



Resource Guide #3
Burlington Archives

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NATIVE AMERICANS AND BURLINGTON

GEOGRAPHY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Heavy, thick sheets of ice, or glaciers, once covered the New England landscape. Ice melted at the outer edges and more ice pushed down to replace it.

Glacial ice sheets covered the New England landscape until 13,000-14,000 years ago. As the glaciers melted and receded, they created the geographical features that are part of the current landscape. Glaciers produced river valleys and long, narrow hills called drumlins.

It is important to know the approximate date that glaciers melted and receded, since this helps date archaeological features. It is believed that the earliest known New England settlements date to more than 30,000 Before Present (B.P.)ⁱ We must presume that glaciers destroyed physical evidence of pre-glacial settlements.

It appears that the last melting and receding of glacial ice in the Burlington area was between 13,000-14,000 B.P. This is the accepted date for the oldest Paleo Indian artifacts in the Burlington area.ⁱⁱ

changing Environments and Changing societies

Like all societies, Native American society changed and adapted. The Paleo Indian, Early Archaic, Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, Woodland, European Contact and Contemporary periods had different environments and different characteristics. Per Plymouth Plantation Education Department's *Native Historical Timeline*.ⁱⁱⁱ

End of the Last Ice Age (13,500 B.P.)

Most of what is now New England was under a glacier towards the end of the last Ice Age. Vegetation first appeared during this time period. Tundra plants such as grasses, sedge, alders, and willows were the most common type of vegetation.

Paleo Period (12,500-10,000 B.P.)

People occupied the region and hunted mastodon and caribou. Spruce forests began to appear, followed by birch and pine. The Paleo Period lasted to about 10,000 B.P.

Early Archaic Period (10,000-8,000 B.P.)

During the Early Archaic Period oaks, pitch pines, and beeches began to flourish.

Middle Archaic Period (8,000-6,000 B.P.)

Corn began to be cultivated in Mexico during the Middle Archaic Period. Flexible shaft stone-weighted spear throwers (atl-atls) were common hunting weapons.

Late Archaic Period (6,000-3,700 B.P.)

During the Late Archaic Period, people began hunting game and marine mammals, including seals, as well as fishing and gathering.

Terminal Archaic Period (3,700-2,700 B.P.)

Soapstone pots were manufactured and widespread trade connections were developed.

Early and Middle Woodland Periods or Early Horticultural Period (2,700-1,000 B.P.)

The Early to Middle Woodland period showed the increased use of ceramics and the very beginnings of horticulture. Corn and beans were grown in some local areas on western Long Island and trade was widespread throughout the eastern woodlands. Shellfish and deer were important food resources. Shell and copper beads appeared in use, and tobacco and pipes became common. Chestnut trees naturalized in the area.

Late Woodland or Late "Prehistoric" Period (1,000-400 B.P.)

The Late Woodland period was characterized by the widespread adoption of horticulture in southern New England, as well as the development of more settled villages. During the Late Woodlands, people across southern New England began growing corn shortly after 1200-1250 B.P. People during this period also began to build palisaded or walled villages.

By the Late Woodland period, the local economy was primarily horticulture south of New Hampshire and Maine's Saco River—the northern regions were too cold for extended agriculture. Semi-permanent villages were located near gardens in river valleys. Both the southern horticulturists and northern hunters spent most of the summer near the sea, gathering and smoking large amounts of fish and shellfish.

During this period, the northeast woodlands were extremely rich in natural resources. Deciduous and coniferous forests contained white-tailed deer, moose, and elk. Woodland bison and caribou were found in some areas of the northeast. Large numbers of bears and beavers, as well as small mammals, migrating waterfowl, ruffed grouse, and turkey, provided ample food. Rivers and lakes were rich with fish and shellfish, including lobsters, oysters, and several types of clams. Seals and beached whales were also hunted. Wild rice was common to the area and was an important foodstuff, since it could be stored for long periods of time.

