

Food for Thought

THE ORIGINS OF MASSACHUSETTS FOODS AND WHY IT MATTERS



The most famous feast in American history occurred in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1621.

After surviving a harsh winter in the new world, a band of English “Pilgrims” met with their Wampanoag neighbors to celebrate the harvest. Today, the three day event is associated with the Thanksgiving tradition.

The menu has not survived but we might imagine the possibilities: turkey (probably), cranberry sauce (cranberries perhaps but not sugary sauce), mashed potatoes (although native to South America potatoes were brought to Massachusetts later by English colonists), pumpkin pie (native pumpkin dishes but not pie), apple pie (not in 1621 – with the exception of crabapples, apples were an old world fruit.) Perhaps venison

would not be on everyone’s list. Deer meat, taken by Wampanoag hunters, might have been the main course.

Historians call the colonial era movement of plants, animals, people, and diseases the “Columbian Exchange.” We live with its consequences, positive and negative, to this day. In Massachusetts, a similar process unfolded as English settlers came into contact with native people. This exhibit explores that exchange, focusing on food, ecological changes, and the pleasant culinary legacy from that distant and turbulent time.

We cannot undo the painful consequences of these early contacts but can reflect that, with food as with other things, America has been enriched by a blending of cultures.

Native Traditions

Before the arrival of Europeans, native people in this region planted crops and moved with the seasons to hunt and gather food.



The “three sisters,” corn, beans, and squash. SEED SAVERS EXCHANGE

The Three Sisters

Women did the planting. The “three sisters,” corn, beans, and squash became dietary staples. Corn provided a pole for beans, while beans, twisting around the corn, helped to stabilize it against wind and weather. The nitrogen in beans fertilized the soil. At ground level squash helped to crowd out weeds and hold in moisture. The mix provided a balance of carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins.

Wampanoag women cultivated crops that were central to the native diet. PLIMOTH PLANTATION



A demonstration of Wampanoag cooking, Massachusetts was home to several native nations. PLIMOTH PLANTATION



