

Governor Winthrop: Say no more. The Court knows wherefore, and is satisfied.

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D. Indian-White Relations in Colonial
New England: Three Views of King Philip's War _____

1. Mary Rowlandson Is Captured by Indians (1675)

Mary Rowlandson was taken prisoner in February 1675 by Indians who raided her home on the Massachusetts frontier some thirty miles west of Boston. Her account became one of the most popular "captivity narratives" that fascinated readers in England and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, providing a model for such later works as James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans. What are the most harrowing aspects of Rowlandson's experience? What religious meaning did she find in the Indian attack and in her captivity?

On the tenth of February 1675, came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster: their first coming was about sunrising; hearing the noise of some guns, we looked out; several houses were burning, and the smoke ascending to heaven.

3. . . . [W]hen the English army with new supplies were sent forth to pursue after the enemy, and they understanding it, fled before them till they came to Baquaug river, where they forthwith went over safely; that that river should be impassable to the English. I can but admire to see the wonderful providence of God in preserving the heathen for further affliction to our poor country. They could go in great numbers over, but the English must stop. God had an over-ruling hand in all those things.

4. It was thought, if their corn were cut down, they would starve and die with hunger, and all their corn that could be found, was destroyed, and they driven from that little they had in store, into the woods in the midst of winter; and yet how to admiration did the Lord preserve them for his holy ends, and the destruction of many still amongst the English! strangely did the Lord provide for them; that I did not see (all the time I was among them) one man, woman, or child, die with hunger.

Though many times they would eat that, that a hog or a dog would hardly touch: yet by that God strengthened them to be a scourge to his people.

The chief and commonest food was ground-nuts. They eat also nuts and acorns, artichokes, lilly roots, ground-beans, and several other weeds and roots, that I know not.

They would pick up old bones, and cut them to pieces at the joints, and if they were full of worms and maggots, they would scald them over the fire to make the vermine come out, and then boil them, and drink up the liquor, and then heat the great ends of them in a mortar, and so eat them. They would eat horse's guts, and ears, and all sorts of wild birds which they could catch. . . . I can but stand in admiration to see the wonderful power of God in providing for such a vast number of

our enemies in the wilderness, where there was nothing to be seen, but from hand to mouth. Many times in a morning, the generality of them would eat up all they had, and yet have some further supply against they wanted. It is said, "Oh, that my People had hearkened to me, and Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and turned my hand against their Adversaries" (Psalm 81.13-14). But now our perverse and evil carriages in the sight of the Lord, have so offended Him, that instead of turning His hand against them, the Lord feeds and nourishes them up to be a scourge to the whole land.

5. Another thing that I would observe is the strange providence of God, in turning things about when the Indians was at the highest, and the English at the lowest. . . . [When the heathen begins to think all is their own, and the poor Christian's hopes to fail (as to man) and now their eyes are more to God, and their hearts sigh heaven-ward; and to say in good earnest, "Help Lord, or we perish." When the Lord had brought his people to this, that they saw no help in anything but Himself; then He takes the quarrel into His own hand; and though they had made a pit, in their own imaginations, as deep as hell for the Christians that summer, yet the Lord hurled themselves into it. And the Lord had not so many ways before to preserve them, but now He hath as many to destroy them.

2. Plymouth Officials Justify the War (1675)

The officials of Plymouth Colony offered the following explanation for their actions in taking up arms against the Wampanoag chief Metacom (called King Philip by the English) in 1675. What do they see as the principal offenses by the Indians? Should John Sassamon be regarded as "a faithful Indian" or as an English spy? Did the Puritan settlers go to war reluctantly or enthusiastically?

Anno Domini 1675

Not to look back further than the troubles that were between the Colony of New Plymouth and Philip, sachem [chieftain] of Mount Hope, in the year 1671, it may be remembered that . . . [he] was the peccant and offending party; and that Plymouth had just cause to take up arms against him; and it was then agreed that he should pay that colony a certain sum of money, in part of their damage and charge by him occasioned: and he then not only renewed his ancient covenant of friendship with them; but made himself and his people absolute subjects to our Sovereign Lord King Charles the Second. . . .

