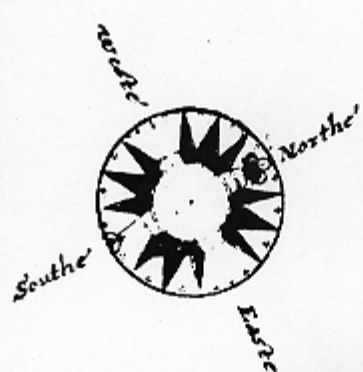
What relationships among the ten farmers will this plan create, if any?

Introduction

Most people wonder what would happen if a group of men were stranded on a desert island or decided to go to the moon or some other planet to live. Left to their own devices how would they survive? Beyond the reach of old laws and old institutions how would they behave toward one another with no rules to guide them? Would they submit to one man? Or live without government? What changes would they make in the way they lived together? What of their past would they keep?

America's past partially answers the question of the men on a desert island with one great difference: we know what happened after some of the people arrived. Because there were many groups of people with many different kinds of past experiences, many different things happened. As we can examine the behavior of some of these people, we can look at the questions they had to answer about land, men, and living together in a vast new continent.¹

The description of diuerse' surlanes of arable lande sea and medowe grounde sicmooc at the southwesterre' corner of the fieldes of wedon and weston in the countie' of Northlon made in September An. dm 1593. An. Eliz. xxxv. by Thomas Langdon. wherein all that is written with red letters is belonnging vnto the' warden and Collee' of the Colledge of all faithfull people' decaied of Oxon.



People in Community: An Early Model of Social Organizations

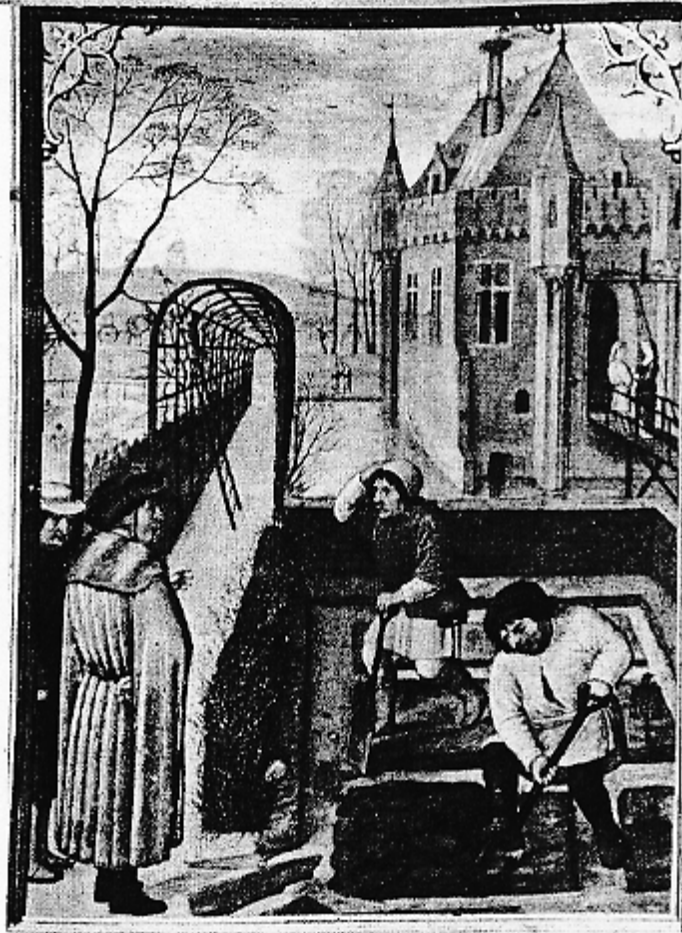
These pictures are meant to be looked at as a set. They show the yearly cycle of life in one community. Although they were painted by a Dutch artist in 1520 there are many similarities to the kind of life lived in English villages of the seventeenth century about the time men began thinking about going to America.

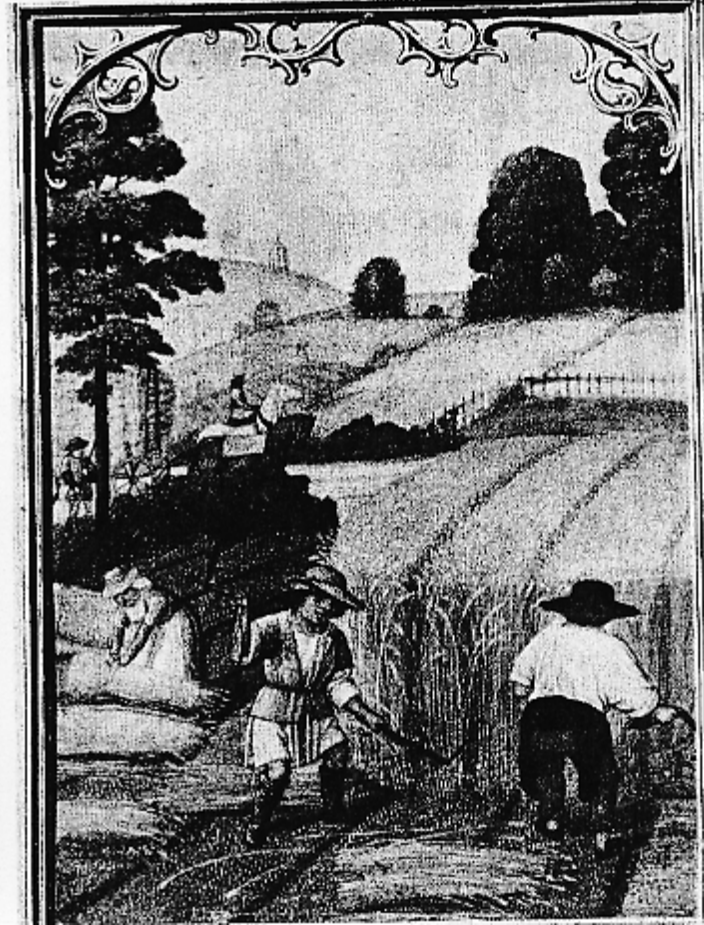
The artist intended to show life as it was. His paintings tell something about the tasks men performed in a farming community during the course of a year. They also tell who performed them. The artist shows who was more important in the community — who probably owned the land — and who probably worked it but did not own it.

John Winthrop, in a sermon to the Puritans, said:

God Almighty in His most holy and wise providence hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity, others mean and in subjection.²

He meant that there was a fundamental relationship between social structure and political authority. There was not one hierarchy for political matters and another for social matters. "Riches," "dignity," and "power" were all found in the same select people. Is this true in the 16th century pictures?







The 16th Century: Exploring the Relationship Between Social Class, Land Ownership and Authority

Which pictures show people at the top of the social scale? (state evidence)

Which pictures show people at the bottom of the social scale? (state evidence)

Who owns the land? Who works it? What are the differences between these people? (state evidence)

What is the relationship of land ownership to social rank?

Who in the pictures is likely to have the most authority to influence the life of the community?

Who is most likely to think about going to America?

The 20th Century: Exploring the Relationship Between Social Class, Land Ownership and Authority

What evidence do we have to indicate who is at the top of the social scale today?

Are there similarities and differences between the 20th century and the 16th century pictures?

What evidence do we have to indicate who is at the bottom of the social scale today?

Are there similarities and differences between the 20th century and the 16th century pictures?

Is land-ownership the basis of the social rank of people today?

Is authority today dependent on wealth and dignity and one's social rank?

Peter Noyes in Old England

The Old Ways

In the small village of Weyhill, England, spring had come. The frosts were over and the ground was soft enough to plow. On the hillsides early lambs could be seen and there would soon be new calves and pigs as well in the village. Peter Noyes, a prosperous farmer in his mid-forties, sat with his family in the parish church and glanced briefly at the congregation. He had been born in Weyhill and had known all these people from childhood. His father had worked with their fathers sowing and plowing the rich fields that the men of Weyhill shared. Peter Noyes loved this land; he respected these people and they respected him. His two uncles William and Robert had been the most important men in the village. As managers of the largest farms, they were second only to the lord of the manor, who owned the entire village of Weyhill and from whom Peter and all the other villagers rented their lands.

Throughout his life Peter Noyes had taken a vigorous part in the life of Weyhill. But this spring was different. He may have appeared sad when he met with the other men to decide which crops to plant in the large fields, or preoccupied as they inspected the hedges around their fields. When his younger children began to babble about next year's Weyhill Fair, he might have told them curtly to be quiet. There was a difference in Peter Noyes and his friends probably noticed.

The vicar was making an announcement in the church — "Hear ye, all who dwell in the manor of Weyhill. The Ramridge court-baron* will

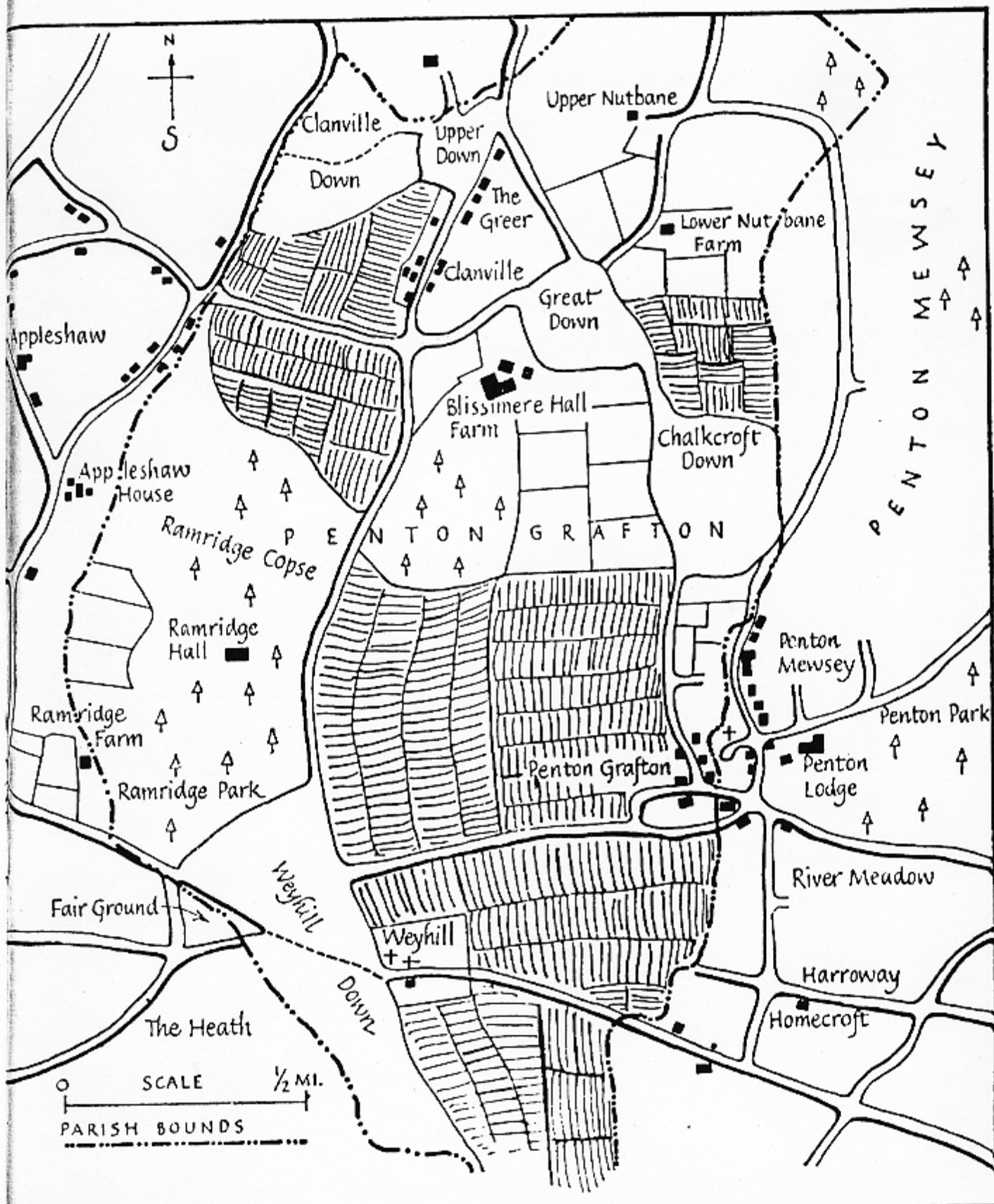
* A court of the Lord of the Manor to record land transactions and hear cases for petty offenses.

convene on the twenty-sixth day of March in the sixteen hundred and thirty-eighth year of Our Lord and the thirteenth year of the reign of His Majesty King Charles I." Every year at this time there was the same announcement and every year the tenants of Weyhill village gathered in the long dimly-lighted hall at Ramridge. They came to pay their rent to the lord, to transfer land or to hear cases dealing with village affairs. Someone might be fined for not ringing his pigs who rooted about and spoiled the crops, or for pasturing more than the permitted number of cows on the common pasture, or for neglecting to put up the woven barriers around the open-field or for other violations of the manor's regulations.

The Ramridge court-baron of March, 1638, was an important one for Peter Noyes. He had heard about the plantations of Englishmen in New England. In fact, some distant relatives of his had already gone, and Peter Noyes was seriously considering following their example. Their descriptions of Watertown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony where they had settled made Noyes curious enough to make a big decision. He would take his eldest son and, with a neighbor, John Bent, cross the Atlantic Ocean to visit these New England settlements. He would see for himself. On March 26th Peter Noyes stood up publicly in Ramridge Hall and gave his 61 acres of Weyhill land back to the lord of the manor.

Tenants and Lord

The land Peter Noyes returned in 1638 had never been his own. Like half the men in Weyhill village, Peter Noyes was a tenant.



The village of Weyhill, England

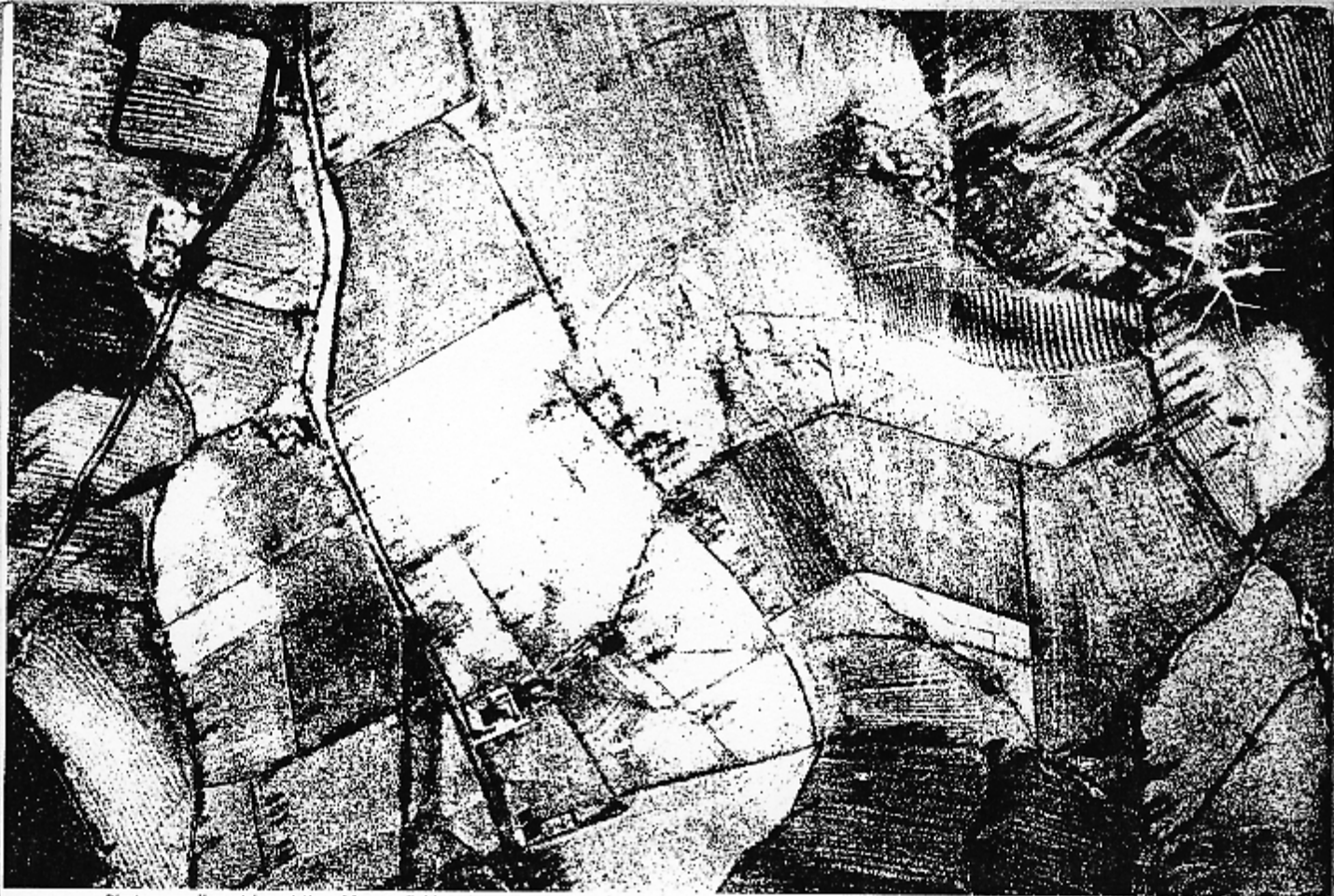


Photo revealing strips of the old open-field system

Every year he paid rent to the lord's agent in order to use his land. But in return for his fees Peter Noyes had certain rights.

He had rights to plant crops, and to pasture sheep and other animals in the downs. He had the right to graze 40 sheep on the Weyhill downs, to pasture 8 head of cattle on the commons, to cut hay from the meadow grass and to cut wood from the forest; the right to take chalk from the common pit, and to set up a booth at the Weyhill Fair where he could sell his own produce. This was what Peter Noyes had received in return for the rent he paid to the lord.

As a tenant, Peter Noyes was really a prosperous man. He was the fourth largest tenant in a village of 44 landholders. Most men's holdings in Weyhill were smaller than Peter's and 40 men in this farming community had no land at all.

The fact that half of Weyhill's men were tenants and half were landless laborers was not unusual in England at this time. Most land in the country had already been claimed and there was almost no new land to be found. What was somewhat unusual in Weyhill was exactly how the land was divided and how it was farmed by Peter Noyes and his fellow villagers.

Open-Field Farming

The men of Weyhill village used a system of farming called open-field farming in which fields were sown, planted, and used in common. Peter Noyes' holdings were not fenced into one plot; they mingled in strips with the holdings of his neighbors and were scattered in different fields. Meadows or grazing lands were separate from fields where crops were planted.

Decisions about which fields were to be used for farming and which for grazing were made by the men of Weyhill together. No man made a decision alone.

And no one farmed on his own. The fields were tilled together and the villagers kept their sheep together on the down; they grazed cattle on a common and they used the woods for feeding pigs and cutting timber. They also gathered hay from their meadow. No family had much farm equipment so tools and plows were shared. No farmer in Weyhill had any experience in running a farm on his own.

No one man decided when to plant or what to plant. Tradition had established that ages before. Farmers today fertilize their fields and grow certain crops which replenish the soil, but men in Weyhill had little knowledge of these things. In those days almost everybody accepted the idea that a field needed to rest or *lie fallow* every few years to regain strength. Since each village rotated its crops with this idea in mind, the customary system of rotation never changed.

The village fields were divided into many long rectangular blocks, or "furlongs," each with many long narrow strips, formed by the action of the plow. The strips of land were in turn separated by narrow bits of unplowed land called "balks," and each farmer's holdings were in the form of a number of strips scattered throughout different furlongs in the major fields. Of course, a farmer could identify all his scattered strips even though an outsider might have great trouble locating them.

Since each field was plowed, sown, and harvested by village teams at one time, the scattering of the strips meant that each farmer shared the rich soil and the poor with his neighbors. This prevented one person from holding all the good soil. Each man planted part of his crop early and part late under this system. Men took turns using the community's plows.

The Cycle of Life

Each April the meadow land was divided among the villagers. From his allotted strips, each man had the right to cut and gather hay, the fodder for his animals. The town shepherd took the sheep out to the common downs in the spring to stay with them until their fleece was ready to be sheared in the early summer.

Summer was the busiest time of all. While the crops were ripening the sheep had to be shorn, and all the animals and wool made ready for the fairs, which began in July.

In August the hay was mowed, after which the meadows were open again for grazing. Then came the autumn harvest of wheat and the second round of fairs with games, dancing, and sports of every sort.

During the fall months the animals were fed on the downland and whatever stubble remained on the unplowed fields. Much stock was slaughtered at this time to sell, to salt, and to store away for the winter. What stock remained alive was kept in the cottages, with the villagers

themselves, and fed from the precious stores of hay.

All year round the villagers, as tenants of the lord of the manor, had to perform all the farming work on the lord's estate; this was a part of the service they owed in return for the privilege of growing crops on the manor.

The Social Order

The people of the Dutch pictures had a fixed set of relationships to one another. So did the people of Weyhill. Some of these relationships were felt more strongly by one individual than by others, depending upon the local area and the kind of community a man lived in.

In Weyhill Peter Noyes had a lord and a lord's steward over him. He was also a member of a parish with a vicar, churchwarden, overseers of the poor and constables forming a hierarchy. Peter Noyes was himself a churchwarden. For his county a lord lieutenant, justices of the peace and sheriffs helped to regulate his life. The English established church had an archbishop (William Laud), bishops and deans. Ruling the country was King Charles, his Privy Council and Parliament (not sitting then because Charles had chosen to rule without it). For Englishmen of trade a man may have been somewhere in the order of corporations, guilds, masters, journeymen or apprentices; and in grammar schools, some people were masters and some were students.

The hierarchy in which Peter Noyes lived did not change very much in his lifetime. Nor had it

changed much for generations before him. His ancestors had fitted into the same set of relationships with the lord and the other members of his open-field community as did Peter Noyes himself.

There were very few questions asked about these traditions. And although some younger sons or some landless men looked to increase their holdings, very little about this community style was to change until a Parliamentary Act of 1812 forced Weyhill to become a different type of community with a different style of farming.

