

# THE FOUNDING OF HAVERHILL, Suffolk, Massachusetts.

Based on HAVERHILL LIFE by Ian Hornsey

## ■ HAVERHILL and the WARD FAMILY of SUFFOLK, England.

The prominent WARD FAMILY from Suffolk, England played an important pioneering role in the development of the COLONY OF MASSACHUSETTS, with two generations of the Family being greatly responsible for the Spiritual well-being of the early Settlers.

NATHANIEL WARD (1578-1653) was born in the Parish of St. Edmundsbury, Haverhill, Suffolk, England, where his father REVEREND JOHN M. WARD (1550-1598) was the Vicar. NATHANIEL was educated at EMMANUEL COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE, England where he graduated in 1599, before taking Holy Orders in 1618.



NATHANIEL WARD (1578-1653)

**NATHANIEL WARD** was originally trained for the Law, at **LINCOLN'S INN**, London, and admitted as an Outer Barrister. After practising in England, he accompanied some Merchants to the Continent, including Germany, where he travelled extensively.

A **BARRISTER**, more commonly referred to as a **LITIGATOR**, is a lawyer who represents Clients in Court, Mediation, or Arbitration. Barristers are also involved in matters **OUTSIDE** the **COURTROOM** which relate to the litigation process, such as drafting Court Documents.

At Heidelberg, **NATHANIEL** met the German Protestant Reformer, **DAVID PAREUS**, who persuaded him to quit the Law and enter the Ministry. This he did, and in 1626-1628, he became **RECTOR** of the Essex Parish of **STONEHAM MASSEY**, England and a leading **PURITAN PREACHER** in Essex.



Inevitably, his non-conformity led him into conflict with others in the Anglican Church, and eventually he fell foul of the ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, **WILLIAM LAUD**, and he was deprived of his position in Stoneham Massey in 1633.

The following year, 1634, NATHANIEL WARD emigrated to MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY with his wife, ELIZABETH STUART and some of his children. Once there, he was installed as the first PASTOR of a small Settlement called **IPSWICH** (originally called AGAWAM), which position he resigned after almost 3-years in 1636 through ill-health.

The AGAWAM were an Algonquian Native American people in New England encountered by English Colonists who arrived in the early 17th Century. Decimated by pestilence shortly before the English Colonization and fearing attacks from their hereditary enemies among the Abenaki and other tribes of present-day Maine, they invited the English to settle with them on their tribal territory.



The GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS protected them by Colonial Law, along with their land rights and their crops. The English defended them against further attacks. The Agawam had an open invitation to enter Puritan households. Often a small number would show up as dinner guests and were fed. By the time of King Philip's War in 1675, the Agawam had been assimilated. They played no part in the war.

- In June 1639, the Deputies of the GENERAL COURT of the Massachusetts Bay Company, asked NATHANIEL WARD to draw up a legal code. This code was adopted by the Court in December 1641, under the title of the 'MASSACHUSETTS BODY OF LIBERTIES'. As a reward he was granted rights to 600-acres of land near Pentucket.

A citation of 27th March, 1643 reads: "A tract of land containing 600-acres is granted by the Colony to Mr. NATHANIEL WARD near Pentucket, or as near as conveniently may be".

- In 1645, NATHANIEL WARD was appointed to a Committee set up to revise the Laws of the Colony, and, in 1648, the 'BODY OF LIBERTIES' was replaced by the 'BOOK OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS AND LIBERTIES' for which Nathaniel Ward was largely responsible.

NATHANIEL WARD'S book was the first modern LEGAL CODE in the Western World, and pointed the way to Democratic, Social, and Political institutions, which were to be gradually incorporated into the legal structure of other 'Colonies' (including CONNECTICUT), and other Nations.

- On 15th November 1642 the "HAVERHILL DEED OF TOWNSHIP" was finally signed, and a Title to the land was legally purchased from the native Indians. JOHN WARD (Nathaniel Ward's son) together with ROBERT CLEMENTS, TRISTRAM COFFYN, HUGH SHERRATT, WILLIAM WHITE and THOMAS DAVIS signed for the Settlers.

A contemporary account relates: "HAVERHILL was sold by two Sachems [Chiefs], Passaquoi and Saggahew, and for the princely sum of £3.10s!"

