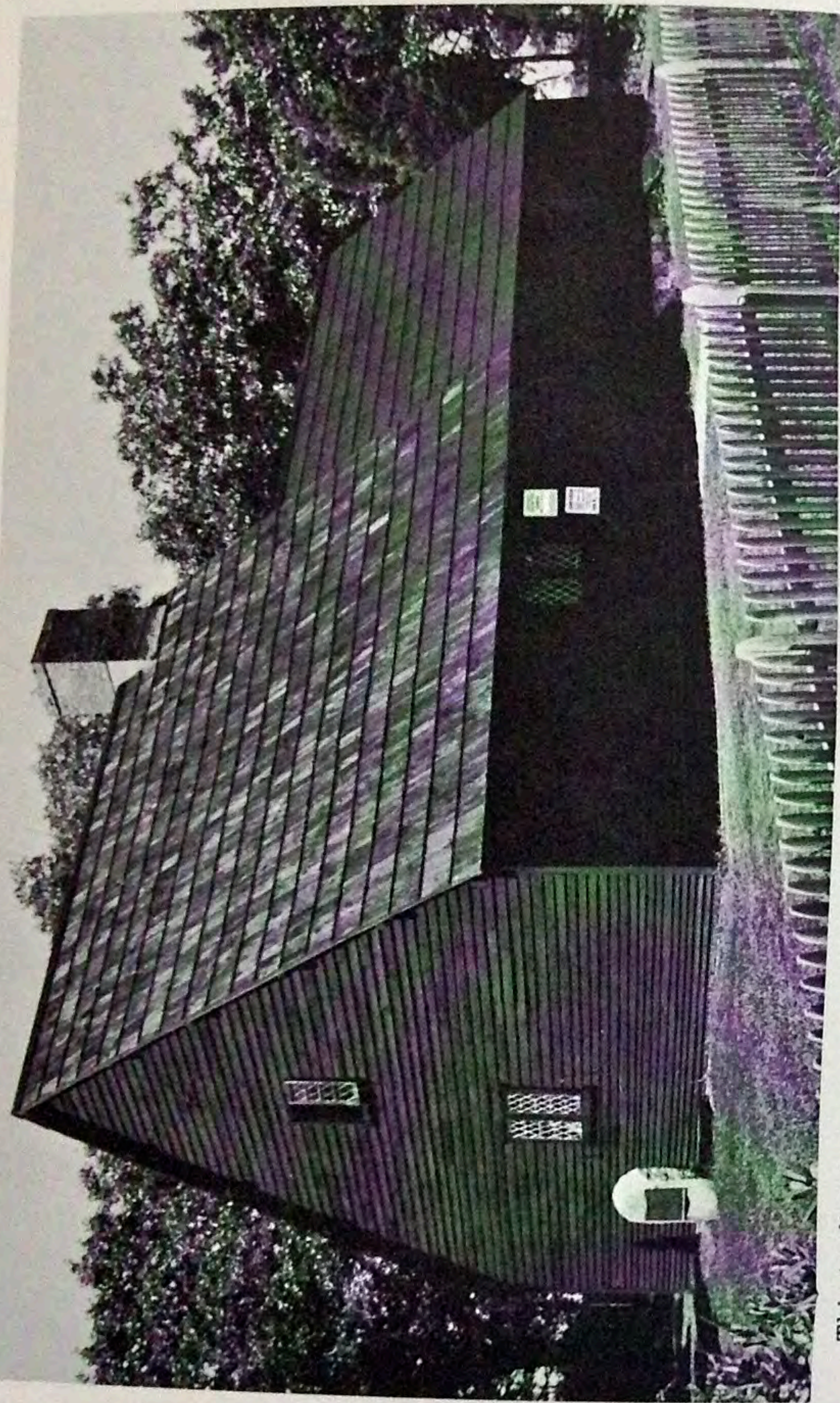


The Pynhons of Springfield
FOUNDERS AND COLONIZERS
(1636-1702)



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This trading house is not unlike the one that William Pynchon and his son, John, had at Warehouse Point. Here they sorted the furs and packed them for shipment to England. Pilgrim Trading Post at Aptuxet. Courtesy of Bourne Historical Society, Bourne, Massachusetts.

bought skins from the Mohawks, one of the Iroquois tribes who lived even farther west. Mr. Pynchon's business increased so much that the Governor of New Amsterdam complained to his government in the Netherlands that the Dutch traders could not find enough skins for themselves.