An English Woman on Native Foods

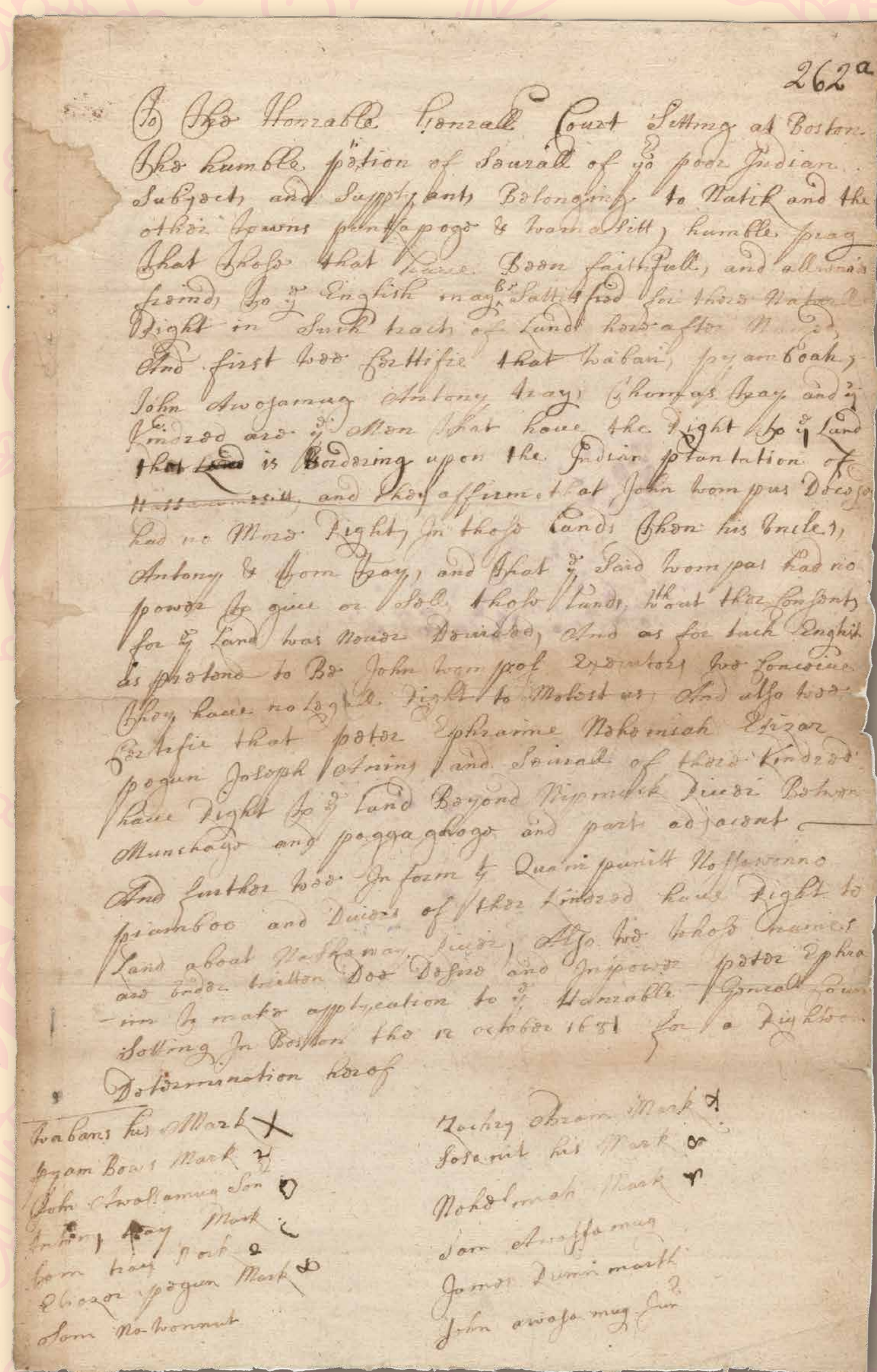
In 1676, during King Philip’s War, Mary Rowlandson was held captive by Nipmuc Indians. She later described their diet in a situation of extreme deprivation. “The chief and commonest food was ground nuts. They eat also nuts and acorns, artichokes, lilly roots, ground beans and several other weeds and roots...also bear, venison, beaver, tortoise, frogs, squirrels, dogs, skunks, rattlesnakes.” Reluctant at first, she came to regard some native foods as “savory.” “For to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”

“WITH THE CORN THEY PUT IN EACH HILL THREE OF FOUR BRAZILIAN BEANS WHICH ARE DIFFERENT IN COLORS, WHEN THEY GROW UP THEY INTERLACE WITH THE CORN WHICH REACHES TO THE HEIGHT OF FIVE TO SIX FEET, AND THEY KEEP THE GROUND VERY FREE FROM WEEDS.”

Samuel de Champlain on native farming

KING PHILIP’S WAR

King Philip, also known as Metacom or Metacomet, led a revolt against English colonists in 1675. Loss of land and native traditions sparked the rebellion which became the deadliest war, per capita, in American history. The war ended shortly after Philip’s death



Waban was an early convert to Christianity (possibly the first.) With other “Praying Indians” he was held on Deer Island during King Philip’s War (despite a history of friendship with colonists.) Signing with pictograms, Waban and others ask compensation for lands lost during the conflict. Waban was then about eighty years old. October 12, 1681

