

*Excerpts on the
Christianization of
the Plymouth
Colony Original
Peoples*

A compilation by Robert Dudley Kelley 2019

The compiler has taken excerpts from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society mostly from the year 1792 when the previously unpublished works of Daniel Gookin (1612 – 1687) was published. Gookin was one of the original Plymouth Colony Magistrates who had charge of the original people's affairs. He kept notes of important events relating to the indigenous peoples and tribes of Plymouth Colony. His writings were never published in his lifetime and eventually published in 1792 by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Further there are excerpts of the unpublished works of Warren Sears Nickerson, who researched with Stanley Smith and made notes on the Lower-Cape Indigenous Peoples. All quotes are footnoted.

In the transcriptions of these manuscripts the word "Indian[s]" appears many times. The compiler has not removed any of the original writings that appear in this compilation. These quotes will appear in italics and a 14 or 12-point font. To tell the difference the compiler's comments appear in regular 14-point font and he uses the substitute of "original people[s]", "indigenous peoples or tribes" to describe the same.

The term "*Praying Indian*" is a specific description of original peoples who were Christianized, and the compiler does use this term in some cases.

Excerpts of Daniel Gookin and other preachers on the Christianization of the Plymouth Colony Indigenous Peoples

During the reign of King James (1603 – 1625) groups of people left England to seek religious freedom in other countries. The Pilgrims left for the New World in 1620. About this time the Puritans were also contemplating emigration, but for slightly different reason. They did not consider themselves separatists, but rather members of the Church of England who were working for further reform of the church.

*King Charles I, appointed William Laud, Arch-Bishop of Canterbury to push for religious uniformity throughout his realm. By the early 1630s it was nearly impossible for anyone with Puritan convictions to receive a pastoral position in the Church of England. For that reason, many left for the New World, including a pastor named **John Eliot** (1604 – 1690). He had received his education at Jesus College, Cambridge, and although he had taken orders in the Church of England, his sympathies were with the Puritan Party. In 1631 Eliot decided to emigrate to the New World. He arrived in July of that year on the same ship that brought John Winthrop, the Colony's first governor. Eliot was invited to preach for a time at the First Church of Boston, in the absence of their minister John Wilson, who was in England. He was received, so well that he was offered a position of Teacher of the church, which he declined in favor of a similar offer from the church at Roxbury. He was settled in Roxbury as Teacher in October 1632 and remained there for fifty-seven years until his death in 1690. ¹*

*In 1646, at the age of about 42 years, John Eliot was called upon by God to preach Christ to the Indians in New England. He began to learn the local Indian dialect. The first place where he began to preach to the Indians was Nonannim, part of Newton, near the Watertown mill, on the south side of the Charles River about four or five miles from his home, with the assistance of an Indian named **Waban**, who was one of the head men of that village, and others. With Waban alongside, Eliot met with some mild success of*

¹ Samworth, Dr. Herbert, author, [John Eliot and America's First Bible](#); p.1; published by Grace Sola Foundation, Inc., www.solagroup.org. [hereinafter: Dr. Samworth]

influencing the Indians, and with that he set up a second lecture site called Neponsitt, which was set up within the bounds of Dorchester, about four or five miles southward of his house, where was located an Indian village under the Sachem Kuchamakin. With the help of Waban, a grave and sober Indian who was an encourager, adept at influencing the tribe, Eliot continued to lecture these two sites for some years with good success. In these early years, Eliot developed two basic catechisms, written in the Indian Algonquin language, used to communicate the gospel to the Indians. One for the children under twelve was shorter, and the other for the adults was longer. ²

*John Eliot was unwavering and diligent in his pursuit of preaching to promote the salvation of the poor Indian. He not only traveled to every corner of southern New England and Islands in this pursuit, but he stirred up other ministers and scholars to help him, by his words and letters, in what Gookin called an Indian harvest. In Plymouth Colony there was **Richard Bourne**, who was able to speak the Indian tongue, and entered into this service with great success. **John Cotton** had lived among the Indians at Martha's Vineyard for two years, learned their tongue, and was the pastor of the English church at Plymouth. He also traveled to every corner of New Plymouth preaching to the Indians. There were the **Mayhew's**, father and son, at Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, who received the calling from above. There was **Mr. Pierson** and currently **Mr. Fitch** who preached to the Connecticut Indians.*

In the task of promoting, encouraging, and propagating the Christian religion to a nation of these considered rude, uncivilized, and barbarous Indians, Eliot took great care to influence the general court of Massachusetts, to appoint some of the most prudent and pious Indians, in every village, that had received the gospel, to be rulers and magistrates among them, to order their affairs being civil and criminal in nature. These rulers were chosen by themselves, but appointed by a superior authority, the general court.

² Excerpts from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, for the year 1792, Vol. 1, part 2, Boston.
Gookin, Daniel, Historical Collections of the Indians in New England, Ch.V. *Of the instruments and Means that God hath used, for the Civilizing and Conversion of some of the New England Indians.* p. 168, 169.

*Additionally, the general court appointed an English magistrate to rule with the chief, to keep a higher court among them, thus extending the power of the English court to the villages. **Daniel Gookin** was the first chosen English Magistrate to rule over the Praying Indians in 1656. Shortly after his appointment Gookin was called back to England and Humphrey Atherton was appointed to take his place, but within 3 years, in 1661 Atherton died. Gookin who returned in 1660 from his commission, resumed his former position as magistrate after the death of Atherton.*³

Commitment of the Praying Indians to English Law.