When the fur trading season came to an end, in the early spring, Mr. Pynchon and his son John would go through their storehouse below the falls at Warehouse Point. They would pack the skins into hogsheads ready to put on board a ship. A hogshead was a large barrel made of wood which could be rolled along the ground and easily hoisted into the hold of a ship or into a large canoe. As soon as the ice in the river melted the ships could sail down the Connecticut River, out into Long Island Sound and along the coast to Boston where the cargoes could be put on board a vessel for London.

In the six years from 1652 to 1658 when John Pynchon, William's son, was in charge of the business, for his father had returned to England, over 9000 beaver skins weighing 14,000 lbs. were shipped to London. In the cargoes were also a few hundred otter and muskrat skins and some moose and deerskins. A poem was written about the Connecticut Valley (also known as the Pequot Country) which said:

Instead of foxes, wolves and hungry bear
That oft the Massachusetts herd do tear
Pequot has beaver, otter and the wary hare.

Some of these animals can still be found in the forests, but it is 200 years since they have been trapped for fur in the neighborhood of Springfield.

Mr. Pynchon found that the Connecticut Valley had much more fertile soil than the plantations around the Massachusetts Bay on the east coast. In 1654 nearly 2000 bushels of wheat and peas went to Boston from the Connecticut Valley. The Pynchons sent flour and salt pork and, later, tobacco and barrels of tar. The tar came from the pine forests and was put between the planks of wooden ships to stop them leaking. Later on Pynchon vessels sailed as far as the new settlements in the West Indies selling

Know all men that I Thomas Miller with the consent of Henry Wolcott of Windsor unto whose care and at whose charge I was brought from England into New England do bind myself as an apprentice for eight years to serve William Pynchon of Springfield Gent. To give him his heirs and assigns in all manner of lawful employment unto the full extent of eight years beginning the 29 day of Sept 1640 and the said William undertake to give the said Thomas meat, drink and clothing fitting for such an apprentice and at the end of his time one suit of apparal and forty shillings in money. subscribed the 2nd October 1640.

Witness
 Elizur Holyoke
 John Pynchon:
 Josp Dibell

The Miller by his own consent is released & discharged of Mr Pynchons service this 22 of May 1648 being 4 months before his tyme comes out, in consideration whereof he loses the 40^s in money which should have bin paid him: but Mr Pynchon giveth him one New sute of Aparall

Indenture of Thomas Miller to serve William Pynchon. The main part is in William Pynchon's handwriting. The discharge in that of John Pynchon. Courtesy of the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum, Springfield, Massachusetts.

flour and salt pork. In return they brought back rum, molasses and Negroes.

The first Negro we know about in Springfield was Peter Swinck who came in 1650. He was a servant to Mr. Pynchon's son John so he was not a slave. He was given an allotment of land on the condition "that he live till his time expired and that he settle his abode (house) there." He also had a seat in the meeting house.

Labor in New England was divided into groups. There was bound labor which included servants, apprentices and those who could not choose their own way of making a living. Others were men and women who, in return for their work, were paid in goods. Bound labor included the indentured servants whose contract was signed in England or the New World, the apprentice who was put out to learn a trade and those ordered by the court to become servants to pay debts. The servant received clothing, food, shelter and medical care. When his term was up he was given either cash, clothing or an allotment of land.

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The Mark of Thomas Miller
 Sam Woolcott

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Thomas Miller by his own consent is released and discharged of Mr. Pynchons service this 22 of May 1648 being 4 months before his time comes out. In consideration whereof he loses the 40s. in money which should have been paid him: But Mr. Pynchon givith him one new sute of aparal"

It was no fun to be a servant. The hours of work were long and hard; extra time could be added to the servant's period of work by court order for certain crimes. The servant could also be whipped either by his master or the constable. In 1664 a servant in Hadley ran away, was caught, ordered by the court to be whipped and returned to his master.

Richard Goodman of Hadley complaining to this court of his servant John Mardin for that he ran away from his house and service on the 16th day of this present Sept and for that he took from his said master a gun and 4 li (pounds) of powder and a hankerchief. John Mardin being taken at Windsor was brought to this court. The case being plain partly by his own confession and by evidence and circumstances the court adjudged that the said John Mardin for his stealing certain goods of his master's his running away from his master and telling sundry lies in his examination causing much expense of time and charges in looking after him shall be whipped on the naked body with ten stripes well laid on: And for the charges concerning his offence and treble damages for things which he stole in all amounting to £5 8s. 4d. He is to serve his said master half a year, which is to begin when his time of apprenticeship is expired.

