

Zoom Talk They Knew They Were Pilgrims by John G. Turner Nov...

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SPEAKERS

Marjory O'Toole, Dr. John Turner, Jenna Magnuski

M Marjory O'Toole 00:00

I'm happy to have Dr. John Turner with us this evening. We tried to have him back in the spring and COVID defeated that plan. So Zoom is the next best thing. And, and perhaps that well, more of you can join us because because it is a remote or virtual program. So, John Turner is a professor of Religious Studies at George Mason University, he holds a PhD from Notre Dame, as well as his Master's in Divinity. And his work is writing and speaking and teaching about the place of work, pardon me, the place of religion in American history. His book, his brand new book, and he's gonna show us the cover in a little while, They Knew They Were Pilgrims, was perfectly timed for the 400th anniversary of the crossing of the Mayflower, and horribly timed with the shutdowns of the COVID virus. So is the best and worst of both worlds. But again, we are delighted that he is able to join us this evening, I have the book, it's beautiful. I have been reading it in in pieces and thoroughly enjoying it. And if someone is looking for Christmas presents, it's easily available on Amazon and I would highly recommend it. So with great pleasure, I turn things over to Dr. John Turner, and he is going to talk about his research into Plymouth Colony with us.

D Dr. John Turner 01:47

Alright, thank you so much, Marjory, I'm going to share a few images along the way. I spent a couple of days in Little Compton two years ago when I was doing the research for this book. And I was so lucky to simply pop into the museum and run into Marjory, who is such a trove of information, not just about Little Compton history, but about the history of the region more more generally. I do have to say that I'm I am. While I am pleased that we have people joining in from New Jersey and Montana and elsewhere, I was really looking forward to getting to come to Little Compton, which is really one of the most beautiful spots in New England. You know, I'm stuck down here in you know, just just outside the Beltway in the Washington DC suburbs, which is a perfectly nice place, but nothing like what you have. So I'm feeling a little bit sorry for myself that I wasn't able to come and do this talk in person. pandemics are certainly just terrible things. But I console myself with knowing how much worse pandemics were in the 1600s. So it's you know, better to be here on Zoom in 2020. And so there we are.

J Jenna Magnuski 03:20
You're on mute.

D Dr. John Turner 03:25
Okay. I hope you heard some of that so far.

J Jenna Magnuski 03:30
We heard most of it, it cut off right as you're transitioning.

D Dr. John Turner 03:33
Okay, well, that's fine. So here we are smack dab in the middle of the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower crossing, the Mayflower Compact, soon the landing at Plymouth. And I think a good question for us, is in the year 2020, what do we need to say or hear about the Pilgrims and their colony? I mean, the Mayflower passengers are the single most studied group of men and women in American history, maybe outside of the founding fathers, with genealogists poring over any scrap of information that can be found in the parish registers of English villages. So surely we know their story by now. And maybe what's left is arguing about whether the whole thing is good, or was good, or bad. Whether the pilgrims were brave seekers of religious liberty and the progenitors of American democracy, or whether they were greedy invaders who took the Indians' land and killed those who resisted. So what what to make of it, what's the truth? I am not a big fan of turning history into morality plays of saints and sinners. And I think we're capable of slightly more

complicated stories, of recognizing that while English settlement brought about tremendous benefits for some people, it came at a tremendous human cost for others. So if you'd like we can discuss any of the familiar aspects of the Pilgrims' story, the separatists' religious vision that propelled men and women to leave their church and their country. The Compact, which I think actually doesn't get nearly enough attention these days, or the first Thanksgiving of American myth, you know, that's always coming up on the calendar next week, the time that the Pilgrims get a little bit of attention. So please ask questions about anything you'd like. And Marjory recommended that we, and Jenna recommended that we stop for questions every so often. And so I'll do that in a little bit. And I'm not a very, I'm really not a very pretentious historian. So please just call me John, my wife's a medical doctor. So I'll get confused if people keep calling me, Dr. Turner. But you know, any anything is fine. What I want to start with tonight, is the Little Compton part of this larger Plymouth Colony story, which is one reason I was so excited to talk to you to this evening. Yes, the the Mayflower crossing and the first winter are dramatic. But what happened next, or what happened five, six decades later? They're 70 years of Plymouth Colony history, that typically gets very little attention and if we're going to wrestle with the larger meaning of this story, I think it's really important that we all know the rest of the story. So briefly, let's start in March of 1621. And because I think, you know, it's important to start with the initial encounter and alliance between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags in order to think about subsequent developments. The Pokanoket Wampanoag sachem Osamequin, known to the English simply as Massasoit, or Great Chief, agreed to an alliance with the Pilgrims. This was not because he was happy that they had come ashore on Cape Cod, and then at Plymouth, but because he correctly saw them as valuable allies. The Wampanoags had been devastated by an epidemic seeded by Europeans, but their traditional enemies, the Narragansetts had been largely spared. And that, that was so intensely destabilizing for Wampanoag communities. Osamequin's leadership was very much at stake. So when the Pilgrims showed up, he saw a group of people who could bolster his situation and provide defense against his enemies. The original agreement between the pilgrims and Osamequin was an alliance between equals, at the very least, that's how Osamequin understood it. It was a mutual defense agreement. The Pilgrims and the Wampanoags would help each other in the event of an attack. So an agreement between equal partners. Certainly the Wampanoags, even after the epidemic were far more powerful than the Pilgrims. They also never envisioned that English numbers would swell. Osamequin lived around 40 miles west of Plymouth at the time, in or around present day Barrington. He and his people were fairly familiar with English and other Europeans because traders, fishermen, and explorers had sailed around the New England coast for many decades. Osamequin knew that the English were untrustworthy. Other Englishmen had kidnapped Natives, and a few encounters had turned violent. He also knew that the English were potentially good trading partners, and that their weaponry could also be valuable but Osamequin did not expect, and could not