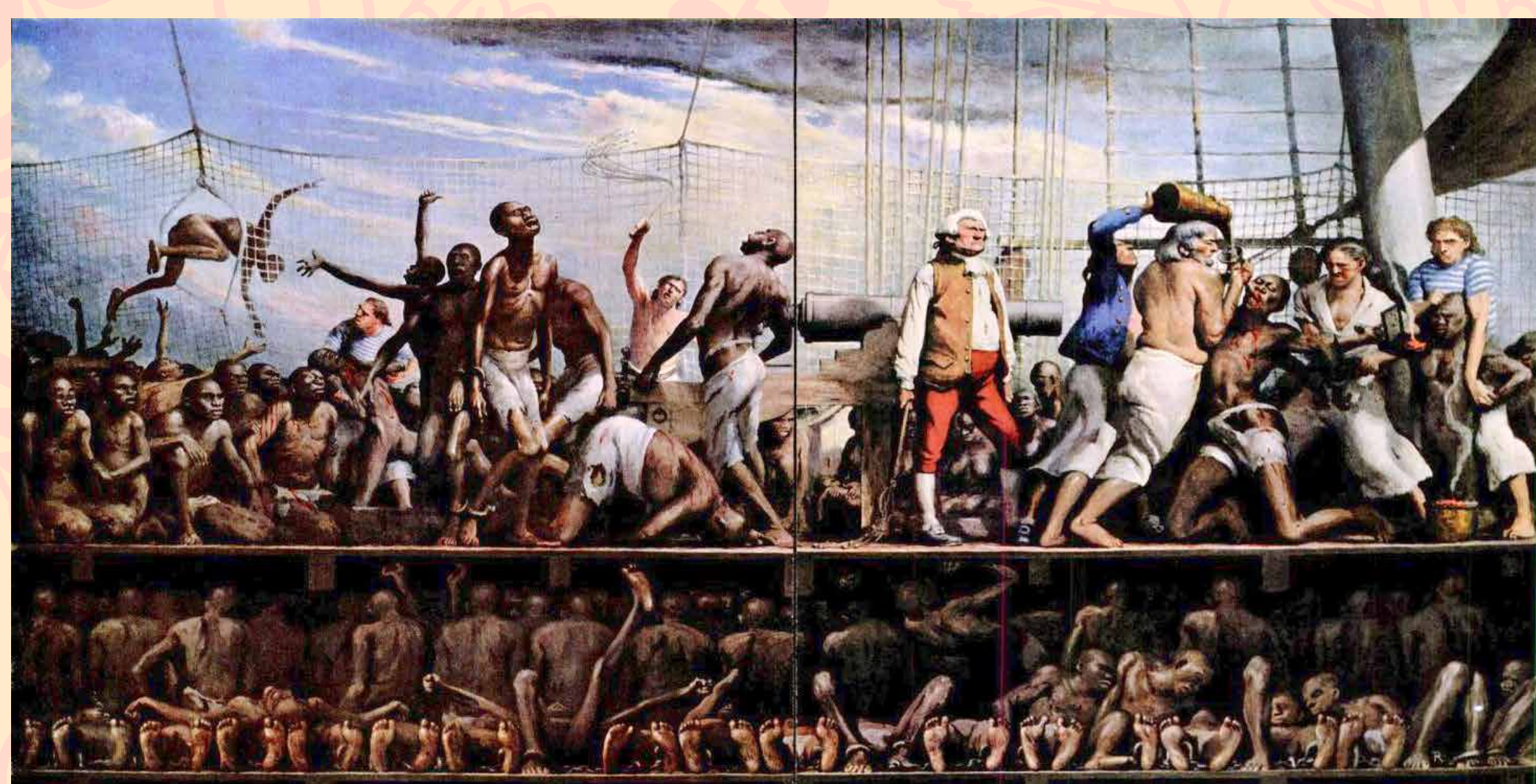
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

A World Transformed

“New World” crops played a critical role in world history and also deeply influenced the development of Massachusetts.

Corn and Population Growth

On his fourth voyage to America, Christopher Columbus saw Taino Indians planting a crop that they called “mahiz.” As “maize” or “Indian corn” the food quickly spread across the globe. It led to growth in the population of China and played an important role in the development of African slavery. Corn helped to increase the population of western Africa and provided a stable source of food for the brutal trans-Atlantic crossing of slave ships.



Slave ships were provisioned with corn for the crossing from Africa. ROBERT RIGGS

CORNUCOPIA

The oldest fossilized corn was found in Mexico, dating back 7,000 years. Corn originated in Mexico or Central America and arrived in present day Massachusetts about 2,000 years ago. It would become the most important grain for English colonists.