In 1645 the Plantation of Haverhill was incorporated as a Town, and the first Church was established there. At that time, the Plantation contained about 32 landholders, and was, with the exception of open fields upon the river, a dense and unbroken forest.

On 13th. February 1647, JOHN WARD became the first MINISTER of the new Community. He was described as: "A man of robust constitution and an excellent divine", and in 1652 his Salary was set at £50.0s.0d per Annum.

- In 1645, JOHN WARD'S Parishioners built him a small house – which survives until this day, and is regarded as a classic piece of early Colonial Architecture.



JOHN WARD'S HOUSE in Haverhill, Massachusetts

- REVEREND JOHN WARD continued as Pastor until his death in 1693, and was succeeded by the Reverend BENJAMIN ROLFE (1662-1708), whose much shorter tenure came to an end when he was killed by Indians in an attack on 29th August, 1708. The Village of 30-houses was attacked by French Military, Algonquin, and Abenaki Indian native warriors under the Command of JEAN-BAPTISTE HERTEL DE ROUVILLE descended on HAVERHILL. In the surprise attack, 16-people were killed and another 24 were taken captive. A rapid Colonial Militia muster gave chase, and in a skirmish later in the day, 9 of the French and Indian party were killed and some of their prisoners escaped.

HAVERHILL was not the original target of the raiders. Expecting a larger Indian contingent, French authorities planned to engage in a series of raids on the communities of the Piscataqua River. However, the unwillingness of some Indian tribes to participate in the expedition forced the French to reduce the scope of the operation and choose an easier target.

- The early Settlers now set about making their own laws and one of the more colourful ones was meant to combat the “intolerable excess and bravery of dress”.

The law stated that:

“No person whose estate did not exceed £200 was permitted to wear any gold or silver lace or buttons, great boots, silk hoods, ribbons, or scarfs, under penalty of 10 shillings”.

Not all of the original Pioneers were evidently as pious as the Wards, as can be demonstrated from the case of **TRISTRAM COFFIN** and his wife:

In 1645, the couple were accused of “selling beere at 3-pence a quarte” which was contrary to the law, which required that beer should be brewed at “four bushels of malt to the hogshead” and that it should be sold at “2-pence per quart”. Mrs Coffin told the Court she had, in fact, put six bushels into a hogshead, and the Court duly acquitted her!

Over the last 400 years Haverhill MA has changed out of all recognition. If the first Settlers could see the City in Essex County today they would be amazed at the way it has grown and prospered.

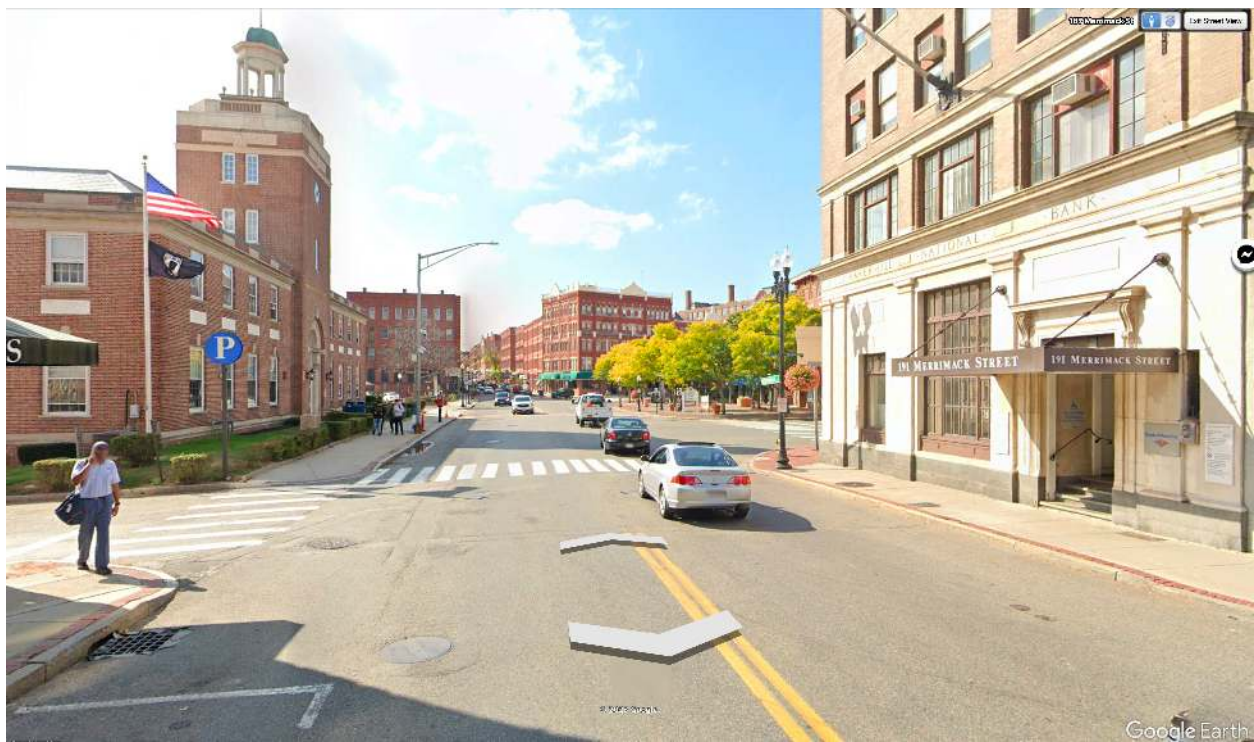
Today HAVERHILL, Massachusetts has 60,000 residents and three airports. The early Settlers would be proud of the way the quiet farming community they founded has grown into a modern and vibrant City.