have expected, was that an English settlement would flourish and expand to the point that it threatened his own community. Indeed, Plymouth Colony remained fragile and tiny for a decade, with only a few hundred settlers by the end of the 1620s. That began to change in the next decade, as the larger Puritan migration to New England led to an influx of settlers to Plymouth Colony as well. Scituate became the colonies largest town and the English established townships on the Cape as well. Still, the area to the east of Narragansett Bay, ultimately claimed by both Rhode Island and Plymouth Colony, remained Native land for many decades. In the early 1640s, a few settlers came to Taunton and Rehoboth. This began to strain the relationship between Wampanoag communities and English settlers. Settlers brought trading goods but they diminished the supply of game and timber, English horses and pigs trampled Wampanoag crops. Even with these English incursions into the western part of the territory, the alliance that Osamequin had established with the Pilgrims held, because English power continued to help Osamequin and other Wampanoag leaders advance their interests against the Narragansetts. So it's a little bit hard to reconstruct what Osamequin would have been thinking or how he would have been appraising this situation along the way. But it seems likely to me that for the first quarter century or so, after the Mayflower, both the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags understood this alliance as mutually beneficial. So I promised that we could talk about, questions about anything. What I'm going to do in the next segment of my material is, oh, I don't know what's going on with my lamp sorry. What I'm going to do in the next segment of my my material is talk about some sweeping changes in the colony that take place in the early, in the 1660s and 1670s. But I'm going to just pause there, and if you have questions or objections, I would love to love to chat about them.

M

Marjory O'Toole 14:09

So any questions, Jenna?

J

Jenna Magnuski 14:13

There are not any yet. Just as a reminder to folks, if you have questions, if you submit them in the chat, send them to me, I will relay those. The chat window is in the center of the toolbar at the bottom if you are on a PC, and in the top of - top right if you are on an iPad, I have one question. I'm curious whether the Wampanoag population increased after the epidemics.

D

Dr. John Turner 14:46

So that's a great question and it wouldn't be totally easy to answer but I think the best way to understand that question generally is to think of it as ongoing population decline.

Over the course of the 1600s, probably right through the 1700s as well. And the epidemic in 1616-1619 was devastating. It's possible that there is some stabilization in the couple of decades after that, but unfortunately, there were really repeat waves of epidemics and illnesses throughout at least the 17th century. And some of those continued to afflict Wampanoag communities. The, in particular, there were terrible epidemics among the Wampanoags on Martha's Vineyard in the 1640s. So I'm pretty sure that the overall Wampanoag population is probably continued to decline. It declined dramatically, then at the end of the 1600s, at that point more due to warfare than epidemics. It's a good question.



Jenna Magnuski 16:11

The Massasoit oversaw the Pokanoket tribe, not the Wampanoag, why not refer to him that way?



Dr. John Turner 16:17

Well, that's also a great question. And, you know, my from my own vantage point, Wampanoag has become, you know, a not - not fully satisfactory umbrella term for the native peoples of most of southeastern Massachusetts, maybe excluding the Cape itself. I don't actually find the term totally satisfactory. The question is really on point, because when the Pilgrims and others referred to Osamequin they did refer to him as the Pokanoket sachem. So I think that's, that's quite reasonable. I think, you know, he also did exercise regional leadership, especially during these early decades of English settlement. So I think, you know, I think it's also acceptable to refer to him as sort of a regional Wampanoag sachem. And so that's a great question. If the questioner wants to chat more about that I'm, I'm certainly open to that.



Jenna Magnuski 17:29

Can you explain how the word Wampanoag evolved over time?



Dr. John Turner 17:35

Sure. So in the in the 1600s, I think the first known reference to it is on a map, I think a Dutch map, and it comes from an Algonquin word that simply means Easterner. So, you know, perhaps these communities themselves and others used that - use that term to refer to the Native communities. Really, mostly within the jurisdiction of Plymouth Colony. The English very rarely use that word. During the, you know, early to middle part of the 17th century, it begins to pop up in sources about the time of King Philip's War. Sometimes,

I think, in a somewhat derogatory fashion. And, you know, my general sense is that most Natives and English settlers in the 17th century would have used more particular local terms Pokanoket, Pocasset, Sakonnet. And rather than the larger umbrella term, and that larger umbrella term has become, you know, so common in conversation and scholarship today that I choose to use it simply because more people are likely to know what I'm talking about that way. In terms of the exact right term to use, I don't know that, you know, I don't know that one could definitively settle that for the 17th century.



