Introduction

Seventeenth-century America was nothing if not a collection of societies in flux. In different places at different times, utopian schemes for settlement disintegrated upon contact with New World conditions, virulent diseases wreaked havoc upon native and European populations, harsh systems of bound labor appeared, ethnic and religious tensions spawned repeated conflict, and various groups of Europeans and Indians fought devastating wars against each other. Within this panorama of turmoil, however, New England stood apart as a region of unusual stability. No one could have predicted the eventual shape of society in Virginia, or Maryland, or Pennsylvania from either the plans of their leaders or the initial contours of development in those colonies. But in New England as nowhere else, society evolved according to patterns established in the earliest years of settlement. Only there did the framework of social and cultural institutions created by the very first generation of settlers prove to be remarkably durable. Town-based settlement, the predominance of freehold family farms, comparative economic equality, and a profoundly religious culture – these elements describe seventeenth- and eighteenth-century (and even early-nineteenth-century) New England with almost equal accuracy. Certainly up to the time of the Revolution, no inhabitant of any other region of colonial America could discern in its history anything like New England's pattern of cultural continuity.[1]

To argue thus for New England's long-run stability is not to say that its society was untouched by change. Like the rest of colonial America, New England experienced enormous demographic and geographical expansion. Over time, its economy

[1] For one sensitive exploration of this issue, see Timothy H. Breen and Stephen Foster, "The Puritans' Greatest Achievement: A Study of Social Cohesion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts," *Journal of American History*, LX (1973), 5–22.

became increasingly commercialized. Its colonists fought deadly wars with indigenous peoples. The Dominion crisis at the end of the seventeenth century ushered in a period of rapid political and institutional change. And although the strength of the settlers' spiritual commitment scarcely diminished over time, the specific nature of their beliefs and the context within which they were expressed gradually altered. Thus a century after its founding, this society, created to promote godly worship, found itself assailed by religious revivalists who intended to restore the pure Christianity they feared had been lost among the descendants of the founders.[2]

But if change was not absent from New England's early history, it never dominated the region's development, as in other colonial societies. Structural alterations were limited and primarily affected political institutions; such changes as the issuing of new charters, it should be noted, were largely imposed from outside rather than generated from within. The modest character of material opportunities in New England prevented the economy from becoming the engine of conflict and social division it became elsewhere in North America. Most important, the region's powerful religious ideology helped to contain potentially disruptive events as they arose.[3] It was, perhaps, because change was so effectively circumscribed within manageable boundaries that New Englanders tended to dwell so obsessively upon the relatively minor problems that worked their way out of the few cracks in their impressively solid cultural foundation.

[2] The persistence of a strong religious tradition in New England is the theme of two recent books: Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York, 1986), and Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York, 1986). Bonomi argues for the importance of religion in other colonial regions as well.

[3] The cohesive influence of religion was stronger in the seventeenth than in the eighteenth century. In eighteenth-century Connecticut, as Richard Bushman has shown, issues of religion affected political disputes during the Awakening; see *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). (Compare his account of the Bay Colony in the same period, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* [Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985]).

Introduction

Historians have long recognized the essentially stable character of colonial New England society; only recently, however, have we come to appreciate how anomalous New England was within the British colonial world.[4] Much of our knowledge about the contrast between New England and the rest of British America comes from an improved understanding of the ways in which other regions were settled. A flood of scholarship dealing with the southern and middle colonies has revealed the importance of examining the character of immigrant populations (including analysis of age, gender, and racial and ethnic composition), the structure and duration of population movements, and the role of commercial interests in the process of settlement as critical factors in explaining subsequent patterns of social development.[5] We have come to realize that, in these other colonial regions, the processes of settlement themselves launched the evolution of distinctive societies.

New England, no less than other parts of British America, owed much of its social character to its experience of settlement, but the connection has been less fully explored for that region than for other colonies. This book began in my attempt to investigate the extent to which New England's curious cultural and social evolution could be traced to its equally unusual process of settlement. New Englanders were the only colonists in British America self-conscious enough to locate the origins of their society in a "Great Migration," and I hoped to discover why they should have made such a portentous claim, and why this founding event should have come to occupy so prominent a place in the region's cultural heritage. Since the magnitude of

[4] The contrast between New England and the rest of British America informs the argument of Jack Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1988).