The General Court of Massachusetts set down laws for the original peoples villages to live by. Gookin outlines them as follows: *For the better ordering and governing the Indians subject to us, especially those of Natick, Punkapang...it is ordered, that whosoever the court shall appoint, do take care that all such Indians, do live according to our laws, as far as they are capable; and in that end shall be authorized to constitute and appoint Indian commissioners in their several plantations, to hear and determine all such matters that do arise among themselves, as one magistrate may do amongst the English; with officers to execute all commands and warrants, as marshal and constables. And further they jointly shall have the power of a county court, to hear and determine all causes arising among them; the English magistrate appointing time and place of the court, and consenting to the determination and judgment. And all other matters beyond their cognizance, shall be issued and determined by the court of assistants.* Although there are other laws, these listed here were the main ones:⁴

- 1. Declaring the Indians' title to lands, from the General Court.*
- 2. The civil Indians to have lands granted them for towns.*

³ Excerpts from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, for the year 1792, Vol. 1, part 2, Boston. Gookin, Daniel, Historical Collections of the Indians in New England, Ch.VI. Of the other Means and Instruments, used and improved for Civilizing and reducing the Indians from Barbarism. Hereinafter [Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VI:]

Indian villages elect rulers and magistrates among them but appointed by general court.

⁴ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VI: p. 177, 188. English laws for the Indians set forth by the General Court of Massachusetts.

3. *Indians not to be dispossessed of what lands they have subdued, or from their fishing places.*
4. *None to buy lands from the Indians without license of the court.*
5. *All strong liquors prohibited to be sold or given to the Indians, unless in case of sickness, by permission.*
6. *Powows, or wizards and witches, prohibited upon penalty.*
7. *Orders to refrain and prevent drunkenness; and some others. (this was added by Gookin as a core issue)*

An example of rules one and two above we can see the forming of a reservation for the original people in the town at Natick. Feeling that the encroachment of the English would impede the growth and livelihood of the original people of Natick in 1651, under a motion proposed by Eliot to the General Court of Massachusetts, that the court grant unto the twenty nine families of the original people of the area known as Natick, about 6,000 acres of fertile land. As early as the mid – 1600s some dwellings within the Natick village, although not as efficient as the wigwam, were made in the English style.⁵

The “Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to the Indians in New England” was formed in 1649. The organizing of the society was due in large part to the efforts of Mr. Edward Winslow, who was then one of the magistrates of the Plymouth jurisdiction, a trusted man of piety and wisdom, had previously gone to England on the business of the welfare of the United Colonies of New England. He published a work entitled “Glorious Progress of the Gospel among the Indians”, which contained excerpts from

⁵ Excerpts from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, for the year 1792, Vol. 1, part 2, Boston.

Gookins, Daniel, Historical Collections of the Indians in New England, Ch.VII. Of the Number, Names, and Situation of the Indian praying towns within the Colony of Massachusetts, with the Churches gathered in some of them, the Quantities of Land belonging to them, a Conjecture at the Number of Families and People that inhabit in them, with other matters thereunto appertaining. p. 180, 181

Gookin describes the town: *The town consisteth of three long streets; two on the north side of the river; and on, on the south; with house lots to every family. There is a handsome large fort, of a round figure, palisaded with trees; and a foot bridge over the river, in form of an arch, the foundation of which is secured with stone. There is also one large house built after the English manner. The lower room is a large hall, which serves for a meeting house, on the Lord’s day, and a school house on the week days. The upper room is a kind of wardrobe, where the Indians hang up their skins, and other things of value. In the corner of this room Mr. Eliot has an apartment partitioned off, with a bed and bedstead in it. Their other houses in this town are generally after their old mode before described; though some they have built in this and other of the praying villages, after the English form...but these being more chargeable to build and not so warm, and cannot be removed to easily as their wigwams, wherein there is not a nail sued, to avoid annoyance by fleas, and themselves being generally artists in building and finishing their own wigwams; for these and like reasons, they do incline to keep their old fashioned houses.*

letters of the Rev. John Eliot tell of his success among the Naticks, and from Governor Thomas Mayhew of Martha's Vineyard, preacher to the Indians of that island. ⁶

Winslow had used his influence to solicit the Parliament of Lords and Commons, with like minds on the good work being performed with the Native Indians in the United Colonies, in passing an Act to Parliament, and to contribute worthy individuals to become a corporation, for the encouragement and design in propagating the Christian religion among the Indians of the United Colonies in America. The society collected funds from every parish in England and even some from the struggling colonies. Parliament did pass the Act in both houses, nominating several worthy individuals as a political body of incorporation to manage the intents and purposes of the Act. The meetings were held at Cooper's hall in London, so that any person may freely observe the proceedings of managing the affair. Gookin states that God blessed the endeavor that opened the hearts and purses of many diverse people on the subject, which produced significant sums of money to the cause, to be distributed by the Commissioners of the United Colonies. Gookin says he personally saw to the distribution of the accounts which ranged from salaries to land acquisitions. The some of the major tenets of the Act are as follows:

- 1. Provide small salaries to those employed in the work.*
- 2. Keeping Indian youths at school, providing diet, clothing, and books.*
- 3. The building of an Indian college.*
- 4. The printing of the Bible and other books in the Indian language.*
- 5. Providing sundry tools and instruments for the Indians to work with in several callings.*
- 6. Furnishing the Indians with sheep's wool and cotton wool for their encouragement in the ways of industry and diligence.*
- 7. Allowing some encouragement and small salaries to Indian rulers, teachers, schoolmasters, and interpreters.* ⁷

Gookin states that within Parliament there were several who would have swindled these funds from the King to build their own coffers behind his back. Again, divine intervention prevailed as Charles II perceived the situation and appointed Robert Boyle, Esq., brother to the Earle of Cork, as

⁶ Nickerson, *Praying Indians*: 6. Winslow's influence with Parliament concerning the organization of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to the Indians in New England," formed in 1649.

⁷ Gookin, *Excerpts*, Ch.VI: p. 211 – 214. The forming of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to the Indians in New England" 1649. Major laws that will govern the villages.

the governor and president of the corporation. Boyle was an ardent supporter of the Act for the Propagation of the Gospel among the original people and he saw to it that the funds appropriated for this grand plan were faithfully distributed.