Wild plant species were also harvested. During the summer, women and children gathered wild strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, and grapes. In the fall, acorns, walnuts, and chestnuts were harvested. Nuts could be ground into powder and made into breads and stews. Plants such as Indian hemp provided fibers for fishing lines, ropes, and baskets.

Although the Native Americans of the northeast woodlands were perceived as having impermanent homes, this was not the case. Native Americans traditionally had seasonal villages. During the Paleo Indian period, animals migrated from north to south and back again, and native peoples followed this migration. During later periods, coastal and woodland villages were established.

Villages and their sachems were mostly autonomous during the precontact period. Local units, consisting of about 200 individuals, typically utilized the drainage system of a single river as their territory.

Post -Contact Period

Prior to 1607, English voyages to New England were considered transient. In 1606, the London (Jamestown, Vermont) and Plymouth (Plymouth, Massachusetts) companies were chartered and major colonization projects began.

Life changed rapidly after the arrival of Europeans. Native Americans did not have immunological protection against new diseases and began to die in large numbers. Traditional medicines had little impact on new diseases. Native residents attempted to escape unknown plagues by fleeing, thus spreading disease to neighboring tribes. Diseases such as smallpox, measles, mumps, and scarlet fever caused the death of 90 percent of the native population. Five out of six Native Americans in New England died between 1617 and 1619. It was estimated that there were 3000 armed warriors in 1600; only 500 were alive in 1619.

By the time English colonies were established, the Massachuset lived in six different bands, each with its own sachem. Each sachem's territory had a few small villages. The deaths caused by the epidemic of 1616-1619 forced the native population to live closer together.

Evangelization AND SETTLEMENT

The settlers of Massachusetts and Plymouth Colonies saw the settlement of New England as an act of Divine Providence. Vaughan, a well-known historian for the New England contact period, noted that native peoples were regarded as "unfortunate heathen who deserved the saving grace of the gospel."^{iv}

The importance of religion to the Puritans had a further affect on the settler's relationship to local Native Americans. Many believed that the Native Americans were descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel and were further in need of the Gospel. This was the view of influential clergymen such as Roger Williams, John Eliot, and John Davenport and lay leaders such as Edward Winslow.^v

During the plague of 1616-1617, the Puritans did not revel in the loss of native population. Vaughan notes that it was a sign of "God's favor to His elect. Clearly the Lord was making room for His people."^{vi}

By the time Rev. Cotton Mather (1663-1728) wrote *Magnalia Christi Americana; or the Ecclesiastical History of New England* in 1702, it was less clear where the European settlers thought the native peoples had come from. Mather wrote "Though we know not *when* or *how* these Indians first became inhabitants of this mighty continent, yet we may guess that probably the devil decoyed those miserable salvages hither in hopes that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would never come here to destroy or disturb his *absolute empire* over them."^{vii}

Although religion was a strong part of the Puritans' worldview, there were economic as well religious issues involved with colonization. Joint stock companies founded the majority of the successful colonies, and they expected a return on their investment. Land was a valuable commodity for new immigrants. The settlers were migrating from countries with very rigid class systems: in order to own land, it had to be inherited. New England brought the opportunity for colonists to become landowners.

SETTLEMENT AND THE GREATER BURLINGTON AREA

Captain Edward Johnson (1598-1672), one of Woburn's early founders, wrote:

The scituation of this Towne [Wooburne] is in the highest part of the yet peopled land, neere upon the head springs of many considerable rivers, or their branches; as the first rise of the Ipswitch river, and the rise of the Shashin river, one of the most considerable branches of the Merrimeck, as also the first rise of Mystick river and ponds.^{viii}

Goff has observed that lands near the Wyman house (56 Francis Wyman house) were uniquely situated near the headwaters of

Timeline of the Contact Period

For more detail, see Plimouth Plantation Education Department's *Native Historical Timeline*.

1524

Spanish explorer Giovanni da Verrazano provided the earliest known description of the continuous voyage along the eastern coast of North America. He had contact with Native Americans at several places along the coast, including North Carolina, New York Bay, Narrangasset Bay, and Maine.