Jenna Magnuski 19:27

How often did the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag interact with one another in general?



Dr. John Turner 19:34

That's a fantastic question. So you know, from the start, I mean, I couldn't quantify it, I think from the start, most English settlers during the early years interacted very little with Native people. Edward Winslow is a Mayflower passenger, who's very much an exception to that. Winslow undertook a couple of trips to the Pokanokets, stayed in Osamequin's home, lodged on occasion with other Native people as well. He didn't particularly like lodging with them, you know, he had some rude things to say about that they might not have enjoyed his presence either. I don't know, we don't we don't know what they thought, quite so well. But Winslow records, some very intimate interactions with Native people, which I think are significant, you know, he learned at least a decent amount of their language. Most of the English I don't think took that approach, they would have had interactions through trade. Certainly some interactions when Native peoples came to Plymouth, but there are definitely a fair number of early English sources that describe Plymouth as sort of a fearful palisaded settlement in which the English were somewhat afraid to venture out into the world that surrounded them. And, you know, I think in terms of regular ongoing interaction, there actually is a lot more by the end of the century, by the end of the Plymouth Colony period, because Native servants and slaves by that time become, you know, I think very common, you know, ubiquitous within English households. That's a great question.



Jenna Magnuski 21:42

Where the epidemics, primarily North American or were they, a lot of them imported along with the English settlers.



Dr. John Turner 21:52

So I think almost certainly imported for the most part, during the the 17th century. So, epidemics, for which the Algonquin peoples had no - no immunity whatsoever. smallpox was certainly a major driver of these epidemics, the Pilgrims, recorded some terrible scenes of epidemics in the Connecticut River Valley in the 1630s, which just make for frightful reading. Historians still cannot decide on what the exact epidemic was that afflicted the Wampanoags prior to the Mayflower. A lot of different theories have been advanced. I don't, you know, I don't know enough about epidemiology and disease to really offer a clear, you know, judgment on that.

J

Jenna Magnuski 22:55

And just a reminder to folks make sure that you're sending the questions to me in chat, so that I can relay them properly. How did the relationship go with Massachusetts Bay Colony? Was it competitive, collaborative? And how did that all get started?

D

Dr. John Turner 23:12

That's a great question as well. So it was both competitive and cordial. So the competition mostly proceeded through the first raid, you know, Plymouth Colony had been such an economic failure for the most part in the 1620s. Things just didn't work out, you know, if they if they actually they either didn't get the first or if they got the first the ship would sink on the way back across the Atlantic or get seized by the French or something like that. Finally, in the early 1630s, Plymouth rather shrewdly cornered a big chunk of New England beaver trade. They had an outpost up in present day Maine, they had a fort up the Connecticut River. And for a few years, the Pilgrims were sort of raking it in. And Massachusetts Bay, just totally out muscled them at that point, they went farther up the Connecticut River. They basically took things over up in Maine as well, or at least we're happy to see the Pilgrims displaced. And William Bradford was just steamed about it. You know, he's, you know, if you look at his history, he has some really angry things to say about the duplicity of Bay Colony leaders. At the same time, there certainly was common ground in terms of religious principles. You know, people tended to draw a really sometimes strict distinction between the separatist Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony and the you know, non-separating Puritans of The Bay Colony. But especially once both groups were on this side of the Atlantic, it really was a distinction without much of a practical difference. And the, you know, when John Winthrop and one of Boston's ministers came in visited Plymouth and 1632, they were permitted to take the Lord's Supper, which was a real sign of spiritual communion. So I think on on many, you know, and to a large extent there was there was that shared religious commitment and foundation. Plymouth's leaders going forward still sometimes resented the way that the Bay Colony would throw its weight around, but there wasn't too much they could do about it.



Jenna Magnuski 25:52

Okay, these people are question machines now we've got them started. I'm going to ask four more, and then we're gonna move on. Where are the Wampanoags on the map that you're showing right now?



Dr. John Turner 26:05

So what I'm doing is I'm showing particular Native communities, all of which most, most scholars and historian would categorize as Wampanoag. So whether we're talking about Mashpee or Patuxet, or Nemasket or the communities to the west, those - those are all Native communities that most people would would label Wampanoag. So that's a good question as well. Well, I guess then I'm pushing ahead. I hope you have more more questions in a bit. Those are just wonderful, wonderful questions. And so I sort of ended a little while ago, with an alliance holding up pretty well, for around a quarter century. Things have definitely changed by the 1660s Osamequin, died in 1660, succeeded first by his son Wamsutta, and then by Metacom, known to the English as Philip. What happened at this point was what I consider a division really a bifurcation among Wampanoag communities. Because the English referred to Osamequin and his son Philip as kings think we sometimes get the wrong idea about the political structures that bound together Native communities, while the communities from the Cape to the islands to the south to Plymouth to what's now Little Compton and Bristol shared a common enough language. And the leaders of these communities were bound together through political ties and the sanctions that Pokanoket it exercised a fluid sort of regional leadership. As English settlements expanded, this structure or this system of relations largely broke down around Plymouth, on the Cape, and on the islands to the south, Native communities increasingly embraced Christianity and tightened their fealty, their loyalty, to the English. Things were entirely different in what I call the western Wampanoag settlements of Mount Hope, Pocasset and Sakonnet. These large Native communities had remained farther removed from English settlements, and they very much wanted to keep it that way. Sachems here wanted nothing to do with Christianity, because they understood that it would undermine traditional ways of life and traditional forms of leadership. And so they kept Native Christian missionaries and English ministers at arm's length. Osamequin once asked an English settler, what earthly good things came with Christianity. He could not see any value in the ways of God. The Bay Colony minister John Elliot, once said that if you wanted to get rid of Indians, you could start talking about religion. That wasn't necessarily true everywhere in what's now southeastern Massachusetts, but it was definitely true in these communities within the western part of Plymouth Colony. And from this point, forward, Mount Hope, Pocasset, Nemasket, and Sakonnet very much follow their own course. They formed their own region within Plymouth Colony. And they were between Rhode Island's settlements across the water and the ever expanding Plymouth settlements