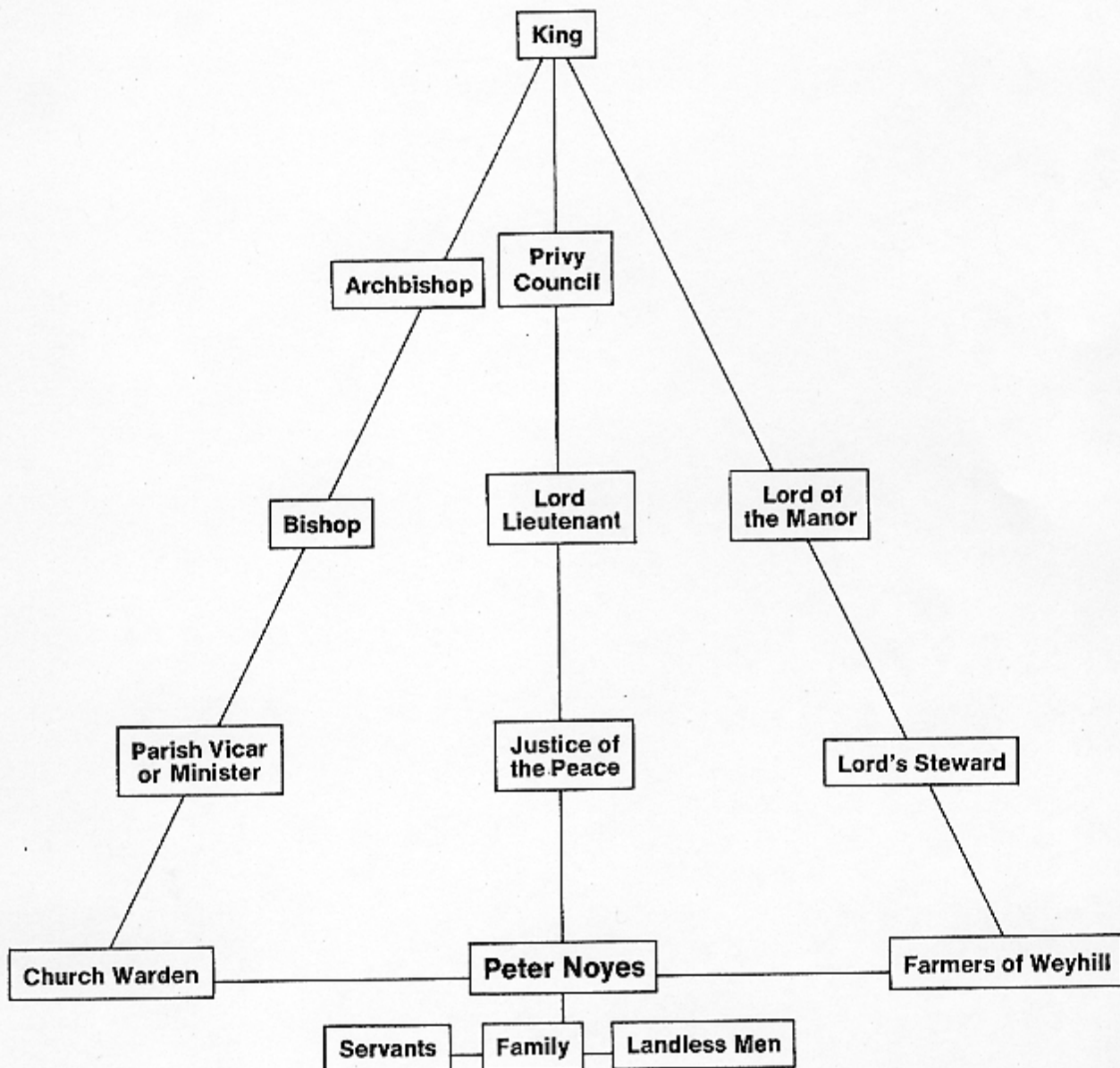
Peter Noyes did not need to be reminded who owned what, or when to do which tasks with the other men of Weyhill. He carried this complex system and set of relationships in his head. Would he carry it out again in the New World?

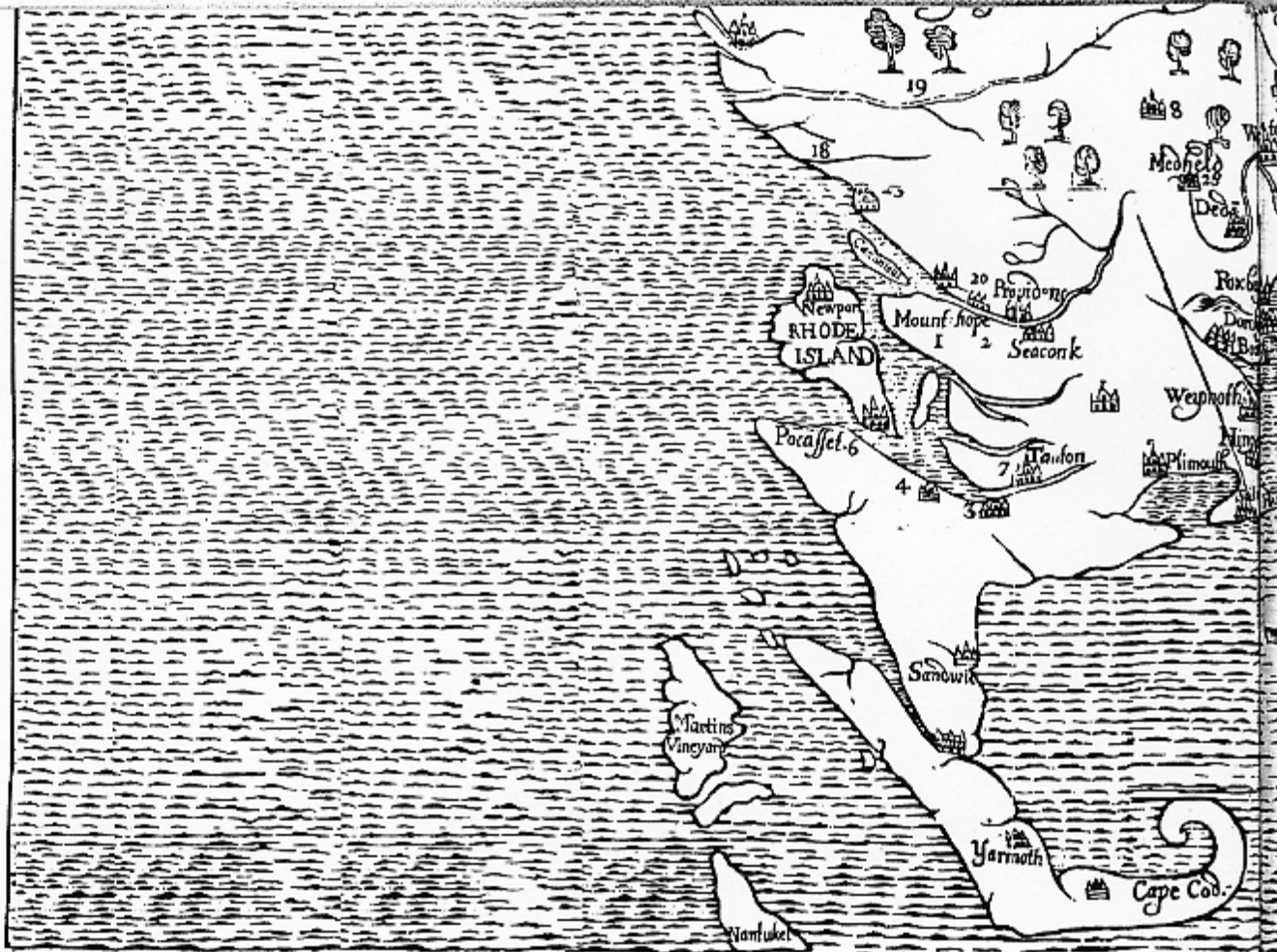
What kind of community would attract Peter Noyes in America? (state evidence)

How would he divide any land he might receive? (state evidence)

What hierarchies might he want to avoid? What would he substitute?

Hierarchies in Peter Noyes' Life





Watertown, Massachusetts

The New Realities

Peter Noyes arrived in Watertown in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the year 1638. Many of the settlers he met there were from a part of England called East Anglia. They were his fellow countrymen, but Peter Noyes quickly discovered that the men from East Anglia were not his fellow farmers. They used an entirely different way of farming that no man in Weyhill had ever experienced.

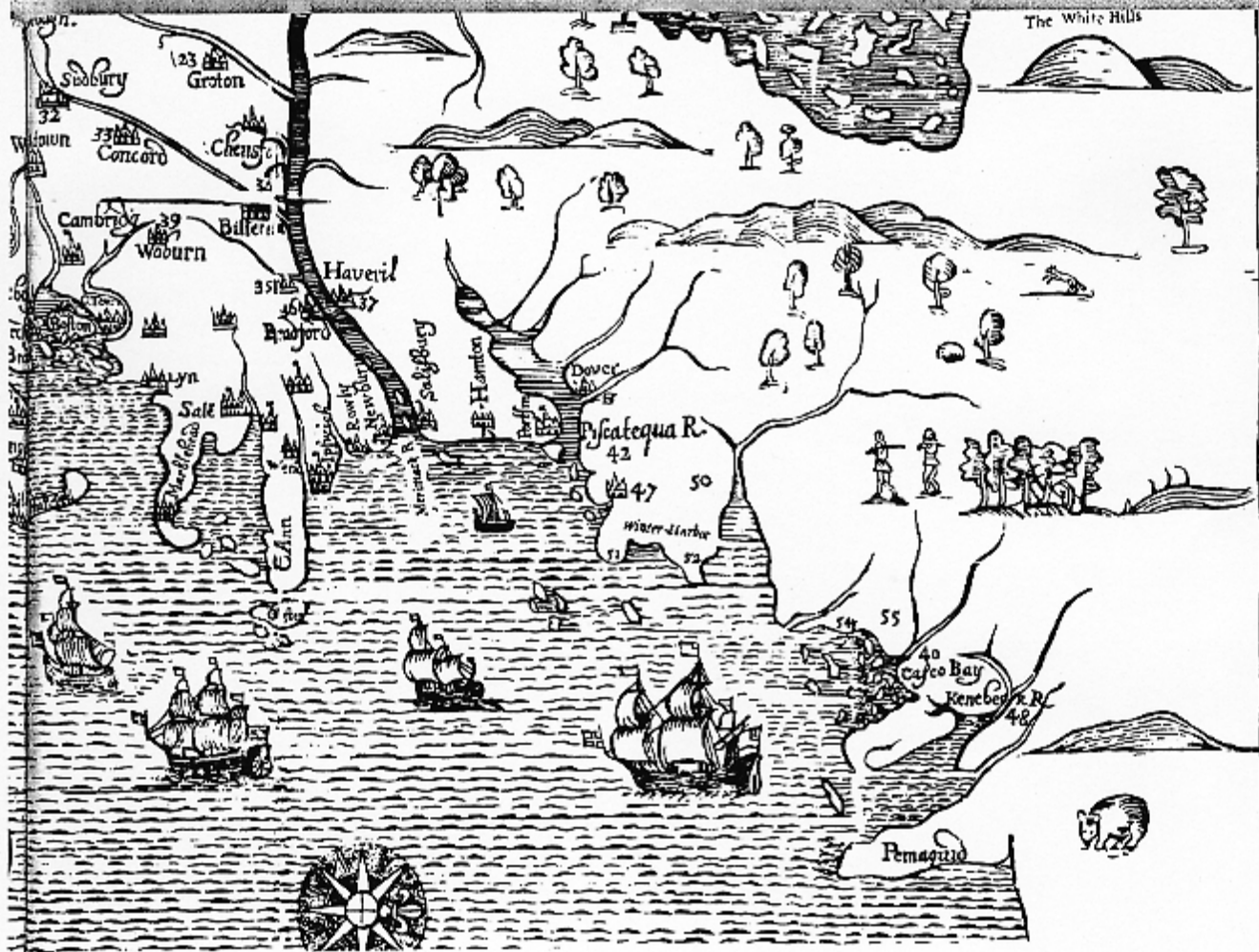
Each settler in Watertown was fencing in his own land. Each man was obtaining from twenty-five to fifty acres of uncleared land, to be made into arable land, hay ground and pasture, all contained in one plot. Houses had been constructed around a village common and some plowlands were being tilled in common, but each farmer was shifting to individual farming as quickly as he could. These men were expected to own their own tools and

beasts and to use them on their own farm. The men from East Anglia who settled in Watertown were establishing the land habits they had been familiar with in England.

Peter Noyes probably sensed very quickly the difference between Watertown and Weyhill. This difference may have disturbed him, but there was one difference about this new town that he liked very much.

The twenty-five to fifty acre grants of land were not being rented to the settlers of Watertown; **each man was being given land to own for himself with no rent to pay and no lord to receive it.**

The Massachusetts General Court in Boston, established originally through a charter from King Charles, was the official source of the grant of land to Watertown. The Court gave the original settlers the power to decide for



themselves how a town was to be set up and how land was to be divided. The land in Watertown was a freehold grant, meaning each man was to have his own land free from rent to anyone else.

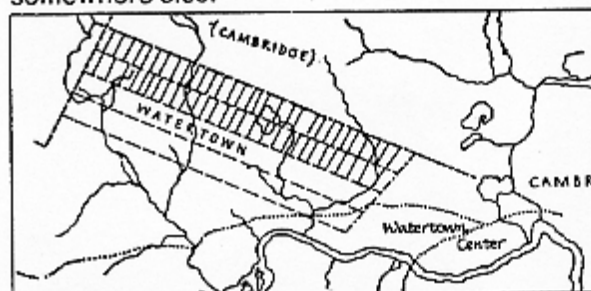
Although land in Watertown was free, most of it had already been given out by the time Peter Noyes arrived. In 1635, at a town meeting, the Watertown settlers had voted that:

No foreiner comming into the Towne or any Family arising among our selves shall have any benefit either of commonage or land undivided, to what they shall purchase.³

This meant that no more free land would be given out to settlers. The remaining free land around Watertown was to be kept, later to be sold or divided among the original settlers. To get any land at all, a newcomer would have to buy it.

Peter Noyes was luckier than most men. Because he was a prosperous farmer in England, the Watertown settlers wanted him to stay; so they made him a special grant of land, 12 acres of arable, 12 of meadow, 18 of upland just outside Watertown, and a large 70 acre lot in the wilderness far beyond the settlement. It was all distant from the town center.

Yet Peter Noyes began thinking of settling somewhere else.



Map shows Watertown divided into individual 25 to 50 acre plots for farming and two large sections of undivided land. Houses were clustered in the town center.



Organizing a New Community

The Unwritten Page

Peter Noyes joined with a group of discontented men in Watertown and petitioned the governing body of the Massachusetts Bay Colony — the General Court — for a grant of western land on which to establish a new settlement.

The petition stated the major reason why these men wished to leave Watertown: there was not enough room, there was a "want of meadow." Of the petitioners only 12 held land in Watertown; 24 had been given no land at all.

There was another, unstated reason why these men were seeking a new settlement: half of those who joined with Peter Noyes had come from English villages like Weyhill. They were men looking to establish a community of their own liking — an open-field community.

In the fall of 1638 the General Court granted full power to Peter Noyes and certain other men to go to a large tract of land seven miles west of Watertown and to establish there a "plantation and allot the lands."

The new land was connected to Watertown by a wide Indian trail that dipped southwest into a broad plain of meadow grass, free of trees and as high as a man's waist. In some places it grew high as a man's shoulders. The total extent of the meadow was about 3000 acres, twice the size of Peter's old village of Weyhill. The entire grant was about 20,000 acres.

The town site was at a point where the Indian trail met the Musketaquid River (later called the

Concord River). The river was full of fish and the hunting was good along its banks.

Peter Noyes and a committee of seven men appointed by the General Court were now ready to parcel out the land to the settlers. They were not going to give out all the land right away; in fact, they were going to keep most of it in reserve as a kind of bank account for the community. But everyone was to receive some land. Like the settlers of Watertown, Peter Noyes and his committee were assuming that each adult male should own some land. How it was to be divided was the question to be answered next.

Rank and Status in Sudbury

What Peter Noyes and the committee decided to do was this: they would rank all the fifty settlers in Sudbury in their order of importance. And they would give out the land according to each man's previous rank and status, that is, his wealth or property, either in England or Watertown. A man who had a high position in England would have a high position in the new town.

To understand why the Sudbury settlers decided to rank people, consider again this statement by John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony:

God Almighty in His most holy and wise providence hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity, others mean and in subjection.⁴

Each man (and each woman) in Winthrop's ideal society had a rank, and each had a certain job to do. In his *Journal* entry on April 13, 1645, Winthrop recorded something that shocked him a good deal.

The wars in England kept servants from coming to us, so as those we had could not be hired, when their times were out, but upon unreasonable terms, and we found it very difficult to pay their wages . . . (for money was very scarce). . . (One) master, being forced to sell a pair of his oxen to pay his servant his wages, told his servant he could keep him no longer, not knowing how to pay him the next year. The servant answered him, he would

serve him for more of his cattle . . . "But how shall I do," saith the master, "when all my cattle are gone?" The servant replied, "You shall then serve me, and so you may have your cattle again."⁵

Winthrop was shaken by talk like this. Just how much freedom could be given men when there were jobs to be done by each man in his place?

Each man in Sudbury would have a certain job to do both in helping the community to survive and in nurturing the new town. Peter Noyes and his committee probably felt as Winthrop did. They thought that some men were more important than others and deserved more respect, more honor — and more land.

How the Land was Distributed

Sudbury men gave the largest amount of land to the minister, Edmund Brown. A former London businessman was ranked second. But third on the list was Thomas Cakebread — a miller by trade. Millers would probably never have ranked so high in any English village, but in a new frontier community millers who could grind grain into flour were important. Thomas Cakebread, a fairly large landowner in Watertown, was in fact lured to Sudbury by the promise of more land.

William Pelham, fourth on the Sudbury ranking list, had a brother who was an important government official in England. Peter Noyes was fifth; he had been a leader in getting the land grant from the General Court to start the community.

Early Sudbury Settlers

Name	Acreage in England	Acreage in Watertown	Sudbury* Meadow	Sudbury Upland
Edmund Brown	?	0	74	38
B. Pendleton	?	92	57	76
T. Cakebread	?	66	50	124
W. Pelham	?	0	50	0
P. Noyes	116	111	48	73
E. Goodnow	?	0	43½	30
J. Knight	?	394	38½	61
E. Rice	15	0	33½	54
G. Munnings	?	109	28	10
W. Ward	?	0	25	20
W. Haines	?	0	23½	57
T. Brown	?	0	23	25
T. Noyes	0	0	22	0
R. Darvell	22	68	20½	27
R. Be(a)st	?	0	19	0
A. Belcher	?	—	18½	19
J. Goodnow	?	0	14	17
J. Bent	45	0	11½	29
J. Wood	?	0	10½	4
S. Johnson	?	0	10	11
A. Buckmaster	?	0	10	0
"Wid" Hunt	?	0	10	14½
A. White	?	0	9½	10½
H. Griffin	?	0	8	20
T. Haines	?	0	8	0
J. Parmenter, Sr.	?	0	8	27
J. Parmenter, Jr.	?	0	8	9
J. Ruddock	?	0	7½	18½
J. How	?	0	7½	8
J. Stone	?	0	6½	9
R. Newton	?	0	6	6½
T. Goodnow	?	0	6	8½
"Wid" Rice	?	0	6	8½
G. Witherell	?	0	0	0
J. Blandford	0	0	5¾	17
H. Prentiss	?	0	5½	12
H. Loker	?	0	5	8
W. Brown	?	0	4	0
T. Flynn	?	0	4	4½
J. Freeman	?	0	4	13
R. Hunt	?	0	4	0
H. Curtis	?	60	3	4
J. Maynard	?	0	2½	9
J. Taintor	?	24	2½	0
W. Parker	?	7	1½	0
W. Kerley	?	—	2	18
J. Loker	?	0	1	6½

* This chart shows only meadow and upland grants made to the Sudbury settlers. It does not include all grants made; each man received some land.

When Peter Noyes, Brian Pendleton, Edmund Rice, Walter Haines and the other commissioners drew up their lists of land grants, they assigned to themselves and to each man a place in the community according to their idea of his importance. But at the

same time they saw to it that each man owned enough land to support himself and his family and to pay taxes as a citizen of the town of Sudbury. A man with a large family probably got more land than a man of the same status who had a small family.

Peter Noyes

**Who had power
over
Peter Noyes
in
Weyhill?**

**Who has power
over
Peter Noyes
in
Sudbury?**

**Over whom did
he
have power?**

**Over whom does
he
have power?**

**How was his power
maintained?**

**How is his power
maintained?**

**How could his power be
changed?**

**How can his power be
changed?**

Parte' of

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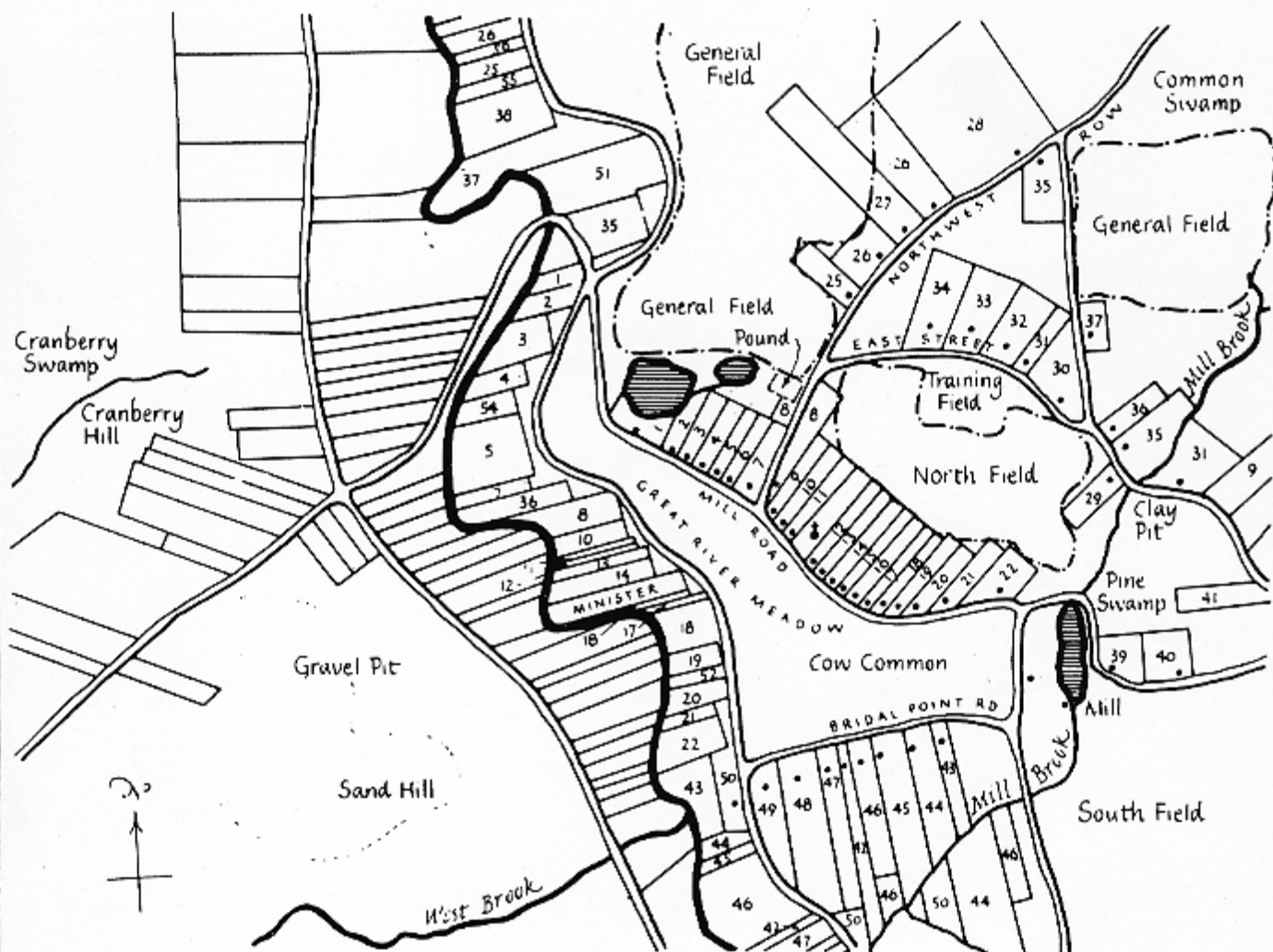
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Sudbury, Massachusetts