[5] The literature on these subjects is vast and is deftly synthesized in Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*. On immigration to the colonies just before the Revolution, see also Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1986), and for a more general view, see his *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York, 1986).

the migration that peopled the New England colonies was so slight in comparison to the vastly larger flows of English men and women to other colonial regions, it was clear from the beginning that the movement's claim to greatness had to rest more on symbolic than on objective grounds. But it seemed no less significant (and indeed, all the more interesting) for that fact. Eventually I became convinced that somehow the distinctive New England sense of identity was related to, and perhaps somehow also fostered by, its origins in the Great Migration. But how? And what was the relationship between the discoverable facts of the Great Migration and the symbolic character it assumed in the region's foundation story? How had the lives of the settlers been changed by their translation from English men and women into New Englanders? These were the questions with which I began the project; and, insofar as I have been able to answer them, this book is my response.

In order to study the processes of New England settlement, I selected a research strategy that allowed me to recapture the dynamics of population movement without sacrificing the rich detail of individual lives. This book is essentially a collective biography of 693 English emigrants who participated in the Great Migration. The subjects for study were drawn from evidence that specifically related to their emigration, that is, from passenger lists for seven ships that sailed during the 1630s.[6]

[6] The ship lists were obtained from the following sources. The *Hercules* (sailed from Sandwich in 1635) and another Sandwich ship that sailed in 1637: Eben Putnam, "Two Early Passenger Lists, 1635–1637," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, LXXV (1921), 217–27, with corrections by Elizabeth French Bartlett in *NEHGR*, LXXIX (1925), 107–9; a ship from Weymouth, 1635: William S. Appleton, "More Passengers for New-England," *NEHGR*, XXV (1871), 13–15; this is reprinted in John Demos, ed., *Remarkable Providences 1600–1750* (New York, 1972), 39–41; the *James* of Southampton, 1635: Louise Brownell Clarke, *The Greenes of Rhode Island, with Historical Records of English Ancestry, 1534–1902* (New York, 1903), 768–9; the *Rose* and the *Mary Anne*, both of Great Yarmouth, 1637: Charles Boardman Jewson, ed., *Transcripts of Three Registers of Passengers from Great Yarmouth to Holland and New England*, Norfolk Record Society, *Publications*, XXV (1954), 21–3, 29–30; the *Confidence* of Southampton, 1638: Henry Stevens, "Passengers for New En-

These seven lists are, so far as I can tell, the only complete published passenger rosters that preserve all the information on the original documents; they are not hypothetical lists reconstructed by genealogists or local historians.[7] Each supplied enough information to permit accurate tracing of specific individuals in New England records. Much of our knowledge of the migration is derived from evidence from the Winthrop Fleet of 1630, but the ships included here sailed later in that decade, when most New Englanders actually arrived: Three of the seven vessels sailed in 1635, three in 1637, and one in 1638.[8] The ships' ports of departure – Sandwich, Weymouth, Southampton, and Great Yarmouth – also reflect what we know of the variety of the settlers' English origins.[9]

gland, 1638," *NEHGR*, II (1848), 108–10, with corrections by H. G. Somerby in *NEHGR*, V (1851), 440. In my choice of a research strategy, I followed the method used so effectively by T. H. Breen and Stephen Foster in their suggestive article, "Moving to the New World: The Character of Early Massachusetts Immigration," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXX (1973), 189–220. Breen and Foster also analyzed the two Yarmouth ships and the Sandwich ship from 1637.

7 Summarized versions of all but the *Confidence* list are in John Camden Hotten, ed., *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality . . . and Others Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600–1700* (London, 1874), xix–xxi, 283–6, 289–95. Incomplete versions of all but the Weymouth list are in Samuel G. Drake, *Result of Some Researches among the British Archives for Information Relative to the Founders of New England: Made in the Years 1858, 1859, and 1860* (Boston, 1860), 44–50, 55–9, 82–5. All of the lists are printed in Charles Edward Banks, *The Planters of the Commonwealth* (Boston, 1930), 114–17, 125–8, 135–9, 181–90, 195–8. Banks usually reordered the lists, often omitting certain information, such as servant status or birthplace, mixing up family or household groups, or adding persons whom he thought belonged to a particular ship, although the names were not listed.

8 According to John Winthrop's record of arriving vessels, the three busiest years of the migration were 1634, 1635, and 1638; see his *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, ed. James Savage, 2 vols. (Boston, 1825), I, passim.