to the east. They ended up being caught in a pincer. This conflict was a long time in coming. Way back in 1639, several of the original Pilgrims, Bradford, Winslow, and John Alden, had reserved for themselves a large parcel of land that included part of Sakonnet. It wasn't relevant at the time. But in 1661, the colony's general court stated that servants who obtained their freedom could acquire land there. And from that point forward, there was a real rush to get land. The full story here is quite complicated. In a nutshell, English settlers and speculators bought, coerced, swindled, and ultimately conquered the western Wampanoag lands. The process I think was accelerated, because Rhode Islanders also claimed and bought lands in Pocasset and Sakonnet in particular. At a few points between 1660 and 1675, Rhode Islanders purchased land from Native leaders. This absolutely alarmed Plymouth Colony's magistrates, because they wanted to make sure that they, rather than the Rhode Islanders, got the land. I want to get a little bit more detailed, starting in 1671, and talk a bit about the Sakonnet sachem Awashonks. And I do hesitate to talk about her, because Marjory knows more about her than probably anyone else I've met. But she's one of my favorite, if tragic, parts of this whole story. That's a figurehead from a whaling ship in - made around 1830 from the New Bedford Whaling Museum that was meant to be a fanciful depiction of Awashonks. It's unclear to me at least when exactly she became sachem of the community in southern Sakonnet, certainly by 1671. And it was a very fraught time, you know, if Awashonks looked from Sakonnet across the water to the west, she could see the English on Rhode Island. The English to the east had settled at Dartmouth. Awashonks also did not trust Metacom, or Philip. It wasn't clear, I think, to her, whether he really intended to resist English authority, and if he did, whether or not that resistance would lead to the destruction or the salvation of Native communities. In 1671, Philip and Plymouth very nearly went to war. And when that conflict developed, the English tried to secure commitments from other Native leaders across the colony. The Cape communities quickly affirmed their loyalty. What about leaders like Awashonks? Plymouth's leaders believed that she opposed them. That April she had sold a piece of land to a Rhode Island settler, which I think alarmed Plymouth's leaders. Plymouth's magistrates sent a summons to Awashonks, asking her to come to Plymouth, pledge her peace, and surrender her people's weapons. She ignored it for a couple of months. Then Plymouth prepared an expedition of 100 soldiers and some allied Wampanoags and prepared to march on Sakonnet. Finally, faced with that military threat, Awashonks capitulated. She agreed to pay a fine of 50 pounds to compensate the English for having to organize this expedition in order to browbeat her into submission. That was just the start of the trouble for her. The English took this conflict as a rationale to claim Sakonnet Land. They began working with another Native leader who led a community farther to the east. His name was Mamanua. Unlike Awashonks and Philip, Mamanua aligned himself with the English and with their God. He visited the house of Plymouth's minister and became a "praying Indian". Mamanua and Awashonks became fierce rivals in the years ahead. They both sold land to the English, whether or not they