“Indian corn” was more colorful than popular varieties today. SAM FENTRESS

“THE ABUNDANT INCREASE OF [INDIAN] CORNE PROVES THIS COUNTRY TO BE A WONDERMENT... YEA JOSEPHS INCREASE IN AEGYPT IS OUT-STRIP HERE WITH US.”

Reverend Francis Higginson



In Prussia Frederick the Great encouraged peasants to cultivate potatoes. Russia's Catherine the Great also promoted this New World crop. DEUTESCHES HISTORISCHES MUSEUM

The Humble Potato

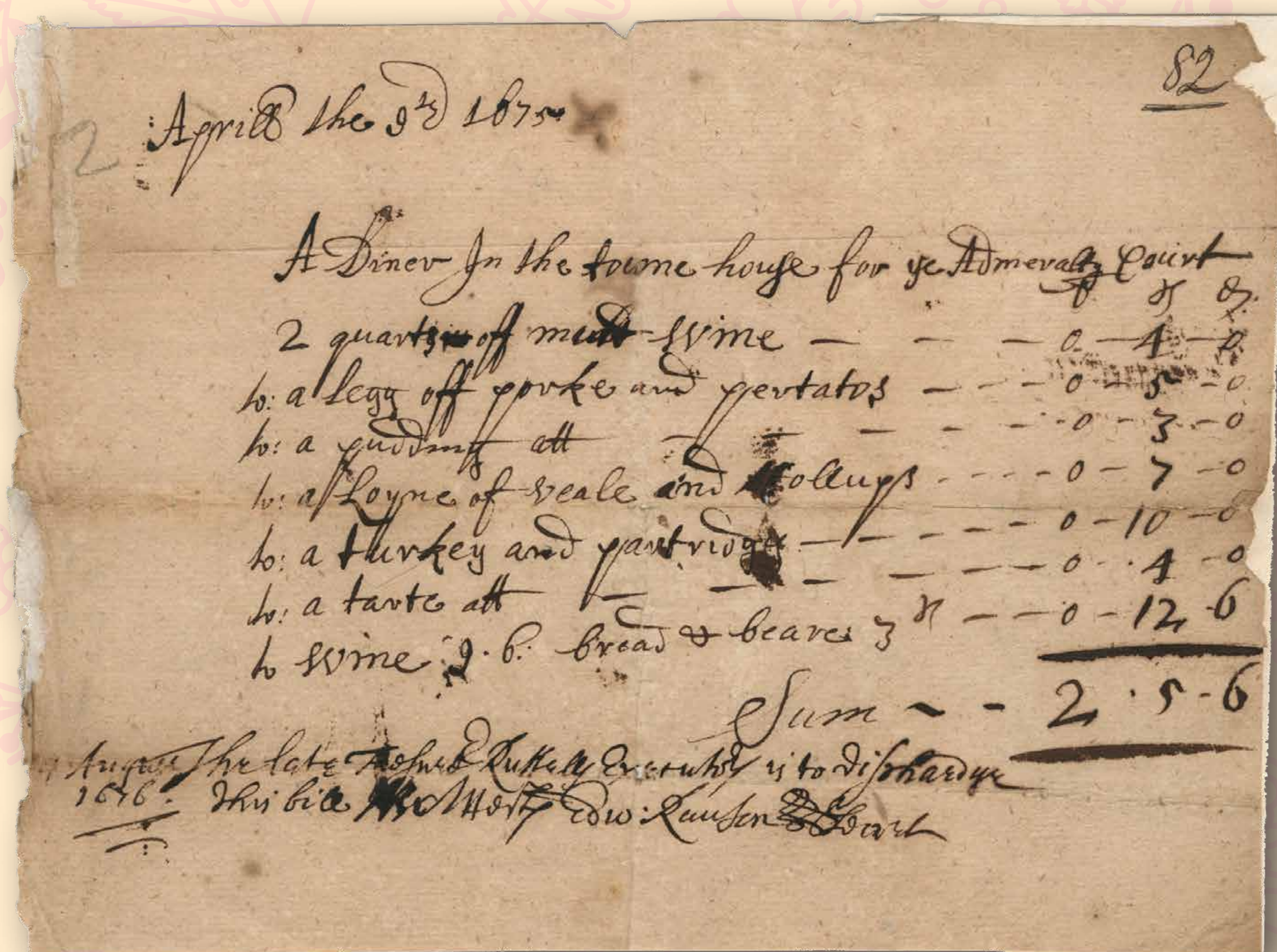
In the 1530's Spanish explorers watched the Inca harvesting potatoes in Peru and introduced them to Europe. At first there were rumors linking potatoes with diseases including leprosy. Frederick the Great of Prussia saw military value in spuds. Growing underground, the crop was more difficult for invading armies to destroy. Potatoes fueled a population explosion in Germany and Russia. They were brought to Massachusetts by English settlers. The Irish potato famine changed Massachusetts with waves of nineteenth century immigrants.

