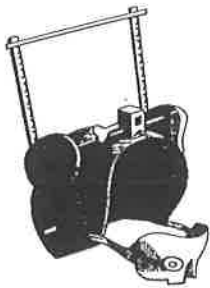


The Colony of New England

16 Of Towns and Schools and Sermons



Women who nagged or talked too much—scolds—were considered a curse in the 17th century and could be made to wear a scold's bridle.

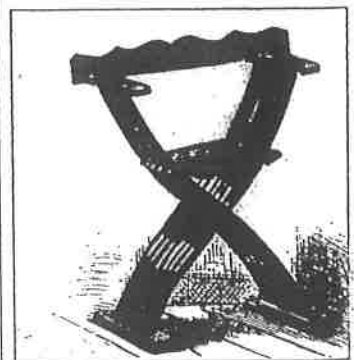
At first the New England settlers built their homes behind high fences called "stockades." They were fearful of the unknown—of Indians and animals.

Soon they began spreading out, beyond the fences, into small towns with names like Greenfield, Springfield, and Longmeadow. The names described the land. Many of those early settlements were just a row of houses strung alongside abandoned Indian fields that the English settlers found and took. They lived with Indians as neighbors, although their animals sometimes made that difficult.

The Native Americans hunted animals; they had no horses, cows, sheep, or hogs. The Indians soon discovered that those English grazing animals could destroy their cornfields. In 1653 the people of the town of New Haven agreed to work for 60 days to build fences around fields planted by neighboring Indians. New England's courts ordered colonists to pay the Indians for damage done to their fields by wandering animals.

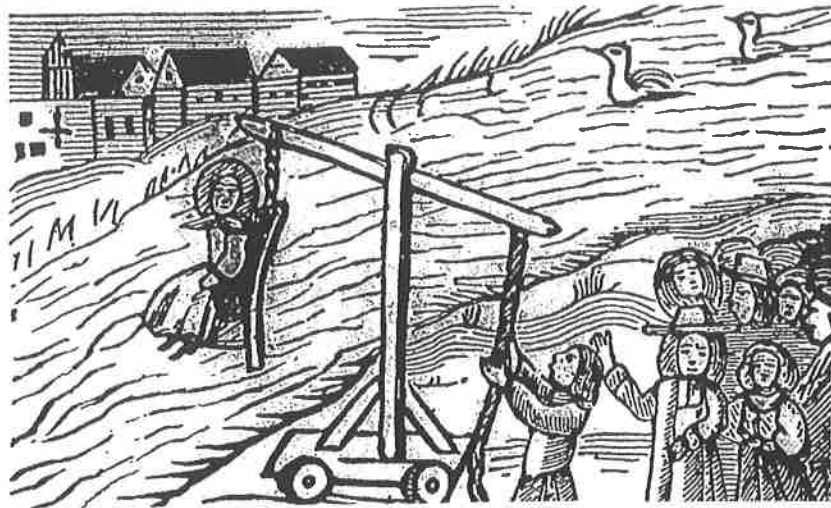
As the colonists began to prosper, they built towns in America that were something like the villages they left behind in Europe. They were compact, easy to defend, and friendly. Castles and manor houses dominated European towns; in New England's villages it was the meetinghouse that stood out. The meetinghouse was used as a church, a town hall, and a social center. It was usually placed at one end of a big field that was called a common, because everyone used it in common. Sometimes, when there were sheep to chew the field's grass and keep it short and green, the common was called a green. Houses were built around the green. The houses nearest the meet-

People in New England villages were usually friendly and neighborly to each other. They had to be. A family needed the neighbors' help to clear rocks out of a field or raise a barn roof. There was one cowman who looked after everybody's cows. But if a stranger came hanging around with no invitation from a local family, he was chased out of town.

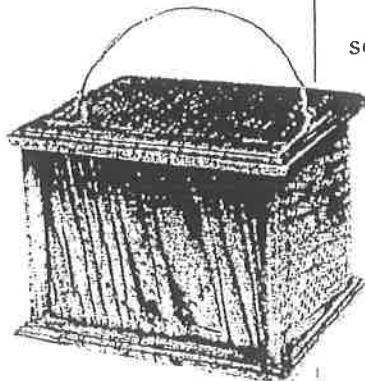


Chairs were rare and costly in the 17th century. This one belonged to Governor Endicott.

