



Last time: To commemorate the 1761 Cambridge Patent, we circled back four and a half centuries to the Age of Exploration centered in 1561, then discussed the earliest American colonies.

Chapter IX: 350 Years Ago – 1661, *New Netherland*

Before visiting the first European culture firmly established in New York by 1661, let's back up to a neighboring society also transplanted from across the seas, which likewise affected the settlement of Cambridge. As every schoolchild knows, 1620 was a milestone in the story of America. Inside a cape hooking into the Atlantic, seeds were sown for the birth of an Anglo settlement, lending the name Mayflower, so it seems, to everybody's family line, as well as a line of moving vans and the Massachusetts state flower, the ground laurel. English Separatists were bound for Virginia but beached a bit north one dreary autumn day, and only half of the hundred or so Pilgrims made it through the bitter winter. With spring, though, a compact was written, friendships were forged with the locals, corn, cranberries and turkeys filled tummies and legendary thanks were given to God. By 1623, Plimouth Plantation flourished while 80 miles up the coast folks from Old Hampshire felled trees for the British market, and likewise the next year, 1624, in later-named Maine. In 1629 five ships with several hundred Puritans aboard anchored off what became Salem-Beverly (including the author's ancestor, a Richard Raymond of Essex, a mariner and one of 30 founders of The First Church of Salem.) By the mid-'30s, after the Mass Bay Colony was sanctioned by the Crown, the population center had shifted into a harbor later called Beantown. Settlements popped up in Connecticut ('34) and Rhode Island ('36) with fleets flooding harbors, and by 1645 royal cartographers were inking *New England* on their charts.

To the west 200 miles, another story emerged. Though France had beaten the Dutch and Brits into the Owlkill around 1540 (almost 500 years ago now), it wasn't Paris, but Amsterdam and London who'd forge a culture here that displaced red man. Explorers found a land of untapped resources and four dramatic seasons, of forested hills and hollows, crystal clear kills and ponds. A region skirted to the north by a long, narrow lake descending from Kanata and on the east a wall of verdant mountains; to the south lay the watershed of the Hoosick clan of the Mahicans, and along the western bound a major river ran straight and deep. Streams were found crawling with furry little critters, so in 1614 Dutch adventurers tacked 150 miles up Hudson's River and built an outpost at today's Albany, the first lasting white presence in the region. Goods of iron and glass were swapped with the Indians for beaver pelts; stacks of furs became legal tender.

By 1622 Holland chartered New Netherland to the Dutch West India Company, a venture that claimed a range from the Fresh River (the upper Connecticut), over the Green Mountains and into our own valley, then down to the South River, today's lower Delaware. Two years later New Amsterdam was founded as the territory's capital on Nut (Governor's) Island off the lower tip of the largest island of the Manathans tribe. Other settlements sprang up, at Haarlem, Bronck's estate, Breuckelen. The colony was secular, multicultural and multinational, unlike the faith-based havens of the English also taking hold in America in the 17th century. But ongoing bloodshed with the natives drove the colonists in 1626 to vote a military commander, Pieter Minuit, as leader of New Amsterdam. He planned to forge the colony into a "new American society", but a dream that died with his death in a Caribbean hurricane in '38. Also in 1624, French Walloons, escaping religious persecution in Belgium, sailed to New Netherland and upriver to establish a colony near the decade old post, naming it Fort Orange for Holland's House of Orange. By '29, the Dutch West India Company set up a larger goods exchange there, and by '36 one Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, a diamond merchant and founding director of the DWIC, purchased land for himself from the Mahicans surrounding Fort Orange, which extended a "two

day's hike" away from and nine miles up and down both sides of the river. Names from Holland were planted in the region that live on today, like Tappan Zee and Rotterdam, mingled with those of the natives like Saraghtage (Saratoga), and later British imports, from Argyle to Williamstown.

Down-province by 1638 Willem Kieft, a Dutch lawyer, assumed governorship of the colony, a stormy tenure rife with conflicts with the Swedes encroaching on the South River (near present day Philly), not to mention the Indians around New Amsterdam, the colonists themselves and, finally, the home country, not a healthy mix for political tenure. So in '47 Pieter Stuyvesant, the original Peg-leg Pete, arrived with legal authority from the Dutch Republic and the muscle of a regiment of soldiers aboard four ships. Under his leadership Manhattan and the colony of New Netherland prospered through the 1650s. In '52 he changed the name of Fort Orange to the village of Beverwyck, stripping Van Rensselaer's private authority (America's first step toward creeping European socialism?) Rensselaerwyck lay just across the river and other Dutch settlements were founded in the area. Three land grants were awarded by Holland: Hoosic, Saratoga, and Walloomsac, all later honored by the English. The story of New Netherland was artfully documented in 1655 by jurist Adriaen Van der Donck in his *Beschreyvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant*, penned in the Old Dutch cursive (not translated into English until the 19th century). A *Description of New Netherland* is considered an early American literary classic since it's replete with raw details of the territory, the 17th century American wilderness, and the tribes encountered. But because it was authored by an arch-rival of the English, and not in their language, for generations it lacked the cachet of e.g. William Bradford's *Of Plimouth Plantation*.