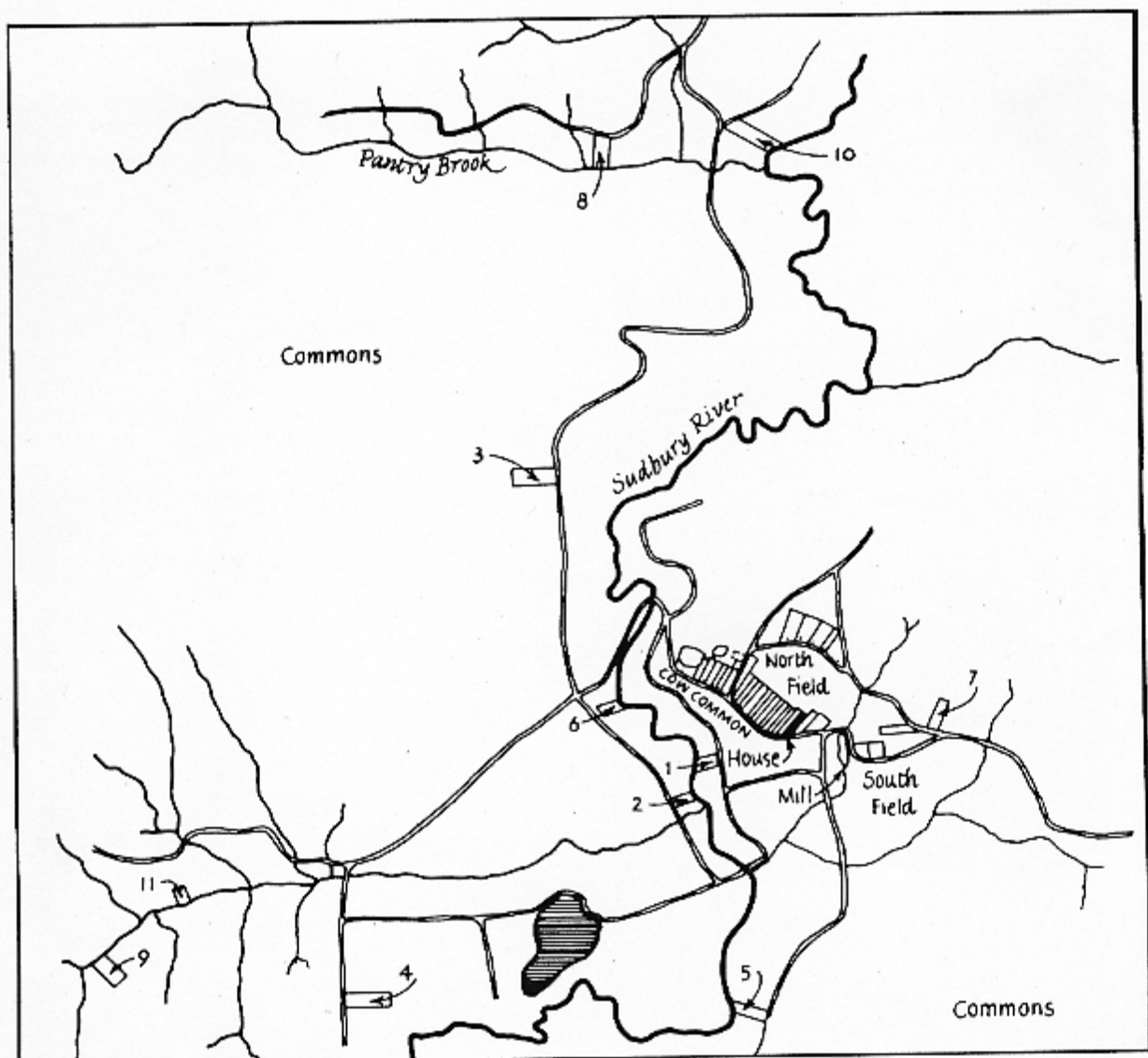
The New Open-Field System

Once the committee had ranked all the men in the community, they began to give out portions of the land. House lots and meadow grants were made first. Each house lot was four acres. All house lots were clustered together in a circle around the cow common and formed the village center.

The committee made meadow grants slowly and according to the ranking system they had established. The first strips staked out were on the east bank of the river. River meadow was rich land, ideal for hay for cattle. Next, the committee determined the second division of

meadow on the western side of the river. This too was given out according to rank, although in this division men drew lots for the land they received. A man might draw three or four times, depending on his rank.

In addition to the meadow grants, farmland was also distributed. Two open-fields, North Field and South Field, which the Sudbury men had decided to farm first, were divided into strips. One of the settlers, John Goodnow, had grants of roughly 100 acres of plowland, meadow and upland. They were scattered all over the town plot. If he wanted to inspect all his land, he had to travel eleven miles. Sudbury was becoming an open-field community.



Grants of land to John Goodnow, Sudbury

Like the men of Weyhill, the Sudbury men worked together co-operatively to plant their fields, share their tools and harvest their crops. In the years that followed these beginnings, the town made orders to determine which fields would be planted and which fields left fallow, when new pastures would be opened up and when new fences would be built.

After the original land grants were made, the rest of the land was declared "the commons," a kind of town bank account of land. This commons — 89% of the town plot — stretched east, west, and northwest from the town center. About 2750 acres lay on the east side of the river; another 5000 acres were laid out on

the west side of the river, to be used for grazing.

Every meadow-holder was assured a right to graze his cattle on the commons, but not all landowners held meadow land. People of the town were to be limited in the putting of cattle upon the commons according to the amount of meadow they received or bought. But in 1643 the town meeting decided that since the town herd was so small all cattle could graze on the land without limit — until the town came to decide that there were too many cows for the available pasture land.

What is New in the New World?

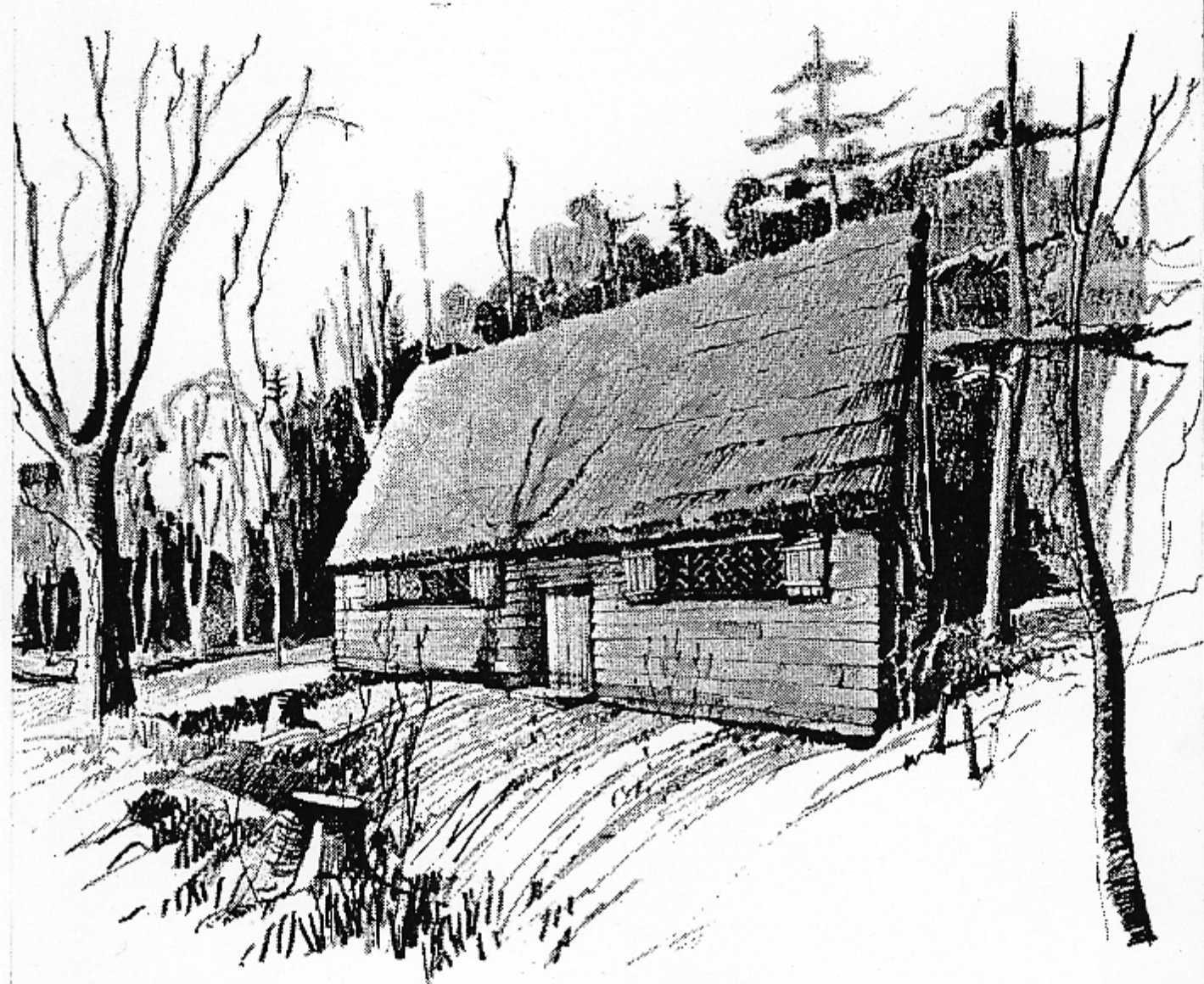
Sudbury, like Weyhill, was an open-field community. Sudbury's co-operative agricultural system was the same as Weyhill's. But men in Sudbury were innovators. Although they still believed in a ranked order of society, every man in Sudbury was a landowner. In Weyhill the lord owned all the land. And, although the villagers made decisions about farming, the lord made most decisions for the village. In Sudbury the people of the community, once the General Court had given them the right to set up a town, became themselves decision-makers in town affairs.

Town meetings were called frequently — often once a month. At a yearly election the people of Sudbury chose a council of seven men, called selectmen, "to dispose of town affairs for one year." In other town meetings, to which the townsmen were summoned by the town drummer they decided about town taxes, made town regulations, settled land disputes and granted to individuals or committees power to perform specific tasks (fence viewer, constable, highway surveyor, swinekeeper, and tax gatherer). The names of the new officers were entered in the Town Book. The town meeting was the source of power and authority in the community.

All Sudbury landowners were expected to live in Sudbury, pay taxes, and serve in any office needed by the town. It was also expected that large landowners would give almost unlimited time and service to affairs of the town. Laws decided on in town meeting were to be obeyed and those who refused were fined heavily.

Anyone whose private interests conflicted with the town's would be challenged. The land committee would not grant requests for sales to those people who wanted to farm on their own. And some town members even opposed the policy of allowing all townspeople, including new citizens, to use the commons freely.

Harmony prevailed in Sudbury in its early years. The policy of strict control over the land and its resources worked well as long as everyone in the town agreed on the basic system. When they did not, angry disputes arose — some of which threatened the very continuance of this open-field community.



First Sudbury meetinghouse



The Second Generation

The Two-Mile Fight: A Town Meeting Role-Play

Although the settlement of Sudbury prospered, a quarrel arose in the community which in the end threatened to break it.

The population was growing. Younger sons were looking for land of their own. At least twenty-six sons had grown to manhood and yet had been granted no meadow strips. Some younger men — and many arriving newcomers — had received no land at all. Even some of the original settlers were grumbling about the unfair distribution. Yet large tracts of land were still undivided.

And there was even more land to come. In 1649 Sudbury petitioned the General Court for another strip of land on its western boundary. The Court granted the town an additional two-mile strip of land containing 6400 acres, but the area was held in reserve and not until several years later was the issue of how it would be divided faced head on.

Finally, in January, 1654, a town meeting was called to discuss the distribution of the new land. Peter Noyes and some of the selectmen proposed that the new land be divided on the basis of (a) rank and estate (men who had prospered would be rewarded) and (b) the size of families, which included servants (men who had large families would receive more land). This was voted down.

On the following day at another noisy town meeting a group of younger men proposed to divide the new land, allotting "to every man

an equal portion in quantity." The idea shocked the town fathers.

To divide the land equally would mean to abandon ranking within Sudbury. But the younger men had another idea that was equally shocking to the older men: they wanted individual farms. They had seen individual farming in Watertown and some men had come from areas in England where it was practiced.

So the townspeople knew that there were really two important issues at stake in the proposal for an equal distribution of land:

— Whether to have an equal division of land, or division according to rank.

— Whether to have an open-field agricultural system, or a system of individual farms.

The issues were to be decided in town meeting. They would be put to a vote.

Proposals to be Voted on in Town Meeting

1. That the new two-mile grant of land should be divided equally.
2. That a system of individual farms should be permitted.

Positions

For distribution of the new land according to rank.

For Noyes and the other founders of the community equal distribution of land to every man is unfair. Sudbury's founders had left England and risked everything to begin a new settlement. They had invested energy and years of service in their new community; the town expected more of them. And hadn't they contributed more to the town? They should receive a just reward and their position should be respected. Men with large families to support should be provided with extra land. They are willing to go that far.

For the open-field system

Peter Noyes, Walter Haines and other town founders know that the younger sons in the community are looking for land of their own. They also know that with at least six open-fields in Sudbury now, strength and co-operation are needed from all young men in the town. Would the younger men go off to farms on their own if they were given land? What would happen to the open-field system? Had the founders not left Watertown to establish an open-field community?

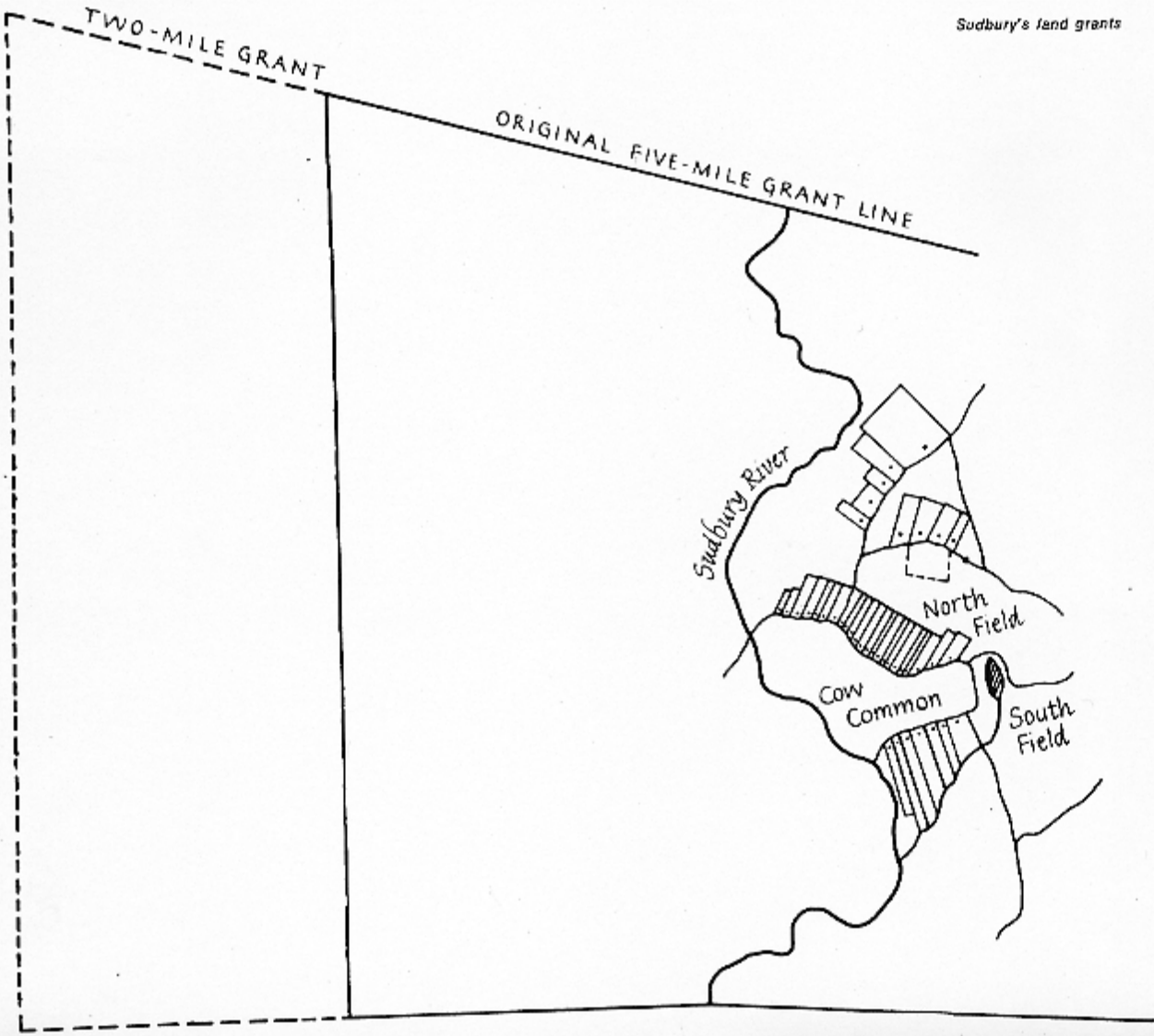
Positions

For equal distribution of land

The younger men of Sudbury look to John Ruddock for leadership. They voted down the selectmen's proposal for the distribution of the new land on the basis of rank, estate or family size. These thirty-two men are still waiting for meadow grants. Most are younger sons and new arrivals. They need land and it is there for the taking. They want to have equal shares of land and eventually have their own individual farms.

For individual farms

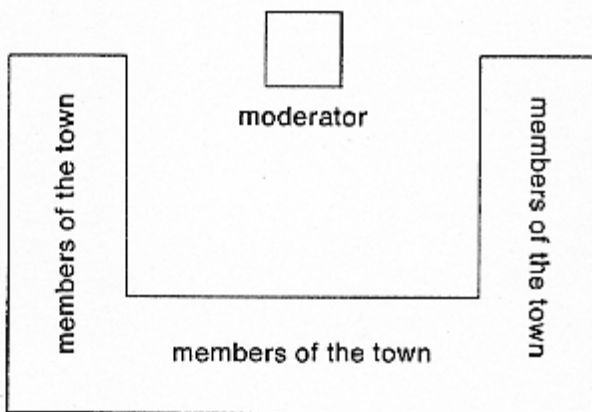
The younger men see no reason why they cannot have individual farms in Sudbury. Watertown men have prospered and so can they. With the experience of open-field farming, they are ready to handle their own property all in one plot.



Instructions to the Moderator

The moderator of the town meeting is personally responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting. This requires a number of important tasks:

First, arrange the classroom according to the accompanying diagram. Seat yourself in front.



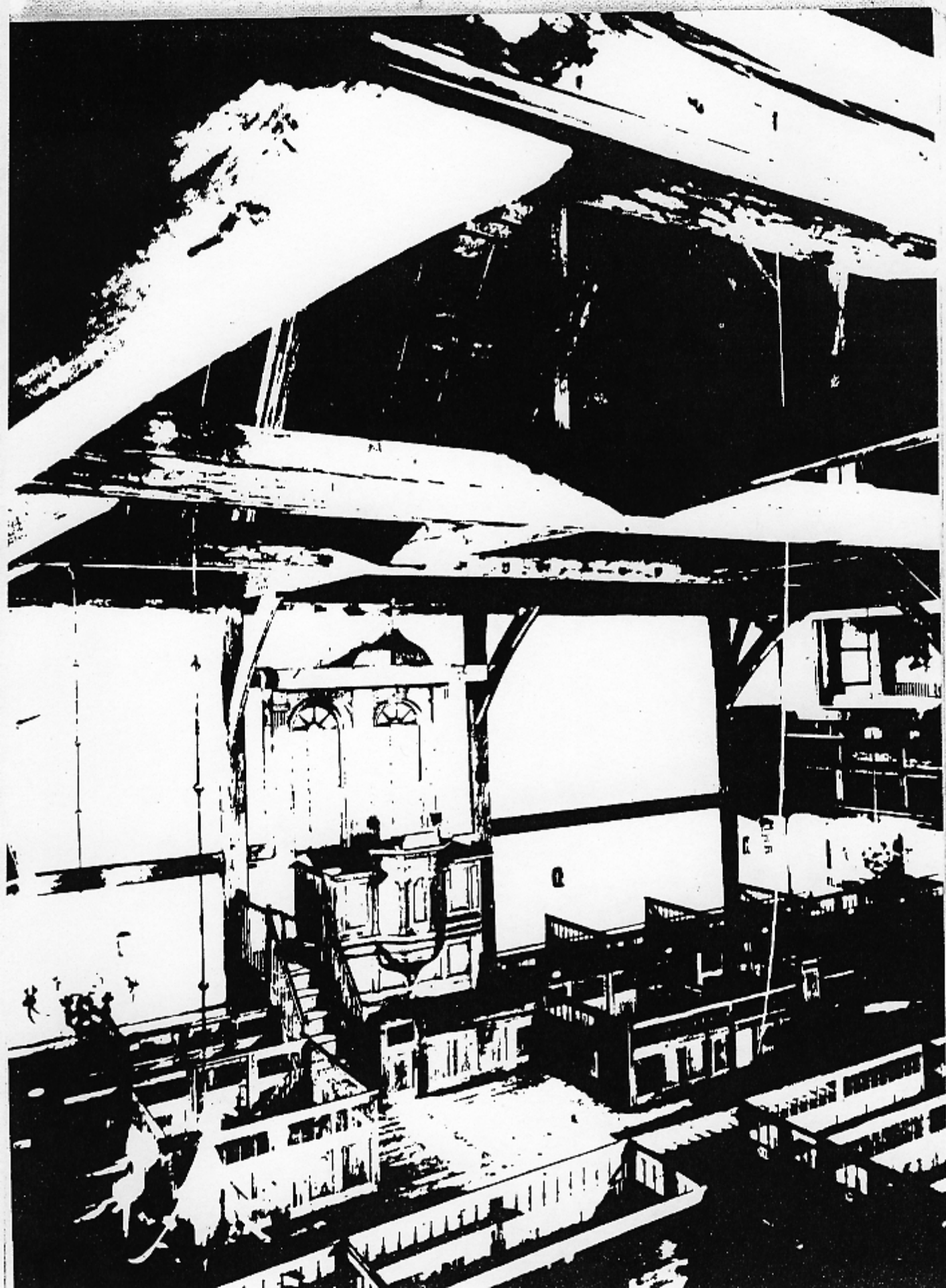
Second, explain to the town members the correct town meeting procedure. This means you will be completely in charge of the meeting; in order for someone other than yourself to speak, he must address you first with a request to be heard. Anyone may do this by simply raising his hand and receiving acknowledgment from you. No one may speak without your permission, and no one, except you, may ever interrupt a speaker. You personally must begin and end the meeting. You will call the vote and tally the "yeses" and "noes." Whenever there is any question as to procedure, your decision is final.

Third, you are responsible for raising the issues to be discussed during the course of the meeting. There are two and they should be brought up in the following order:

1. That the new two-mile grant of land be divided equally.
2. That the system of individual farms be permitted.

Your job is to ask the town to air their ideas about these two issues first and then to suggest an action or motion to be voted on.

After voting you will announce what the town has agreed upon and how the decision binds the people. You must be sure the town votes on each issue. Do not allow too much time to be spent on either issue; call for a vote as soon as you feel there is some consensus. After voting, town meeting members may discuss the results to decide any further strategies.