Boyle writes his first letter from the corporation and he reveals the Commissioners answer to the account of that year's disbursements. Communications back and forth were conducted secretly and so the beginning of Boyle's letter is an acknowledgement of the receipt of the Commissioners needs.

...We are glad, that through the goodness of God, we are now in a condition to inform you, that since the receipt of your lastly mentioned letter, it hath pleased the king's Majesty, in council, to grant a charter of incorporation, wherein many of the nobility and other persons of quality, and most of those gentlemen that were formerly employed in the like work, are authorized and appointed to endeavor the carrying on of that pious design for converting the heathen natives; wherein they deservedly esteem it both an honour and advantage to be employed in this new establishment; being, among other particulars, enjoined to appoint commissioners to New England, to protect there, by our directions, his Majesty's pious intentions... We hope you will discern how great a truth we willingly repose in you; and we doubt not of your readiness to comply as formerly you have done, with our directions herein; the business wherein we desire to engage you being such, as we think it truly honourable to be engaged in ourselves; and the design being of a nature to which the greatest and most precious promises are annexed; besides that the civilizing and converting of your barbarous and unbelieving neighbours is that, whose success will be, in some regards, of more immediate advantage to yourselves than to us...Our good wishes to so christian a work makes it much our trouble, to see the means of carrying it on are no greater, than we now at our entrance find them; which we mention not by way of reflection upon those, to whose hands the management of them was committed, before the grant of our charter; but because it is necessary for us to acquaint you with the condition we are brought to, partly by the great charge you and we have been at on several necessary occasions, and partly, and indeed chiefly, by the injurious dealing of some, who take advantage of the letter of the law against all justice and equity, to repossess themselves of what they formerly sold, whereby the greatest part of our revenue is at present detained; which will prove, we fear, very expensive and somewhat difficult to recover. And therefore we desire as little money may be drawn upon us for this year to come, as will possibly consist with the not neglecting of what is necessary to be done. We say, for this next year; because we cannot be despondent, as not to hope, that the providence of God will, by some means or other, provide for the supply of a work, so much tending to his glory, and so acceptable to those, that are heartily concerned for it.

The bill for eight hundred pound, drawn for the use of the Indian work, is for the most part paid, and should have been entirely so ere now, were it not for the want of present money. That which is from time to time laid out, we desire may, according to your commendable practice, be sent over in a particular account within the year. And it

may assist us in the regulating our expenses, if you be pleased to let us know, by the first conveniency, what further charge you judge you shall be put to, by perfecting the printing of the bible. The use of that divine book, and also a constant use of catechisms, we judge most necessary for the Indians' instruction in religion. And we also think it may conduce to unity and order if the same catechism be generally taught amongst them.

If our flock do increase, which we hope hereafter it may, especially since his Majesty himself hath graciously pleased particularly to countenance this work, and to secure both what hath been, and may be given towards it, by a legal settlement, which before was wanting: - If we say, our means increase, we shall consider of some employment, in the way of trade and manufacture, to employ the Indians in...your informations and advice will be, as well as your assistance, very welcome to us. Pr. Robert Boyle, Governour. London May 15, 1662 ⁸

Parts of the response by the "Commission for the Indians" dated, September 10, 1662 Boston.

Touching the progression of this work, at present your Honours may please to be informed, that, as we have formerly related, we are still waiting on the Lord in the use of the means afforded.

The labourers in that work, for instructing the Indians in the several colonies, continued, together with the education of sundry youth; two whereof have been, the year past, brought up at the college in Cambridge; where they have good commendations of the president and their tutors, for their proficiency in learning. Also two others are at the grammar school; and two more, at the English school; where they learn to read and write; one whereof is now fitted for the grammar school; beside many others that are instructed by schoolmasters in other places to read and write. It hath pleased the Lord to frown upon our endeavors in this kind; taking away by death, at sundry times six youths or more, upon whom considerable cost had been expended for their education; wherein it very well becometh us, and all herein concerned, humbly to submit unto his sovereign pleasure.

The number of lectures, with the schoolmasters that constantly attend that work in the respective places of the Indians' abode, your Honours may more particularly discern by their names, inserted in the account enclosed, together with their respected salaries and allowance for the same. We are informed by the Reverend Mr. Eliot, that he is so far satisfied concerning the Lord's effectual work with his word, on the hearts of sundry of the natives, that he hath proceeded to administer the sacrament of baptism at two of their plantation; the one called Martha's Vineyard; and the other, Natick; being a distance about one hundred miles.

The bible is now about half done; and a constant progress there is made. The printer hopes it will be finished within a year. The future charge is uncertain; by estimate, not less than two hundred pounds. We have herewith sent twenty copies of the new testament, to be disposed of as your Honours shall think meet.

⁸ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VI: p. 214 – 215. First letter from The Corporation in London to the Commission in New Plymouth Colony. from its President Robert Boyle, Governor.

The trust your honours hath seen meet to repose in us for the managing of this work, we shall endeavor in all faithfulness to discharge. The account enclosed tells you, to whom, and in what manner, and for what ends, the money sent over, hath been distributed; wherby you will plainly see, that neither our colonies nor particular concernments are any diminshers thereof, but the whole is improved according to the will of the donors. And for the future, we shall be ready to observe the more particular directions of you Honours; humbly intreating this favour, that no information or complaint may be received against us to the prejudice of our trust, until we have had advice thereof, with a reasonable opportunity to return an answer thereto. The sum at present resting in hand, the foot of the account doth declare; which will be more than all expended before the return of the year. Less than five hundred pounds we could not charge bills, to be paid this year; without which the work will inevitably be interrupted, if not broken in pieces...Boston in New England, Sept. 10, 1662.⁹

The Honourable Corporation for the Indians, The first year disbursement of nearly 800 pounds. At this time it is clear by looking at this disbursement who was involved in the propagation of the gospel among the Indians of southeast New England:

- *Imprimis, to sundry disbursements for printing the bible £237 6s od*
- *To books for the Indian scholars, as pr. Account enclosed..... £19 12s 6d*
- *To diet, clothing, and tutorage of two Indian youths at the college, one year past with extraordinary expenses at entrance £44 12s 3d*
- *To Mr. Daniel Weld, schoolmaster at Roxbury, for diet, clothing, and schooling of two Youths, one year past, abating one third part of a year, for one of them ending December 20th next..... £25 0s od*
- *To Mr. Thomas Danforth, for diet and clothing of two Indian youths, the year past..... £30 0s od*
- *To the diet and clothing Matthew Mayhew, one year past.....£13 0s od*
- *To the schoolmaster of Cambridge for two Indian youths and Matthew Mayhew..... £8 0s od*
- *To the maintenance of Mr. Stanton's son, one year £25 0s od*
- *To Mr. Pierson of New Haven, for his pains and travel instructing the Indians at several places in those parts..... £30 0s od*
- *To Mr. Eliot senior, his salary for the year past £50 0s od*
- *To his interpreter Job, and three schoolmasters £40 0s od*
- *To Mr. John Eliot junior, his salary for one year past £25 0s od*
- *To Mr. Mayhew, his salary for the year past £30 0s od*
- *To eight Indian schoolmasters at Martin's Vineyard £30 0s od*
- *To Mr. Bourne in Plymouth patent, his salary £25 0s od*
- *To two schoolmasters, employed by him in those parts £5 0s od*
- *To Captain Gookin, for instructing and governing the Indians £15 0s od*
- *To sundry well deserving Indians in the several colonies£15 0s od*

⁹ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VI: p. 216 – 218. Commissioners response to Robert Boyle's May 15, 1662 letter.

- *To Mr. William Thompson, his salary, for instructing the Indians about Pequot*..... £20 0s 0d
- *To Mrs. Mayhew, relict of Mr. Mayhew deceased* £6 0s 0d
- *To Mr. John Alcock, for physic to sick Indian scholars, pr. order* £7 9s 5d
- *To two Indian coats for the Pequot sachems* £0 16s 0d
- *To Mr. James of Easthampton, his salary for instructing the Indians at Long Island*.....£20 0s 0d
- *To Captain George Denison, for time and expense among the Indians, sundry times, pr. order* £6 13s 4d

£728 8s 6d ¹⁰

Eliot not only traveled extensively preaching the gospel to the original people, he set up the great work of translating the Bible into the Algonquin language. This work was greatly encouraged by the Corporation in England, who paid for its printing. In addition to translating the New Testament of the Bible there were other books translated into Algonquin published and promoted by the corporation, such as the original peoples catechisms, a grammar primer, singing psalms, the Practice of Piety, Baxter’s call to the Unconverted, and others. ¹¹

His Majesty Charles II was an ardent supporter of converting the New England original people, and to have the Bible interpreted in the Algonquin tongue under his reign was a great honor to himself, his church and his people. Eliot being one of his subjects made the undertaking all that more glorious. On September 5, 1661, Eliot and others, had the New Testament translated and printed into Algonquin much to the delight of the King.¹² With funds from the corporation in London, an original peoples college was erected out of brick at Harvard/Cambridge for both Indian and English scholars. It contained a printing press, which was likely the source of the many Algonquin language printings.¹³ (Insert Cambridge, Printing Press, Indian/English College)

¹⁰ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VI: 218. The disbursement of the first years funds by the Commission at New Plymouth Colony, 1662, Eliot was clearly the leader of the clergy at 50 pounds per year. Note the printing of the scriptures expense was the most important event.

¹¹ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.5: p. 172. Eliot recruitments and book translations to the Indian language.

¹² Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.5: p. 176. Eliot and others translate and publish the New Testament in the Indian language.

¹³ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.5: p. 176. Writes Gookin: *...as a means...for the good of the Indians... was the erecting of a house of brick at Cambridge in New England, which passeth under the name of the Indian college. It is a structure strong and substantial though not very capacious. It cost between three or four hundred pounds. It is*

In 1673 the Rev. John Eliot proclaims the English resistance to treat Protestant original people as equals. He argues

“I have moved and argued among the Elders, that it will be an act of honor to Christ, to the churches, and to yourselves, and but a fit, yea necessary encouragement unto the work to accept them into your communion which the Lord hath so manifestly, undeniably accepted”

A certain segment of the English Elders resisted the notion that would allow these original peoples to attend religious services in the same edifice with the English. One of the arguments was that the diversity of language would be hard to overcome. The English certainly had other reasons for not wanting integration in the Church, but the language argument was a convenient one.¹⁴ It was determined that the English style Congregational meeting houses built for the indigenous tribes in New Plymouth Colony would not be attended by the English, or vice versa.¹⁵

*Although the Rev. Eliot traveled everywhere in southeastern Massachusetts, in those early days, and visited all the villages of the indigenous tribes on the Cape and Islands, at the upper Cape, it was Richard Bourne who laid the groundwork for a cohesive, organized and systematic upper Cape Cod to Middleborough original peoples community, Thomas Mayhew and his son Thomas at Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket, and **Samuel Treat** in the lower Cape. Bourne had a few close colleagues in Captain Thomas Tupper and Anthony Besse that assisted him in this operation, mainly working near the Herring River and Manomet Country, the headquarters being Commassakumkanit, or Bournedale. Captain Tupper, his son, grandson, gr. grandson continued devoted service to the Indians for 150 years.¹⁶ Each of these men had a host of indigenous tribe helpers in each village.*

large enough to receive and accommodate about twenty scholars with convenient lodgings and studies; but not hitherto hath been much improved for the ends intended, by reason of the death and failing of Indian scholars...to accommodate English scholars, and for placing and using a printing press belonging to the college. This house was built and finished at the charge, and by the appointment, of the Honourable Corporation for propagating the gospel in new England.

¹⁴ Mashpee, p. 56.

¹⁵ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.5.

¹⁶ Nickerson, Praying Indians, 8.