POPCORN

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that native people in Peru prepared popcorn over 3,000 year ago. According to legend Wampanoags brought it to Plymouth for the 1621 feast. That is unlikely since local varieties of corn were not effective for popping.

Potatoes were introduced to Massachusetts by English colonists. This bill for dinner for an Admiralty Court is dated April, 9th, 1675. Included are two quarts of wine, “2 legg of porke and pertatoes,” ...A Loyne of veale...a Turkey and pertatoes.”

MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Culture Clash

The absence of “farm animals” in North America influenced the economy and culture of native people.



English Puritans discussing church organization. In Massachusetts Puritans favored farming practices described in Old Testament passages. JOHN ROGERS HERBERT

Culture and Morality

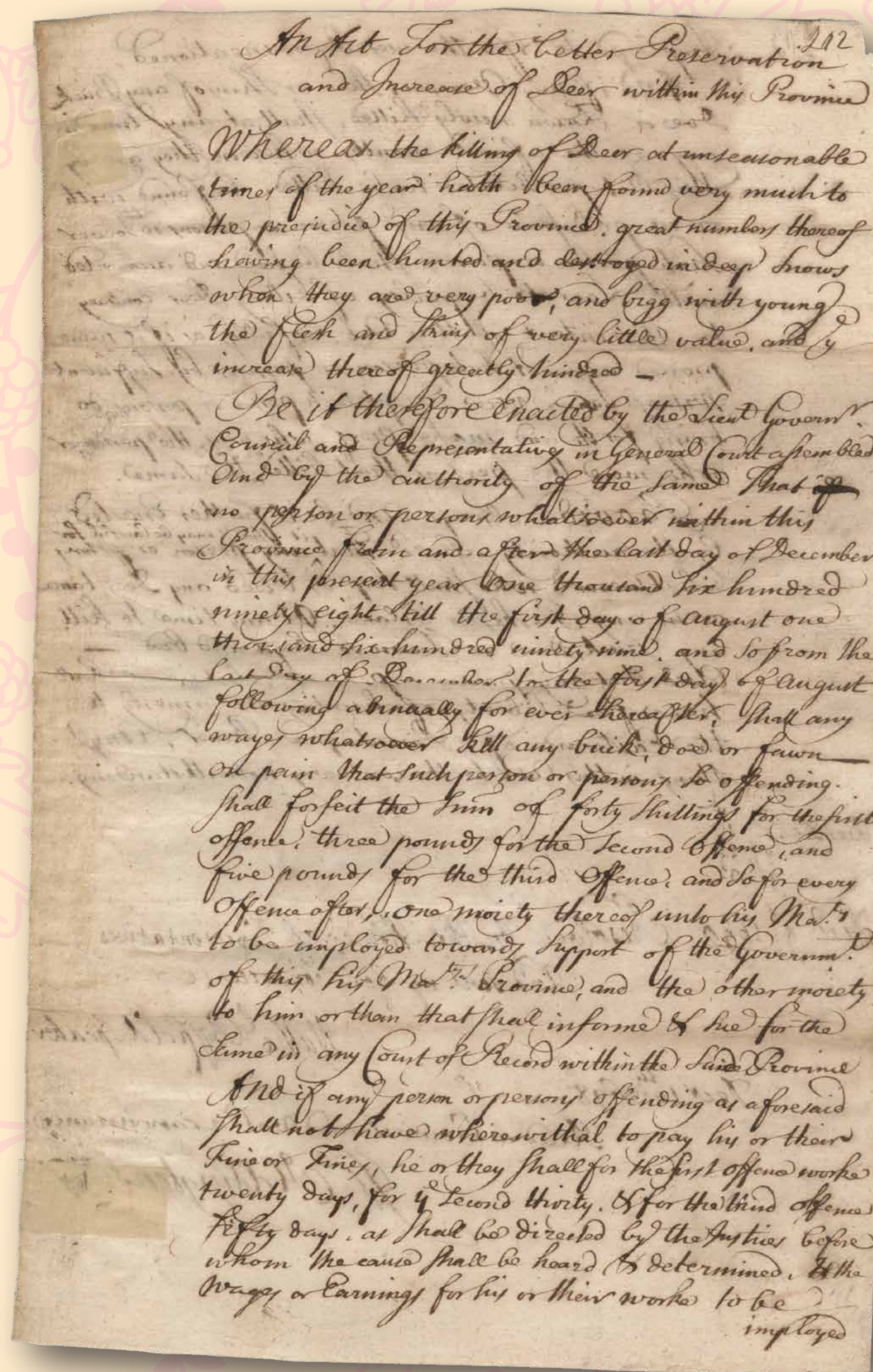
Based on their interpretation of the Bible, English Puritans thought that land should be “enclosed” with walls and fences to separate cattle from crops. It should also be “improved” with permanent settlements. In contrast, native people moved with the seasons in pursuit of food. Spawning fish, migratory birds, and ripening fruits were found at varying times and places. The native custom of “mobility” was suspect by Puritans and judged to be morally wrong.