actually controlled the land in question. In 1675, Mamanua sold all of Sakonnet Neck to several Plymouth men, including Constant Southworth and Governor Josiah Winslow. This sale included land on which Awashonks and her people lived. That spring Plymouth's General Court granted the purchasers the right to form a township on this land. Constant Southworth's son in law, Benjamin Church became a key player in the fulfillment of his colony's, long standing land ambitions. Remember the Pilgrims had claimed this land back in 1639. In May 1675, the Sakonnet land proprietors met in Duxbury and drew lots, placing names such as Winslow, Church, and Southworth on parcels of Sakonnet land. They reserved a three quarter mile - three quarter square mile - parcel of land for Awashonks herself. The image is a 19th century copy of a survey of this land made sometime around the year 1681. And if you - if you blow it up, you can see different descriptions of land sales. Here's one reference to a parcel of land that Awashonks sold in 1673 for \$250. And these - this series of actions left leaders such as Awashonks, really without any good options, you know, they could accommodate themselves to English ways, embrace Christianity, and hope that English ministers and magistrates would allow them to keep a sliver of their lands. This happened at Mashpee. But outcomes elsewhere generally were less promising. Or they could gradually watch their lands be overrun, or they could fight. In 1675, Metacom or Philip ultimately resolved to fight. Awashonks hesitated. She tried desperately to stay out of the war. She told Benjamin Church that she wanted peace. When the war came, Awashonks tried to flee to Rhode Island, but apparently couldn't get past English patrols. She then hid out in the swamps while, according to her son, the English came and burnt her people's homes. Eventually, she took refuge among the Narragansetts before, before returning to Plymouth Colony, before returning to Sakonnet, and accepting Church's offer to ally with English. What did she get in return? Church promised only that if she submitted to English authority, and if her men fought for the English, her people would have their lives spared and not be transported out of the country. The context was enslavement. Plymouth's forces enslave many hundreds of captive Wampanoags during the war, and at least several hundred were exported out of the colony. It was the worst imaginable fate. And here's the certificate from Plymouth Colony Governor Josiah Winslow authorizing the export of Wampanoag slaves and identifying a group of men, women, and children as traders and allies of Philip. You know, therefore, by association, guilty of his crimes and fit for enslavement and export. That threat and Benjamin Church's promise were enough. The Sakonnets fought with Church and participated in the rounding up of hundreds of Native captives during the closing months of the war. And Church kept his promise. Awashonks' people remained on a small portion of land. They weren't killed or exploited. And I found that Awashonks remained on the scene until at least 1688. That year, through her son, Peter, she made a request to the Crown-appointed Governor of Massachusetts at the time for land on which her people could plant crops. So again, I'm going to stop there and see if you have some more questions or comments, objections? Do you have a question?



Jenna Magnuski 40:57

Would you explain the title of your book? Who exactly did the Pilgrims think that they were?



Dr. John Turner 41:01

So great question. And so the title comes from a phrase in William Bradford's history. He looked back on the time that he and his would-be colonists left the Dutch Republic, heading back to England, to then head to - head across the Atlantic. And most of the congregation that had been together in the Dutch city of Leiden, chose not to join the colony, at least initially, either because they didn't think it was a good idea, or because they lacked the means to do so. And so it was a very sorrowful parting. Among other people, the Pilgrims left their minister behind. And Bradford said that, despite their sorrow, they knew they were Pilgrims, and look not much on those things, but lifted their eyes to the heavens, their, you know, their heavenly country. And it was an allusion to a phrase in the New Testament, epistle to the Hebrews, which describes Christians as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And, you know, I think it's a beautiful passage. I think a lot of Bradford's history is really poignant, and beautifully written. You know, there was this strong sense that they had no idea really what their earthly fate or even their earthly destination was, but they took comfort from their faith in their ultimate destination.



Jenna Magnuski 42:55

Why did Josiah Winslow not get along with Philip?



Dr. John Turner 43:01

Well, you know, so I think what really happened was, it wasn't, you know, I don't - I don't think it was particularly a personal conflict between Winslow and Philip. You know, I think suspicion on both sides built steadily from the early 1660s [1660s]. Philip's brother Wamsutta died. And, you know, basically during and after a visit to - with Plymouth leaders in the early 1660s, Philip later seemed to claim that his brother might have been poisoned. I think that's actually relatively unlikely. But really, from that point forward, and the western Wampanoag communities were feeling extremely pressured, and at least I think for quite some time had contemplated and resisting Plymouth's English leadership, you know, they were no longer treated as equals and as allies. Plymouth's leaders treated them dismissively and as subjects, and certainly I think by 1671, already, Philip had had more than enough. And, you know, I used to think that the English writers were probably making up, you know, accusations that Philip was conspiring against them. But David

Silverman, who wrote a really impressive book on the Wampanoags that came out last year, you know, he really convinced me that well, if you were Philip, wouldn't you have been plotting to revolt? So, you know, I think - I think the two sides had good reason to suspect - suspect each other, they didn't trust each other. And so was a very fraught situation for many years. And then, you know, all it took was sort of a catalyst in 1675 for ultimately the whole region to become engulfed in a bloody war.

J

Jenna Magnuski 45:17

In the last question break you had mentioned Indigenous servants and slaves, were those slaves Indigenous people or African people?

D

Dr. John Turner 45:28

So I was referring to Native slaves. And there were also some African slaves in Plymouth Colony. Some brought by Rhode Islanders after King Philip's War, but also - also prior to that. And one of the first English casualties of King Philip's War was an African slave owned by the Baptist minister, John Miles. I found - I find that, you know, quite, quite fascinating. Miles owned five or six African slaves. But in terms of slavery and Plymouth Colony, Native, there were far more Native peoples enmeshed in sort of a murky area between slavery and servitude after the war. And English always referred to these individuals as servants. Some of them were clearly slaves for life. However, there were a number of court cases. Also when the English owners of these slaves attempted to claim their offspring as slaves as well. The, you know, Plymouth - Plymouth's leaders actually passed laws, trying to clarify that Natives ultimately, would not be slaves for life, but there was a lot of uncertainty in the immediate years after, after the war.

J

Jenna Magnuski 47:14

Where were the Wampanoag exported to?