Instructions for Observers

The role play of the Sudbury town meeting reconstructs an historical event. Twenty-five students will place themselves in the shoes of the townspeople and work through a major conflict in the development of the community: the dispute over the two-mile grant. The students playing the roles will be concentrating on what the people in the real event would have done and said, so it will be the responsibility of the rest of the class, acting as observers, to analyze what happened.

The primary goal of the observers will be to compare the community at the beginning and end of the conflict to help decide what changes, if any, occurred.

Observing Actions to Collect Evidence

It is one thing to observe the actions and behavior of living people one can talk to and question. It is quite another to try to piece together from diaries, newspapers, church records and town records how people acted and how they felt a long time ago. Sometimes records tell how people felt. (The Sudbury Town Book mentions "much agitation" at a town meeting held to discuss the division of the new two-mile grant of land.) More often people's actions tell how they felt. What did they do to back up their statements? How did they react to a decision? Actions tell a great deal about human feelings, and so historians can make inferences about events in the past by looking at the words and actions of people.

During the role play of the town meeting you will observe the two leaders, Peter Noyes and John Ruddock. Write down what they say about the two issues under discussion in the meeting and what they are willing to do to back up their words. Then decide how the action each one suggests will influence the town.

Procedures for Observers

1. Two students, working as a team, observe and make brief notes on what either Peter Noyes or John Ruddock said and did in the town meeting. Use the worksheet, "Observing People Trying to Resolve Conflict."
2. After the role play, summarize your observations on the "Sorting Information" worksheets. All observers will pool their data at this point. The most important point for discussion is how the action suggested by Noyes or Ruddock will influence the town.
3. Report findings to the class. Include how the result of the conflict has influenced Sudbury; how the conflict would have been resolved if these events had taken place in Weyhill.

Observing People Trying to Resolve Conflict

Worksheet 1

Person observed: Peter Noyes, John Ruddock (circle one)

Issues	Leader		Those who agree with the leader		
	Position or comments	Reasons	Names	Position or comments	Reasons
How the new two-mile grant should be divided. a) That the land be divided equally. b) That individual farms be permitted. (Use "a" and "b" to code brief remarks in the next columns.)					

Worksheet 2

Sorting Information

Person observed: Noyes, Ruddock (circle one)

Final position of leader

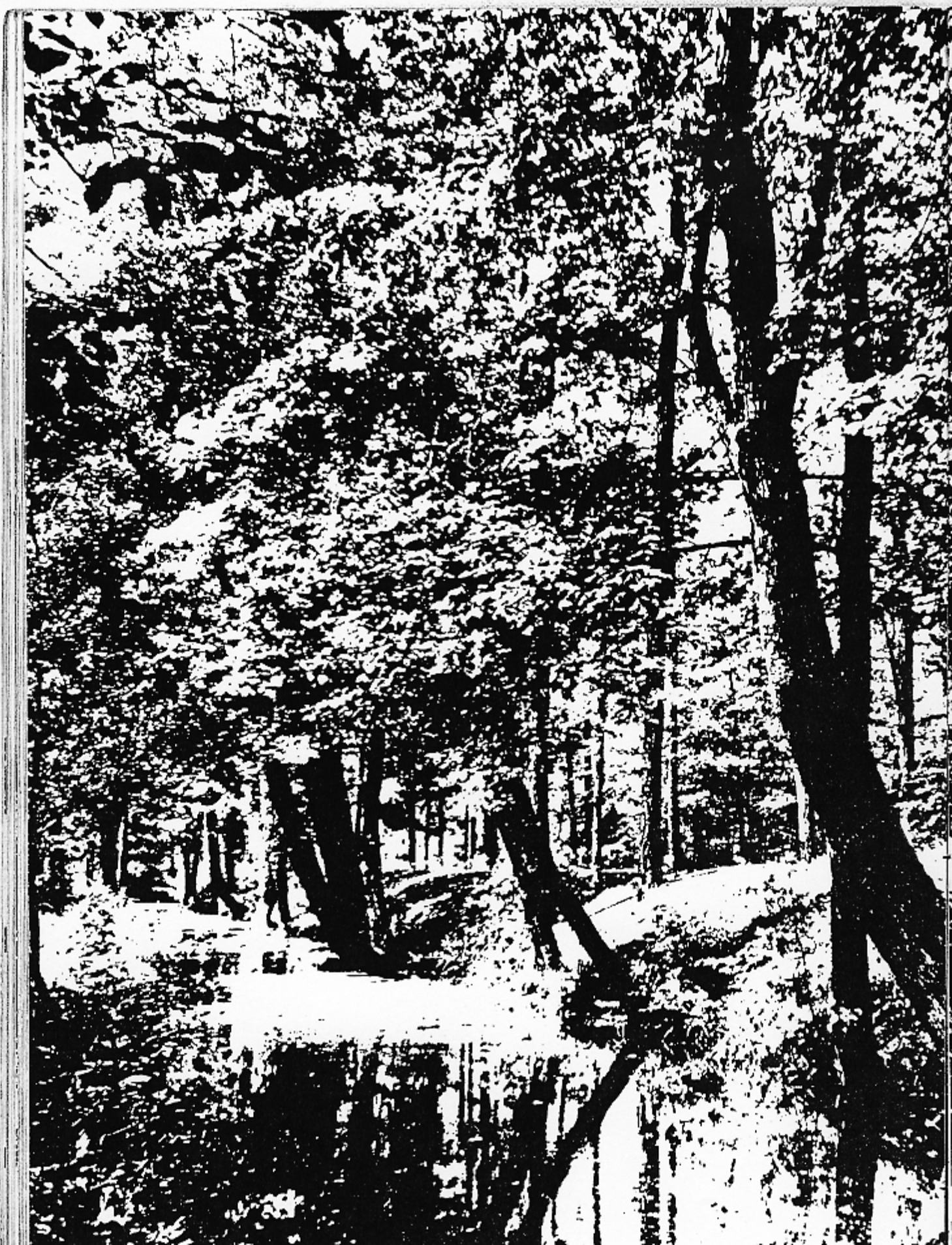
(Check appropriate statements)

1. He would seek a compromise with the position of others.
2. He wants the town to follow his suggestions.
3. He would abide by the decision of the town meeting.
4. Other:

Action suggested by leader

By Noyes/By Ruddock (circle one)

1. How would this action affect:
 - the agricultural system of Sudbury?
 - the ranking system of Sudbury?
2. What role did the town meeting play in bringing about a solution?
How useful would you say the town meeting was in finding a solution?
3. How would the dispute over the land have been resolved in Weyhill?





The Settlement of Virginia



THE
GENERAL HISTORIE
 OF
 Virginia, New-England, and the Summer
 Isles with the names of the Adventurers,
 Planters, and Governours from their
 first beginning An: 1584. to this
 present 1624.

*With the Proceedings of those Seuerall Companies
 and the Accidents that befell them in all their
 Journyes and Discoveries.*

Also the Maps and Descriptions of all those
 Countreys, their Commodities, people,
 Government, Customes, and Religion
 yet knowne.

DIVIDED INTO SIXE BOOKES.
 By Captaine JOHN SMITH sometymes Governour
 in these Countreys & Admirall
 of New England.

LONDON
 Printed by I.D. and
 I.H. for Michael
 Sparker.
 1624.



Early Virginia

When John Smith explored North America's coastline, he recorded descriptions of the land he found. He also predicted how Englishmen might expect to survive and profit in the New World. The soil along New England's coast was rocky, and the climate colder than that of England, Smith wrote. The land might be difficult to farm. Englishmen could, however, expect immediate food and great profit from the fish which abounded in New England's waters.

New Englanders did become fishermen, and they became seamen, too. And to the extent that the rocky soil permitted, they also became farmers, growing corn and wheat, keeping cattle, making cheese, every year producing a little more corn or flour or cheese than they needed, and sending it off in ships to the West Indies, along with fish and lumber. Because of the difficulty of the soil, New Englanders varied their agriculture, and did not produce very much of any one thing.

The lands along Virginia's coast, on the other hand, were rich and fertile. Early explorers thought the climate would agree with Englishmen. They predicted that Virginia's earth would one day yield gold, silver and other riches.

The idea of the riches of Virginia became popular with Englishmen. One playwright, John Marston, described it this way:

I tell thee, gold is more plentiful there than copper is with us; and for as much red copper as I can bring, I'll have thrice the weight in gold. Why, man, all their dripping pans and

chamber pots are pure gold; all the chains which they chain up their streets are massy gold; all the prisoners they take are fettered in gold; and for rubies and diamonds, they go forth on holidays and gather 'hem by the seashore, to hang on their children's coats, and stick in their caps.¹

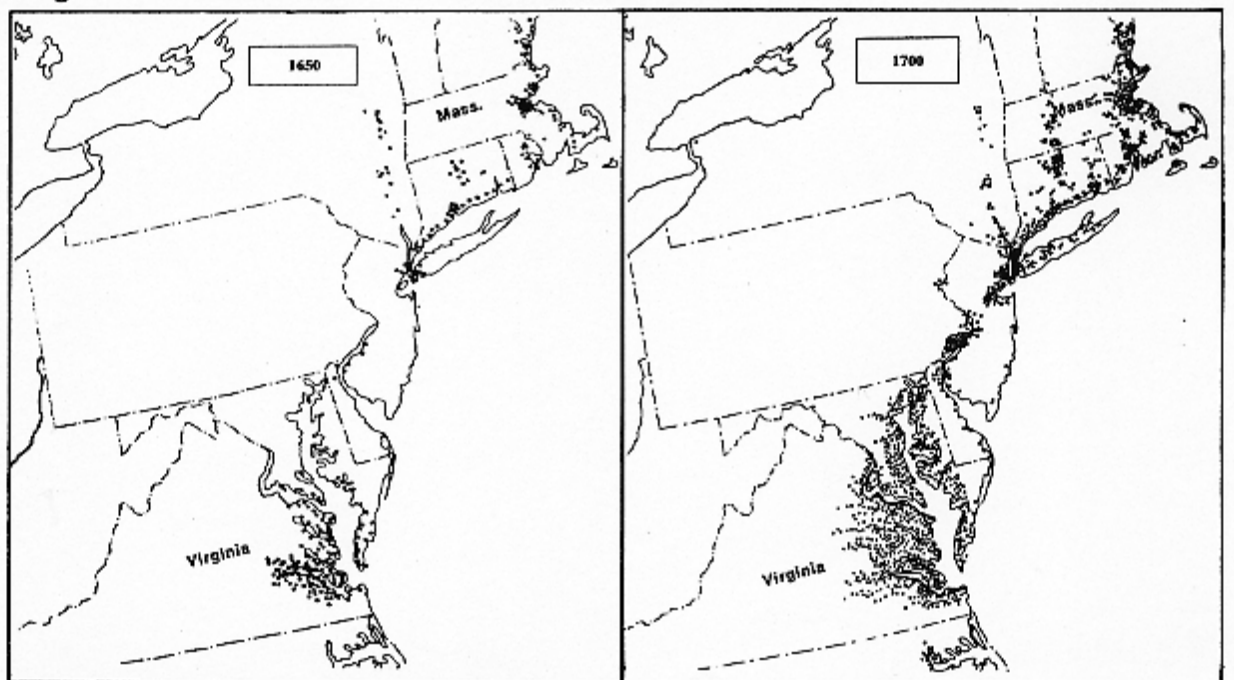
Englishmen never did find the gold they had hoped for in Virginia but they discovered very early that the soil of the rich lowlands of Virginia's extensive rivers was ideal for tobacco. Tobacco was a product of the Americas. It had been introduced to Europe by Spanish explorers and suddenly it was wanted everywhere. With a ready European market for tobacco, early Virginians set about growing it. The steady tobacco cultivation exhausted the soil rapidly, and farmers were constantly in search of new lands.

By the end of the first fifty years of settlement in New England and Virginia, two very different life styles had emerged, not only because of different uses of the land, but also because land settlement patterns in Virginia were quite different from those in New England.



Virginia landscape

Virginia and Massachusetts: similarities and differences



Each dot represents approximately 200 rural inhabitants

0 100 200 MILES



New England town

The Colonies' Growth Rates

	Population		Numbers of Colonial Towns ²	
	1660 (part of Mass.)	1700 (part of Mass.)	1660	1700
Maine	—	—	2	7
New Hampshire	2,300	6,000	4	8
Vermont	—	—	—	—
Massachusetts	25,000	70,000	41	81
Rhode Island	1,500	6,000	4	12
Connecticut	8,000	24,000	12	36
New York	6,000	19,000	11	35
New Jersey	—	14,000	—	12
Pennsylvania	—	20,000	—	3
Delaware	—	(part of Penn.)	—	2
Maryland	8,000	31,000	1	2
Virginia	33,000	72,000	1	2
North Carolina	1,000	5,000	—	—
South Carolina	—	8,000	—	3
Georgia	—	—	—	5

Western Star

by Stephen Vincent Benét³

There were a hundred and forty-four, all told,
In the three small ships. You can read the names, if you like,
In various spellings. They are English names.
William Tankard, Jeremy Alicock,
Jonas Profit, the sailor, James Read, the blacksmith,
Love, the tailor, and Nicholas Scot, the drum.
One laborer is put down with a mere "Ould Edward,"
Although, no doubt, they knew his name at the time,
But, looking back and remembering, it is hard
To recollect every name.

• • •

A fair voyage, but two months longer than they expected.
A fair percentage of loss, for they lost no ship,
Not even the twenty-ton *Discovery*.
They sailed the long Southern course—the Canaries first
Then over to the West Indies—the trade wind course,
The track of the Genoese, a century old.
They had gone two sides of a triangle from England,
Not the one long reach, but it was the surer way.

• • •

And yet, a good voyage.
And others would fare worse in other ships,
Bad water, crowded quarters, stinking beef,
And, at the end, the hurricane and death.
Though this voyage carried a locked Pandora's box,
Sure to make trouble, sealed orders from the Company.
Naming a council of seven to rule the colony
But not to be opened till they reached their goal.
It was the way of the East India Company.

• • •

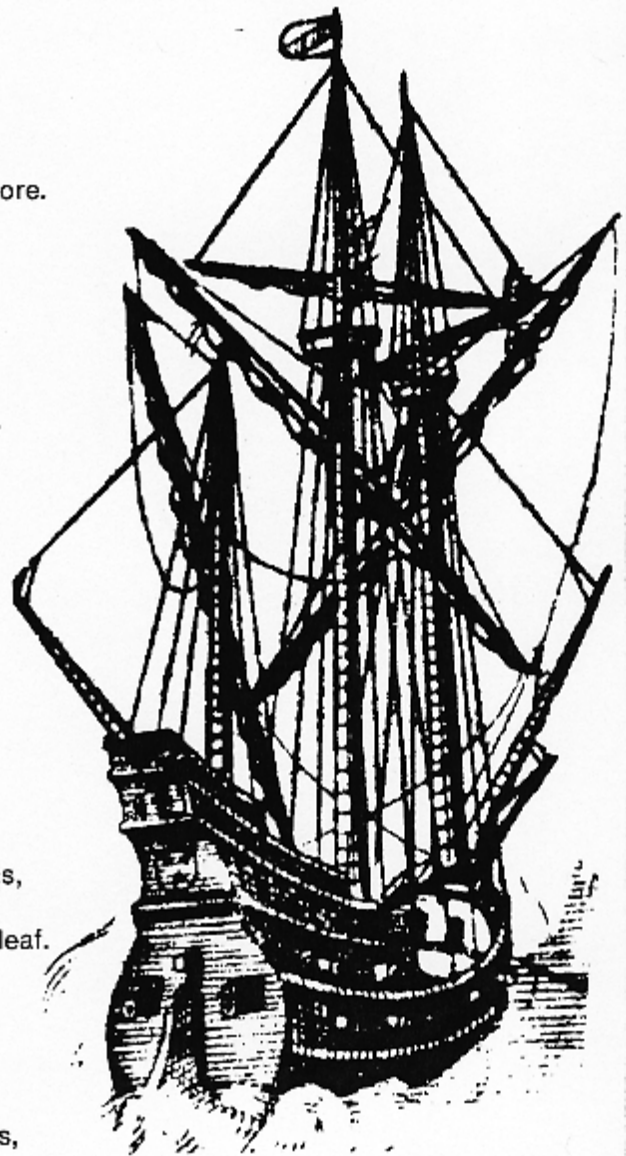
There were plots and gossiping, wranglings and suspicions,
"Have you heard what So-and-so planneth? Nay, bend closer.
My fellow heard him roaring in the great cabin,
Swears, when he's of the Council, he'll have thy head:
But we'll pull him down from his perch."

The idle, human
Gossip of hot-blooded, quarrelsome men,

Cooped up together too long through the itching weeks
When you get to hate a man for the way he walks
Or snores at night or dips his hand in the dish,
But, most of all, because you keep seeing him
And cannot help but see him, day after day.

• • •

And so, at dawn, on the twenty-sixth day of April,
Just over four months from London,
They sailed between Cape Henry and Cape Charles
And saw the broad Chesapeake, and the wished-for shore.
We shall not see it as they, for no men shall
Till the end and the ruin have come upon America.
The murmuring green forest, the huge god,
Smiling, cruel, lying at ease in the sun,
And neither smiling nor cruel, but uncaring,
The vastness where no road ran but the Indian trail
And the little clearings of man were small in the forest,
The little dirt of man soon washed away,
The riches of man, white shells and opossum skins,
The scalp of a foe, the ritual of the clan,
Squash-vine and pumpkin seed and the deer's sinew
And the yellow, life-giving corn.
We shall not see the birds in their multitudes,
The thundercloud of pigeons, blotting the sun,
The fish that had never struck at an iron hook,
The beaver, breeding faster than men could kill,
The green god, with the leaves at his fingertips
And a wreath of oak and maple twining his brows,
Smiling, cruel, majestic and uncaring,
As he lies beside bright waters under the sun,
Whose blood is the Spring sap and the running streams,
Whose bounty is sun and shadow and life and death,
The huge, wild god with the deer horns and the green leaf.
We shall not see their Americas as they saw them
And this was what they saw.
Now we must follow them, into the wood.
They landed and explored.
It was the first flood of Virginia Spring,
White with new dogwood, smelling of wild strawberries,



Warm and soft-voiced, cornflower-skied and kind.
And they were ravished with it, after the sea,
And half-forgot their toils, half-forgot the gold,
As they went poking and prying a little way
In childish wonderment.
A handful of men in hot, heavy English gear,
With clumsy muskets, sweating but light at heart,
Staring about them, dubiously but ravished,
As a flying-squirrel leapt from a swaying branch
And a grey opossum squeaked and scuttled away.
Oh, the fair meadows, the goodly trees and tall,
The fresh streams running in silver through the woods!
'Twas a land, a land!

They blest themselves and were gay.

And that very evening,
As they were going back to the anchored ships,
The savages came down on them from the hills,
Creeping like bears through the trees, with bows in their mouths,
And the sudden arrows flew in the goodly wood,
The first ambush, the first taste of Indian war.
They stood it and fired blind musket-shots through the dusk
But Captain Archer was wounded in both hands,
A sailor named Morton hurt, and the attackers
Neither hurt, nor, it seemed, dismayed, for they bore the lagging
Rattle of musket-shots disdainfully,
And melted back, like spirits, into the wood.
And there were the wounded men and the evening star,
The balmy night, the strange country, the shot arrows,
And it was not a dream.

So they went back to their ships.

And that same night opened their Pandora's box
And saw the names of their council—

Christopher Newport,
Gosnold and Ratcliffe, the captains of the three ships,
John Martin, George Kendall, Edward-Maria Wingfield,
And the chimera-prisoner, John Smith.
A ticklish business, for Smith was under arrest.
They would not admit him, though they were soon to use him,
John Smiths being somewhat difficult to bind.

At Jamestown, the lost men neither wondered nor dreamed.
They were dying.

It was the stroke of the forest-god,
Sleepily vexed at last and pointing at them
The flame-tipped arrow of the August sun,
Weaving them round with vapors from the marsh,
Coming upon them in a cloud of small
Innumerable, buzzing, deadly wings,
In the river-slime, in the mud of the streaming river.
And they die and die, and Percy writes it down,
Soberly, briefly, giving name and date,
A young, brave man, but shaken to the heart.

The sixth of August
There died John Asbie, of the bloody flux.
The ninth day died George Flower, of the swelling.

(It is hot. We did not know it could be so hot.
We did not know that the warm and pleasant sun
Could parch us so. We are thirsty and we drink.
We drink of the river-water at low tide.)

• • •
(The ships are gone. There was biscuit aboard the ships
And a little, comforting store of beer and wine.
Now we live on a pint a day of wormy grain,
We watch every three nights, lying on the bare ground.)

• • •
(Edward Morrish, the corporal.
A hardy man—had served in the Low Countries.
I saw him at ten o'clock and his face looked white,
Under the tan. He said that his belly griped him.
And at five o'clock he was dead.)

• • •
(We die, we die!
There are seven dead in four days—and every morning
We drag them out of their cabins like stiffened dogs
To lie in the hateful earth of this wilderness
Where we thought to find the gold. We are sick and weak,
Burning with fever, purging out our entrails



And once we were gentlemen and adventurers,
We were carpenters and bricklayers with a trade
In kindly England—oh, the English sky,
The grey, sweet Spring, the cuckoo singing aloud!
Not these wild, bright birds, this killing and brazen sun!
And no relief but the huge, black thundercloud
That lights trees of fire in the swollen, purple sky
Over the sluggish river, but brings no sweet
Blest coolness after it, only a thicker heat,
A wearier aching.)

• • •

(Toll them out like bells,
The names of the lost, the nightmare peal of death,
The price of blood for the fair, sweet-smelling land.
The small store of rotten grain is nigh at an end,
The leaders are ill and wrangling, the skull-bones show
Through the dry, pinched faces of the once-hardy men,
The men who barely shoulder their muskets now,
Who are too weak to get up from their own dung
As they lie dying in the filthy cabins.
Toll the bell, forest-god.
The brazen bell of the unbearable sky,
For the fish are leaving the river, the grain is spent.
Yet a little while and the forest will come again.
Yet a little while and there will be no town.
The green vine will grow through the logs of the ruined church.)
Staring into the forest with dull eyes,
Knowing they had to watch for something there
But half-forgetting what.