**GEORGE WASHINGTON** visited Haverhill, Massachusetts Bay, United States of America on November 4th, 1789, as part of his ‘triumphal tour’ of New England. His impression of the Town was: “The pleasantest village I have passed through....it has commercial advantages and beauty of location”. After his departure, the Townspeople named their main Meeting Square in his honour.



WASHINGTON SQUARE, Haverhill, MA - as seen TODAY January 2023.



The CITY OF HAVERHILL until 1999, was administratively in northern ESSEX COUNTY with the State of New Hampshire on the north. Haverhill covers an area of almost 36 square miles. It gained 'City' status in 1870. Boston is some 30 miles to the south, whilst New York is just over 200 miles to the south-west.

**JOHN WINTHROP** (1588-1649), often referred to as 'America's forgotten founding father', was another Suffolk Englishman, born in the Parish of Edwardstone, Suffolk, England. Winthrop was an interesting character who was granted a Charter for the Massachusetts Bay Colony and arrived with 700 Settlers in 1630. Winthrop served as **GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS** for 12-terms, and was considered to be a good, if strict, leader. His strong Puritan beliefs (he thought that the Church of England should abolish bishops, and other relics of Roman Catholicism, such as kneeling and the use of vestments and altars) led him to fall out of favour with the Established Anglican Church.