Over sixty versions of the “Peaceable Kingdom” were painted by David Hicks. While the animal population was not quite this diverse in seventeenth century Massachusetts, “new” European farm animals like cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and chickens appeared. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

“FOR BEASTS THERE ARE SOME BEARES...ALSO... SEVERAL SORTS OF DEERE.. ALSO WOLVES, FOXES, BEAVERS, OTTERS...GREAT WILD CATS, AND A GREAT BEAST CALLED A MOLKE (MOOSE) AS BIGGE AS AN OXE.”

Reverend Francis Higginson, describing North American animals, 1645



“An Act for the better Preservation and Increase of Deer within the Province” The arrival of English colonists led to a sharp decline in the deer population through hunting and clearing land. This 1698 law belatedly recognized the problem and banned deer hunting from the last day of December to the first day of August. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

An Alternate View: Culture and Geography

Some animals, including sheep and cattle, can be domesticated. Others, such as wolves or even deer, cannot serve as farm animals. “Domestic” animals had evolved naturally in the Middle East and along similar latitudes in Europe and Asia. They were scarce in North America.

In Europe, populations settled in for farming. Agricultural surpluses allowed new occupations to develop since fewer people were needed for hunting and gathering. Towns and cities emerged. In North America – lacking farm animals – mobility was necessary for survival.



Deer and other North American animals were not suited to European farming methods. ABBYSS-ALPHA