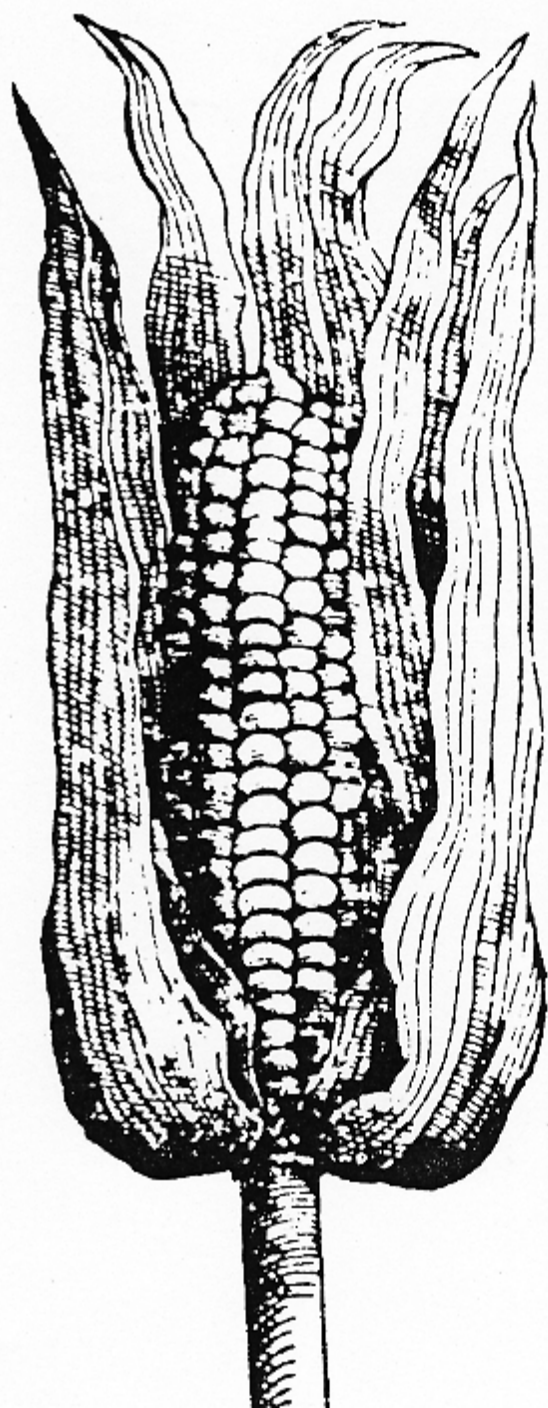
There was no rule.

They would not listen to Wingfield any more,
Kendall had been deposed and plotted escape,
Gosnold was dead, Smith newly risen from fever,
And it was the end.

And then, no man knows why,

There came the savages, smiling, bringing corn.
Corngivers, why do you give
That these men live?
They think that you are devils of the wood

And you have fought them once and will again,
Yet, in their last extremity, you come
As if in answer to some forest drum
To bring the bounty never understood,
To bring the food that saves the starving men.
Gods? You have seen them die like truculent fools
Where any one of you would live and thrive
And, if they have the iron and the tools,
The powder and the shot,
These things avail them not.
Their magic cannot keep their best alive.
Pity? Why should you pity them or care?
They will be greedy, soon, when they are fed.
Look in their eyes and see
The felling of the tree,
The great vine-twisted tree of Powhatan.
Look in their eyes and see the hungry man
Moving with ax and fire upon the wood,
Spoiling the rivers, digging up the dead.
This is your own destruction that you bear
In venison and corn
And the red Autumn leaf
That falls before the snow,
This is the doom of werowance and chief.
This is the breaking of the hazel-bow.
And yet, before it happens, and the great
Passionate drum of wrong begins to sound,
Ere the dead lie upon the bloody ground
And the chief's sons lie drunken in the street,
Let us remember how this happened, too,
And how the food was given, not in hate,
Liking or dazzled wonder, but, it seems,
As if compelled by something past all plans,
Some old, barbaric courtesy of man's.
Wild as his heart, red as his hunter's dreams,
—And for no cause the white men ever knew.



Land Settlement in Virginia

Virginia was settled by a trading corporation called the Virginia Company. It was composed of a group of directors and investors who headquartered in London and based their authority on a charter from the King. After the fateful events of the first settlements in Jamestown, the Virginia Company found that Englishmen could be reluctant voyagers,

especially after hearing tales of the starving time at Jamestown. The officers of the company had to find an attraction powerful enough to convince Englishmen to go to Virginia, to help to cultivate the land and bring in some returns for the company. One thing the Virginia Company could offer convinced some Englishmen to go: they offered land.



The dream



The reality

A CALL FOR COLONISTS



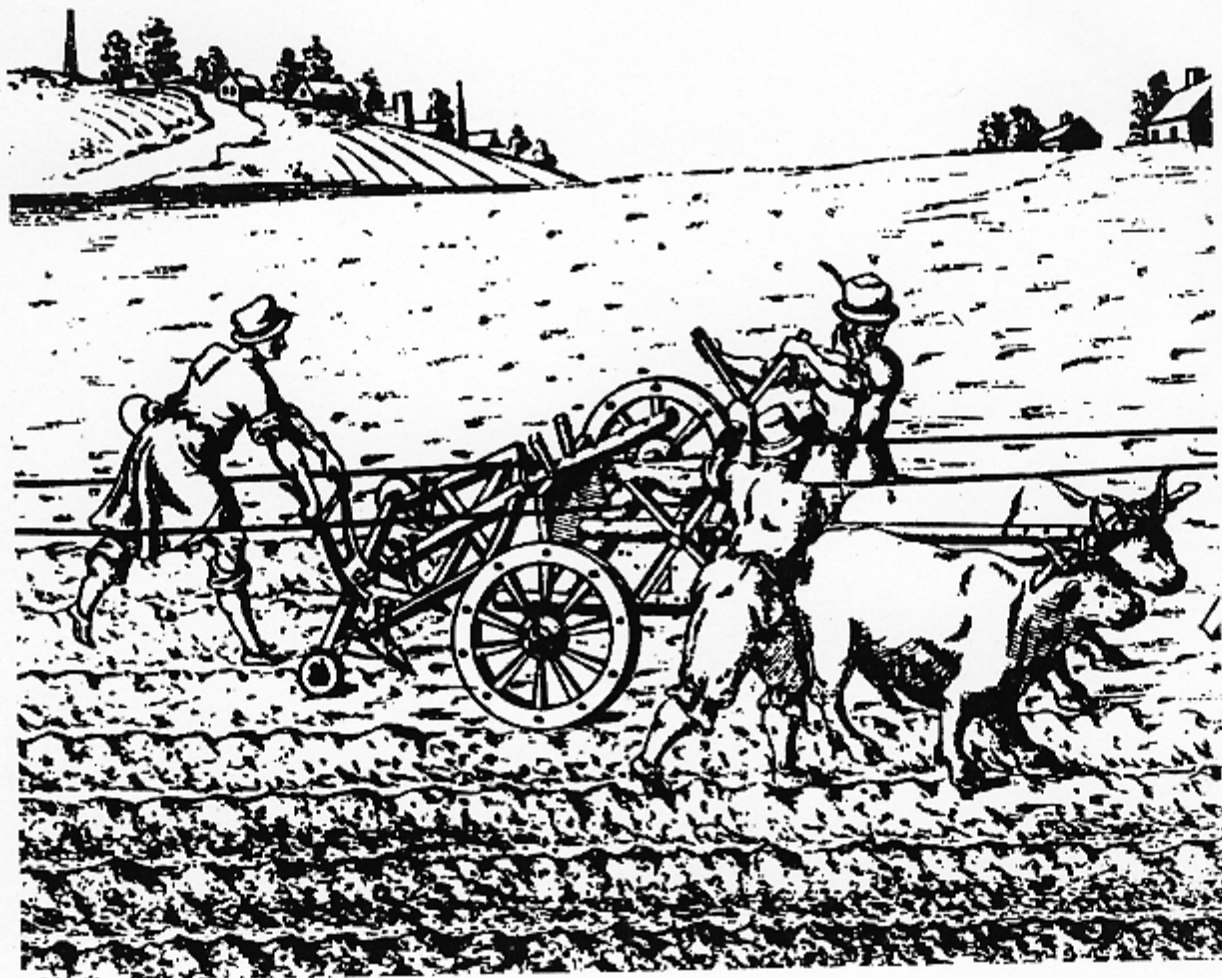
Concerning the Plantation of Virginia New Britain, March 5th, 1609*

In order that so honorable a voyage may find support and be prospered, this paper has been made public, so that it may be generally known to all workmen of whatever craft they may be, blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, shipwrights, turners and such as know how to plant vineyards, hunters, fishermen, and all who work in any kind of metal, men who make bricks, architects, bakers, weavers, shoemakers, sawyers and those who spin wool and all others, men as well as women, who have any occupation, who wish to go out in this voyage for colonizing the country with people.

And in the same way, all who may desire to give money before the last day of March will be admitted as Members in this Virginia Company and will receive a proportionate share of the profits and advantages although they do not go in person on this voyage.⁴

* Broadside for Virginia Company advertising what the company had to offer.

A LAND OFFER



By Order of the Virginia Company, 1618

That for all persons which during the next seven years after Midsummer Day, 1618, shall go to Virginia with intent there to inhabit (if they continue there three years after they are shipped there) shall be made a grant of fifty acres of land for every person.* These grants are to be made respectively to people and their heirs who pay for the transportation of people (including themselves) with reservation of twelve pence yearly rent for every fifty acres, to be given to the Treasurer of the Company and his successors, after the first seven years of every such grant.⁵

* The head-right system, nicknamed for the fact that land was given to every person who went, and so by the count of heads.

A LAND GRANT



By the Governor and Capt. General of Virginia, 1621

Know ye that I Sir Francis Wyatt Knight, Governor and Capt. General of Virginia, by virtue of the great Charter of Orders and Laws concluded and dated at London, 18 November 1618 by the Treasurer Council and Adventurers for the first Colony of Virginia, give and grant unto Mr. Thomas Hothersall and to his heirs and assigns forever:

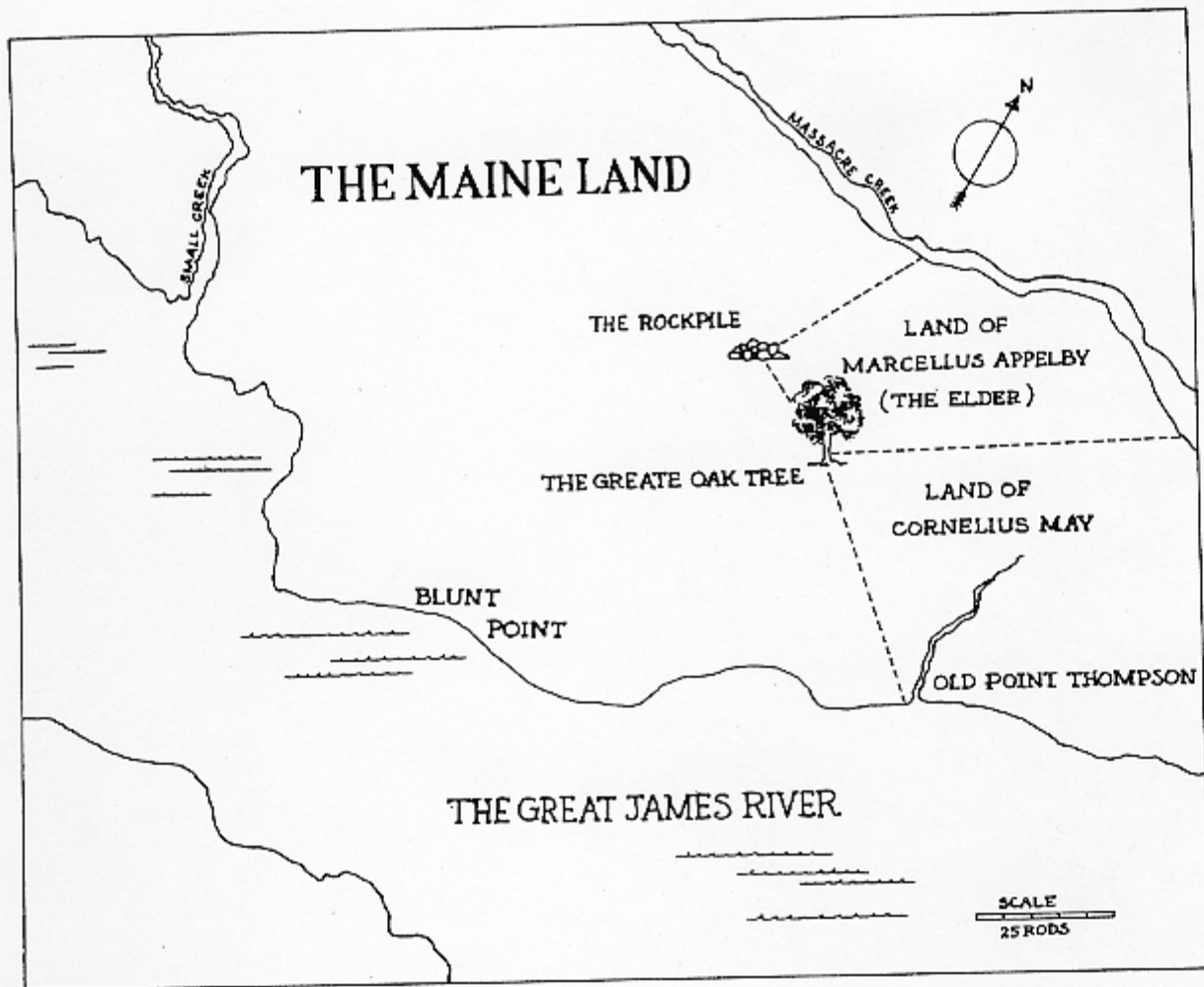
Two hundred acres of land situated and being at Blunt Point, confining on the East the land of Cornelius May, on the South upon the great river, on the north upon the main land and on the west running towards a small creek one hundred rod (at sixteen foot and a half the rod); fifty acres whereof is his own personal right and fifty acres is the personal right of Frances Hothersall his wife, the other hundred acres in consideration of his transportation of two of his children out of England at his own cost and charges, viz: Richard Hothersall, and Mary Hothersall.

To have and to hold the said two hundred acres of land with his due share of all mines for minerals therein contained, and with all rights and privileges of hunting, hawking and fowling and others within the precincts and upon the borders of the said land. To the use benefit and behoofe of the said Thomas Hothersall, his heirs and assigns forever. . . .

Yielding and paying to the Treasurer and Company and to their successors forever, yearly at the feast of St. Michael the Archangel [Michaelmas], for every fifty acres, the fee rent of one shilling.*

In witness whereof I have to these presents set my hand and the Great Seal of the Colony, given at James City the six and twentieth day of January.⁶

* The yearly rent paid to the Virginia Company for the land was called a *quitrent*. This phrase is an ancient one going back to the Middle Ages in England. When duties were performed for a lord, such as working a number of days on his land, or paying some fees, a notation was made that the person was "quit," meaning that he had performed his duties until next week or next month or next year.



Mapping Thomas Hothersall's land grant in Virginia

What problems of calculation might the head-right system cause?

How is this land settlement pattern different from Sudbury's?

How might this system of land distribution affect the lives of the people in their relationships to one another?

How might this system of land distribution affect the lives of the people in their relationship to one another?

How might the need of land for tobacco influence the people?

The Effects of Virginia's Land Settlement System

The Virginia Company never did become successful as a money making venture. In 1624 when the financial problems became too complicated and the company neared bankruptcy, King James I revoked the original charter and Virginia became a royal colony, governed by a royal governor instead of a group of businessmen. The land settlement pattern of head-rights and payments in quitrents, however, did not change. At the turn of the century some seventy years later, a group of officials for the English government looked into the results of Virginia's land settlement pattern. They found several unfavorable things to report back to England.

AN ACCOUNT OF VIRGINIA AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LACK OF TOWNS: REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRADE, 1697

It is astonishing to hear what contrary statements are given of the country of Virginia, even by those who have often seen it, and know it very well. Some of them represent it as the best, others as the worst country in the world. Perhaps they are both right. For the most general true character of Virginia is this: that as to the natural advantages of a country, it is one of the best. But as to the improved ones, one of the worst of all the English plantations in America.

But it is easier to see their misery, than to find out the causes of it. No doubt it is chiefly to be charged to the first wrong measures that were taken in not seating themselves in towns, and to the narrow, selfish ends of most of their governors, who go easily into any projects, whereby they may make a gain.

OF LAND AND HOW IT IS TAKEN UP WITHOUT BEING INHABITED TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE KING'S REVENUE⁸

The method settled by the King in the first settling of the country was to allot 50 acres of land to everyone who should adventure into the country. Had this been observed it would have been a lasting encouragement to adventurers to come, until the whole country was peopled. But, as matters have been managed, the land has gone from the King's hands and the country is very ill-peopled.

The first great abuse of this design arose from the ignorance and knavery of surveyors. They often gave out drafts of surveys without even seeing the land. They gave their description by some natural bounds as a tree or a rock and were sure to allow large measure, so that the persons for whom they surveyed should enjoy much larger tracts than they paid quitrents for.

Then all the Courts were very lavish in allowing certificates for head-rights. If a master of a ship came unto any Court and swore that he had imported himself and so many seamen and passengers at different times into the country, and that he never elsewhere made use of these rights, he quickly obtained an order for so many head-rights (i.e. fifty acres of land times the number of people he brought) and these rights he would sell to others. Perhaps the seamen at another Court swore that they had adventured themselves so many times into the country and had not elsewhere proved their rights. They too obtained an order for so many rights. Likewise the masters who bought the servants would at

another Court make oath that they had bought so many persons and would obtain additional head rights. Thus the land was sold away without being settled and the people who actually remained in the country had the least share of it.

The Government connived at these things, thinking it good that the King's land should be given away to people. In this way the land was taken up and the King had so much more quitrent paid to him, whereas land not taken up paid nothing. But they did not consider that the small profit of quitrents does not balance the great damage of leaving the country without inhabitants, which is the result of their method. . . .

In New England, the settlers at first were compelled to settle in towns, and not a single man was allowed to take up land until enough were agreed together to form a township, when they laid them out a town with home-lots for gardens, out-lots for cornfields and meadows, and country-lots for plantations with overseers and gangs of hands. There being no such rule in Virginia, the people seated themselves, without any order, in country plantations. The General Assembly has made several attempts to bring the people into towns, but so far ineffectually.

The majority of the Burgesses have never seen a town, and have no notion of any but a country life. For instance, the following argument was used by an ingenious Virginian who had never been out of the country. They might, he said, observe already that wherever they were thickly seated they could hardly raise any

stocks or live by one another; much more therefore would it be impossible for them to live when a matter of a hundred families were cooped up within half a mile of ground.

Land Settlement Patterns: A Comparison

In Virginia

In Massachusetts

Who decides?

To give out the land?

To whom?

How much land to give?

What crops to plant?

That people should live in towns?

THE VIRGINIA COMPANY



A Publication by the Virginia Company, 1610*

Former experience hath too dearly taught how much and many ways it hurteth to send wicked sons, bad servants, and ill husbands, and so to clog the business with such an idle crew as did thrust themselves in the last voyage, that will rather starve for hunger than lay their hands to labor.

It is therefore resolved that no such unnecessary person shall now be accepted but only such sufficient, honest, and good artificers as smiths, shipwrights, sturgeon-dressers, joiners, carpenters, gardeners, turners, coopers, salt-makers, iron-men for furnace and hammer, brickmakers, bricklayers, mineral-men, bakers, gun-founders, fishermen, ploughwrights, brewers, sawyers, fowlers, vine-dressers, surgeons and physicians for the body, and learned divines to instruct the colony and to teach the infidels to worship the true God. Of which so many as will repair to the house of Sir Thomas Smith, treasurer of the company, to proffer their services in this action before the number be full, shall be entertained with those reasonable and good conditions as shall be agreeable to each man's sufficiency in his several professions.⁹

* Virginia Company broadside following the starving time at Jamestown.



Social Class and Political Authority in Virginia¹⁰

The Englishmen who settled Virginia held the same ideas about a fixed order of society that New Englanders held. It was part of their common European heritage. Most Europeans of the seventeenth century believed that there was a hierarchy to society with some men superior and some men inferior. High social position went hand in hand with political authority and power. Power rightfully belonged to people at the top. Nothing would have been more foreign to New Englanders or Virginians than the idea that political leadership should be open to all levels of society, especially the lower levels.

What happened to these ideas in America? The Sudbury story revealed that some men changed. In Europe these ideas were linked to

land and land ownership. More land usually meant more power. But in Sudbury everyone owned land. The widespread practice of land ownership in America upset the old social order. The availability of political training in town meetings propelled men like John Ruddock into positions of political leadership. And even though Peter Noyes himself wanted to maintain some ranking in his new community, he wielded more power and leadership in Sudbury than he would have in England in his old social position.

But what happened in Virginia? The founders of the Virginia Company, like John Winthrop and the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, were men of eminence and high position in England. Some of them came to Virginia to help settle the country. The disaster of Jamestown taught the Virginia Company that farmers and skilled men like carpenters and

millers were also needed. Yet although they were encouraged to come, and did, leadership of Virginia remained in the hands of a higher social class.

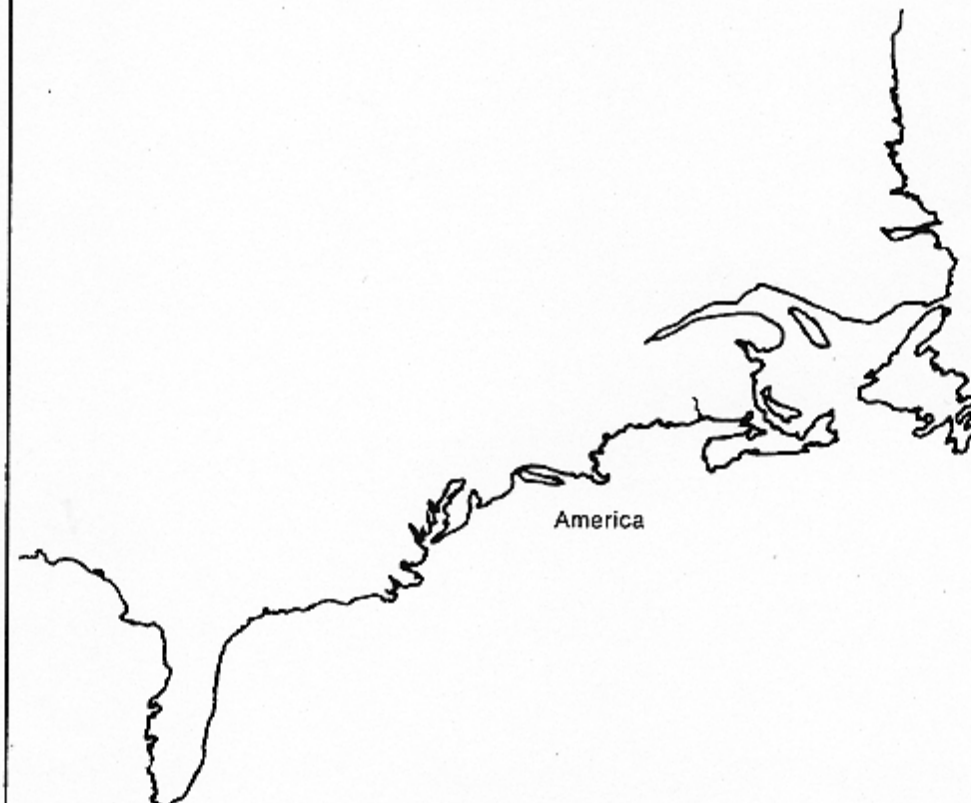
By the 1630's all but a few of the original leaders were gone from Virginia. Some went back to England, some were killed by Indians and some were victims of a new and harsh environment. Their disappearance created a political vacuum that the older planters of Virginia complained about. Leadership was

coming from a new social class. It was coming from men who were tough enough to survive in the wilderness and make a go of it economically. Some were farmers, some were head-right landowners, and some were servants. They rose to positions of leadership by shrewd land manipulations and by hard work. They were ambitious men who wanted land, a right to a say in their local affairs, a secured legal claim to their land, and increased trade.

How were they looked upon by the others? In

Who Came to America?

What effect might who came have on the development of political leadership in America? On the control of the King over his colonies?