The Puritans had so many rules and laws that they were often broken. Another popular punishment, especially for scolding women, was the ducking stool. The sinner was tied on and lowered into the stream or village pond.



Puritans liked to give their children names that were reminders of goodness and holiness. Some we still find occasionally like Constance, Faith, or Hope, and some seem strange: Joy from Above, Kill-sin, Fear, Patience, Wrestling with the Devil.



A footwarmer for churchgoers.

inghouse belonged to the most important people in town: the minister and the church leaders.

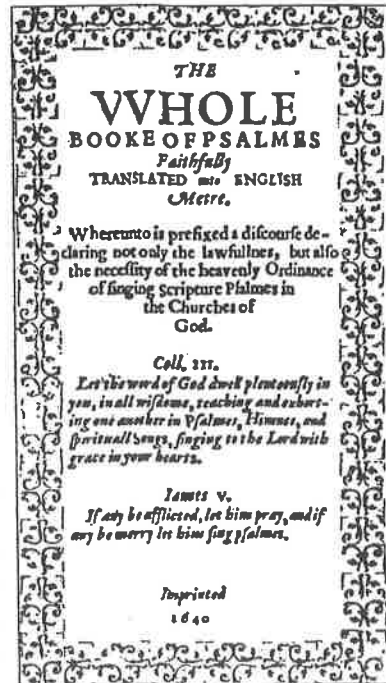
Many villages had a stream. The tumbling water of the stream turned a big wheel, and that provided power for the mills where wood was sawed and wheat ground into flour.

As the town grew other buildings were added: a general store, a blacksmith's shop, a furniture maker's shop, a candle maker's.

If the town was large enough, there might be an inn. Almost always there was a school.

The Puritans cared about schooling. By 1636 they had founded Harvard College. It was amazing that they had a college so soon after they arrived, although Harvard did get off to a rocky start. The first teacher beat his students, fed them spoiled meat, and ran off with college money.

Then they got a college president, Henry Dunster. He was so good that students began coming to study with him from Virginia and



The *Whole Booke of Psalmes*, also known as the Bay Psalm Book, was the first book ever printed in the English colonies.

Bern
Be
lege
Harv
in 16
parel
Th
those
pass
H
th
u
re
p
In
ilies r
Do
"shall
mean
c
tion i
wealt
schoc
with
I kr
Why
do it?
way?)
it. It i
In
teachi
or in
an ap
ter. Bu
that s
enoug
werer
thoug
highly
The P
tant t
Bible.
towns

Bermuda and even England itself. Of course, they were all Puritans.

Because of their religion, Puritans weren't allowed to attend college in England. That was one reason it was so important to have Harvard succeed. To do that it had to have a supply of students. So, in 1642, the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law saying that parents must teach their children to read.

The Puritans wanted everyone to be able to read the Bible, even those who weren't going to Harvard. So the next thing they did was pass a law that said:

It is therefore ordered, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord has increased its number to 50 householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general.

In plain English, that means that every town with 50 or more families must have a schoolteacher.

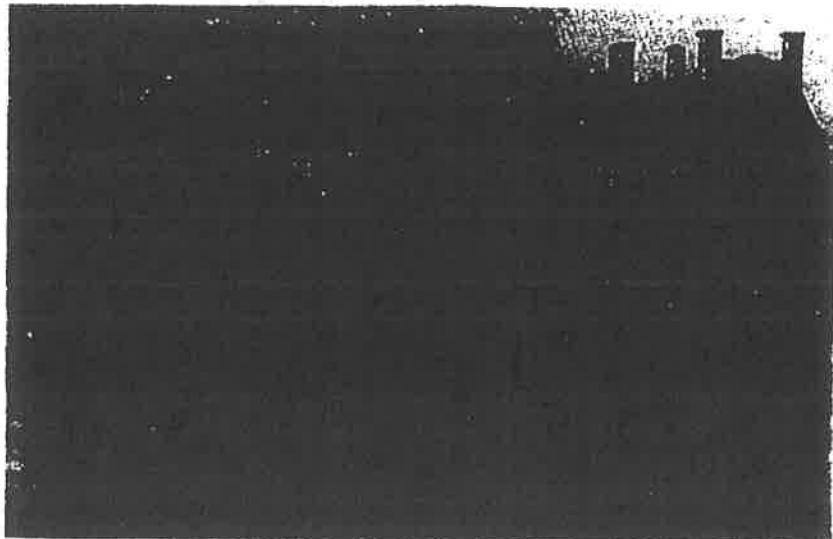
Do you see something unusual in that law? Read that bit at the end, "shall be paid...by the inhabitants in general." Do you know what that means? It means that everyone in the town has to pay for the education of the children. Not just the parents. That is what public education is all about. It guarantees that every child, not just those with wealthy parents, can go to school. In America, it all began with that school law in 1647.