D

Dr. John Turner 47:19

So a great question. And so at least one ship in 1675, went to a Spanish port. And then some of the slaves on board ended up in Tangiers, and on a galley owned by a British naval officer. Others were exported in all likelihood to the Caribbean. But there had been some slave revolts in the Caribbean at the time. And Barbados, for instance, forbade the further import of Native slaves about that time. It's a little sketchy, but some of them may have even ended up as far away as Madagascar. And, you know, I think we're so used to thinking of slavery as being Africans taken west across the Atlantic. Certainly, the

numbers don't compare, but we have to reckon with the fact that, you know, Native people were sometimes enslaved and taken East across the Atlantic, ending up in various places. Very few of whom returned back home. Tisquantum or Squanto, you know, as an early example of that, having been kidnapped at Patuxet along with 20 or 27 others in 1614, and taken to Spain, sold as a slave, and somehow made his way back to England and then eventually, back to what's now southeastern Massachusetts.

J Jenna Magnuski 49:15
Was Awashonks Metacom's sister?

D Dr. John Turner 49:19
Hm. Marjory, do you have an answer to that question? I don't think so.

M Marjory O'Toole 49:27
I don't think so either. Nothing I've seen refers to her in that way. Nothing I've seen refers to her as kin, to Philip or Metacom. She is kin to a leader named Takamona, Takamana. Who is sort of in the Swansea-Seekonk, Swansea-Somerset area. I and they only use the word kin, not sister. But if I had to say I think she's Takamona's sister.

D Dr. John Turner 50:10
It's great. You know, if you don't know an answer to the question, you can pass it off.

J Jenna Magnuski 50:15
All right, last one for now, how many of the people on the first voyage were not Pilgrims motivated by religious ideals?

D Dr. John Turner 50:23
So that's a great, great question. You know, a lot of this terminology is tricky. None of these people were known as the Pilgrims until the early 1800s or so. And there used to be this sense that, you know, there were Pilgrims and strangers on the Mayflower, so separatists and then others, I've been convinced by other historians that a majority of Mayflower passengers were separatists. There were definitely were folks on the on the on the ship, passengers who did not share the same exact religious principles. But I'm quite convinced they were in the minority. And I think the evidence for that is really convincing.

Because after they signed, what became known as the Mayflower Compact, they held an election and one of the separatists was chosen as the governor. And clearly these groups had had some conflicts. And so if the separatists had been in the minority that that wouldn't have been the case. And I forgot actually what the exact question was, Jenna, you want to refresh my memory? In case I didn't answer it completely.

J Jenna Magnuski 51:39

The question was, how many of the people in the first voyage were not Pilgrims that were motivated by religious ideals. So I think you got there. Okay.

D Dr. John Turner 51:47

Good enough. I mean, I think it'd be a little bit hard to quantify because you'd have to factor in servants that we might not be sure about. But I think in terms of the free adult passengers on the Mayflower, certainly a majority were separatists. Not all might have belonged to the same congregation in Leiden but I think at least a majority were very sympathetic. Myles Standish for instance, people used to count him as a non-separatist, but he was clearly on friendly terms for the most part with the separatist minister, John Robinson, they clearly already knew each other. So, you know, I think he was at least sympathetic to their principles. So is that is that it for questions for now?

J Jenna Magnuski 52:40

Yes, for now.

D Dr. John Turner 52:42

Okay. Um, so, Awashonks, I think as much as the Pilgrims themselves, helps us think through the larger implications of Plymouth Colony and English settlement more generally. It's not a simple story. And I don't think the role of the historian is to tell people precisely how they should feel about the past, or what moral conclusions they should reach. I also don't think it's terribly worthwhile for us to get up on our 21st century pedestals and looked down on the benighted people of the past and lambaste them for their sins and shortcomings. What I think we see throughout is people, and peoples, acting in their perceived self interest. Osamequin believed that the English would help him secure his leadership and preserve his people against the Narragansetts. Worked out for a while, but after several decades, the English became a threat, rather than a useful ally. For their part, the English also saw it in their self interest to ally with Osamequin. The English still feared Indians several decades later, but not as keenly as they had in the 1620s. They no