In 1674, just a year before the King Philips War, Gookin called each of his head clergy to contribute a census of *Praying Indians* in the various villages throughout the New Plymouth Colony. The ensuing letters and correspondence from Richard Bourne, Thomas Mayhew, Sr., and the Rev. John Cotton together give us a good understanding of how many *Praying Indians* there actually were in New Plymouth Colony, by village.

Thomas Mayhew born in England was a merchant, who came over at the beginning of the settlement of the Massachusetts colony. He owned land at Watertown where he built and operated a mill. About the year 1642, Mayhew sold off his properties in Watertown and was called upon by a higher authority to settle on the island of Martha's Vineyard. About 1648 along with his son Thomas junior these men took up the gospel, while learning the native tongue of the island and preaching to the original peoples there and Nantucket. While on a voyage to London in 1657 Thomas Mayhew, the younger, met with tragedy, as the four-hundred-ton ship, mastered by James Garrett, carrying aboard about 50 passengers and a rich cargo was lost at sea. This was a great loss to the progress of preaching the gospel on the islands. Thomas Mayhew, the senior, diligently continued the work of teaching the gospel to the indigenous tribes on the islands until an advanced age of over 90 years.¹⁷

In a letter from Mayhew to Gookin, dated, May 14, 1674, Mayhew provides a census of sorts, describing the numbers of *Praying Indians* on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

Briefly, the first church was gathered here just fifteen years since...Which church is now become three churches, by reason of their habitations; two upon the Vineyard. There are near fifty in full, and suppose rightly in communion...Which churches have a pastor and an elder. Mr. Eliot was here, and joined in their ordination. Mr. Cotton was also here with Mr. Eliot. The families here are three hundred at least; upon the isle Chappaquidgick, sixty families, but one of them prays not to God. The other two hundred and forty families are generally praying. Care is

¹⁷ Excerpts from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, for the year 1792, Vol. 1, part 2, Boston. Gookin, Daniel, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, Ch.IX: p. 201 – 202. About Thomas Mayhew senior and junior took up the gospel on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Thomas Mayhew junior lost at sea traveling back to England.

taken, that all and every one come in by voluntary contention; which is and hath been the constant practice here now. There are ten Indian preachers, of good knowledge and holy conversation; seven jurisdictions; and fix meetings every Lord's day. In every jurisdiction the heads are worshipers.

...And at Nantucket, there is a church which relates to me. They as I said, first joined into full worship here, and since became a church orderly, and is increased. Upon that island are many praying Indians. Also the families of that island are about three hundred. I have oftentimes accounted the families of both island; and have very often these thirty two years, been at Nantucket.

*For schools, sometimes there are some; sometimes, not. But many can read and write Indian; very few, English; none, to great purpose; not above three or four; and those do it brokenly. Myself and my two grandsons can speak the language of this island. But my grandsons not yet employed. John, the younger, doth teach the Indians; and is like now, I suppose, to be encouraged by the Commissioners. Matthew, my eldest grandchild, hath also preached to them; and I think, when settled, will again.*¹⁸ *The following is a Postscript for Martha's Vineyard by publishers in 1792.*¹⁹

¹⁸ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.IX: p. 204 – 205. Letter from Thomas Mayhew to Daniel Gookin, May 14, 1674, stating the number of praying Indians on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Nearly every Indian family on the Island is praying, with the exception of one family on Chappaquiddick. There are 3 churches and 10 Indian preachers. On Nantucket there are about 300 Indian families, many are praying. §. 2. " To his much-esteemed friend, Captain Gookin, in Cambridge.

¹⁹ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.IX: p.206. Post Script in the 1792 publication of Praying Indian census readings in the mid-1700s.

Post Script: 1720, there were on the Vineyard six small villages, containing about a hundred and fifty-five families, and about eight hundred souls. Each of these villages was supplied with an Indian preacher. There was also a small assembly at Winthrop's island ; another, consisting of twelve or fourteen families, at Tucker's island and Nashaun, which lie near together. There were a few Indians left at Noman's Land. Beside these Indian assemblies, there was a small congregation of Baptists at Gay Head. (a) [Exp. Mayhew's Nar. of Ind. on Martha's Vin. pag. 2.]—In the year 1764, there were remaining in Duke's County three hundred and thirteen Indians ; eighty-six of whom were in Edgartown ; thirty-nine, in Tisbury : and a hundred and eighty-eight, in Chilmark.—About that period they began to intermarry with negroes ; in consequence of which the mixed race has increased in numbers, and improved in temperance and industry. At present there are of pure Indians and of the mixed race about four hundred and forty persons ; seventy-five of whom live on Chappaquiddick, (not more than one third pure ;) about twenty-five, at Sancheantacket, (not more than one fifth pure ;) about forty, at Christian-town, in the north part of Tisbury, toward the sound, (about one half, pure ;) about twenty-four, at Nashouhkamuck, (about three quarters, pure;) and about two hundred and seventy-six, at Gay Head, (of which about one quarter are pure.) In this account unmixed negroes are not reckoned. [Information of Captain Jerningham and Benjamin Bassett, Esq.]

Gookin describes Eliot's recruitment of Richard Bourne as the spiritual leader of the Mashpau Plantation.²⁰

*...The example and exhortations of Reverend Mr. Eliot, and his travelling into Plymouth jurisdiction at sometimes, and writing letters to stir up others, and preaching among some of them, and others coming sometimes to him, hath had an influence, through the grace of God co-operating, to win sundry of them to yield obedience and subjection unto the gospel. For the encouragement and furtherance of that work, it pleased God to raise up one Mr. Richard Bourne, living in that colony, about Sandwich; who being a pious, sober, and active person, endowed with good understanding in the scriptures, having gained by his industry and diligence a competent knowledge and ability to teach them in the Indian language; he applied himself to preach the gospel to some Indians that dwelt not far from his habitation: and afterwards finding good success, went further among them, preaching the glad tidings of salvation to sundry others: that a good and plentiful harvest is gathered in that colony. Of which take the following account from his own hands.*²¹

Even before Bourne was ordained as the pastor among the indigenous tribes at Mashpee in 1670, he accelerated the religious teachings up and down the Cape. Most particular to the census of *Praying Indians* in the various Cape Cod indigenous peoples villages is Richard Bourne's letter to Daniel Gookin dated, 1 of 7 month, 1674. Bourne records the progress in converting the original people to the English church.