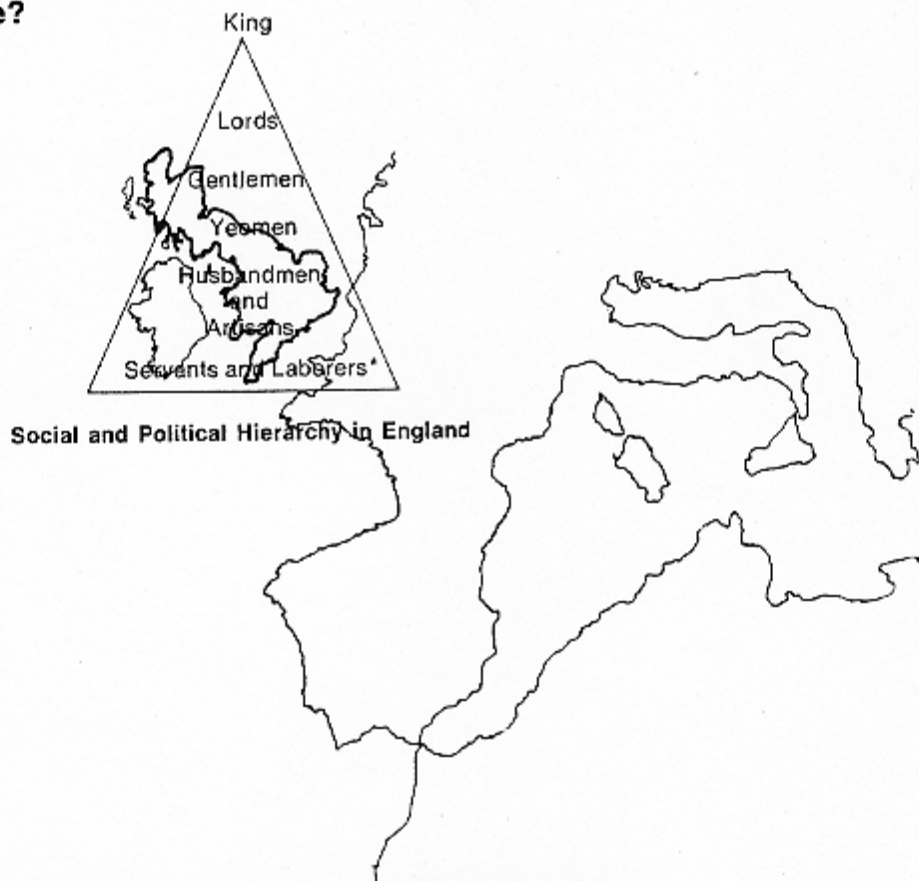
a petition to the Virginia Company in 1620 some prospective settlers complained about a new governor of Virginia, Sir George Yeardley. Yeardley had been knighted to give him greater personal authority before being made governor, but the petitioners argued that he lacked eminence and social position. He could not be a proper ruler.

Great actions are carried with best success by such commanders who have personal authority and greatness answerable to the action, since

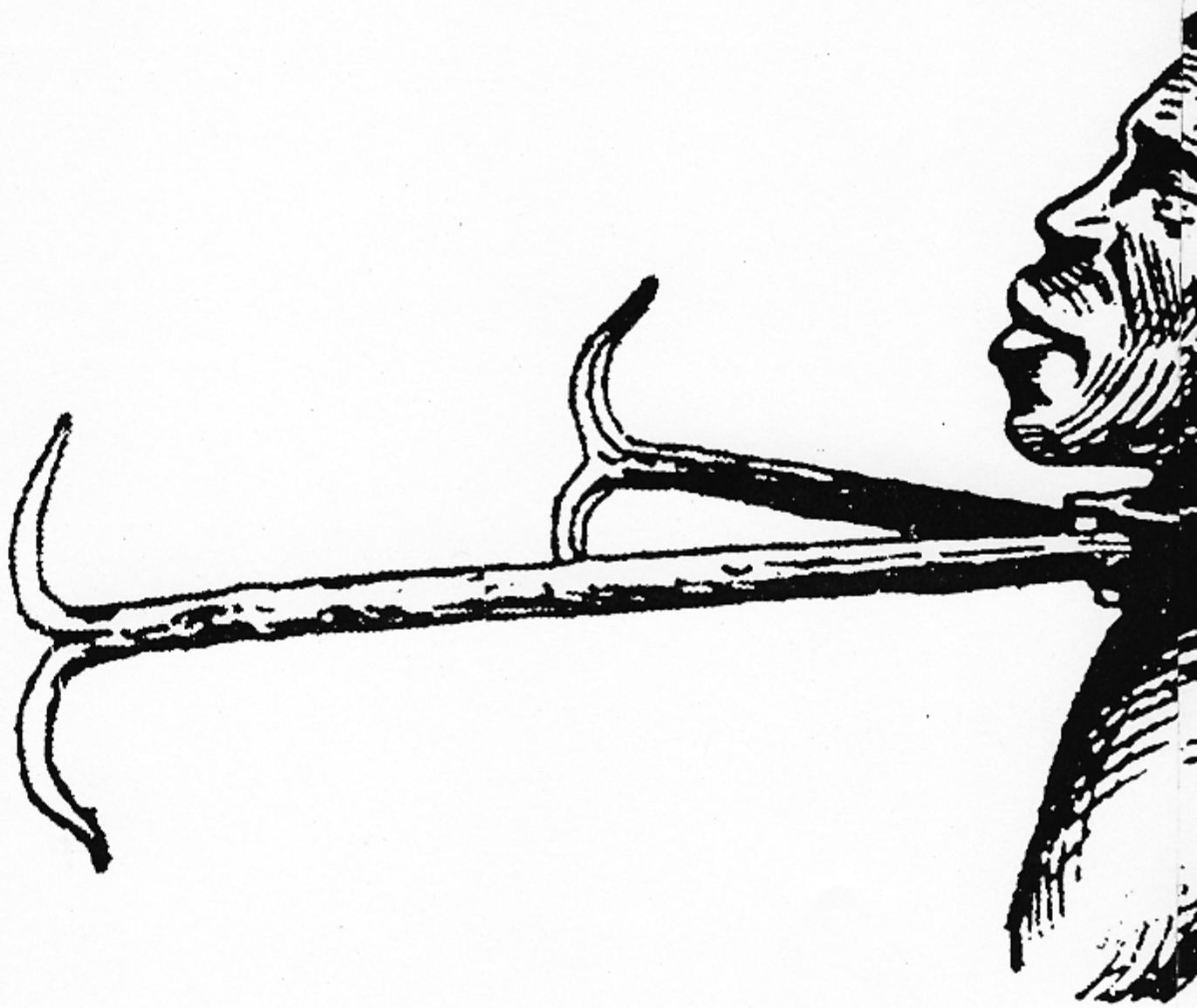
it is not easy to sway a vulgar and servile nature by vulgar and servile spirits. [With a person of nobility for a leader] every man subordinate is ready to yield a willing submission. [Ordinary men would not obey ordinary men selected from their own rank.] To maintain and hold up the dignity of so great and good a cause, [the] better sort [should be sent as leaders.]¹¹

Change was taking place in Virginia. The men of the "meaner" sort were upsetting old ideas.

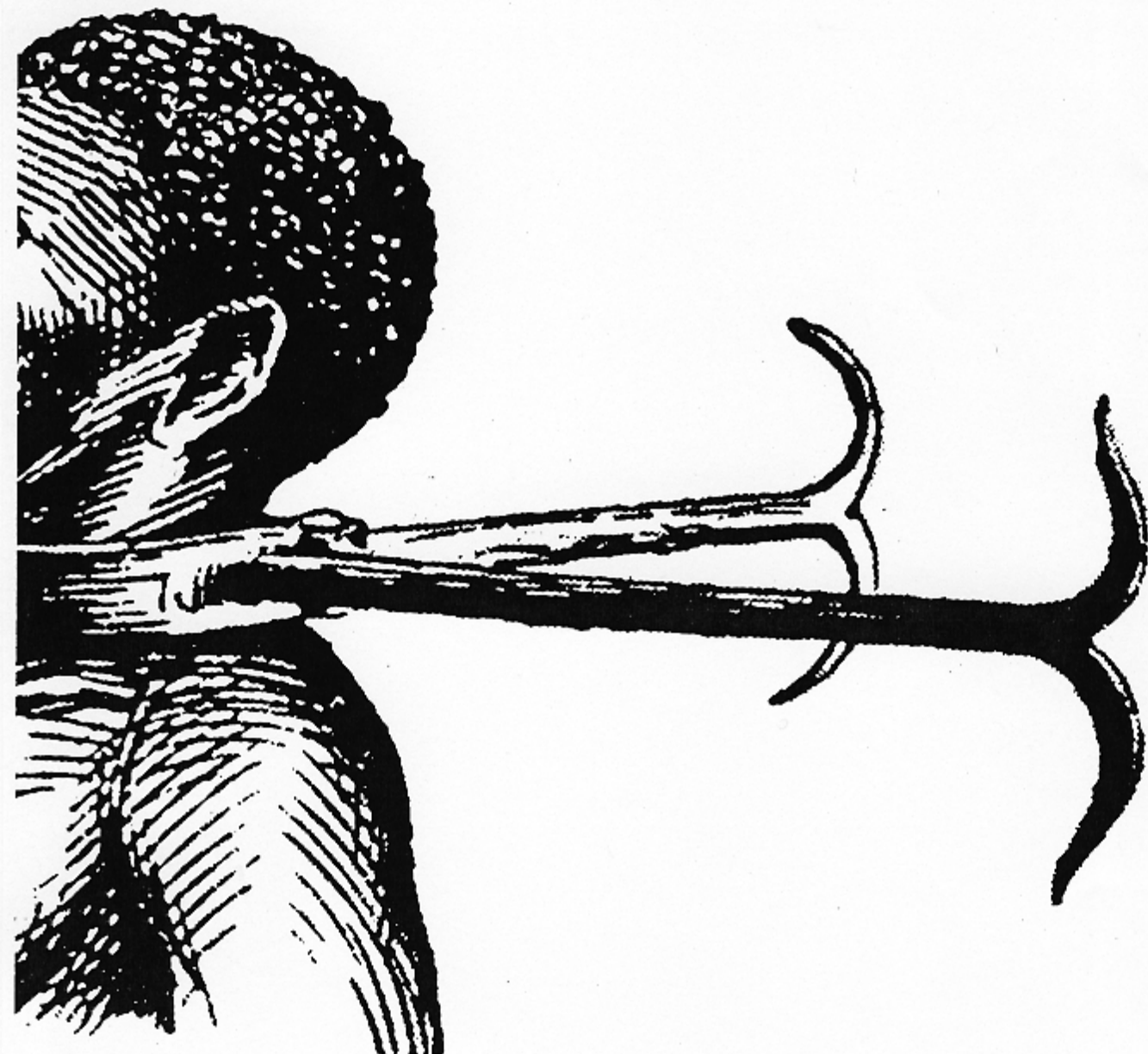
Who Stayed Home?



* Actually servants and laborers represented a smaller percentage of society than husbandmen and artisans.



The Question of Slavery





Gustavus Vassa: The Story of a Slave

Olaudah Equiano's Life in Africa ¹

This kingdom is divided into many provinces or districts: in one of the most remote and fertile of which I was born, in the year 1745. The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the sea coast must be very considerable; for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea; and our subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal; for every transaction of the government, as far as my slender observation extended, was conducted by the chiefs or elders of the place.*

My father was one of those elders or chiefs I have spoken of, and was styled Embrenche; a term, as I remember, importing the highest distinction, and signifying in our language a mark of grandeur . . . Those Embrenche, or chief men, decided disputes, and punished crimes; for which purpose they always assembled together. The proceedings were generally short; and in most cases the law of retaliation prevailed.

When our women are not employed with the men in tillage, their usual occupation is spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dye, and make into garments. They also manufacture earthen vessels, of which we have many kinds. Among the rest tobacco pipes, made after the same fashion, and used in the same manner, as those in Turkey.

As we live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favors, our wants are few, and easily supplied; of course we have few



*Benin, now part of Nigeria.

manufactures. They consist for the most part of calicoes, earthen ware, ornaments, and instruments of war and husbandry. We have also markets, at which I have been frequently with my mother. These are sometimes visited by stout mahogany-colored men from south west of us; we call them Cye-Eboe, which term signifies red men living at a distance. They generally bring us firearms, gunpowder, hats, beads, and dried fish. . . . These articles they barter with us for woods and earth, and our salt of wood ashes. They always carry slaves through our land; but the strictest account is exacted of their manner of procuring them before they are suffered to pass. . . .



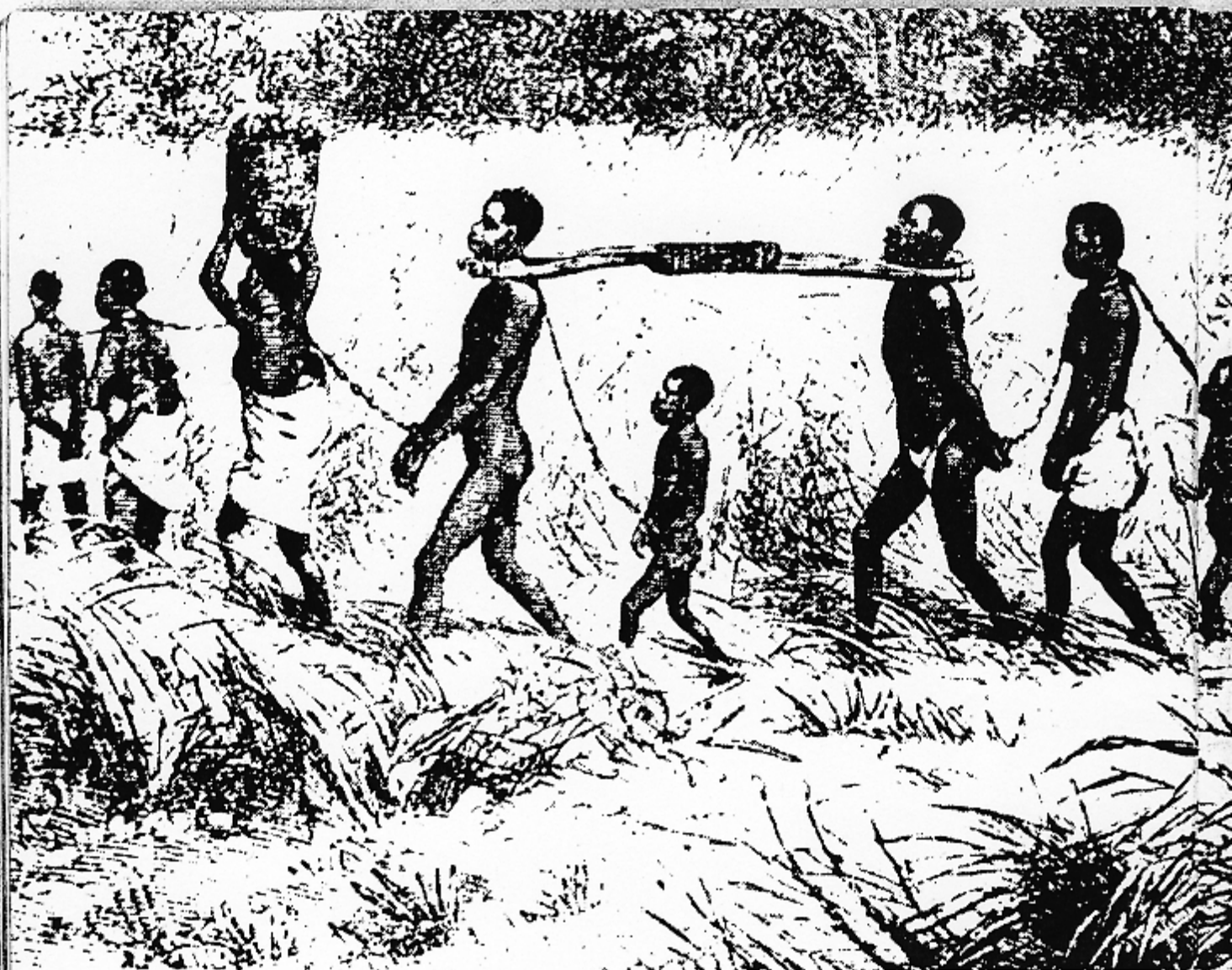
Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful. . . . Agriculture is our chief employment; and every one, even the children and women, is engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labor from our earliest years. Every one contributes something to the common stock; and, as we are unacquainted with idleness we have no beggars. . . .

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion.

As our manners are simple, our luxuries are few. The dress of both sexes is nearly the same. It generally consists of a long piece of calico, or muslin, wrapped loosely round the body, somewhat in the form of a highland plaid. This is usually dyed blue, which is our favorite color. It is extracted from a berry, and is brighter and richer than I have ever seen in Europe. . . .

The head of a family usually eats alone; his wives and slaves have also their separate tables. Before we taste food, we always wash our hands; indeed our cleanliness on all occasions is extreme; but on this it is an indispensable ceremony. After washing, libation is made, by pouring out a small portion of the drink on the floor, and tossing a small quantity of the food in a certain place, for the spirits of departed relations, which the natives suppose to preside over their conduct, and guard them from evil. . . .





As to religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girded round with a belt, that he may never eat or drink; but according to some, he smokes a pipe, which is our own favorite luxury. They believe he governs events, especially our deaths or captivity.

Kidnapped

I have already acquainted the reader with the time and place of my birth. My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family, of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and a sister, who was the only daughter. As I was the youngest of the sons, I became, of course, the greatest favorite with my mother, and was always with her; and she

used to take particular pains to form my mind. I was trained up from my earliest years in the arts of agriculture and war: my daily exercise was shooting and throwing javelins; and my mother adorned me with emblems, after the manner of our greatest warriors. In this way I grew up till I turned the age of eleven, when an end was put to my happiness in the following manner.

One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both. Without giving*

*In this village adults worked the fields together. The children were left behind to play, with someone posted as a watch against other African kidnapppers who stole children for sale as slaves.



us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, tied our hands, and ran off with us into the nearest wood. They continued to carry us as far as they could, till night came on, when we reached a small house, where the robbers halted for refreshment, and spent the night. We were then unbound, but were unable to take any food; and, being quite overpowered by fatigue and grief, our only relief was some sleep.

The next morning we left the house, and continued travelling all the day. For a long time we had kept to the woods, but at last we came to a road which I believed I knew. I had now some hopes of being delivered; for we had advanced but a little way before I discovered some people at a distance, on which I began to cry out for their assistance.

But my cries had no other effect than to make them tie me faster, and stop my mouth, and then they put me into a large sack. They also stopped my sister's mouth, and tied her hands; and in this manner we proceeded till we were out of the sight of these people. When we went to rest the following night they offered us some victuals; but we refused them. The only comfort we had was in being in one another's arms all that night, and bathing each other with our tears.

The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay clasped in each other's arms. It was in vain that we besought them not to part us. She was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to

be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days did not eat anything but what they forced into my mouth. At length, after many days travelling, I got into the hands of a chieftain, in a very pleasant country.

I was there I suppose about a month, and they at last used to trust me some little distance from the house. This liberty I used in embracing every opportunity to inquire the way to my own home. I had observed that my father's house was towards the rising of the sun. I therefore determined to seize the first opportunity of making my escape and to shape my course for that quarter. I was quite oppressed and weighed down by grief after my mother and friends; and my love of liberty, ever great, was strengthened by the mortifying circumstance of not daring to eat with the free-born children, although I was mostly their companion.

While I was projecting my escape one day, an unlucky event happened, which put an end to my hopes. I used to be sometimes employed in assisting an elderly woman slave to cook and take care of the poultry. One morning, while I was feeding some chickens, I happened to toss a small pebble at one of them, which hit it on the middle, and directly killed it. The old slave, having soon after missed the chicken, inquired after it. On my relating the accident (for I told her the truth, because my mother would never suffer me to tell a lie) she flew into a violent passion, threatening that I should suffer for it. My master being out, she immediately went and told her mistress what I had done. This alarmed me very much, and I expected an instant flogging, which to me was uncommonly

dreadful; for I had seldom been beaten at home. I therefore resolved to fly; and accordingly I ran into a thicket that was hard by, and hid myself in the bushes. In that part of the country (as well as ours) the houses and villages were skirted with woods or shrubberies, and the bushes were so thick, that a man could readily conceal himself in them, so as to elude the strictest search. The neighbors continued the whole day looking for me, and several times many of them came within a few yards of the place where I lay hid. I expected every moment, when I heard a rustling among the trees, to be found out, and punished by my master. But they never discovered me, though they were often so near that I even heard their conjectures as they were looking about for me. I now learned from them that any attempt to return home would be hopeless.

I heard frequent rustlings among the leaves; and being pretty sure they were snakes, I expected every instant to be stung by them. This increased my anguish; and the horror of my situation became now quite insupportable. I at length quitted the thicket, very faint and hungry, for I had not eaten or drank any thing all the day, and crept to my master's kitchen, from whence I set out at first, and which was an open shed, and laid myself down in the ashes, with an anxious wish for death to relieve me from all my pains. I was scarcely awake in the morning when the old woman slave who was the first up, came to light the fire, and saw me in the fire-place. She was very much surprised to see me, and could scarcely believe her own eyes. She now promised to intercede for me, and went for her master, who soon after came, and, having slightly



Slaves being sold in Africa

reprimanded me, ordered me to be taken care of, and not ill-treated.

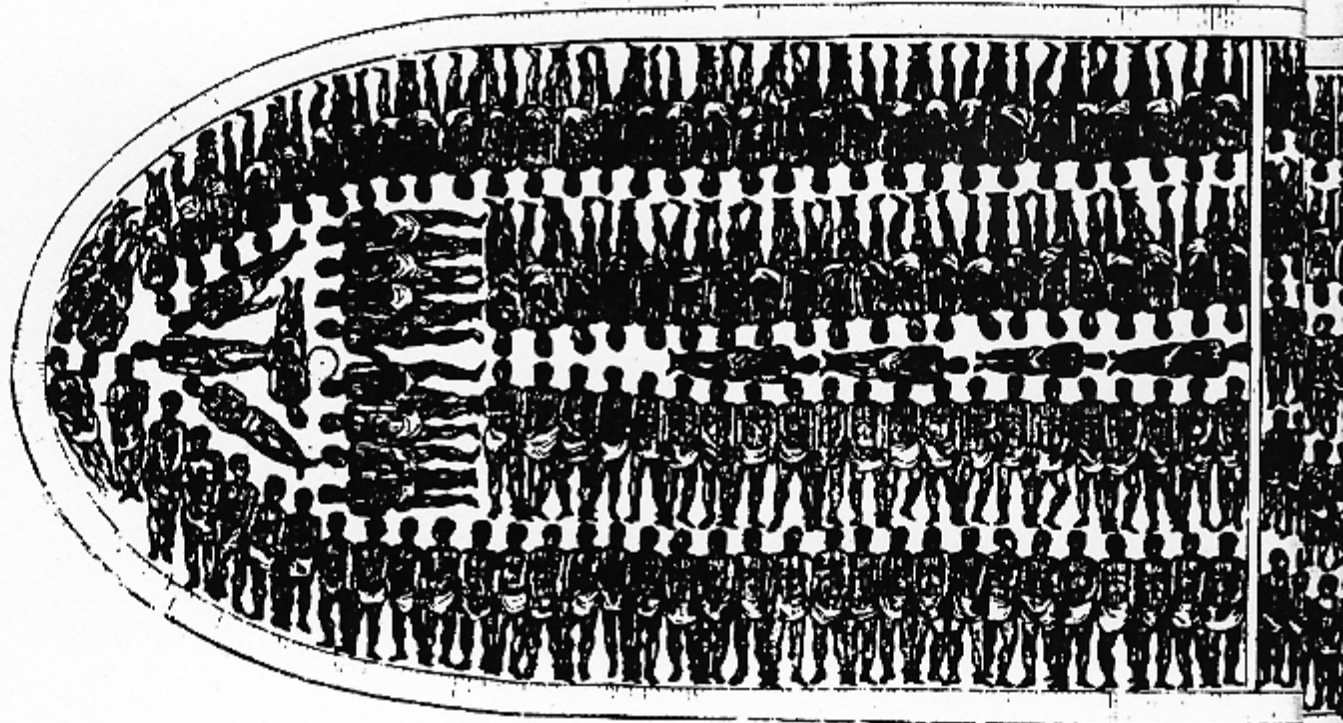
Soon after this my master's only daughter and child by his first wife sickened and died, which affected him so much that for some time he was almost frantic, and really would have killed himself had he not been watched and prevented. However, in a small time afterwards he recovered, and I was again sold.