Climate Change

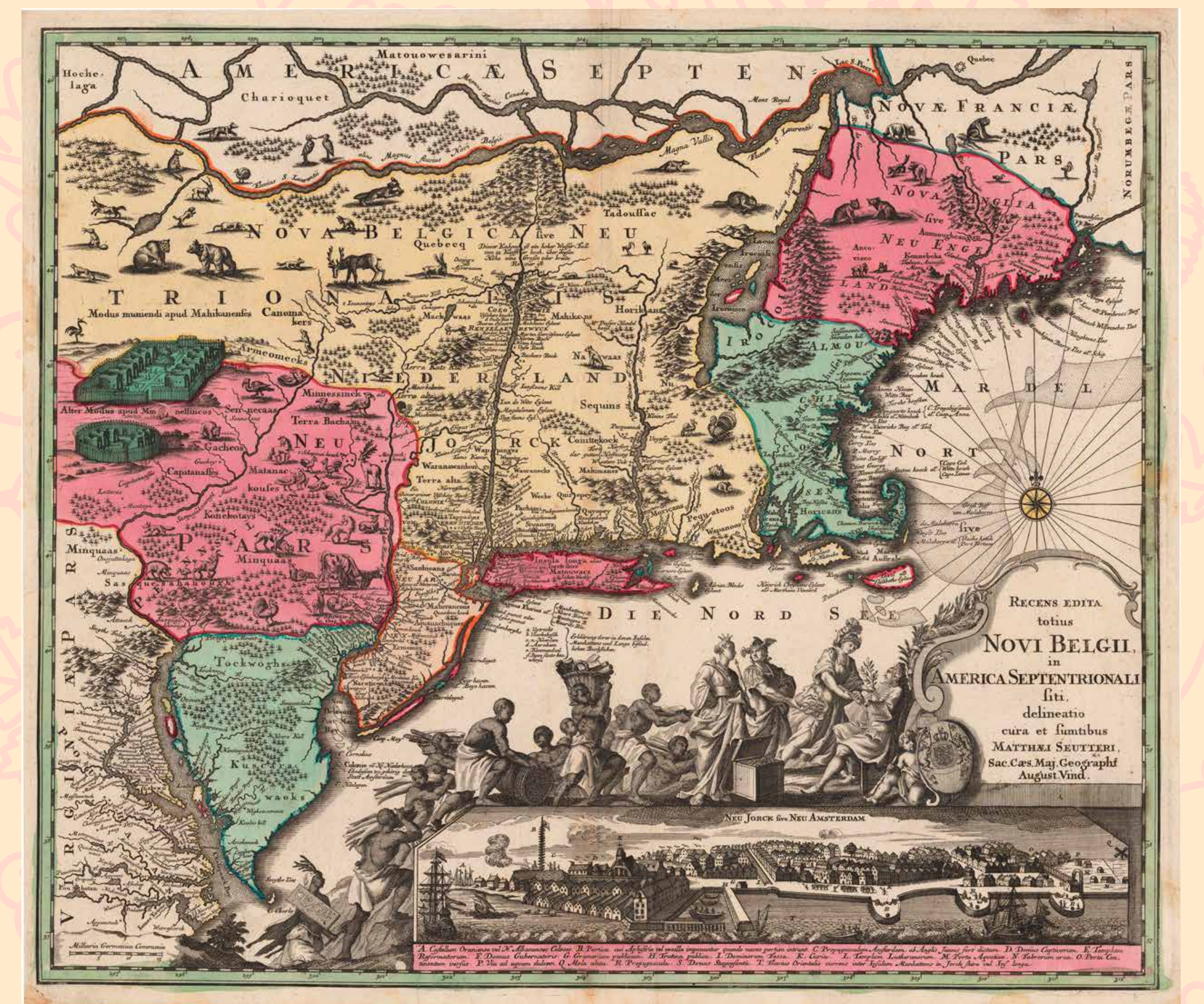
Many English settlers attributed the decline of native populations to divine providence – clearing the land for them. Today we recognize it as a tragedy and a lesson.



Massasoit befriended the Pilgrims. Ironically, he sought English allies because European diseases had reduced the Wampanoag population.
GKULLBERG PHOTO

“GOD HATH CONSUMED THE NATIVES WITH A MIRACULOUS PLAGUE, WHEREBY THE GREATER PART OF THE COUNTRY IS LEFT VOID OF INHABITANTS.”