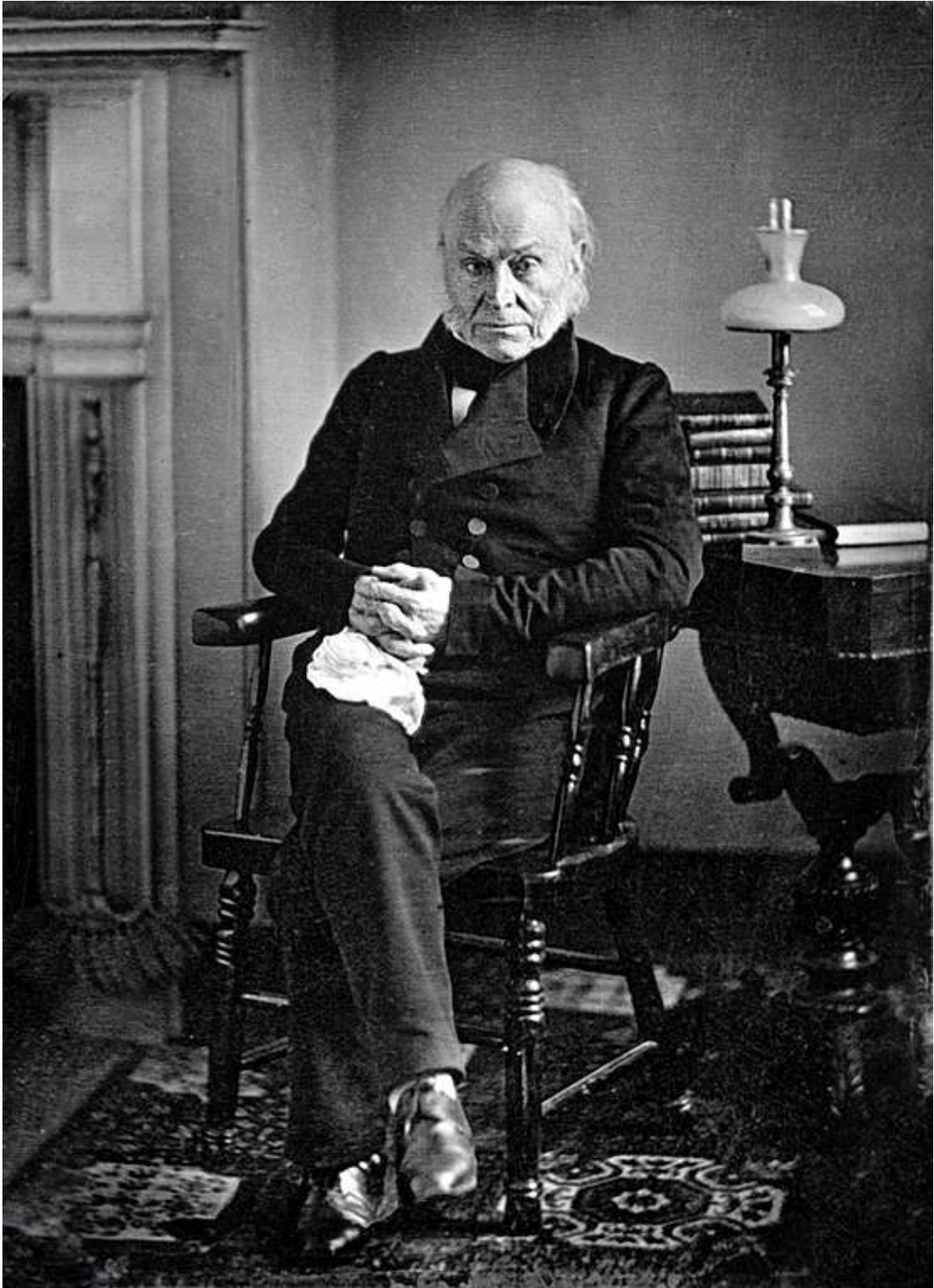
**In 1645, JOHN WINTHROP was elected the first President of the NEW ENGLAND CONFEDERATION.**

The NEW ENGLAND CONFEDERATION, was a Confederal Alliance of the New England Colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Saybrook (Connecticut), and New Haven formed in May 1643. Its primary purpose was to unite the Puritan Colonies in support of the Church, and for defence against the Native Americans and the Dutch colony of New Netherland. It was the first milestone on the long road to Colonial unity and was established as a direct result of a war that started between the MOHEGAN and Narragansett Indian tribes. Its Charter provided for the return of fugitive criminals and indentured servants, and served as a forum for resolving inter-Colonial disputes. **In practice, none of the goals were accomplished.**

The CONFEDERATION was weakened in 1654 after MASSACHUSETTS BAY refused to join an expedition against NEW NETHERLAND during the FIRST ANGLO-DUTCH WAR, although it regained importance during KING PHILIP'S WAR in 1675. It was dissolved after numerous Colonial Charters were revoked in the early 1680s.

**PRESIDENT JOHN QUINCY ADAMS** remarked at a meeting of the [Massachusetts Historical Society](#) on the 200th Anniversary of the Confederation's founding:

*"The NEW ENGLAND CONFEDERACY was destined to a life of less than forty years' duration. Its history, like that of other Confederacies, presents a record of incessant discord-of encroachments by the most powerful party upon the weaker members, and of disregard, by all the separate members, of the conclusions adopted by the whole body. Still the main purpose of the UNION was accomplished."*



**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS (6th. President of the United States of America.)**

*Voted*, To adjourn to meet at the house of the President, in Temple Place, this evening, at eight o'clock.\*

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ADJOURNED MEETING.

Monday, May 29, 1843, 8 P.M. Met, pursuant to adjournment, at the house of the President.