Hampshire County, Registry of Probate
Northampton, Mass., Vol. I, p. 35

In 1650 William Pynchon sent for several menservants from England and gave their contracts to Henry Smith. Their indentures said they were to serve for periods of five to nine years. To receive money and clothing during that period and when their terms were finished they were to get clothing and an "allotment of land." In all cases the contracts were fulfilled.

Mr. Pynchon was the wealthiest man among the planters and paid half the taxes. He was, at first, the only planter who could hire other men to work for him. Wages were paid in the plantation. In 1641 Springfield passed a law that stated laborers would get from 18d. (pence) to 20d. (pence) a day depending on the season of the year. The men who worked in the fields were paid three or four times as much as laborers in England at that time. In the summer they worked for ten hours a day, "besides eating and sleeping." Court action was stipulated for those employers who broke the law by not paying the legal wage. Mr. Pynchon

and later, his son John, employed many people. They also owned most of the land and the mills which ground the corn. In many ways Mr. Pynchon acted much as he would have done as the squire of his village in old England. But most of his neighbors were not his tenants; they owned their own land and only worked for him when they needed money. The planters governed themselves with more freedom than they would have had in an English village. Men who, in England, had no part in village affairs because they were poor found that in America they were more important because they could earn enough money to buy land.

Mr. Pynchon wrote to his friend Stephen Day, in 1644, that he needed food for he had many "workmen, which eat it as soon as I have it," which indicates that Springfield was a busy place.

Stephen Day:

Springfield this 8 of the
8 month 1644

I received a letter from you by an Indian who saith that his name is Ta-muggut: whereas you write for butter and cheese it is not to be had in all our plantation. I spend it as fast as I make it, because I have much resort and many workmen, which eat it as soon as I have it and as for pork or bacon I have none. I have not yet killed any hogs; only 2 of our neighbors killed some yesterday: but the women say with carriage it will putrify especially seing Indians will often linger on such a journey two days: only I procured 3 li (pounds) of Bacon of a neighbor which is sent to you at £6 and 2 li of tobacco I procured at another place which cost 18d. per li. I have no peper: salt 1 quart 1s. 1 li sugar, 20d. 4 loaves 2s. 5d. The whole is 9s. and the bagg and basket to put the things in 6d: so the Lord bless you in your proceedings. your ever loving friend.

William Pynchon — *Winthrop Papers* Boston:
Massachusetts Historical
Society, 5 Vols., 1929-47
Vol. IV, p. 495

Life on the plantation for children was hard. At an early age they worked: the girls helped their mothers in the house while the boys worked in the fields or learned a trade. Often they got



Indians making canoe. Detail from model of Algonquin village. Courtesy Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts.

into trouble and two of Mr. Holyoke's sons and some boys had a fight one day in June of 1662 after curfew. They were caught and brought to the court. The judges admonished them and gave them the choice of being whipped by the constable or fined. They paid the fine. The fact that Mr. Holyoke was one of the judges did not exempt his sons from receiving the same punishment as their friends.

Thomas Hobbs Constable presenting Thomas Thomson and John Horton for that last Sabbath was fortnight viz June the 7th they made fray in the street in the evening and about ½ hour after sunset: Samuel and Elizur Holyoke being accessory to said fray: The Commissioners upon examination of the case do find that the said four persons did profane the Lords day: and therefore do determine that they all shall be admonished thereof and that Thomas Thomson, John Horton and Samuel Holyoke shall pay a fine of five shillings apiece to the county or be whipped by the Constable on the naked body with 3 stripes apiece: whereupon they were all admonished and the former desiring to pay the fines than otherwise were ordered to pay them to the county treasurer.

Smith, Joseph H. — *Colonial Justice in Western Massachusetts The Pynchon Court Record (1639-1702)*, Cambridge, Mass. 1961, p. 269

The same day an Indian left his canoe in a planter's garden, thinking it was safe. It was stolen and wrecked by some young people who were caught. The constable was unable to find out which of the fifteen people involved were guilty, so the magistrates ordered each one to pay 4d. (pence) apiece to the Indian. Their parents provided the money to pay the fine.

Also an Indian called (blank) having lately complained to the commissioners that having left a barken canoe in Goodman Muns garden it was taken forth and used and abused by diverse young persons at the brook in the street, whereby the canoe was made unservicable. The business being examined there were found fifteen young persons children and others that had a hand in playing with the canoe: but who of them broke or split the canoe it could not be certainly determined: Whereupon