longer saw a need to treat their former allies with anything like a sense of equality. Instead, they expected the Indians to behave as their subjects, and they expected Native peoples to yield their land, or at least most of it. The history of land sales is sobering because sale implies a freely struck and somewhat fairly struck bargain. Sometimes that occurred, but the English also took advantage of the circumstances to obtain Native land on the cheap and through crooked means. After the war, settlers from Plymouth and Rhode Island, move to Sakonnet, Pocasset and Mount Hope. As I mentioned, in response to one of the questions, in many instances, they obtained Native slaves and servants. One could and maybe should look at this history and say that Plymouth Colony is a story of dispossession and conquest, followed by subjugation and slavery. Those are important parts of the story, parts not usually included in our Thanksgiving myths. Still, I would say they aren't the entire story. Plymouth Colony provided land not just for wealthy landowners like Ben Church, but also for humble English families as well. In Plymouth Colony, the colony-wide government and towns provided opportunities for participation, political participation, that were very unusual in the English world, and towns such as Little Compton and Tiverton and Bristol were relatively hospitable places for religious dissenters such as Quakers and Baptists and those individuals who are simply aloof from the churches. In other words, it's not without some good reasons that Americans have associated Plymouth Colony with liberty, political and religious. I think it's difficult for Americans today to know what to make of their early history, precisely because slavery and dispossession, developed alongside forms of liberty that we still cherish. A good starting point, I think, is simply to acknowledge that the tragic and more inspiring parts of the Plymouth Colony story developed together. Piety and rapacity existed side by side. Plymouth Colony stopped being a self-governing colony in 1691, when the Crown folded it into a larger province of Massachusetts Bay. The Western Wampanoag lands, formerly Western Wampanoag lands, remain part of Massachusetts until 1747 when a Royal Commission reassign them to Rhode Island. Over time, at least outside of your neck of the woods, remarkable leaders, such as Awashonks have been largely forgotten. When it comes to the Pilgrims in Plymouth Colony, by all means, we want to refresh the stories that we already know. The Mayflower Compact the first winter the first Thanksgiving. There are good reasons those episodes have long captured the American imagination. But we also want to take full advantage of the riches of our history. Plymouth Colony's longer history includes episodes about religious dissenters, such as Baptists and Quakers, chapters about servants and slaves, English, Irish, Native, African. There are tax revolts, we could talk about. Instead of just the town of Plymouth, there's the Cape and there's Little Compton, part of Rhode Island today, but a critical part of Plymouth Colony's 17th century past. In short, we have a treasure chest of historical riches, and we need to open it up and explore it more fully. Thanks so much for listening. If you have more questions, I'd love to - love to chat more with you.

J Jenna Magnuski 58:31
Okay, a few more questions. Um, was there a significant distinction in the attitudes about Natives between the original Mayflower settlers and those that arrived at a later time in the settlement?

D Dr. John Turner 58:49
That's such a great question. Um, I would say, not really. The one big distinction, I would say, that is a bit of a turning point is that by the time you get to the 1660s, and 1670s, you begin to have a critical mass of English who are interested in missions and the conversion of Native communities. That's a huge shift. Otherwise, I'd say there's, there's, you know, there's sort of a similar amount of suspicion, which becomes a little bit more disdain at times, I think later on.

J Jenna Magnuski 59:33
Did the Pilgrims encounter Native tribes that had slaves themselves?

D Dr. John Turner 59:40
Almost certainly. Yes. So cap, you know, captive taking and was a widely established practice among Algonquin peoples more generally, the sources for how that actually worked within the Native communities of - of southeastern Massachusetts are pretty sketchy. It's something I've tried to figure out but feel that I haven't been able to get a great handle on. I think the experience of Native captives really ranged from, you know, adoption and incorporation into new communities, to something a bit more akin to what we would call slavery. And it did not - it did not amount to chattel slavery, which is usually what Americans today think of when they use the term slavery. So you know that - that really doesn't seem to have been the case. Sometimes, captors - captives were taken for ransom. But that's not exactly the same thing.

J Jenna Magnuski 1:00:48
Thank you. Can you talk more about why the Mayflower Compact is important?

D Dr. John Turner 1:00:54
Sure. So, you know, I think it's typical today to dismiss the Mayflower Compact, as a hastily written, makeshift agreement, basically thrust upon the passengers to tamp down

a possible rebellion. And, you know, there's some reason for that. That's the way that William Bradford writes about it in his history. You know, they'd gone off course, they didn't have any legal authority to form a government in New England rather than Northern Virginia. And so they - they felt they needed this agreement so that people wouldn't sort of just go their own way and threaten the cohesion of the colony. At the same time, the political leaders of Plymouth regarded it as fundamental to their political order, when colonists would gather together to revise their laws on a number of occasions, which they did in 1636, then that then at a couple of later points, they would begin by reading the Compact aloud. And it enshrined a principle that I think is important - that yes, and members of the community need to obey their leaders and their laws. But the legitimacy of those leaders and laws, hinges on the consent of the people. The compact doesn't put it in exactly those terms. But it says that they're forming a body politic, to enact laws and offices. And that's what gives those laws and offices their validity. And it's right after they assign it, that they - that they hold an election, and they elect John Carver for that year, not for five years, or until he drops dead, which turns out not to be too long. But going forward, they hold annual elections for their leaders. And, you know, that's fairly remarkable. Down in Virginia in 1619, there's a representative assembly, but the Governor and Council there are appointed back in London. You know, in Plymouth Colony, the in-person votes matter. So, you know, so I do think the Compact, you know, does - does matter, actually, more than we might think.

J

Jenna Magnuski 1:03:23

What do you think is the most important takeaway from the Pilgrim story for people today?