On motion of Mr. F. C. GRAY, seconded by Mr. TICKNOR, it was

*Voted*, That the thanks of this Society be presented to the Hon. John Quincy Adams, for the learned, interesting, and eloquent discourse delivered by him this day, at their request, in commemoration of the first confederation of the New England Colonies, in the year 1643; and that a copy be requested for the press.†

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\* In his Diary, under this date, Mr. Adams records: "President Quincy took me in his barouche to the chambers of the Historical Society, where a meeting well attended was held. The President, James Savage, moved that the meeting should adjourn to his house, at eight o'clock this evening, and gave a general invitation to all the members present to attend there. A procession was then formed, in which I walked with President Savage to the First Church, in Chauncy Place, where I delivered the address to the Massachusetts Historical Society, in celebration of the Second Centennial Anniversary of the New England Colonial Confederacy of 1643. The performances began precisely at eleven o'clock, with an appropriate prayer by Dr. Frothingham, the minister of the church. Then Psalm cvii. of the New England version of 1640 was sung. I then delivered my address, beginning at twenty minutes past eleven and closing at five minutes past one, one hour and three-quarters, omitting about one-eighth of what I had written. It was very well received, and there was no manifestation of what I most dreaded, — a sense of weariness on the part of the auditory. The attention was general and unremitting to the last. The house was well filled, but not crowded; excepting the members of the Society, about as many women as men. After the address, Psalm xlv. of the New England version was sung, and the benediction was pronounced by Dr. Frothingham. Mr. William Beach Lawrence, Mr. John Jay, and several other gentlemen were introduced to me as delegates from the Historical Societies of New York, Connecticut, and Maine." (Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Vol. X. pp. 378, 379.) Mr. Adams's address is in 3 Collections, Vol. IX. pp. 189-223. — EDS.

† "See Dr. Lowell's letter, on file, as to societies, &c., represented at the celebration." *Marginal note of the Secretary.* — EDS.



AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL BAROUCHE - Horse Drawn Carriage.



During the early years of Settlement, the **NEW ENGLAND COMMUNITY** was largely **agricultural**. With the Atlantic Ocean only 16-miles away, **fishing** soon became an important industry. Proximity to the sea also encouraged **shipbuilding** to flourish, and these three areas of employment provided an economic base well into the 19th Century.

During the early 19th Century, a strong **CATTLE MARKET**, and several **TANNERIES** developed, and, as a spin-off from this, **Haverhill** became an important **SHOEMAKING** centre (just as **SUFFOLK** had been renowned for **WOOLLENS** centuries before). The situation was to change when the Railway came to Haverhill in 1839, some twenty-one years before her Suffolk sister.

- The key date in the founding of **Haverhill, Massachusetts**, USA is 1639, a year before the first 12 Settlers arrived at the banks of the **MERRIMACK RIVER** near today's Mill Street. The year 1639 is also when **John Ward** arrived in Ipswich, Suffolk, England joining his father, the Reverend **NATHANIEL WARD**.
- **NATHANIEL WARD** (1578-1652) was born in Haverhill, Suffolk, England. The son of the famous **REVEREND JOHN M. WARD**, a Puritan Minister in Haverhill, he initially forsook the family trade (both his brothers were Ministers). He became a Barrister and traveled across Europe. In Heidelberg, Germany, he was convinced to join the Ministry.

Returning to England, **REVEREND NATHANIEL WARD** quickly became one of the foremost Puritan Ministers in the region.

This made him an easy target for the Anglican Church's leader **ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM LAUD**. Laud was already antagonizing the Puritans by making the Church more ceremonial, to the point of being accused of re-introducing Catholicism.

**REVEREND NATHANIEL WARD**, after repeated reprimands and narrowly escaping excommunication, was dismissed from his Church. He boarded a ship the next year, arriving in **BOSTON** in 1634 and serving as the **PASTOR** of Ipswich's **FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH** 1635-1638, before stepping down for health reasons.

**IPSWICH**, first known as Agawam, was settled by **JOHN WINTHROP** and his twelve companions in 1633 and in 1634 the Town was officially incorporated. The Towns of **Boxford, Hamilton, Essex and Topsfield** were once part of Ipswich. The **FIRST PARISH** built its first meeting house in 1634. Over the Centuries, the Congregation has inhabited six different buildings and spawned four "daughter" Churches. It continues to serve the Community today as **FIRST CHURCH IN IPSWICH**, Massachusetts and is a member of the United Church of Christ.