Late 1500s-early 1600s

Native Americans in eastern Massachusetts were allied against the Narragansett confederacy. Eastern Massachusetts groups were located at the endpoint of an extensive trade network involving the French, Micmac, Maliseet-Passamaquoddy, and Eastern Abenaki.

1602

Bartholomew Gosnold explored Vineyard Sound, Elizabeth Islands, Buzzards Bay region. Gosnold made the first known attempt to establish a trading post in Wampanoag territory (Cuttyhunk Island, off the coast of New Bedford). The attempt failed.

1605

French explorer Samuel de Champlain led an expedition south from the Saint Lawrence River into southern New England to Massachuset territory. After crossing the Saco River, Champlain noted that

three major watersheds, the Ipswich, Shawsheen, and Mystic Rivers. The Ipswich meets the Atlantic Ocean near Ipswich; the Shawsheen meets the Merrimack River at Lawrence/North Andover; and the Mystic River—whose headwaters are located near Horn Pond in Woburn—flow through the Mystic ponds and drains into the Charles River at Charlestown and Boston. Goff further notes that two Billerica tributaries of the Shawsheen River—McKee Brook and Webb Brook—provided an easy crossing and access to the Museketaquid (Concord) River. This provided access to Wamesit (now Lowell) on the Merrimack River. This provided upstream access to what is today Worcester and Grafton—Indian sites in their own right—and a cross-over point to the Nipmuck (Blackstone) River and Narrangansett Bay. Goff believes that the geography near the Wyman house—and this area of the Shawsheen—was significant to the first peoples and settlers of the early frontier as a geographic crossroads and spiritual center.^{ix}

The Billerica and Burlington area had strong ties to early missionary leaders in Cambridge, Massachusetts, particularly the First Church and Harvard College. On the same day that Charlestown received the grant for Woburn—October 7, 1640—the General Court granted the town of Cambridge "a month to consider of Shawshin for a village for them, & if they like it not, the town of Roxberry hath the liberty to consider of it for a village for them to the nexte Generall Courte." The result was that on June 2, 1641 "Shawshin is granted to Cambridge, p^rvided they make it a village, to have 10 families there settled wthin three years; otherwise the Court to dispose of it." The first building was built in 1642 at the intersection of the Shawsheen River and Vine Brook.^x

Goff points out that one of the primary purposes of Harvard College was to educate "English and Indian youth of this country in knowledge and godliness;"^{xi} it was not a coincidence that early missionary leaders—Henry Dunster, a missionary associate of Rev. John Eliot, Daniel Gookin [Gookin], the First Church of Cambridge, and Harvard College—acquired land in modern day Billerica, close to the current location of the Francis Wyman house.

In 1649, it was "agreed that Mr. Henry Dunster, President of Harvard College, should have 500 acres whereof four hundred is granted by the town to his own person and heirs, to enjoy freely, forever, and the other 100 acres for the use of Harvard College." A missionary associate of Dunster and Rev. John Eliot, Daniel Gookin [Gookin], was also granted 500 acres.^{xii} In 1654, the residents petitioned Governor Bellingham to transfer the land to the Church of Cambridge and that the petitioners "desireth the Name of Shawshin henceforth may bee call^d Billericay." It was consented that

his Micmac guides no longer understood the language. Champlain was the first European settler to have contact with the Massachuset, although French and Dutch traders soon followed.

1614

A decade later John Smith traveled the coast of New England and gave the tribe the name Massachuset.

1616-1617

Diseases brought by European traders devastated the Massachuset: population was reduced by ninety percent.

November 21, 1620

Mayflower drops its anchor off the coast of Provincetown, Mass.

1621

Europeans first visited the Woburn area

1622

First clashes between English colonists and the Massachuset at Wessagusset (modern Weymouth). The Massachuset complained that settlers were stealing corn and furs. The Massachuset refused to trade more corn and forced them to do manual labor for food. Massasoit, a Wampanoag sachem, warned the settlers that Obtakiest, the Massachuset sachem, planned to attack and demolish the Plymouth colony. Miles Standish took eight men to Wessagusset and killed seven Massachuset sachems in the next few days. The Massachuset in turned killed three Englishmen living with them.