D

Dr. John Turner 1:03:30

Oh, yikes, that's a great question. I should have, I should have a better prepared answer for that one. Um, I don't - I - you know, I don't know. I mean, I think, um, you know, as I said, at the outset, I don't, you know, I really don't like turning history into a morality play. And, you know, for so many years, you had the Pilgrims as the saints and you had the Natives as the sinners. And you know, now sometimes that gets reversed. In reality, these are, you know, much more complicated and ordinary people than we might think, at first glance. You know, if anything, I find the Plymouth Colony story interesting because things change a lot over time. You know, the Pilgrims come with their particular religious vision, and they, they don't want religious options in the colony. And, and over time, other people come and they push back against that, and they sort of carve out space for Baptists and Quakers and dissenters. And, you know, I think there's sort of a grudging toleration that emerges over time, especially in the western part of the colony. And, you know, Plymouth

really ends up occupying sort of a middle ground between the soul liberty of Rhode Island and the stricter religious establishment of Massachusetts Bay. And I think you know, if anything, and you know, this is why I think your museum and historical society are so important. It's a good reminder that local stories really matter that, you know, you might have had Puritans settling New Haven, Connecticut, Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. But they didn't all exactly agree on everything. And communities sort of took their own own shape. And so I guess that's, that's one of my favorite takeaways.

J Jenna Magnuski 1:05:40

Did the second generation in Plymouth become more motivated by profit and land speculation than the religious idealism of their parents?

D Dr. John Turner 1:05:48

Well, William Bradford thought so he described Plymouth by the 16, early 1640s, as a widow, abandoned by her children. That was partly because really, the Pilgrims hadn't made the best choice of land. You know, I think they sort of, you know, they sailed up to the Charles and thought, oh, maybe we should have gone here. And you know, people Scituate was maybe booming more, and maybe even parts of the Cape looked a little nicer at times. But, you know, I don't - I don't I, you know, that would be hard to judge. You know, church membership is not high anywhere in Plymouth Colony during these years. But at the same time, the standards for church membership were really high. So it's, it's, it's a bit hard to know. And the people who were breaking the rules are those who tend to get noticed in the court records. So I guess I'm sort of passing on your question.

J Jenna Magnuski 1:06:47

How did the government of Plymouth Colony relate to and interact with the General Court of Massachusetts?

D Dr. John Turner 1:06:54

Well, you know, some someone before asked about the general - general relationship with the Bay Colony. And, you know, I think, you know, a sort of fraught oftentimes. You know, for instance, toward the end of the Plymouth Colony part of King Philip's War, there was still fighting in Maine, against the Abenaki. And Massachusetts leaders asked Plymouth for help. And Plymouth, despite having gotten a lot of help from Massachusetts during the war, just stiffed them, and they weren't - they weren't gonna, they weren't gonna fight anymore. And you know, that that kind of thing happened, you know, happened a fair

amount, you know, the, the two colonies that - they could certainly be friends. Sometimes if there were religious, you know, synods that brought folks from a lot of churches together, they would invite Plymouth Colony representatives, and Plymouth wasn't a serious economic rival after the 1630s. So that really wasn't a problem. But, you know, I think Josiah Winslow among others resented the fact that, you know, the Bay Colony was a little bit imperious toward everybody else.



Jenna Magnuski 1:08:12

What's your understanding of the first Thanksgiving?



Dr. John Turner 1:08:15

Well, possibly turkey. No, I mean, in seriousness, there's only there's only one real source for what we call the first Thanksgiving, which is a letter of Edward Winslow that was published in the early 1620s. And Winslow says that after the harvest was gotten in, it was good - a good harvest in 1621. Governor Bradford decided that they should after a more special manner rejoice together and he's - that meant to shoot fowl, which I think could have included turkeys, and you know, they shot - shot a bunch of birds, we don't know exactly what kind and they feasted and they engaged in recreations. Among other things, they fired their guns, and Wompanoags heard the Pilgrims firing their guns and showed up to see what was happening. Maybe their allies were under attack or were attacking you know, who knows? And so about 90 men, including Osamequin came to Plymouth, and ultimately they joined in the feast. Some of the Wampanoag shot five deer and they stayed for a few days. Now, the Pilgrims would not have understood this as a thanksgiving. For them, Thanksgivings were appointed by governments and churches to more solemnly thank God for a particular blessing. People would gather at church. There'd be several hours of prayer, songs - singing, and sermons. And after the end of a drought a year or two later, William Bradford records that they held a day of Thanksgiving. I absolutely think the Pilgrims were thankful in 1621 for their good harvest. It's possible they held a day of Thanksgiving. But nobody, nobody refers to it as such. And I think the Pilgrims and other folks in Plymouth Colony didn't look back at that occasion, as of any particular import, other than the fact that they had, you know, they had passed their most immediate danger of starvation.



Jenna Magnuski 1:10:39

And I think these last two are more specific to the book, because they're not triggering enough for me, based on what we've talked about so far. Could you describe the three small landing parties by Shallup? And Mr. Richard Warren's part in the third and final

exploration?



Dr. John Turner 1:10:58

I can't do that much detail out of my out of my memory. I'm sorry. I'd be happy to get back to whoever asked it.



Jenna Magnuski 1:11:08

Okay, sounds good. Um, what generally-understood traits qualified a man to be designated as Mister?



Dr. John Turner 1:11:15

Mister, that's a great question. Um, I should know, but I don't know that I know precisely. I mean, I think a certain, you know, certain gentlemanly background, so like somebody like Winslow, who came from a wealthy background in England. And other than that, I don't know exactly. I think, you know, holding certain political offices sometimes did that as well. Um, but I'm sorry, I don't I don't have a better answer for you.