In this manner I had been travelling for a considerable time, when one evening, to my great surprise, whom should I see brought to the house where I was, but my dear sister. As soon as she saw me she gave a loud shriek, and ran into my arms. I was quite overpowered; neither of us could speak, but, for a considerable time, clung to each other in mutual

embraces, unable to do anything but weep.

When these people knew we were brother and sister, they indulged us to be together; and thus for a while we forgot our misfortunes in the joy of being together. But even this small comfort was soon to have an end; for scarcely had the fatal morning appeared, when she was again torn from me for ever! I was now more miserable, if possible, than before. I did not long remain after my sister. I was again sold, and carried through a number of places.

Thus I continued to travel, sometimes by land, sometimes by water, through different countries, and various nations, till, at the end of six or seven months after I had been kidnapped, I arrived at the sea coast.



The Slave Ship

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, which I am yet at a loss to describe.

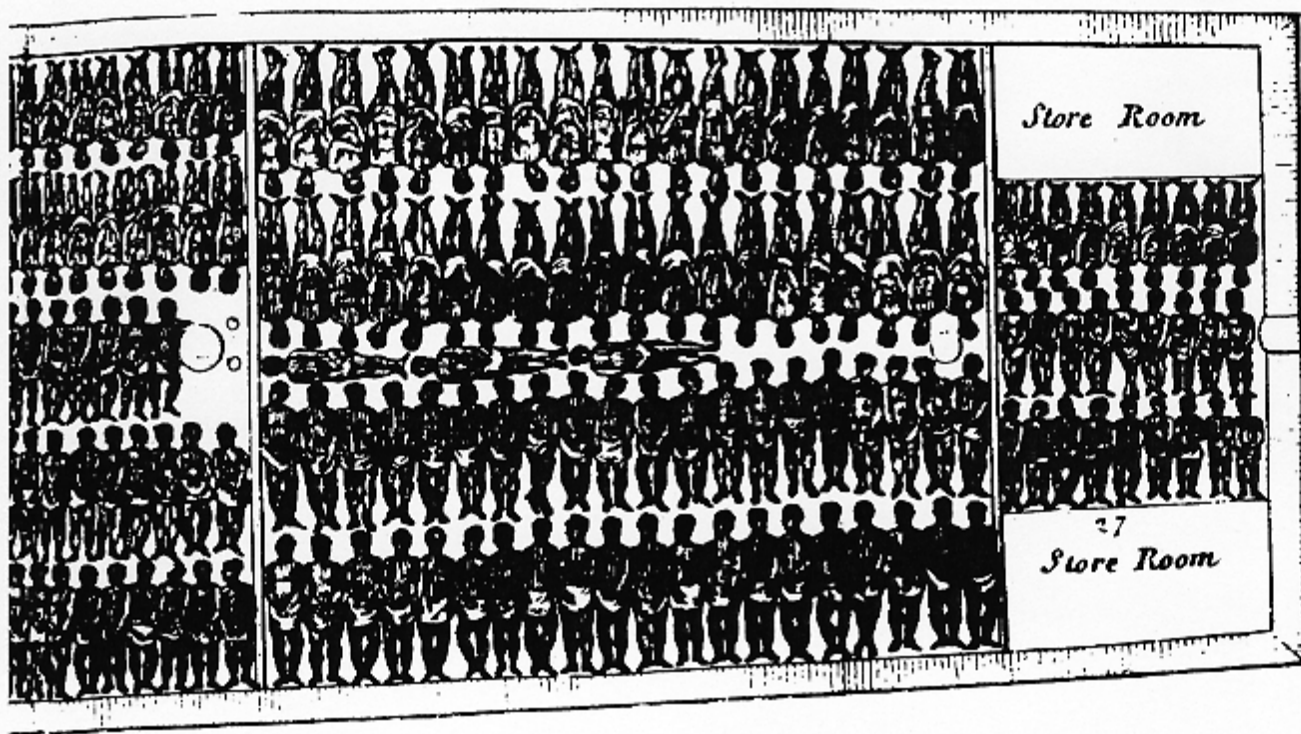
When I was carried on board I was immediately handled, and tossed up, to see if I were sound, by some of the crew. I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, which was very different from any I had ever heard, united to confirm me in this belief.

When I looked around the ship and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate. Quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted.

When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay. They talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not.

Soon after this, the blacks who had brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair. I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly. I even wished for my former slavery, in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo.

I was not long suffered to indulge my grief. I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such an odor in my nostrils, as I had never experienced in my life. With the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was



not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, Death, to relieve me. But soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables. On my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and laid me across, I think, the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced any thing of this kind before, and, although not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it; yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side. But I could not. Besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks. I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself.

In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of them what was to be done with us. They gave me to understand we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and

thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate. But still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted in so savage a manner.

I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen. I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place. They told me they did not, but came from a distant one. I asked how could the vessel go. They told me they could not tell; but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on. And the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked in order to stop the vessel.

At last when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost

suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness amongst the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the greed of their purchasers. This wretched situation aggravated by the galling of the chains now became insupportable. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.

Happily perhaps for myself I was soon reduced so low here, that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck. And from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters.

One day, when we had a smooth sea, and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made

3 feet 3 in. high



through the nettings, and jumped into the sea. Immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example. I believe many more would very soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck. There was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate; hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade.

Many a time we were near suffocation, from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. During our passage I first saw flying fishes, which surprised me very much. They used frequently to fly across the ship, and many of them fell on the deck. I also now first saw the use of the quadrant. I had often with astonishment seen the mariners make observations with it, and I could not think what it meant. They at last took notice of my surprise, and one of them willing to increase it, as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it. The clouds appeared to me to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder. I was now more persuaded than ever that I was in another world, and that everything about me was magic.



A Slave Market in the West Indies

At last, we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes. We plainly saw the harbor, and other ships of different kinds and sizes: and we soon anchored amongst them off Bridge Town. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us. When, soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions. At last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much; and sure enough, soon after we landed, there came to us Africans of all languages. We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent



up together like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. What struck me first was, that the houses were built with bricks, in stories, and in every other respect different from those I have seen in Africa. But I was still more astonished on seeing people on horseback. I did not know what this could mean; and indeed I thought these people were full of nothing but magical arts.

We were not many days in the merchant's custody before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehension of the terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see and hear their cries at parting. Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

Life in Virginia

I now totally lost the small remains of comfort I had enjoyed in conversing with my countrymen; the women who used to wash and take care of me, were all gone different ways, and I never saw one of them afterwards.

I stayed in this island for a few days. I believe it could not be above a fortnight; when I and some few more slaves that were not saleable among the rest, from very much fretting, were shipped off in a sloop for North America. On the passage we were better treated than we were coming from Africa, and we had plenty of rice and fat pork.

We were landed up a river a good way from the sea, about Virginia county, where we saw few or none of our native Africans, and not one soul who could talk to me. I was a few weeks weeding grass and gathering stones in a plantation, and at last all my companions were distributed different ways, and only myself was left.

I was now exceedingly miserable, and thought myself worse off than any of the rest of my companions; for they could talk to each other, but I had no person to speak to that I could understand. In this state I was constantly grieving and pining, and wishing for death, rather than anything else.

While I was in this plantation, the gentleman to whom I supposed the estate belonged being unwell, I was one day sent for to his dwelling house to fan him. When I came into the room where he was, I was very much affrighted at some things I saw. I had seen a black woman

slave as I came through the house, who was cooking the dinner, and the poor creature was cruelly loaded with various kinds of iron machines. She had one particularly on her head, which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak, and could not eat or drink. I was much astonished and shocked at this contrivance which I afterwards learned was called the iron muzzle.

Soon after I had a fan put into my hand, to fan the gentleman while he slept; and so I did indeed with great fear. While he was fast asleep I indulged myself a great deal in looking about the room, which to me appeared very fine and curious. The first object that engaged my attention was a watch which hung on the chimney, and was going. I was quite surprised at the noise it made, and was afraid it would tell the gentleman anything I might do amiss. When I immediately after observed a picture hanging in the room, which appeared constantly to look at me, I was still more affrighted, having never seen such things as these before. At one time I thought it was something relative to magic; and not seeing it move, I thought it might be some way the whites had to keep their great men when they died, and offer them drinks as we used to do our friendly spirits. In this state of anxiety I remained till my master awoke, when I was dismissed out of the room.

In this place I was called Jacob; but on board the African ship I was called Michael. I had been some time in this miserable, forlorn and much dejected state, without having anyone to talk to, which made my life a burden, when the kind and unknown hand of the Creator now began to appear, to my comfort. For one day

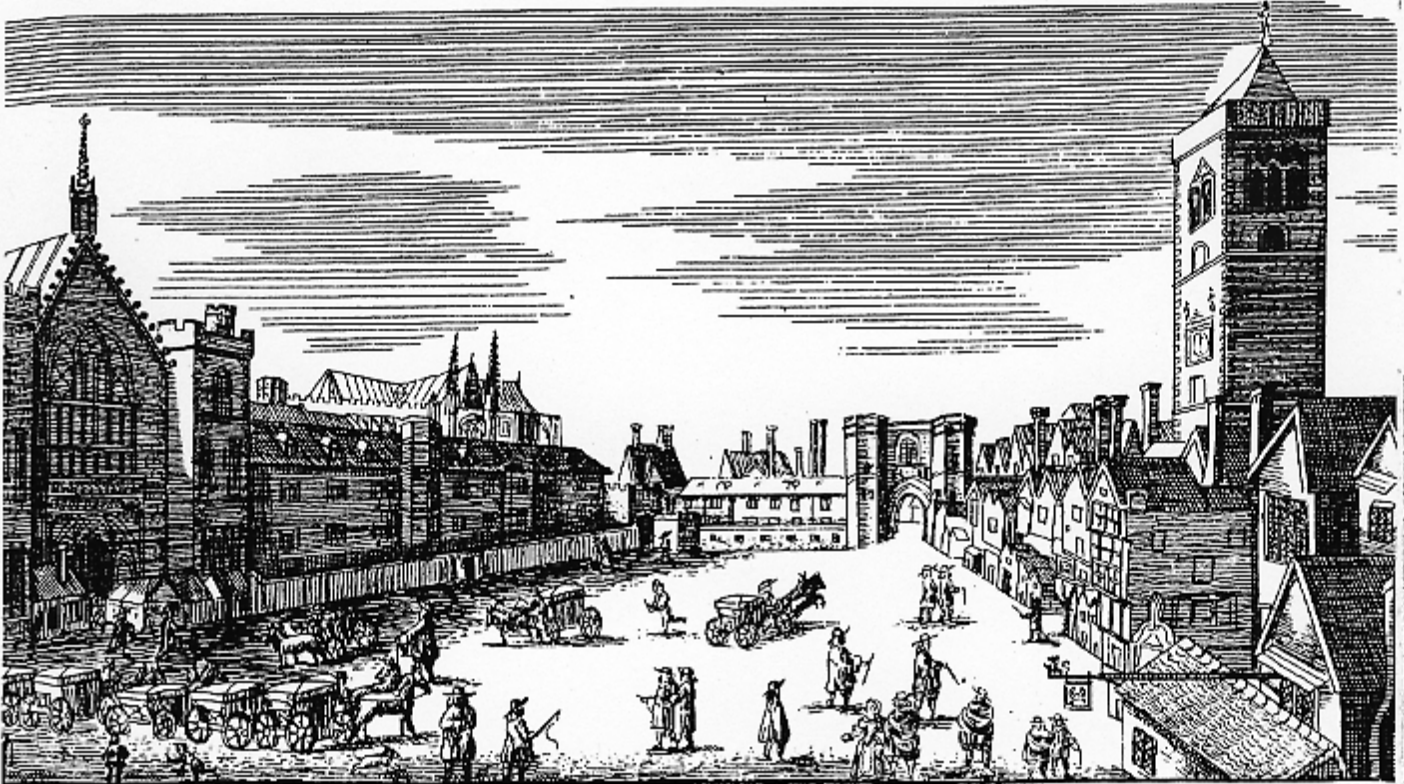
the captain of a merchant ship, called the Industrious Bee came on some business to my master's house. This gentleman, whose name was Michael Henry Pascal, was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, but now commanded this training ship, which was somewhere in the confines of the county many miles off. While he was at my master's house it happened that he saw me and liked me so well that he made a purchase of me. I think I have often heard him say that he gave thirty or forty pounds sterling for me; but I do not now remember. However, he meant me for a present to some of his friends in England; and I was sent accordingly from the house of my then master to the place where the ship lay. When I arrived I was carried on board a fine large ship, loaded with tobacco, and just ready to sail for England. I now thought my condition much mended. I had sails to lie on, and plenty of good victuals to eat; and every body on board used me very kindly, quite contrary to what I had seen of any white people before. I therefore began to think that they were not all of the same disposition. A few days after I was on board we sailed for England.

A New Name and a Trip to England

When I was on board this ship my captain and master named me Gustavus Vassa. I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob. But he said I should not, and still called me Gustavus, and when I refused to answer to my new name, which at first I did, it gained me many a cuff. So at length I submitted, and by which name I have been known ever since.

There was on board the ship a young lad who had never been at sea before, about four or five years older than myself. His name was Richard Baker. He was a native of America, had received an excellent education, and was of a most amiable temper. Soon after I went on board he showed me a great deal of partiality and attention, and in return I grew extremely fond of him. We at length became inseparable. And for the space of two years, he was of very great use to me, and was my constant companion and instructor. Although this dear youth had many slaves of his own, yet he and I have gone through many sufferings together on shipboard. Thus such a friendship was cemented between us as we cherished till his death, which to my great sorrow happened in the year of 1759, an event I never ceased to regret. I lost at once a kind interpreter, an agreeable companion, and a faithful friend, who at the age of fifteen discovered a mind superior to prejudice, and who was not ashamed to notice, to associate with, and to be the friend and instructor of, one who was ignorant, a stranger of different complexion, and a slave!

It was about the beginning of the spring of 1757 when I arrived in England, and I was near twelve years of age at that time. I was very much struck with the buildings and the pavement of the streets in Falmouth, and, indeed, every object which I saw filled me with new surprise. One morning, when I got upon deck, I saw it covered all over with the snow that fell over-night. As I had never seen anything of the kind before, I thought it was salt. So I immediately ran down to the mate, and desired him to come and see how somebody in the night had thrown salt all over



Westminster, London

the deck. He, knowing what it was, desired me to bring some of it down to him. Accordingly I took up a handful of it, which I found very cold and when I brought it to him, he desired me to taste it. I did so, and I was further surprised beyond measure.

Gustavus Vassa is Educated and Baptized

It was now between three and four years since I first came to England, a great part of which I had spent at sea, so that I began to consider myself as happily situated, for my master treated me always extremely well. From the various scenes I had beheld on ship-board, I soon grew a stranger to terror, and was, in that respect, at least almost an Englishman. I could now speak English tolerably well, and I perfectly understood every thing that was said. I not only felt myself quite easy with these new countrymen, but relished their society and manners. I no longer looked upon them as spirits but as men superior to us; and therefore I had the stronger desire to resemble them. I therefore embraced every occasion of improvement. Every new thing that I observed,

I treasured up in my memory. I had long wished to be able to read and write, and for this purpose, I took every opportunity to gain instruction, but had made very little progress. However, when I went to London with my master, I had soon an opportunity of improving myself, which I gladly embraced. Shortly after my arrival, he sent me to wait upon Miss Guerins, who had treated me with much kindness when I was there before, and they sent me to school.

While I was attending these ladies, their servants told me I could not go to heaven unless I was baptized. This made me very uneasy, for I had now some faint idea of a future state. Accordingly I communicated my anxiety to the eldest Miss Guerin, with whom I was a favorite, and pressed her to have me baptized, when to my joy, she told me I should. So I was baptized in St. Margaret's church, Westminster, in February 1759, by my present name.

[Gustavus Vassa continued as a seaman for many years. He was fortunate in having an American master who was kind to him and a captain who took great interest in his affairs.]

A Trip to the West Indies Teaches a Lesson

While we lay in this place [Montserrat], a very cruel thing happened on board of our sloop, which filled me with horror; though I found afterward such practices were frequent. There was a very clever and decent free young mulatto-man who sailed a long time with us. He had a free woman for his wife, by whom he had a child; and she was then living on shore, and all very happy. Our captain and mate, and other people on board, and several elsewhere, even the natives of Bermudas, then with us, all knew this young man from a child that he was always free. No one had ever claimed him as their property. However, it happened that a Bermudas captain, whose vessel lay there for a few days in the road, came on board us, and seeing the mulatto-man, whose name was Joseph Clipson, told him he was not free, and that he had orders from his master to bring him to Bermudas. The poor man could not believe the captain to be in earnest. But he was very soon undeceived, his men laying violent hands on him. Although he showed a certificate of his being born free in St. Kitt's, yet he was forcibly taken out of our vessel. He then asked to be carried ashore before the secretary or magistrates, and there the infernal invaders of human rights promised him he should. But, instead of that, they carried him on board of the other vessel: and the next day, without giving the poor man any hearing on shore, or suffering him even to see his wife or child, he was carried away, and probably doomed never more in this world to see them again.

Nor was this the only instance of this kind of

barbarity I was a witness to. I have since often seen in Jamaica, and other islands, free men, whom I have known in America, thus villainously trepanned and held in bondage. I have heard of two similar practices even in Philadelphia: and were it not for the benevolence of the Quakers in that city, many of the sable race, who now breathe the air of liberty, would, I believe, be groaning indeed under some planter's chains. These things opened my mind to a new scene of horror, to which I had thought only slavery dreadful. But the state of a free Negro appeared to me now equally so at least, and in some respects even worse, for they live in constant alarm for their liberty, which is but nominal, for they are universally insulted and plundered, without the possibility of redress. For such is the equity of the West Indian laws, that no free Negro's evidence will be admitted in their courts of justice. In this situation is it surprising that slaves, when mildly treated, should prefer even the misery of slavery to such a mockery of freedom? I was now completely disgusted with the West Indies, and thought I should never be entirely free until I had left them.

Gustavus Vassa Obtains His Freedom

I determined to make every exertion to obtain my freedom, and to return to Old England. For this purpose, I thought a knowledge of navigation might be of use to me. I therefore employed the mate of our vessel to teach me navigation, for which I agreed to give him twenty-four dollars, and actually paid him part of the money down. Though when the captain came to know that the mate was to have such



RUN AWAY,

FROM

Orange River Plantation,

In the parish of St. Mary, in July
1778, a Creole NEGRO WOMAN
named

MARY GOLD,

She was harboured some time past, at a Penn in Liguanea, but was seen about two months ago at Port-Henderson, big with child. Whoever harbours her, will be prosecuted according to law, but whoever apprehends her and will give information to WALTER POLLOCK, on said Plantation, or to THOMAS BELL in this town, shall be handsomely rewarded.

Left, on said Plantation,

A large, black, Gelding MULE,
with a Spanish brand mark on the left buttock: Any person proving their property, may have him by applying as above, and paying the charge of advertising.



a sum for teaching me, he rebuked him, and said it was a shame to take any money from me. However, my progress in this useful art was much retarded by the constancy of our work.

We soon got loaded again, and returned to Montserrat, and there among the rest of the islands, I sold my goods well. And in this manner I continued trading during the year 1764. After this my master fitted out his vessel for Philadelphia, in the year 1765. During the time we were loading her and getting ready for the voyage, I worked with redoubled alacrity, from the hope of getting money by these voyages to buy my freedom, if it should please God.

[Gustavus Vassa worked for about two more years, selling whatever little products he could obtain, and thus saving enough money to buy his freedom.]

We sailed once more for Montserrat and arrived there safe. When we had unladen the vessel, and I had sold my venture, finding myself master of about forty-seven pounds, I consulted my true friend, the captain, how I should proceed in offering my master the money for my freedom. He told me to come on a certain morning, when my master and he would be at breakfast together. Accordingly, on that morning, I went and met the captain there. When I went in I made my obeisance to my master, and with my money in my hand, and many fears in my heart, I prayed him to be as good as his offer to me, when he was pleased to promise me my freedom as soon as I could purchase it. This speech confounded him. He began to recoil, and my heart sank

that instant within me.

"What!" said he, "give you your freedom? Why, where did you get the money? Have you got forty pounds sterling?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"How did you get it?" replied he.

"Very honestly," I told him.

The captain then said he knew I got the money very honestly, and with much industry.

"Come, come, Robert, (which was my master's name), I think you must let him have his freedom. You have laid your money out very well. You have received good interest for it all this time. I know Gustavus had earned you more than an hundred a year, and he will save you money as he will not leave you."

My master then said he would not be worse than his promise and taking the money, told me to go to the Secretary of the Register Office, and get my commission drawn up. These words of my master were like a voice from heaven to me. In an instant all my trepidation was turned into unuttered bliss, and I most reverently bowed myself with gratitude, unable to express my feelings, but by the overflowing of my eyes, and a heart replete with thanks to God; while my true and worthy friend the captain congratulated us both.

THE
INTERESTING NARRATIVE
OF
THE LIFE
OF
OLAUDAH EQUIANO,
OR
GUSTAVUS VASSA,
THE AFRICAN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be
afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my
song; he also is become my salvation.
And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his
name, declare his doings among the people. Isa. xii. 2. 4.*

EIGHTH EDITION ENLARGED.

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1794.