9 Winthrop's account of ship arrivals likewise indicates that most vessels left from a variety of ports in southern England; his history records ships sailing from London, Southampton, Bristol, Barnstaple, Weymouth, Ipswich, Great Yarmouth, Gravesend, and Sandwich; see *History of New England*, ed. Savage, I, passim.

Once I had collected the names from the seven lists, I followed individual emigrants through the rich genealogical and local historical materials available for seventeenth-century New England and then analyzed the data by computer.[10] This aggregative, quantified data provided the basis for identifying certain modal types of experience among the settlers and, in turn, furnished a meaningful context within which the more detailed stories of individuals and families could be explored. In the chapters that follow, the narrative sketches in the broad outlines of that context, and case studies focus on people whose representativeness has been established by the aggregative analysis. Technical information concerning method and quantification is located in the footnotes and the Appendix, to which readers specifically interested in the presentation of evidence can refer.

The use of representative cases to communicate the character of collective experience raises the larger issue of the degree to which the emigrants studied here are representative of the entire body of New England settlers. Because the 693 emigrants were not chosen randomly from a universe of all participants, but rather comprised the complete set of cases included on the seven ship lists, no claim can be made for perfect representation. Moreover, the survival of information on the migrants in genealogical accounts and local records is simply too irregular to be subjected to the most rigorous quantitative analysis. But if

[10] An invaluable research tool was Clarence Torrey's "New England Marriages Prior to 1700," a bound copy of a manuscript in twelve volumes located at the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston (and recently made available on microfilm). This is essentially an index of New England couples, organized by husband's surname, who married in New England before 1700; it also includes couples who married in England and participated in the Great Migration. Next to each couple's name is the date of the marriage, if known, followed by a series of annotations indicating references to the couple in genealogies and local histories. Using Torrey's index eliminated the need to search through a number of genealogies of families with the same surname to find the one containing the emigrant in question. I ultimately consulted over 200 genealogies and local histories in compiling data on the 693 emigrants and was able to find at least some additional information for 83.4 percent of them (578 of 693).

it is difficult to assess the extent to which the group represents the totality of experiences among all participants in the Great Migration, certain evidence suggests that they were at least not *un*representative. Perhaps the best indication is that much of the analysis of demographic patterns and levels of wealth included here corresponds quite closely to data obtained by social historians examining other groups of settlers.[11] In addition, the geographic dispersal of these colonists roughly matches what we know of settlement patterns as a whole for the period; that is, most settlers remained in the Bay Colony or Plymouth, and far fewer traveled to Connecticut, New Haven, Rhode Island, or New Hampshire.[12] And since these colonists, unlike those

[11] Richard Archer's recent analysis of the early New England population provides a useful context within which to evaluate the demographic evidence presented here. Archer has constructed a profile of 22,164 colonists who either migrated to New England before 1650 or were born there between 1620 and 1649. Many of the statistics derived from his much larger sample – such as the age structure of the emigrant population, frequency of geographic mobility among New England's first generation, and rates of remigration back to England – match (sometimes almost identically) the figures presented in this book. See Richard Archer, "New England Mosaic: A Demographic Analysis for the Seventeenth Century," *WMQ*, 3rd ser., XLVII (1990), 477–502. The New England Historic Genealogical Society is currently sponsoring a research project on the Great Migration aimed at gathering as much information as possible on all known emigrants to New England during the 1630s. The completion of this project, which lies well in the future, will also provide valuable perspective on the representativeness of the group of settlers examined here.

[12] One important exception is that Connecticut is probably underrepresented here. Jackson Turner Main has noted that early Connecticut settlers differed in age and family structure from emigrants to Massachusetts. The settlement patterns outlined in this study thus would not have appeared in precisely the same form in Connecticut, although within a few decades the two societies came to resemble each other more closely. See his *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton, N.J., 1985), 4–10. Two stylistic points should also be made. Throughout the text, I refer to "New England" as a generic term, much as contemporaries did, although the narrative principally concerns Massachusetts and Plymouth Colony, where nearly 90 percent of these emigrants settled. Second, to avoid repetition, I simply refer throughout the text to "the emigrants," omitting the obvious qualification that I mean the conclusions to pertain only to "the emigrants in this study."

examined in most other treatments of early New England social history, were selected on the basis of their appearance on ship registers rather than their residence in a particular community, their stories may in fact reflect more comprehensively the general experience of the colonial population; at the very least, their patterns of migration within New England are described in greater detail than has previously been possible.