Bourne's summary of the *Praying Indians* from Middleborough to the tip of the Cape is recorded as: 497 souls, that can read Algonquin 142, that can write Algonquin 72, and that can read English 9. The following are the details by village or area of converted original people listed by Bourne. Apparently Gookin was pressing each of his chief ministers to respond to him with

(a) For the state of the Indian Baptists on Martha's Vineyard in the year 1774, see Backus's *Hist. Vol. I. pag. 439*. Their minister, Silas Paul, is dead ; but their number is not lessened.

²⁰ The Rev. John Cotton in his letter to Gookin in 1674, refers to the Mashpee as *Mashpau*.

²¹ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VIII: p. 196. Census of the Plymouth Colony Praying Indians in the year 1674.

census information concerning the original people who had become Christianized. Bourne seemed bothered by the fact that he wasn't fully prepared to have this information presented so quickly.

Letter from Richard Bourne to Captain Gookin of Cambridge:

"All due respects presented; according to your desire, signified in your letter unto myself, I have endeavoured to return you a particular answer, according to the short time I had to accomplish it in. Although I have not been willing to appear formerly in so particular account as this is, but rather did desire, that the effect of the work might speak for me, the which would speak more fully than I could : But being it must be so now, I hope it will occasion many to render thanks to God with myself, in respect of the grace in the gospel manifested among these poor, lost people. And for those that I have been conversant with, and employed amongst, these many years, you may please to see as followeth. ²²

²² Gookin, Excerpts, Ch. VIII: p. 196 – 198. Census recordings for Indian villages from Middleborough to the tip of the Cape.

* Cape Cod. Part of these Indians probably lived in Provincetown ; but the greatest number in Truro.
+ Now Wellfleet.

* The south east part of Eastham.

|| The north part of Eastham.

¥ Chatham.

§ The west part of Harwich.

§§ The north east part of Yarmouth.

¶ The land between Barnstable and Yarmouth harbours, lying principally in the north west part of Yarmouth.

** Pronounced at present Cheehwacket. The south west part of the east precinct in Barnstable.

¥¥ Satuit, or Sanctuit, Pawpoesit, and Wakoquet, or Waquoit, are all within, or near the limits of Mashpee.

++ Coatuit is in the south west part of Barnstable.

§* Probably Canaumut Neck in Mashpee.

||| Or Shumuit. On the west line of Mashpee.

¶¶ Between Pokeset meeting-house and Wenaumut Neck in Sandwich.

+ Waywayantik, or Wewewantett. Wareham.

¥ Commonly pronounced Succonusset. Part of Falmouth.

|| Or Titticut. Part of Middleborough.

¶ Or Assowamset. Part of Middleborough.

Below is a breakdown by village of the census Bourne submitted in his letter to Gookin in 1674. The Mattacheese are among the census taken by Bourne. Their numbers are grouped with the Nobscussett, Weequakutt, & Sawkattukett, ranging in area from the eastward of the Mashpee tribes to the western edge of the Potanumicutt tribe.

"First there is at Meeshawn, or near the head of the Cape, and at Punonakanit, or Billingsgate,+ that are praying Indians, that do frequently meet together upon the Lord's day to worship God ; and likewise the rest as followeth ; viz.*

<i>Men and women</i>	51	} 72
<i>Young men and maids</i>	21	
<i>Of these seventy-two there is that can read Indian</i>		25
<i>And that can write there is</i>		16

*"Potanumaquut, * or Nawsett, || or Eastham, there are praying Indians,*

<i>Men and women</i>	24	} 44
<i>Young men and maids</i>	20	
<i>Of these forty-four there is that can read</i>		7
<i>That can write there is but</i>		2

Manamoyik^Y; there are praying Indians,

<i>Men and women</i>	42	} 72
<i>Young men and maids,</i>	29	
<i>Of these seventy-one there is that can read</i>		20
<i>That can write</i>		15
<i>That can read English</i>		1

*"Sawkattukett [§]; Nobsquassit ^{§§}; Matakees [¶]; and Weequakut ^{**}; praying Indians,*

<i>Men and women</i>	55	} 122
<i>Young men and maids</i>	67	
<i>Of these one hundred and twenty-two there is that can read</i>		33
<i>That can write there is</i>		15
<i>That can read English</i>		4

"Satuit, Pawpoesit, Coatuit ++; Mashpee, Wakoquet ¥¥; there is praying Indians,

Men and women	70	} 95
Young men and maids	25	
Of these ninety-five there is that can read		24
That can write		10
That can read English		2

"Codtanmut§*; Ashimuit||||; Weesquobs¶¶; there is praying Indians,

Men and women	12	} 22
Young men and maids	10	
Of these twenty-two there is that can read		13
That can write		7
That can read English		2

"Pispogutt*; Wawayontat +; Sokones¥; there is praying Indians,

Men and women	20	} 36
Young men and maids	16	
Of these thirty-six that can read		20
That can write		7

"Cotuhtikut||; Assoowamsoo¶; there are praying Indians, one with another.

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Letters from the Rev. John Cotton

The Rev. John Cotton also played a role in the Christianizing of the New Plymouth original people. He has preached in the Algonquin language, to the Cape Cod indigenous tribes, and spent about two years on Martha's Vineyard preaching there. Here is his letter to Gookin during this 1674 census.