Early 1630s

Citizens of Charlestown, Massachusetts petitioned the General Court for more land. The land grant included present-day Woburn, Winchester, Burlington and parts of Stoneham and Wilmington.

1630

Massachusetts Bay Colony settlers made their chief settlement at the mouth of the Charles River. This settlement became present-day Boston.

1631-1633

Small pox epidemic further reduced the

"the President of the College [Henry Dunster]" have five hundred acres 'in the nearest and best place.'^{xiii}

There were two "praying Indian" communities in this area, Wamesit, near present-day Lowell, Massachusetts (about ten miles to the northeast) and the Indian village of Shawshinock in Billerica, Massachusetts. For more information on Wamesit, see Henry A. Hazen's *History of Billerica* and Historic Preservation and Design's *Restoration Plan, Francis Wyman House, Burlington Massachusetts*.

Shawshinock was less than 1 mile downstream from the Francis Wyman house. Goff notes that two ca. 1600s maps^{xiv} show Shawshinock and Church Farme and he believes that Shawshinock was a "praying Indian" town founded by Rev. John Eliot and that the coexistence (at least prior to the 1670s) was peaceful. This would have been in the area south of Connolly Road in Billerica, near Carter Rd. in Burlington. If one looks at a modern day map, one notices places names related to the Native American and missionary history of Harvard College: College Pond, Crimson Rd., and Sachem St. Goff pointed out that Shawshinock would have been a sacred location, since it was located on high ground, was close to the source of freshwaters—the source of life—and had ready access to natural deposits of Bog Iron, hematite, or olomon. Olomon was used by native peoples to make red ocher, used to color sacred wood records and for personal skin paint.^{xv}

In 1655, the 500 acre Dunster property was sold to the Wyman brothers, Francis and John Wyman. The history of Shawshinock must be researched, but we do have evidence of interaction between the Wyman family and local Christianized Indians. Caleb Cheeshateamuck, a Christianized and Harvard-educated Massachuset Indian, witnessed the Wyman's ca. 1665-1667 purchase of the 500 acre Coytemore parcel. Records show that after King Philip's war, 1675-1676, Shawshinock Indians helped tend the cornfields. Goff points out that this is evidence of peaceful interaction and an example of the missionary goals of the early settlers.^{xvi}

Area leaders: Sho-shanim, Sholan, showanon and the shawsheen river valley

Based on the research of R. A. Douglas-Lithgow, Goff suggests that the name Shaw-sheen was derived from Sho-Shanim (Sagamore Sam), a Nipmuck sachem or leader. Goff's research revealed that prior to 1668, it appears that Shoshanim was located in the Shawsheen River valley. After 1675, other historians placed Shoshanim near Waushaccum ponds near Sterling, Lancaster, and Clinton, about 25 miles west of the Francis Wyman house property. Located near the Nashua River (a tributary to the Merrimac), Shoshanim and his people became known as the Nashaway Indians.^{xvii}

Shoshanim was the nephew of Sholan or Showanon, the leader around and probably before the 1640s. Sholan (or Showanon) was

Massachuset population.

1635

Concord, Mass. was settled by Simon Willard as an Indian fur trading post. Simon Willard was the brother-in-law of Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard College, and a founder of the effort the Christianize the native peoples of New England.

1640s

Puritan missionaries such as Roxbury minister, John Eliot, persuaded the colonial government to move the remaining Massachuset into special mission villages or "praying towns" where Eliot believed they would lead ideal Christian lives. During the 1660s Eliot translated the Bible into the Massachuset language and created a grammar and primer to teach reading and writing.

1640

A group of settlers petitioned the General Court to establish Charlestown Village at what is now Woburn center. On the same day the General Court offered Shawshin to the town of Cambridge.