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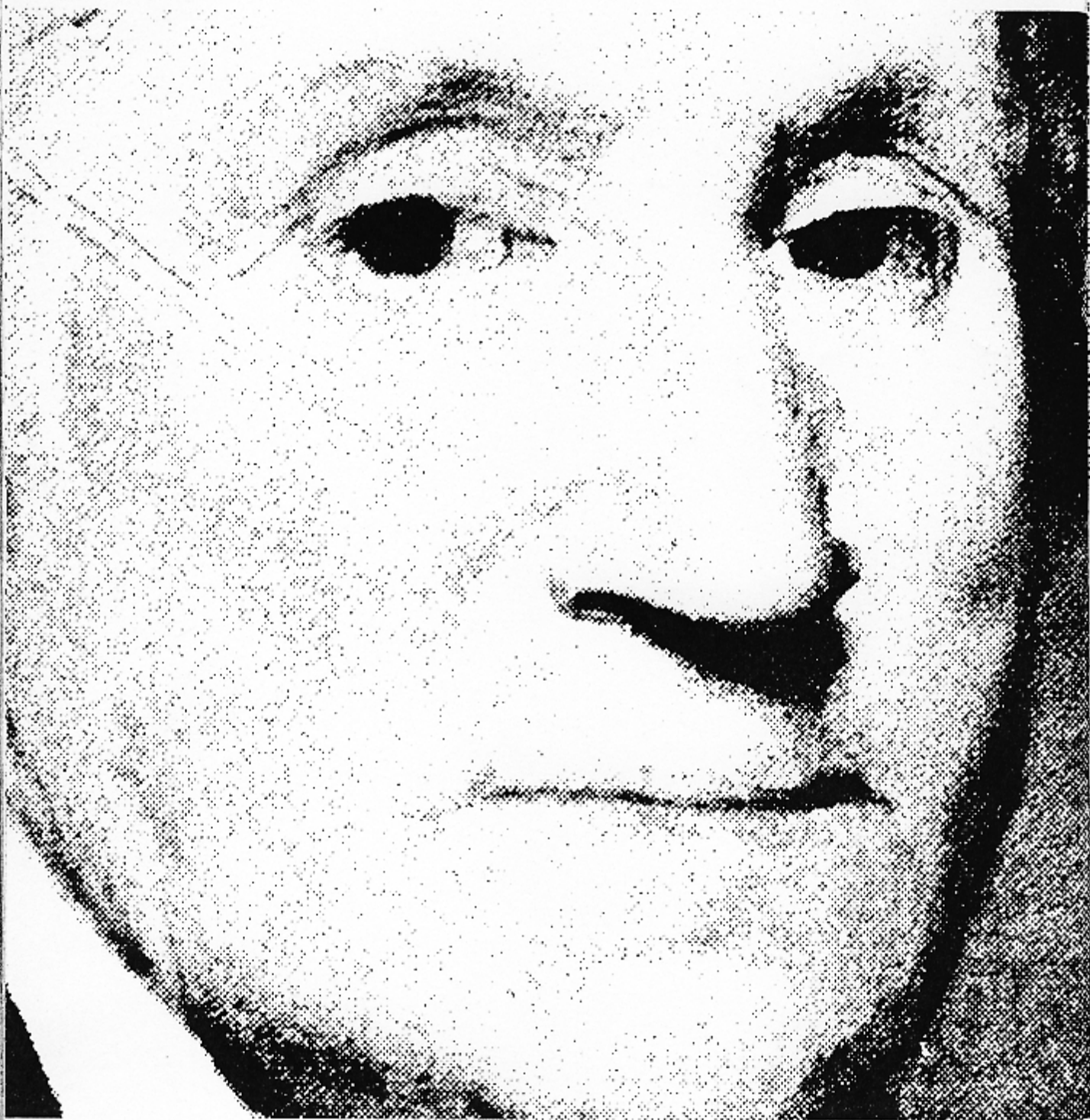
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[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of . . .

Gustavus Vassa is a rare account of an 18th-century immigrant to America. In this case Gustavus Vassa did not want to come to the New World. He was stolen from his native African village of Benin in present-day Nigeria by African slave traders, sold to white slavers, put on a slave ship and transferred to the West Indies. For him there was no hope of creating a new life or obtaining free land in a new country. And the possibility of obtaining his freedom was even more remote.

This story is unique in several respects, as is Gustavus Vassa himself. His journal is perhaps the one narrative that has survived. It is one of the few that was ever written. Furthermore, Gustavus Vassa did not share the fate of most slaves who came to be part of the world of plantations of the West Indies or America. He was educated, as very few slaves were. He became a seaman, traveled extensively, and eventually became an explorer of the Arctic. His narrative itself was written for a most unusual purpose: to help educate Englishmen to the evils of slavery and to promote the passage of a law to end the slave trade. Understandably the route from African child to Arctic explorer is not typical of the average Negro slave's life. But Vassa's story is significant because he gives us his impressions of all he experienced.



George Washington: A Southern Planter on the Question of Slavery

Washington's Attitude Toward Buying Slaves²

To Captain Joh. Thompson

Mount Vernon, 2 July, 1766

Sir:

With this letter comes a Negro (Tom), which I beg the favor of you to sell in any of the Islands you may go to, for whatever he will fetch, and bring me in return for him

One hogshead of best molasses

One hogshead of best rum

One barrel of limes, if good and cheap

One pot of tamarinds, containing about 10 lbs.

Two small pots of mixed sweetmeats, about 5 lbs. each.

That this fellow is both a rogue and a runaway (tho' he was by no means remarkable for the former, and never practiced the latter till of late) I shall not pretend to deny. But that he is exceeding healthy, strong, and good at the hoe, the whole neighborhood can testify, and particularly Mr. Johnson and his son, who have both had him under them as foreman of the gang; which gives me reason to hope he may with your good management sell well, if kept clean and trim'd up a little when offered for sale.

I shall very cheerfully allow you the customary commissions on this affair, and must beg the favor of you (lest he should attempt his escape) to keep him handcuffed till you get to sea, or in the bay, after which I doubt not but you may make him very useful to you.

I wish you a pleasant and prosperous passage, and a safe and speedy return.

George Washington

Washington's Protest Against the Efforts of the Quakers* to Abolish Slavery

Mount Vernon, April 12, 1786

Dear Sir:

I give you the trouble of this letter at the instance of Mr. Dalby of Alexandria, who is called to Philadelphia to attend what he believes to be a troublesome lawsuit respecting a slave of his, which a Society of Quakers in the city (formed for such purposes) has attempted to free. It seems that this Society is not only acting against justice so far as its conduct concerns strangers, but in my opinion extremely impolitically with respect to the State, the City in particular, without being able (except by acts of tyranny and oppression) to accomplish their own ends. He says the conduct of this Society is not sanctioned by law: had the case been otherwise, whatever my opinion of the law might have been, my respect for the policy of the State would on this occasion have appeared in my silence; because against the penalties of established laws one may guard, but there is no avoiding the snares of individuals, or of private societies. And if the practice of this Society of which Mr. Dalby speaks is not discountenanced, none of those whose misfortune it is to have slaves as attendants, will visit the city if they can possibly avoid it, because by doing so they hazard their property. Otherwise they must be at the expense (and this will not always succeed) of providing servants of another description for the trip.

* The Quakers in Pennsylvania were the first group to protest slavery in America. They also, during the 18th century, helped visiting slaves in Philadelphia to escape.

I hope it will not be thought that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people, who are subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is by Legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting. But when slaves who are happy and contented with their present masters, are tampered with and seduced to leave them; when masters are taken unawares by these practices, a conduct of this sort brings only discontent on one side and resentment on the other.

On the Abolition of Slavery

September 9, 1786

I never mean (unless some particular circumstance should compel me to it) to possess another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted, by which slavery in this country may be abolished by slow, sure, and imperceptible degrees.

I wish from my own soul that the Legislature of this state could see the policy of a gradual abolition of slavery; it would prevent much future mischief.





On the Separation of Slave Families

To John Lawson

Mount Vernon, April 10, 1787

Sir:

On the 8th of April Neptune delivered me your letter of the 2nd of April. Although he does not profess to be a workman, yet as he has some little knowledge of bricklaying, seems willing to learn, and is with a man who understands the business, I will keep him, and this shall be my obligation to pay you the sum for which he sold, at the time and agreeable to the terms of Mr. Hunter's sale.

George Washington

P.S. Since writing the above, and informing Neptune of my determination to buy him he seems a good deal disconcerted on account of a wife which he says he has at Mrs. Garrards from whom he is unwilling to be so far removed. This also embarrasses me as I am unwilling to hurt the feelings of anyone. I shall therefore, if agreeable to you, keep him awhile to see if I can reconcile him to the separation (seeing her now and then) in which case I will purchase him. If not I will send him back, and pay what hire you shall think fit and is reasonable to charge for the time he is here.

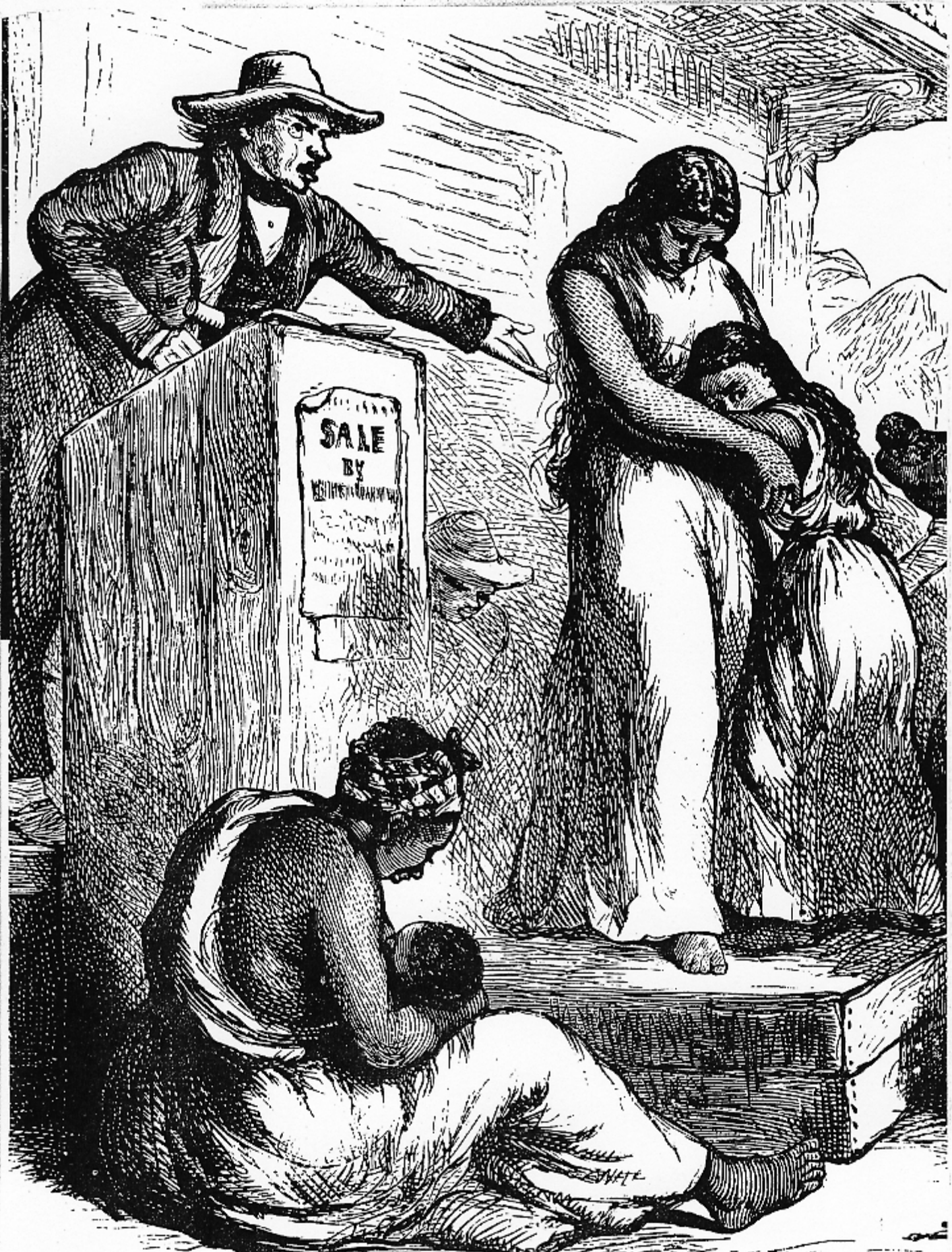
With respect to the Negroes, I conclude it is not in my power to answer your wishes, because it is as much against my inclination as it can be against yours, to hurt the feelings of those unhappy people by a separation of man and wife, or families.

On the Care of Sick Slaves

14 October 1792

Although it is last mentioned, it is foremost in my thoughts, to desire you will be particularly attentive to my Negroes in their sickness; and to order every overseer positively to be so likewise; for I am sorry to observe that the generality of them view these poor creatures in scarcely any other light than they do a draught horse or ox, neglecting them as much when they are unable to work, instead of comforting and nursing them when they lie on a sick bed. I lost more Negroes last winter than I had done in 12 or 15 years before, altogether. If their disorders are not common, and the method of treating plain, simple and well understood, send for Doctor Craik in time. In the last stage of the sickness, it is unavailing to do it. It is incurring an expense for nothing.

The whole progress through the disorders with which they might be seized should be closely watched, and timely applications, and remedies be administered, especially in pleurisies, and all fevers accompanied with pain. In such cases sweeten'd teas, broths, and, (according to the nature of the complaint, and the doctor's prescription) sometimes a little wine may be necessary to nourish and restore the patient. These I am perfectly willing to allow when it is really necessary. My fear is, as I expressed to you in a former letter, that the overseers are so unfeeling, in short viewing the Negroes in no other light than as a better kind of cattle, the moment they cease to work, they cease their care of them.





Washington's Will

Mount Vernon, 9 July 1799

Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will and desire that all the slaves which I hold in my own right, shall receive their freedom. To emancipate them during her life, would, tho' earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by marriages with Mrs. Washington's Negroes, as to excite the most painful sensations, if not disagreeable consequences from the latter, while both descriptions are in the occupancy of the same Proprietor; it not being in my power, under the tenure by which Mrs. Washington's Negroes are held to free them. And whereas among those who will receive freedom according to this device, there may be some who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, that will be unable to support themselves; it is my Will and desire that all who come under the first and second description shall be comfortably clothed and fed by my heirs while they live; and that such of the latter description as have no parents living, or if living are unable or unwilling to provide for them shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the age of twenty five years; and in cases where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgment of the Court upon its view of the subject shall be adequate and final. The Negroes thus bound, are (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read and write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of orphans and other poor children. And I do hereby expressly forbid the sale, or transportation out of the said Common-*

wealth, of any slave I may die possessed of, under any pretense whatsoever. And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my executors hereafter named, or the survivors of them, to see that this clause respecting slaves, and every part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the time at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect or delay, after the crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm; seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the uncertain provision to be made by individuals. And to my Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which have befallen him, and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so. In either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, which shall be independent of the victuals and clothes he has been accustomed to receive, if he chooses the last alternative; but in full, with his freedom, if he prefers the first; and this I give him as a testimony of my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.

George Washington

Why did Washington wait until his death to free his slaves?

* It is stated in E. E. Prussing's *Estate of George Washington, Deceased*, that this provision of the will could not be carried out because of the "black-laws" of Virginia which forbade the education of Negroes. The last of Washington's pensioned Negroes died in 1833.



The Numbers Involved

Statistics on the slave trade are difficult to state with great accuracy, due to insufficient evidence. How many slaves were imported into the New World? Where did they come from? Where did they go? These questions are difficult to answer for a number of reasons: exact population figures of areas in Africa from which slaves were taken are not always known; the number of slaves who died during capture in Africa, transportation to seaports, or in the "middle passage" across the Atlantic is not known exactly; shipping records are scattered and sometimes incomplete due to the number of different European companies involved in the trade; records in countries receiving slaves are not always available or accurate.

The following statistics are taken from a recent survey³ which reviewed a great deal of data, and, more importantly, called for new studies to be made. Consequently the following figures are still tentative, but they are the latest ones available. Much work needs to be done to know the true history of the slave trade.

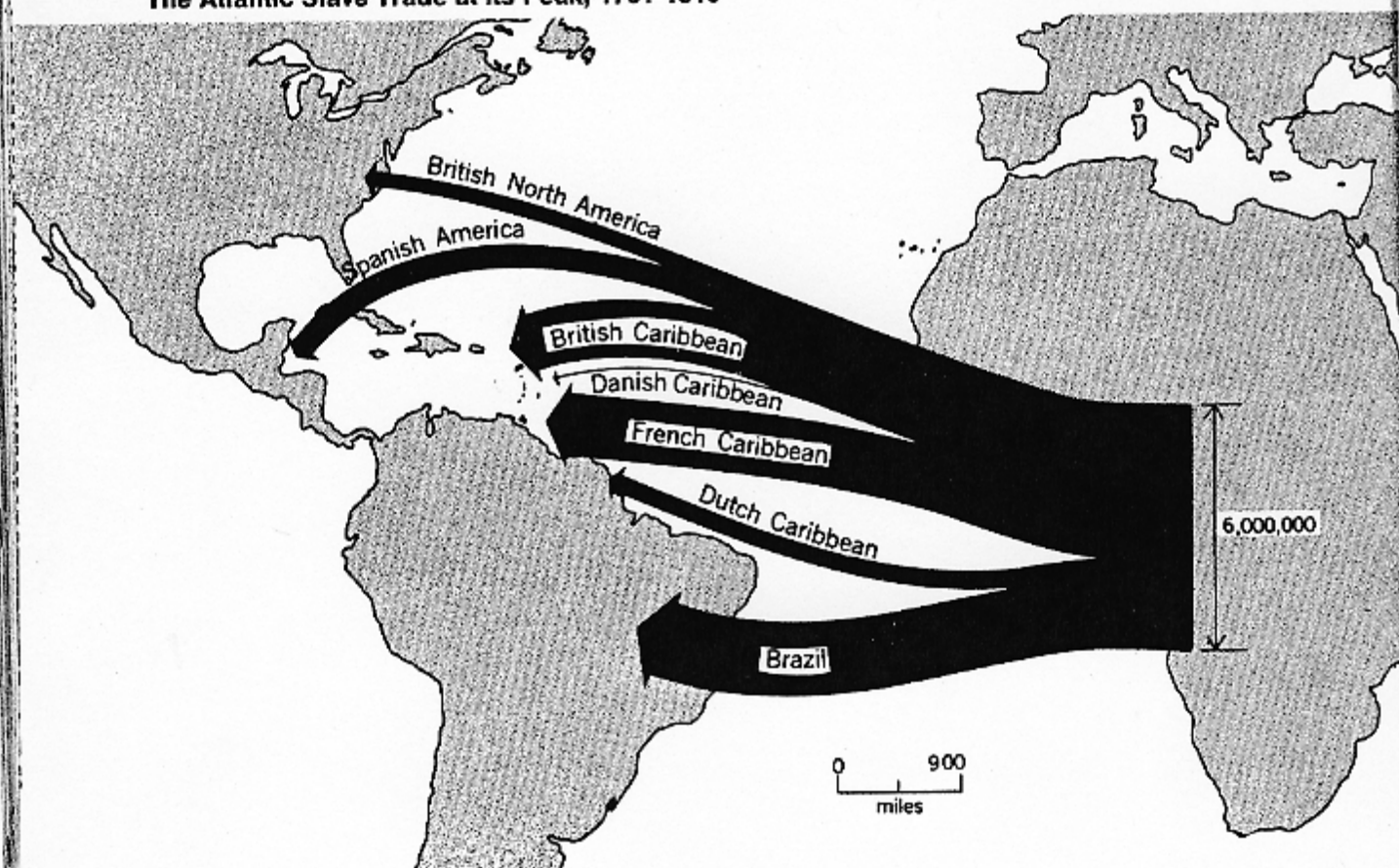


Some Estimates on the Slave Trade

The period of the Atlantic slave trade lasted from 1450 to 1860. During these four centuries, it is speculated that over 9 million people were exported from Africa, most coming to North and South America, (less than 2% went to Europe). This is the probable distribution:

North America (United States, Canada and Middle America)	651,000	6.9%
Caribbean Islands	4,040,000	42.2%
South America	4,700,000	49.1%
Europe	175,000	1.8%
TOTAL	9,566,000	100.0%

The Atlantic Slave Trade at its Peak, 1701-1810



The slave trade in the United States began in 1619 with the importation of the first slave, and was abolished in 1808, though the illegal trade did continue. These are the estimated numbers for the United States:

1619-1807	345,000
1808-1861	54,000
TOTAL	399,000

The 9½ million slaves involved in the Atlantic slave trade have left as their descendents a population of nearly 48 million people partially or entirely of African descent. The following estimates, based on population figures from 1950, do not include Africans in Africa, but only those who are the descendents of exported slaves:

North America		
United States and Canada	14,916,000	31.1%
Middle America	342,000	0.7%
Caribbean Islands	9,594,000	20.0%
South America	23,106,000	48.2%
TOTAL	47,958,000	100.0%

The Slave Trade Estimated Mortality Rates

Slaves at sea	13% to 33%
Crews of slave ships	20%
European merchants, agents, officials and soldiers sent to man African trading posts	50%

Some Unanswered Questions about the Slave Trade

The historian who assembled this data feels that many questions are still unanswered and much research needs to be done if a true picture of the slave trade is to be constructed. How men could enslave their fellow human beings in such a cruel operation is the overwhelming human question. The total effects of the slave trade on the human beings involved — the people in Africa, the ships' crews, the agents, the planters — may never be known, but they must be searched for.

Still other questions go unanswered:

1. What diseases entered Africa from Europe or America? What impact did they have on African societies?
2. Manioc, a plant whose rootstocks yield a nutritious starch, and maize (Indian corn) were introduced and became two important sources of food in Africa. What survival impact resulted from the introduction of New World crops into Africa?
3. What role did the slave trade play in social and political change in Africa?
4. African slave traders sold other Africans to European slave traders. Where did the slaves come from? Were the slaves prisoners, *by-products* of warring peoples in Africa, or did the need for slaves *cause* wars?
5. What accounts for the survival and growth of African descendents in the United States as compared with the decline of African population in the Caribbean Islands?

How did men justify the slave trade in the New World?





**Is the American a New
Man?**

What, then, is the American?

by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur*

I wish I could be acquainted with the feelings and thoughts of an Englishman when he first lands on this continent.¹

A modern society offers itself to his consideration, different from what he had seen before. It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratic families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no great church holdings, no invisible power given to a few, no great manufactures employing thousands, no great luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe.

If he travels through our countryside, he views not the unfriendly castle and the haughty mansion, contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin, where cattle and men help to keep each other warm and dwell in meanness, smoke and poverty. A pleasing uniformity appears throughout our dwelling places. We have no princes for whom we toil, starve, and bleed. We are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be.

There is room for everybody in America. Has a man any particular talent or industry? He uses it in order to make a livelihood, and it suc-

ceeds. Is he a merchant? The avenues of trade are unending. Is he outstanding in any respect? He will be employed and respected. Does he love a country life? Pleasant farms present themselves. He may purchase what he wants and thereby become an American farmer. Is he a laborer, sober and industrious? He need not go many miles before he will be hired, well-fed at the table of his employer, and paid four or five times more than what he can get in Europe. Does he want uncultivated lands? Thousands of acres present themselves, which he may purchase cheap. Whatever be his talents or inclinations, if they are moderate, he may satisfy them. I do not mean that everyone who comes will grow rich in a little time; no, but anyone may obtain an easy decent maintenance by his industry. Instead of starving, he will be fed. Instead of being idle, he will have employment and these are riches enough for such men as come over here.

A European, when he first arrives, seems limited in his intentions, as well as in his views; but he very suddenly alters his scale. Two hundred miles formerly appeared a very great distance. It is now but a trifle. He no sooner breathes our air than he forms schemes and embarks on plans he never would have thought of in his own country. In Europe the fixed order of society confines many useful ideas and often extinguishes the best schemes, which in America succeed. Thus Europeans become Americans.

What, then, is the American, this new man?

He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has

¹"What then, is the American?" was a question asked and answered by a Frenchman some one hundred and fifty years after America's settlement by Europeans. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur not only travelled and lived in the English colonies, he also wrote about the land, people and society. He compared Europeans to Americans and found what he thought were startling differences.

embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds.

The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions. This is an American.