I know what you're thinking. Why did they have to go and do it? Who needs school anyway? But you don't really mean it. It isn't fun to be ignorant.

In the 17th century much teaching was done by parents, or in church, or, if you were an apprentice, by your master. But the Puritans could see that sometimes that wasn't enough. Some parents just weren't good teachers, even though many Puritans were highly educated themselves. The Puritans thought it important that everyone read the Bible. In Boston and the larger towns some children were ac-

Blowing Thy Nose

Many little Puritan boys and girls had to study a book called *The School of Good Manners*. It reminded them to "stand not waggling with thy body hither and thither, but steady and upright; or that "when thou blowest thy nose, let thy handkerchief be used." Naughty children were whipped with a birch stick or cane. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was a firm belief even of kind parents and teachers.



Harvard College (above) had a very English class consciousness for many years. Until 1769 the roster of students was not listed in alphabetical order, but according to social status. That meant that if you were from an important family, you were listed ahead of somebody of lowly rank.

Several generations learned their ABCs from the *New England Primer* (right), which used rhymes to help children remember letters. This might be all you got if you were a girl—very few had as much schooling as boys.

tually taught to read the Bible in its original languages. So little Puritan boys and girls of six and seven learned to read Latin and Greek, and a few learned Hebrew, too. That sounds hard, and it was, but learning languages is good training for the mind. Many of this nation's greatest thinkers came from Puritan stock.

Try and take yourself back to Puritan times, and see what you think of Sunday churchgoing. Those Puritan ministers gave sermons that lasted for hours and hours. Sometimes there was an intermission for lunch, and then everyone went back to hear more. There was no heat in the meetinghouse, and New England can get very cold. People brought warming boxes with hot coals in them to keep their feet from freezing. Sometimes they brought their dogs to church for the same reason.

A church official held a tickling rod to wake up anyone who looked as if he might be falling asleep. The dog whipper took out dogs who barked. If you were a troublemaker and wiggled and made noise you could get locked up in the town stocks. You'd have to sit there with your hands and feet stuck into a wooden contraption and everyone would make fun of you.

We know you wouldn't like that kind of life, but maybe things weren't so bad for the Puritan boys and girls. Maybe some of them even looked forward to the sermons. Remember, in Puritan Massachusetts there were no movies and no TVs. At first, there were no newspapers, no magazines, and only a few books. The Puritans were intelligent people who could read and think well. Maybe that will help you understand why everyone tried to listen to the weekly sermon and why Puritans sometimes spent all week talking about it.

Feeling Blue

Rules banning work, trade, and playing on Sundays—the Sabbath—are still called "blue laws," because the Puritans wrote the laws in books bound in blue paper. You could be fined or punished for doing these things on Sunday: running, cooking, making a bed, or shaving. A man was whipped for saying that the

minister's sermon was boring. Another was put in the stocks after kissing his wife on his return home from three weeks at sea. And celebrating Christmas was forbidden. It was "something that both he and she did. Most Puritans worked on Christmas. It was a day that it happened to fall on a Sunday.

A		In Adam's Fall We sinned all.
B		Thy Life to Mend This Book Attend.
C		The Cat doth play And alter day.
D		A Dog will bite A Thief at night.
E		An Eagle fights It out of sight.
F		The Idle Fool Is whipped at School.
G		As runs the Glass Mans life doth pass.
H		My Book and Heart Shall never part.
J		Job feels the Rod Yet blesses GOD.
K		Our KING the good No man of blood.
L		The Lion told The Lamb doth hold.
M		The Moon gives light In time of night.
N		Nightingales sing In Time of Spring.
O		The Royal Oak It was the Tree That sav'd His Royal Majesty.
P		Peter denies His Lord and cries.
Q		Queen Esther comes in Royal State To Save the JEWS from dismal Fate.
R		Rachel doth mourn For her first born.
S		Samuel anoints Whom God appoints.
T		Time cuts down all Both great and small.
U		Uriah's shameous Wife Made David lose his Life.
W		Whales in the Sea God's Voice obey.