In 1661 all was well on the western front for the Dutch, but in '64 they were expelled by the English from New Amsterdam without a shot fired; Holland was jammed up with warfare in Europe and couldn't assist in the settlement's defense. Richard Nicholls assumed the first governorship of the new British Crown Province. The Dutch regained control of New Amsterdam briefly in 1673, but the following year all their holdings in America were ceded by treaty to England bringing the colony under the authority of the Duke of York and Albany, hence today's names. Little did the Duke know that his newly acquired island at the mouth of the Hudson would one day become "the center of civilization", renowned for banking, bagels, baseball, and the bright lights of Broadway. Up the lazy river in 1686 the newest Provincial Governor, Thomas Dongan, granted a Royal charter to the City of Albany and assigned Pieter Schuyler its first mayor. Since then, over 70 have served the office, 34 of which were of Dutch decent. The fur trade declined with fashion sense in the early 1800s, but other area raw materials like lumber and grain amply filled the coffers of Europe.

Over in New England, meanwhile, unrest had boiled over between the Indians and the English that would find its way into the Cambridge District. In 1634-38 the Pequot War erupted between an odd alliance of the Mass Bay/Plymouth colonists and the Narragansett/Mohegan tribes arrayed against the Pequots over fur trade access. The latter were defeated in southern New England and dispersed, some surviving for a time. In 1675 warfare broke out again, between a confederation of *all* the New England Indians against the colonists, called "King Phillips War", a derisive name given to the major chief. The NE Indians found friends in the French to the far north – "the enemies of my enemies are my friends" – and led captured whites up the Great Northern War Trail (see photo). Hundreds of settlers and thousands of Indians perished, firearms the difference, before a treaty ended the hostilities. By the 1680s some Pequots had escaped over the Taconics and were camping in the White Creek area east of Cambridge, calling their settlement Pompanuck (corrupted into Pumpkin Hook.) Eventually the Pequots were completely wiped out as a living, breathing tribe.

(Insert photo here.)



300 Years Ago – 1711, *The Great Awakening*

As New York Province moved toward the new century, Albany County was established in 1683 to include the Hoosic, Owl and Batten kills, the latter known as Ondawa to the locals. Dutchman Bartholomew Van Hogleboom had earlier trapped the stream, known to the literate as Bart's Kill, then Botskill, and eventually today's name. The 18th century saw a new age of social and spiritual maturity unveiled across English-America, but as the darkest hour always precedes the dawn, in 1692 over in the Mass Bay Colony at Salem, religious zeal overtook reason. The Witch Trials left a trail of horror and shame (gladly for the author's line, Richard Raymond had relocated to Saybrook, Connecticut Colony, by 1660.) After the turn of the century, in 1704 the New England settlement of Hebron was established just southeast of Hartford, which in another six decades would birth our own valley's Anglo population. In 1707 England, Scotland and Wales formed the United Kingdom, an event of epic measure for the British, indeed for all of World History, as Britannia was now set to rule the waves and Western Civilization for 200 years.

By 1711 the census of the British colonies reached more than 250,000, and in 1712 Albany County was parsed into districts. The area north of Schaghticoke and east of Saratoga appeared on the map for the first time as the Cambridge District; the precise reason for the name here is uncertain. Poverty in Europe and opportunity in America packed ships leaving Portsmouth, Glasgow and Dublin, including a lass, Sarah McConnell, one of the Cambridge area's oldest recorded emigrants. Born in Ireland in 1711, she married Thomas Green in 1739, and they booked passage and arrived in the Owlkill, where they raised three sons.

During Europe's "Age of Enlightenment" (1700-1760), America realized her own such period, "The Great Awakening", as our Founding Fathers were delivered into families of both wealth and common standing, born to parents or raised by mentors who ensured their education in the arts and letters. Ben Franklin was a babe in Boston in 1706, but we know his mark was made in Philadelphia and Paris as a preeminent scientist and inventor, printer and postmaster, diplomat and spy, and the eldest of the framers of our enduring national experiment. Sam Adams followed in 1722, also in Boston, a political philosopher and statesman of note. In 1731 George Washington saw the light of day on February 11 (Old Style Calendar) in Westmoreland County, VA, and became our first great wartime general and initial Chief Exec. John Adams, 1735, was born in north Braintree (Quincy), MA. The others followed in the '40s and '50s. As our future leaders matured, political and religious thought evolved during the decline of Puritan orthodoxy in America; in 1734 the Rev. Jonathan Edwards delivered his "hellfire and damnation" sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, in central Mass, about a hundred miles from Cambridge.

We leave this chapter in 1739 when the Walloomsac Patent was legitimized by the Crown for Stephen Van Rensselaer. Dutch and Walloon descendents accepted the authority of Great Britain but the Indians were divided in sympathies of acquiescence or resistance to the whites. Indeed, the Canadian Fracs actively enlisted the natives to push back, and the Seven Year's War, the French and Indian, was just around the corner.

Next time: Chapter X: 250 years ago, 1761, *The Cambridge Patent and the Prelude to Revolution*

Sources: *The Island at the Center of the World*, (R. Shorto, 2005); *Old Cambridge District* (A. Moscrip, 1941); photo: Ken Gottry. (The author may be contacted at tmraymond4@gmail.com)