**FIRST CHURCH in IPSWICH, Massachusetts.**



NATHANIEL WARD'S legal background would prove useful. He began to compile and write a **"BODY OF LIBERTIES"** as a Legal Code for Massachusetts, a combination of Old Testament law melded with English Common Statutes. The 1641 version was rejected, but it clearly established Massachusetts as a Puritan-controlled theocracy.

It would not be until 1648 that a broadened version of Nathaniel Ward's work became Massachusetts' first complete Legal Code.

Ironically, the process took so long that when Nathaniel's other son, **JAMES WARD**, was caught robbing houses in Cambridge in 1644, there was still no Statute against burglary.

JAMES WARD was, however, kicked out of Harvard College after being whipped by the College President and ordered to pay double the value of the stolen items as restitution.

JOHN WARD'S arrival in 1639 was out of necessity. It was becoming increasingly dangerous for Puritans in England. ARCHBISHOP LAUD and KING CHARLES 1ST. were attempting to standardize the Anglican Book of Prayers across Great Britain. Instead of conformity, the plan triggered riots in Scotland, and now King Charles was amassing troops at the Scottish border to quash the rebellion. John Ward's father and grandfather had both been high-profile leaders in the Non-Conformist movement, and John was aware of the difficulties his uncles were experiencing.

With the entire Country of 'Olde England' teetering on the brink of Civil War, it was a good time to head to 'New England'.

JOHN WARD was born in 1606. Sources cite Haverhill, Suffolk, England, as his likely birthplace although he could also have been born in Ipswich, Suffolk, England. He was educated at Cambridge University (like his father and grandfather), receiving an A.B. in 1626 and an A.M. in 1630. His arrival in Ipswich, Massachusetts Bay Colony, British Colonial America, found him in the middle of a glut of Ministers. The Wards were not the only ones fleeing religious persecution. Even NATHANIEL WARD'S influence could not locate a position for son, JOHN and Nathaniel's insistence that John needed to stay close to his father also minimized opportunities.

## **F**ounding of the HAVERHILL COLONY... Absent the Minister.

The year 1639 is also when GILES FIRMAN married NATHANIEL WARD'S daughter SUSAN in Ipswich, Massachusetts. It is Firman who makes the earliest reference to the proposed new Settlement of HAVERHILL.

The reference is contained in an odd letter to Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor JOHN WINTHROP from GILES FIRMAN, dated Dec. 26, 1639. According to Firman, his father-in-law wanted to keep the family together now that John Ward had arrived, but it did not appear possible as Ipswich already had a Minister. The letter continued that the Wards and Firmans wished to start a new Settlement, either at PENTUCKET by the MERRIMACK or *Cochichawich* by the Shawsheen (Andover), to give the family a location where Nathaniel's son, JOHN WARD could serve as the Minister. He then requested the Governor not act upon the request until they actually had the opportunity to visit the locations. He also asked that the request be kept a secret.

**WARD, John**, clergyman, was born, according to Cotton Mather's "Magnalia." in Haverhill, Eng., Nov. 5, 1606, son of Nathaniel Ward (q. v.), and a grandson of John Ward, both distinguished Puritan ministers. He was educated at the University of Cambridge, England, where he received the degree of A.B. in 1626, and that of A.M. in 1630. On Nov. 16, 1633, he became rector of Hadleigh, in Essex, England, but resigned this charge six years later and came to this country. For a time he assisted Rev. Ezekiel Rogers, of Rowley, and about 1640 settled, with twelve associates, at Pentucket, Mass. On May 13, 1640, the general court granted to "Mr. Ward and Newberry men" permission to begin a settlement on the Merrimack river, on condition that they would locate and build within six months. Accordingly before October the settlement on Pentucket plantation was well under way, and was named Haverhill by the pioneer settlers, in compliment to their leader. Thereafter Ward was the temporal as well as spiritual leader of the community. He was ordained their first minister in 1645, when a church was organized, and he materially contributed by his work and influence to the prosperity and final success of the plantation, which, in 1645, was incorporated into a town. Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia," says of him: "He was learned, ingenious, and religious. He was a person of quick apprehension, a clear understanding, a strong memory, a facetious conversation, an exact grammarian, an expert physician, and, which was top of all, a thorough divine;" and adds that, notwithstanding he had various offers of rich matches in England, yet he married a "meaner" person. This was Alice Edmunds, a young Englishwoman, with whom he lived happily over forty years. **John Ward** died in Haverhill, Mass., Dec. 27, 1693.