The Colony of Virginia

31 Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny



On this optimistic English tobacco label, colonists and an Indian chat happily together about the merits of the brand being advertised.

I haven't said much about Virginia since John Smith's time, and that's too bad, because some future presidents were getting born there: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. Virginia's John Marshall, George Mason, and Patrick Henry were destined for greatness, too.

Was there something about Virginia that bred leaders? Life there was certainly different from life in Pennsylvania or Massachusetts.

Most people in 18th-century Virginia weren't Puritans or Quakers. They were Anglicans: members of the Church of England.

But they were more relaxed about their religion than the Puritans. In the New England colonies the ministers were the most important people in the community; in the South, the wealthy landowners were more important.

The Virginians didn't live in towns, as people did in Massachusetts. They lived along the rivers on small farms, or on very large farms called "plantations." Living on the river made shipping easy, and that was important.

What Virginians were shipping was tobacco—to England. While a few other crops were grown, the



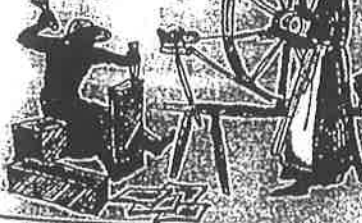
Sir William

Berkeley, twice governor of Virginia in the 17th century, was a Royalist (a supporter of the English kings). He thanked God that there were no free schools or printing presses in Virginia in his time; "for learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world; and printing has divulged them and libels against the government: God keep us from both."

The slaves on a tobacco plantation don't just plant and pick and dry and cure the tobacco. The slaves do all the physical labor—here they're making the barrels to ship the tobacco, and packing them, too.

Splitting
Shingles

Spinning
wool



Plantation
Kitchen



Tobacco



Tobacco
Barn

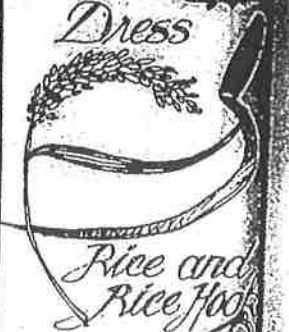
The SOUTHERN COLONIES



Canada
Duck



Dress



Rice and
Rice hook



and
Scales
Raccoon

main moneymaker was tobacco. That was a problem. When tobacco prices were high, Virginians did well. When tobacco prices fell, they were in trouble. There was no balance.

There was little industry, and most goods came from England. In this land of magnificent forests, even fine furniture and other wood products were shipped from the "mother country."

There was another problem. Tobacco uses up the soil. After a few years, nothing grows well on land that has been planted with tobacco. To succeed in a tobacco economy, you need to rest the land every few years. That means you need to own a lot of land. You also need many workers.

So tobacco growers in colonial Virginia began to buy land and workers. As you know, at first they bought indentured servants. Then they bought Africans and made them slaves. By 1750 there were more Africans in Virginia than any other single group of people. More Virginians had come from Africa than from England or Scotland.

It was a few rich white planters who held power in the colony. Most whites were small farmers, and there were thousands of them. Some owned a slave or two—or hoped to—and that made them go along with the big slave owners. Virginia was not the only place where this happened. A society built on slavery stretched from Maryland to Georgia. Slavery was not only terrible for the black slaves—it ruined many white farmers, too.

At first the South, like the North, was full of yeoman farmers. Yeomen are independent farmers who work their own land. When slave ships began bringing in large numbers of Africans, the yeomen were in trouble. The blacks, being slaves, were forced to work for nothing. The yeoman farmers couldn't compete with that. The tobacco they grew was more expensive than tobacco grown by slaves.

The yeoman farmers had these choices. They could stay in Virginia (or Maryland or the Carolinas or Georgia) and try to work their own farms. Usually that meant they would become "poor whites."

Or they could buy slaves.

Or they could head West, to the frontier, and settle new land (and perhaps fight Indians for that land). These were difficult choices.

By the 18th century most slave owners were beginning to realize that slavery was wrong. Many spoke out against it. (They also made excuses and tried to justify enslaving others. They knew that every ancient society had included slaves.) Many white people realized they were trapped in a bad system; they didn't know how to get out. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and many others wrote that slavery was evil—but they owned slaves. If you were a plantation owner and you freed your slaves, you might become poor. So

Charleston, July 24th, 1769.