But sometime last winter the Governor of Plymouth was informed by Sassamon, a faithful Indian, that the said Philip was undoubtedly endeavoring to raise new troubles, and was endeavoring to engage all the sachems round about in a war against us; some of the English also that lived near the said sachem, communicated their fears and jealousies concurrent with what the Indian had informed. About a week after John Sassamon had given his information, he was barbarously murdered by some Indians for his faithfulness (as we have cause to believe) to the interest of God and of the English; some time after Sassamon's death Philip, having heard that

Indians were earnest for a war; on the 7th of June Mr. Benjamin Church being on Rhode Island, Weetamoo and some of her chief men told him that Philip intended a war speedily with the English, some of them saying that they would help him; and that he had already given them leave to kill Englishmen's cattle and rob their houses; about the 14th and 15th of June Mr. James Brown went twice to Philip to persuade him to be quiet but at both times found his men in arms and Philip very high and not persuadable to peace; on the 14th June our Council wrote an amicable friendly letter to Phillip therein showing our dislike of his practices: and advising him to dismiss his strange Indians and command his own men to fall quietly to their business that our people might also be quiet; and not to suffer himself to be abused by reports concerning us, who intended no wrong, nor hurt towards him; but Mr. Brown could not obtain an answer from him; on the 17th June Mr. Paine of Rehoboth and several others of the English going unarmed to Mount Hope to seek their horses at Philip's request, the Indians came and presented their guns at them and carried it very insolently though no way provoked by them; on the 18th or 19th Job Winslow his house was broken up and rifled by Philip's men; June the 20th being our Sabbath, the people at Swansea were alarmed by the Indians, two of our inhabitants burned out of their houses and their houses rifled; and the Indians were marching up as they judged to assault the town; and therefore entreated speedy help from us; we hereupon the 21 of June sent up some forces to relieve that town and dispatched more with speed; on Wednesday the 23 of June a dozen more of their houses at Swansea were rifled; on the 24th Thomas Layton was slain at the Fall River; on the 25th of June divers of the people at Swansea slain; and many houses burned until which time, and for several days, though we had a considerable force there both of our own and of the Massachusetts (to our grief and shame), they took no revenge on the enemy; thus slow were we and unwilling to engage ourselves and neighbors in a war; having many insolencies almost intolerable from them, of whose hands we had deserved better;

Josiah Winslow

Thomas Hinckley

[Plymouth Commissioners to the United Colonies]

3. A Rhode Island Quaker Sympathizes with the Indians (1675)

John Easton, lieutenant governor of Rhode Island and a Quaker, took a different view of the war's causes than did the officials from Plymouth, as described in the preceding selection. In what ways does he disagree with them? What does he cite as the Indians' primary grievances against the English settlers?

... We said we knew the English said the Indians wronged them and the Indians said the English wronged them, but our desire was [that] the quarrel might rightly be decided in the best way, and not as dogs decide their quarrels. The Indians owned that fighting was the worst way, then they propounded how right might take place, we said by arbitration. They said all English agreed against them, and so by arbitration they had had much wrong, many miles square of land so taken from them, for English would have English arbitrators, and once they were persuaded to give in their arms, that thereby jealousy might be removed. [then] the English having their arms would not deliver them as they had promised, until they consented to pay 100 pounds, and now they had not so much land or money, that they were as good be killed as leave all their livelihood. We said they might choose an Indian king, and the English might choose the Governor of New York, that neither had cause to say either were parties in the difference. They said they had not heard of that way and said we honestly spoke, so we were persuaded if that way had been tendered they would have accepted. We did endeavor not to hear their complaints, said it was not convenient for us now to consider of, but to endeavor to prevent war, said to them when in war against English, blood was spilt that engaged all Englishmen, for we were to be all under one king. We knew what their complaints

Another grievance was when their kings sold land, the English would say it was more than they agreed to and a writing must be proof against all them, and some of their kings had done wrong to sell so much. He left his people none, and some being given to drunkenness the English made them drunk and then cheated them in bargains, but now their kings were forewarned not to part with land for nothing in comparison to the value thereof. Now whom the English had owned for king or queen they [the English] would disinherit, and make another king that would give or sell them their land, that now they had no hopes left to keep any land. Another grievance the English cattle and horses still increased, that when they removed 30 miles from where English had anything to do, they could not keep their corn [there] from being spoiled, they never being used to fence, and thought when the English bought land of them that they [the English] would have kept their cattle upon their own land.

Another grievance, the English were so eager to sell the Indians liquor that most of the Indians spent all in drunkenness and then ravened upon the sober Indians and, they did believe, often did hurt the English cattle, and their kings could not prevent it. We knew before [that] these were their grand complaints, but then we only endeavored to persuade that all complaints might be righted without war, but could have no other answer but that they had not heard of that way for the Governor of York and an Indian king to have the hearing of it. We had cause to think if that had been tendered it would have been accepted. We endeavored that, however, they should lay down their arms, for the English were too strong for them. They said then the English should do to them as they did when they were too strong for the English. . . .