1641

Thomas Mayhew purchased 16 islands, including Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and the Elizabeths. His son, Thomas Mayhew, Jr. directed the first settlement at Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard in 1642.

1642

Charlestowne Village was incorporated as Wooborne or Woburn. The first general town meeting was held in 1643 and the first organizational town meeting was held in 1644.

1644

Daniel Gookin moved to Boston from the Virginia Colony and served as Rev. John Eliot's chief assistant.

1649

English Parliament chartered the Society for the

converted to Christianity by Rev. John Eliot in 1648. Sholan died in 1654 and leadership of the Nashaways passed to Matthas or Matthew, a brother or cousin of Sholan. Under Matthas' leadership, the tribe remained Christianized and allied with the English. During the 1670s—the period leading up to the so-called Metacom's, King Philip's or Puritan War in 1675-1676—the Nashaways named Shoshanim a sachem and successor to Matthew. Shoshanim listened to the advice of Metacom and believed that English alliances meant tribal destruction. Under Shoshanim, the Nashaways led a successful attack on an English settlement in Lancaster, Massachusetts on February 9, 1676. The raid resulted in one of the most well known colonial accounts of captivity, that of Mary Rowlandson; see the resource section for a printed account of her captivity. Thus the sachem originally associated with the peaceful Shawsheen River valley to the east became known as the individual leading one of the most well known attacks upon an English colonial settlement.^{xviii}

Burlington pr oper

Burlington historian, Martha Elizabeth Sewall Curtis noted "the arrow heads and other relics which our farmers find in their fields today give evidence that many Indians frequented this region. Immemorial tradition informs us that one of their wigwams was located in the new [Chestnut Hill] cemetery, on the Bedford road."^{xix} The site was near Sandy Brook and was noted to be an encampment or village site.

Fogelberg reports that 1670 was the only recorded incident between local Native Americans and Europeans. During that year, a Native American man allegedly hid himself in a farm hophouse at the corner of Bedford Street and Francis Wyman Road. When it appeared that all of the family and neighbors had traveled to church, he approached the house, assuming it was empty. The man discovered that a young woman was still at home and he reportedly demanded cider. She went to the cellar to retrieve the cider and when she returned, he struck her from behind, and the blood spilled onto the doorway. The man was caught and allegedly hanged in chains. The story goes that the blood was never wiped from the cellar door and when the house was taken down in 1760, the doorway was taken to the barn. When the barn was taken down, the door was transferred to a shed which directly across from the West School (106 Bedford St.); the shed reportedly stood as late as 1930.

Preserving Culture

Federally funded assimilation programs—including boarding schools—had further affects on North America's native population. Despite all odds, native populations have continued to survive. Across North American, tribes are preserving and reviving their cultural heritage.

Today there are three reservations in Massachusetts:

- Hassanamisko Reservation
Address: Nipmuc Tribal Council

Propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England. The Society provided Eliot with financial support.

1651

First praying town was gathered at Nonatum (modern Newton) and moved to Natick in 1651. The land was set aside by the General Court. Other towns were also established by the legislature.

1654

One of the founders of Woburn, Captain Edward Johnson (1598-1672), published *History of New England Wonder-Working Providence of Zions Saviour in New England*, promoting settlement in Woburn.

1663

John Eliot published the Bible in the Massachuset language.

1670

Allegedly the first European-Native American clash in the Burlington area.

1674

14 praying towns have a population of 2200 on the mainland and 1800-2600 on the islands.

1675-1676

So-called Metacom's or King Philip's War; the resulting anti-Indian hysteria defeated Eliot's efforts and the remaining Massachuset were scattered. Alarmed by the growing number of settlements, Metacom, a Wampanoag sachem, urged native peoples to unite and to oust the English settlers. See Fogelberg, pp. 462-464 for a list of Woburn residents that fought; this list originally appeared in Samuel Sewall's *History of Woburn*.

1800s

Only a small population of the "praying Indians" were extant in the late 20th century, with small churches at Mashpee on Cape Cod and at West Tisbury on Martha's Vineyard.