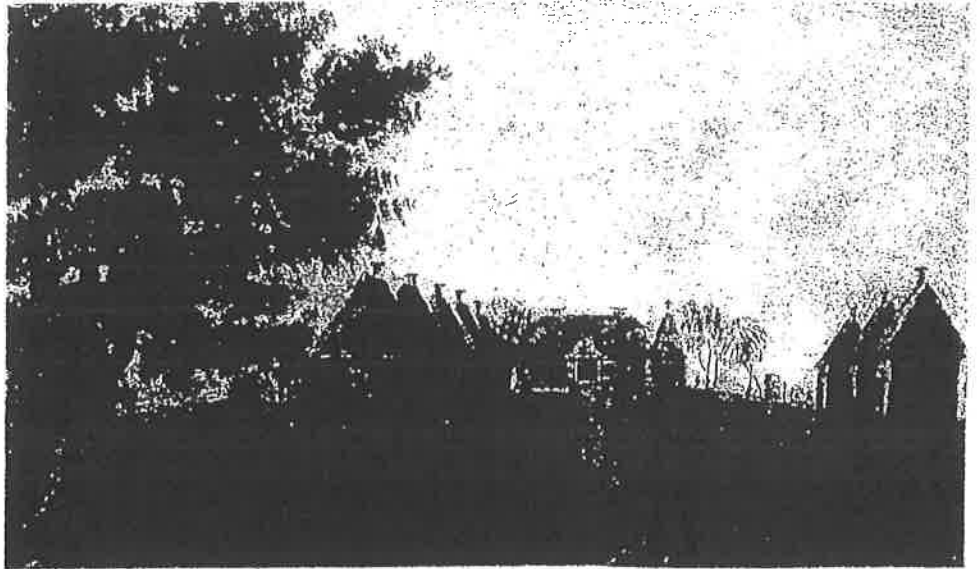
TO BE SOLD,
On THURSDAY the third Day
of AUGUST next,
A CARGO
of
NINETY-FOUR
PRIME, HEALTHY
NEGROES,
CONSISTING OF
Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS,
Twenty-four WOMEN, and
Sixteen GIRLS.
JUST ARRIVED,
In the Brigantine *DEMBA, Francis Bare,* Master, from SIERRA-
LEON, by
DAVID & JOHN DEAS.

A slave auction notice. Traders usually wanted slaves to look young and healthy—they were worth more. But they didn't like slaves who looked proud and held their heads high. Such people might be troublemakers.

Divorce, Colonial Style

Dame Alice Clawson, who lived on Virginia's eastern shore in the mid-1600s, was a woman who wouldn't take nonsense from anyone. When her husband came home from a stay with the Nanticoke Indians, he brought an Indian woman home with him. Dame Alice was outraged, and hauled her two-timing husband off to the local justices. She became the first Virginia woman to obtain a divorce.

A plantation owner (below), a mansion, and rows of slave cabins—with dirt floors, no glass in the windows, no water (except a pump everyone shared), and smoky open fireplaces.



After seeing some slaves try to rebel against their owner, an observer from New Jersey wrote: "The ill Treatment which this unhappy part of mankind receives here, would almost justify them in any desperate attempt for gaining that *Civilitie*, & *Plenty* which tho' denied them, is here commonly bestowed on Horses!"

might your family. What would you do?

For a decent person, the problem was even more difficult than you can imagine. Many white Virginians had been very poor back in England or wherever they or their parents came from. Many had been let out of jail if they agreed to come to America. They knew what it was like to be oppressed, and many didn't want anything to do with slavery. But in some places it was against the law to free slaves. In some places it was against the law for black people to own land. It was against the law to teach black people to read. Many slave owners believed that if they freed their slaves, there would be no way for the slaves to survive. Most would not be able to find jobs. They might starve. They might be kidnapped and sold again into slavery.

A few whites did free their slaves. Some tried to end slavery. Most did nothing. What would you have done?

Imagine that you are a slave owner. You control other people's lives. You can order them around. You can have them whipped. You can taunt them. Do you think you might become mean and lazy? Do you think you might turn into a bad-tempered tyrant?

Some slave owners were all of those things. Some of them were among the meanest people in America's history. But there were others who felt great responsibility for their slaves.

There is a paradox connected with slavery. A *paradox* is a "puzzle." Something very puzzling happened in Colonial Virginia.

When it came time to write a constitution for our nation, it was the slave-owning Virginians who thought and wrote most about freedom. That is the paradox. Why do you think it was so?