*"Mr. Bourne having been long in the Indian work, and acquainted with the Indian language in several parts, is most able to give you a satisfying account of the work of God, and its progress among the Indians of this colony. I have not long lived here: but in this time I began to preach the word of God to a company of Indians, at a place called Kitteaumut.*²³ Since which, through the blessing of God, the number of praying Indians is forty males and females. As yet they have no Indian teacher; but on sabbath days, they usually go to hear one of Mr. Bourne's Indians, at the nearest place to them. "About ten of these can read the English books; [A]²⁴ and many more are very desirous to learn to read the word : but there is very great want of Indian primers and bibles. I much desire that the Commissioners would take some speedy course to supply that defect. I sometimes preach to the Indians upon the Cape, at several places, and at Namassekett;⁺²⁵ whither come the praying Indians of Assawomit^{¥26} and Ketchiquut.||²⁷ Of those Indians Mr. Bourne gives you the account. When the courts are here, there are usually great multitudes of Indians from all parts of the colony. At those seasons I preach to them ; which I mention, because God hath so far blessed it, as to make it a means to encourage some that live very remote, to affect praying to God ; viz. Manmanewat, sachem of Sakonett,¶²⁸ and some principal Indians of Coquitt ;**²⁹ who made their confessions, and declared their willingness to serve God ; and they do improve all the opportunities they can get to hear the word. They came to hear me at Acushnett,++³⁰ when I preached there; and do desire further means of instruction. I desire your prayers for me and mine; and rest, Sir, Your Worship's in any service for Christ, John Cotton.³¹*

In the year of our Lord 1659, it pleased God to bring things to such maturity among the praying Indians at the Vineyard, that one Indian church was gathered among them; which since is become two churches : Where I take this account in part of a letter from

²³ * Or Katamet. Part of Sandwich, on Buzzard's bay.

²⁴ [A] Translated into the Indian language.

²⁵ + Or Namasket. Part of Middleborough.

²⁶ ¥ Assoowamset.

²⁷ || Titticut.

²⁸ ¶ Little Compton.

²⁹ ** Or Coxit. Part of Dartmouth.

³⁰ ++ New Bedford.

³¹ Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.VIII: p. 199 – 200. Letter from Rev. John Cotton, Pastor of the English church in Plymouth to Daniel Gookin, September 14, 1674.

Mr. John Cotton, now pastor at Plymouth, which sometimes lived and preached to the Indians upon the Vineyard.

"When I lived at the Vineyard, the praying towns were Chappaquidgick, Nashamoies,+ Sengekontakit,|| Toikiming,¥ Nashuakemmiuk,¶ Talhanio ;** one church there gathered long before, but no officers. Since I lived here, I went over with Mr. Eliot thither ;++ and Hiacoomes was ordained pastor: John Tokinosh, teacher; John Nonoso and Joshua Mummeecheeg, ruling elders.¥¥ Since I hear they are become two churches ; the pastor and one ruling elder for Chappaquidgick; the teacher and the other ruling elder, for the other church, which hath some members, if I mistake not, in all the other towns above mentioned. Hands were imposed in ordination, by Mr. Eliot, Mr. Mayhew, and myself.*

"The church at Marshpaug,|||| was gathered, and Mr. Bourne ordained pastor of it ; hands imposed by Mr. Eliot and I, and one of the messengers of Natick church, and one of the Vineyard. Major Winslow, now our governour, Mr. Southworth, Mr.-----, Mr. Hinkley, and Mr. Bacon, were the magistrates present ; Mr. Walley, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Shove, Mr. Thornton, Mr. Homes, Mr. Newman, with brethren from all our churches. How these churches have increased since I cannot inform."

A further account of Nantucket Indians take in part of Mr. Cotton's letter, dated 14th of September, 1674.

"At Nantucket, according to my best intelligence, there are three praying towns ; and praying Indians, about three hundred males and females; one church, the pastor is John Gibbs ; the men in church fellowship are about twenty ; the women, ten. Their children are all baptized. The English upon that island, who are about twenty-seven families, and many of them Anabaptists, did at first seek to hinder them from administering baptism to infants ; but now they are quiet, and meddle not with them. Caleb is preacher to one town there."+

"Thus, according to the best intelligence I can yet obtain, I have endeavoured to give a faithful account of the Indians that pray to God upon these two Islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. And in truth it hath pleased God, in his sovereign grace, to do much for them. I have seen and spoke with divers of the Indians of those islands, that usually every summer come up to our parts, about Boston and the towns adjacent, to work in harvest labour and other employ. Many of them I have judged pious; and most of them, sober, diligent, and industrious; which are commendable qualifications. My desires and prayers are, that not only they, but all the other praying Indians, may more and more increase in virtue and piety." ³²

³² Gookin, Excerpts, Ch.IX: p. 207. Further notes from Rev. John Cotton.

Until 1672, the following religious men, including, Mr. John Eliot, Mr. John Cotton, and Mr. Richard Bourne, attempted to make inroads into the Christianizing of the indigenous tribes eastward of the Bass River. Mr. Eliot ran into some difficulty communicating with these tribes due to the difference between their dialect and that of the Natick's near Boston, which is what Eliot was used to. Eliot was also bothered by the opposition of some of the indigenous tribe leaders in this area. Mr. Bourne made great inroads towards the Christianizing some of the lower Cape indigenous tribes, but was getting up in age.

He had a very large following in the Mashpee Plantation area and traveled down the Cape less and less. Owing to some of these issues, these lower Cape indigenous tribes were still under the strong influence of their ancient Paw Waws. The systematic methods that Eliot, and Bourne used with the Plymouth Colony indigenous tribes west of the Bass River were much more entrenched than then those of the tribes further down the Cape.

The area of Eastham at this time was still considered a struggling frontier. Then in 1672, the Rev. Samuel Treat was ordained as the pastorate of the indigenous peoples Eastham Church. At the time of Treat's arrival tensions between the colonists and the Potanumaquut, Monomoyick, Matchapoxet, Namskaket, Tonset, Pochet and Weesit among other smaller indigenous tribes in that area was very difficult. English settlements were expanding and consuming the ancient hunting grounds of the established indigenous tribes.