This last part is understandable – GILES FIRMAN was a Physician and had been granted 120-acres of land from IPSWICH under the condition he remained in Town for at least three years. The letter admits to the Governor that medicine was not paying well, and he wished to pursue the more lucrative career as a Minister. Should the Governor send Firman to Pentucket, it would negate the agreement with Ipswich without besmirching Firman's word (and allow him to sell the property instead of forfeiting it).

Whether Firman's letter was a catalyst may never be known, but at the Session of the **GENERAL COURT**, held at Boston on May 18, 1640, another Petition was received. This one was from Nathaniel Ward and other Newbury men for permission to begin a new Plantation on the Merrimack. Permission was granted, providing the Settlement was established by October 1640. It would not be a problem. As hinted at in Firman's letter, NATHANIEL WARD already had plans in place.

In short order, a group headed up the Merrimack consisting of eight Newbury men: James Davis, Samuel Gile, Christopher Hussey, Richard Littlehale, Henry Palmer, John Robinson, William White, John Williams and, from Ipswich, Jobe Clements, Daniel Ladd, *Joseph Merrie* and Abraham Tyler.

You'll note that there are no WARDS nor FIRMANS among the initial settlers. Firman had apparently decided to stay in Ipswich, studying theology and counting down the days until his obligation to the Town was fulfilled. **NATHANIEL WARD'S delicate health** was not conducive to taming the wilderness, and **JOHN WARD**, ostensibly the reason for the Settlement in the first place, had accepted a Preaching position in another Settlement that would become YORK, MAINE.

Once it was apparent the **PENTUCKET COLONY** had survived its first winter, NATHANIEL WARD sent for JOHN WARD. John Ward arrived in the Autumn of 1641, after the harvest was complete and began introducing himself to his new flock.

#### Town Name Actually Honours Prominent Landowner:

In 1643, the GENERAL COURT disbanded the Pentucket Charter and issued a new one under the name HAVERHILL, essentially the Colonial equivalent of a Legal Name Change. In spite of claims the name change was to honor the Settlement's new Minister's birthplace, it was actually named in honor of NATHANIEL WARD, also born in Haverhill, Suffolk, England. **The proof of this is that at the same time, Nathaniel was granted 600-acres of land in a town he rarely, if ever, actually visited.**

If the Haverhill Colony was indeed an effort to keep the WARD FAMILY together, the plan was an abysmal failure. Having completed his obligations as the Ipswich physician, GILES FIRMAN sold off the property in 1644 and sailed to England to pursue his religious studies. His ship was wrecked off Spain, but he did eventually become a Minister in England after a leisurely tour of Spain. NATHANIEL WARD, JAMES WARD and Firman's family would return to England in 1647.

The First English Civil War (1642–1646) had ended and being an ardent Puritan, like NATHANIEL WARD was now significantly less likely to get you killed.

NATHANIEL WARD then wrote a nasty little satirical book, *A Simple Cobbler of Agawam*, lambasting his New World pet peeves like RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, WOMEN'S FASHIONS, and the very existence of CATHOLICS and the IRISH.

JOHN WARD was apparently done with adventures. He had spent four days lost in the wilderness in Maine while traveling to be the new Preacher at York, and sea voyages were arduous and often dangerous. The fact his father was now 3,000 miles away may have been a consideration as well. JOHN WARD remained in Haverhill, until his death in 1693. In spite of a biographical sketch by Cotton Mather that bordered on hagiographic in *Magnalia*, Ward was seemingly content to be a low-profile, small town Minister.

But he would never escape his father's shadow – after all, the Town was named Haverhill.



Reverend JOHN MORDAUNT WARD Memorial tablet on the Chancel north wall of St. Mary the Virgin Church in Haverhill, Suffolk, England.