Hassanamisco Indian Reservation
Grafton, MA 01518
508-839-7394 or 753-5034

- Mashpee-Wampanoag Reservation
Address: Mashpee-Wampanoag Indian Tribe
PO Box 1048
Mashpee, MA 02649
508-477-0208
- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
Address: Wampanoag Tribal Council of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
RFD 137, State Rd.
Gay Head, MA 01535
508-645-9265/3401

For a tribal profile, cultural institutions, and special events, see Veronica Tiller's *Discover Indian Reservations USA: A Visitors' Welcome Guide*, Denver, Colorado: Connail Publications, 1992. For information on indigenous independence movements in New England, contact United American Indians of New England (UAINE), PO Box 697501, Quincy, MA 02269, phone 781-331-3690, <http://idt.net/~uaine19>.

MUSEUMS

In addition to the small museums at the Hassanamisco and Mashpee-Wampanoag Reservation:

- Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (museum, library, and archives)
Ledyard, Conn.
www.mashantucket.com
- Plimoth Plantation
PO Box 1620
Plymouth, MA 02362
508-746-1622 Phone
www.plimoth.org
- Fruitlands Museum
102 Prospect Hill Road
Harvard, MA 01451
978-456-3924 Phone
www.fruitlands.org

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

The purpose of the following bibliography is to provide an overview of printed sources on Native Americans in Massachusetts during the prehistoric to post-contact period. It is not meant to be a comprehensive bibliography, but it is meant to provide a starting point for commonly-available books i.e., books that are available via local library consortiums and/or locally available at local public library special collection departments. If the book is non-circulating i.e., it is held by local public library special collection departments, that repository is noted. Most of the following books should be commonly available via inter-library loan. To search various library consortiums, see www.mlin.lib.ma.us. Note that the Burlington Public Library is part of the Merrimac Valley Library Consortium and the Woburn Public Library is part of the Minuteman Library Consortium.

For more information on Native Americans in Massachusetts, search library catalogs for the subject heading Indians of North America--Massachusetts, Mashpee Indians, Massachusetts Indians, Nipmuc Indians, Stockbridge Indians, Wamesit Indians, Wampanoag Indians, Indians of North America--Missions--Massachusetts, Massachusetts Indians--Missions, and Indian captivities--Massachusetts.

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ⁱ John Goff, Historic Preservation and Design. *Restoration Plan, Francis Wyman House, Burlington Massachusetts*. Salem, Mass.: n.p., c1997, p. 1; this is the current thinking as of 1997. B.P. designates how many years ago. This has become the standard way of presenting archaeological dates.

ⁱⁱ Geography and Archaeology section based on: Historic Preservation and Design. *Restoration Plan, Francis Wyman House, Burlington Massachusetts*. Salem, Mass.: n.p., c1997, pp.1-2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Plimouth Plantation Education Dept. *Native Historical Timeline*. N.D. Online. Plimoth Plantation. Available: <http://www.plimoth.org/Library/Wampanoag/ewamphist.htm>. 8 September, 2000.

^{iv} Alden T. Vaughan. *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1965, p. 19.

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- ^v Vaughan, pp. 19-20.
- ^{vi} Vaughan, pp. 21.
- ^{vii} Mather, Cotton. *Magnalia Christi Americana, or, The ecclesiastical history of New-England : from its first planting in the year 1620 unto the year of Our Lord, 1698 : in seven books ...* 2 vol. (Hartford, Conn: 1820), pp. 503, 506.
- ^{viii} Goff, section 1, p. 3.
- ^{ix} Historic Preservation and Design, Early Site History, p. 4.
- ^x Hazen, p. 6.
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- ^{xiii} Hazen, p. 16-17.
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- ^{xviii} Historic Preservation and Design, Early Site History, pp. 6-7.
- ^{xix} Martha Elizabeth Sewall Curtis. "Burlington Historical Sketch." *Woburn News*, October 14, 1890. A copy of this article is located on the archives' web site at www.burlington.org/archives.