This book, then, offers both a study of individuals and an examination of their collective participation in the Great Migration. It could not have been written without recourse to the unusually rich literature on early New England society and culture that generations of scholars have produced. It does, however, differ from almost all previous work in its prosopographical method and in the questions it seeks to answer. I have not attempted to explore the relationship between the Puritans' experience and the origins of American culture, nor have I tried to describe exhaustively any single aspect of early New England life. The intensive examination of the individual lives of people who were nothing if not ordinary has necessarily precluded the extensive analysis of such formal topics as politics, economics, religion, or family life. Instead, these appear in the narrative only as they emerged in the lives of the emigrants: people whose lives were not made up of topical categories, but rather of attendance when necessary to public matters and attendance at all times to the work, worship, marriage, reproduction, and death that made up daily life.

Following a roughly chronological framework, the narrative explores particularly critical phases in the emigrants' lives. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the experience of emigration itself, describing the settlers' lives before they set foot in New England. Addressing in the first chapter the question of the emigrants' motivation, I argue that religious factors predominated in making the difficult decision to leave England. This did not mean that economic factors were of no concern to the emigrants, for no matter how steadfast their faith, they could scarcely have afforded to be indifferent to the need to earn

their daily bread. Leaders of the migration, seeking to reassure their anxious followers, succeeded in convincing them that such secular concerns, far from threatening their religious purpose, actually harmonized with spiritual goals. So long as prospective settlers aimed to achieve not riches but competency – a modest prosperity that would sustain a family's economic independence – their souls would not be endangered.

Chapter 2 describes the settlers' preparations for departure and the events of the voyage – the singular experience that distinguished New England's first generation from all others to come. The tasks of disengaging themselves from the social, economic, and familial ties that bound them to England and then embarking on a transatlantic voyage (which for most settlers was their first time at sea) created common bonds among people who often had not known one another; indeed, in a real sense these shipboard associations constituted the first "New England communities." Like the towns the emigrants would eventually form on land, these seaborne communities served both practical and spiritual ends. Unlike the later bonds linking townsfolk, however, those forged among shipmates would for the most part prove only temporary. Once safely ashore, the emigrants scattered as they went about settling the new land.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate, in turn, two of the most pressing challenges that confronted the new colonists: finding a home and making a living in a place quite unlike the England they had left behind. The Great Migration *to* New England, it appears, was followed by a "Great Reshuffling" *within* the region as colonists dispersed and recombined in the dozens of communities they founded within the first decade or two of settlement. Most settlers spent their first few years on the move, settling only when they found a town they liked well enough to make it their permanent home. This distinctive pattern of short-term mobility succeeded by a remarkable persistence grew from the region's equally distinctive system of land distribution, which bestowed enough benefits on town founders to guarantee that latecomers to established communities would find it advantageous to move on and found new towns

for themselves. The pursuit of individual advantage, however, never overwhelmed the religious impulse that had inspired the emigration from England. For the most part, settlers steeped in the communal imperatives of their Puritan faith circumscribed their behavior in order to maintain a workable balance between their search for economic security and their commitment to the larger community of which they were members.

Achieving economic security for their families, even within the modest definition sanctioned by Puritan ideals, proved to be no easy task. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which colonists changed occupations and adapted their work lives to suit conditions in a strange new world where land was plentiful but labor and capital were scarce – a place, in other words, utterly unlike the England they had left. Success, as often as not, depended less on English background or previous social status than on versatility and luck: Settlers willing either to abandon their old crafts or to combine such work with farming might do quite well, and in a land hungry for labor, families with several sons enjoyed an advantage over their less prolific neighbors. For most settlers, however, doing well in New England meant no more than achieving a modest prosperity. Nevertheless, this marked one instance, rare in seventeenth-century America, when actual experience matched the aspirations of the colonists. In the end, most New Englanders obtained the competencies with which, their leaders had assured them, God would bless a faithful people.

How such modest achievements as these could ever have been elevated to quasi-mythical status as a – indeed, *the* – Great Migration is the subject of the final chapter. In it I argue that the migration's unique character created a set of conditions that, given the social experience and cultural predispositions of early New Englanders, invited precisely such an interpretation. Because it was brief in duration and made up largely of middling families sharing a common world view, the Great Migration resembled a single event more than a process, and in that it was unlike the much more extended migrations that peopled other parts of British America. The coherence of New England's found-