The older Plymouth generation English leaders that had worked hard to develop good relations between the apostles and the original people were dying out. A new generation of Plymouth leaders had a more aggressive agenda, to acquire more land, or to tie it up with new laws. The old friend to the white man, Sachem Massasoit was gone, and Metacomet, better known as King Philip, his son and successor, was not inclined to see the English way.³³

³³ Nickerson, *Praying Indians*: 8. The Rev. Samuel Treat is ordained as Eastham's religious leader in rough times.

Richard Bourne

Richard Bourne's farm was located in South Sandwich just north of the Mashpee pond. In 1665 the General Court of Plymouth authorized Bourne to make use of the meadow at the northeastern end of Mashpee Pond provided he do it with the consent of the Indians who owned the property. The Indians agreed and Bourne became a subtenant on Indian held land. Bourne befriended the Indians and they likewise accepted him as their trusted friend.

The Plymouth Records show that the settling of the western boundary, the land sold by Paupmunnuck and his associates, to Barnstable in 1658, Bourne acted as their mediator. He endeavored to learn their Algonquian language, and to devote much of his time learning their ways and customs. He was preparing himself for a lifetime devoted to their welfare. Bourne began to journey up and down the Cape urging the Indians to convert to Christianity, preaching in their own Algonquian language.³⁴

By 1674 Bourne could claim credit for almost five hundred adult Indian conversions, in twenty two separate Indian communities, extending in terms of today's map of Middleborough on the west all the way to the east to Provincetown. These Indian village communities visited by Bourne were scattered over a vast area. Most of the Cape Indian villages were reduced from pre-plague size of many hundreds to groups of 50 or less, some as small as one lone Indian. Seeing some of the marginal and pathetic circumstances by which these Indians were living, it was Bourne's ambition to gather in his converts into a single town where their wellbeing could be furthered with the strength in numbers, this being within the verge of the Mashpee plantation.

In 1666, a great formal gathering was held at Mashpee for the purpose of organizing the first Indian church on Cape Cod. In attendance were the governor of New Plymouth Colony and numerous other dignitaries, including the famous missionary to the Indians of Massachusetts Bay, John Eliot. The assembled Englishmen heard confessions of the Mashpee converts. Cotton Mather expressed that before these converts could be

³⁴ Hutchins, Francis G., Author, Mashpee, *The Story of Cape Cod's Indian Town*; p.35; Publ. by Armata Press, Franklin, NH, 1979, Hereinafter: (Mashpee)

accepted, their confessions must be in writing and sent to all the churches in the colony. This was a task that took four years to finish, pushing the formal acceptance of the first Mashpee church to 1670, making Mashpee the earliest location of an Indian converted Congregational Church, with Bourne ordained as Mashpee's first minister.³⁵

The Reverend Samuel Treat at Potanumaquut

According to Nickerson, there was no systematic effort made towards Christianizing the Lower Cape Indians until the Rev. Samuel Treat became the pastor of the Eastham Church in 1672. Until this time there were sporadic visits by the Reverends John Cotton, John Eliot, and old Richard Bourne, which left the Indians below Bass River to the welfare of the Paw Waw's of those tribes. At the time of the arrival of Rev. Treat Eastham was still a struggling frontier in a savage wilderness. Earlier attempts by Rev. Eliot proved difficult because the dialect he used was different from that of the Natick's to the west.³⁶

About the time the Rev. Treat took up the pastorate at Eastham the tensions between Colonists and the Indians of southeastern Massachusetts were at a breaking point. English settlements were expanding, and the hunting grounds of the original peoples were rapidly diminishing. The older Plymouth officials died out and were replaced by a younger generation whose energetic efforts included acquiring more land. The "friend" of the Pilgrims, Sachem Massasoit had since died and his son, Metacomet, would not yield to the ways of the Colonists.

This was a vulnerable time for the Cape Cod Indians. Under the guidance of their spiritual leaders they were attempting to learn the new ways, but they were met with many challenges, and realized varied success. Illegal sale of alcohol was prevalent and a main disruption to their daily lives.

Around this time, the Rev. Thomas Thornton, the third resident minister at Yarmouth is said to have attempted to continue the work started by Eliot. This would indicate that the Christianized Yarmouth original peoples held

³⁵ Mashpee: 36, 37.

³⁶ Nickerson, *Praying Indians*, p. 8. Rev. Samuel Treat becomes pastor of the Eastham Indian Church in 1672.

Congregational meetings as early as 1672. Capt. Tupper and Rev. Besse were working among the Herring River indigenous tribes confining their efforts mainly to the Manomet Country with headquarters at the ancient Commassakumkanit of the original peoples at what is now Bournedale. Besse continued his work for many years and Capt. Tupper, his son, grandson, and great grandson continued to devote their lives to the welfare of the Indians for more than 150 years.³⁷

Metacomet, known as King Philip, traveled the Cape persistently and used his strong personality to try to break down the resistance of the Praying Indians to their white brethren. He proclaimed that these Praying Indians had adopted the religion and laws of the white man and were subject to their court system, and that he and his men would never be subject to any white man's court, but only to their Head men and Sachems. Philip met with no success trying to recruit any of the Lower Cape Praying Indians.

It is believed that during the early months of the King Philips War many of the Praying Indians from the Cape Cod villages were corralled into a camp at or near Mashpee. It is not clear whether this was an action to protect them from Metacomet's force, or whether the English were afraid the Praying Indians would join with him.

The Indian known as Captain Amos from Mashpee, showed up at Plymouth with twenty or thirty men to fight against Metacomet and his non-Christian Indians.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid, 9. Capt. Tupper and Anthony Besse continued to work the Manomet Country. Swift, Charles Francis, compiler, History of Old Yarmouth, p. 179.

³⁸ Mashpee, p. 56, 57.