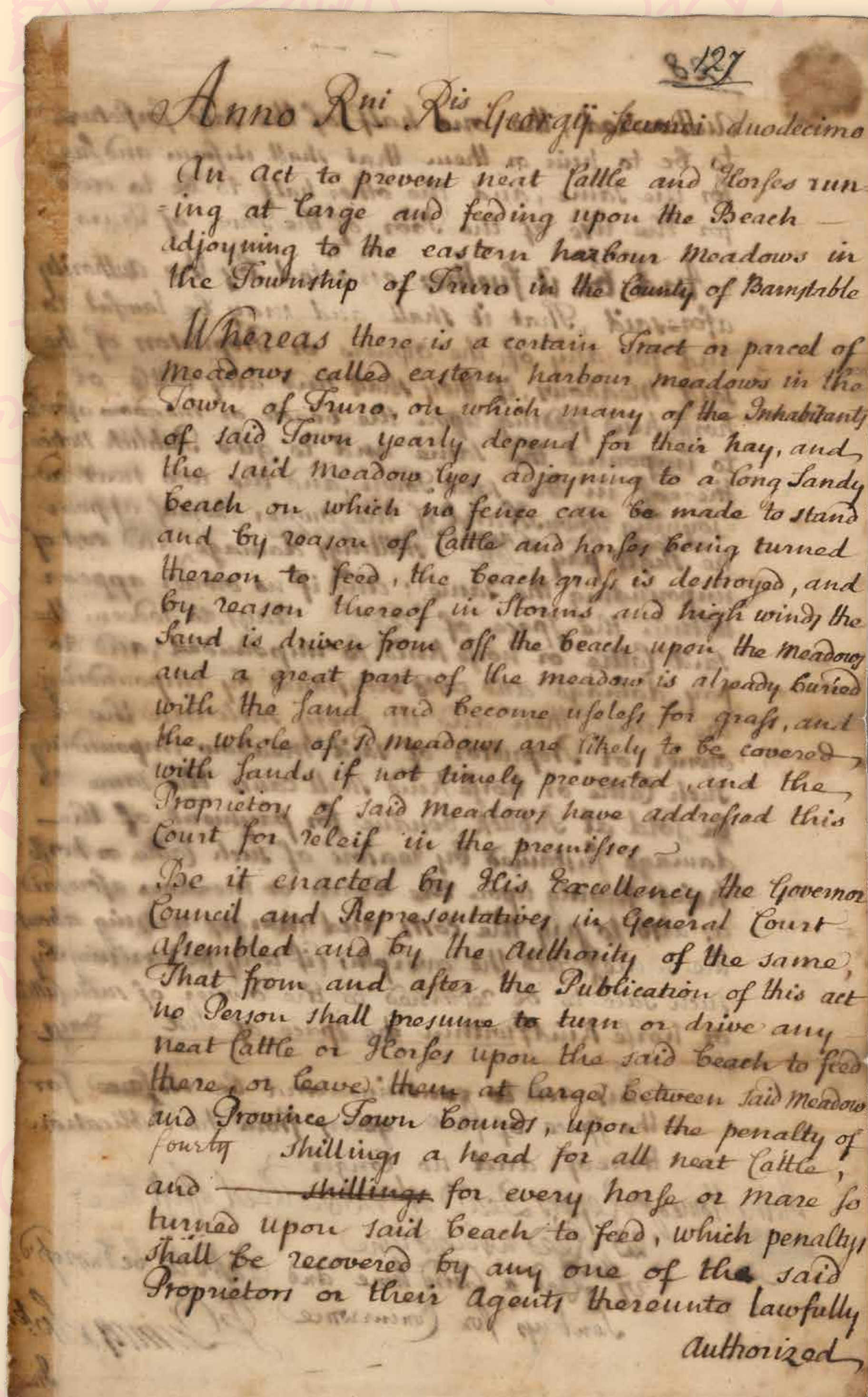
Governor John Winthrop



Massachusetts was (and remains) home to several native nations including the Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Massachuset, Mobican, and Pennecook-Abenaki. Although not completely accurate, this period map includes native lands. GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE

A Changing Landscape

Native people endured tremendous shocks. Although they traded furs and other commodities there was no connection to a worldwide market. Large European ships brought beaver and other furs across the globe creating enormous demand. Many species – including beaver - became nearly extinct. Wolves were hunted down as nuisances. New animal species crowded out familiar ones. Forests were felled to create open land for grazing animals and European crops. This changed temperature levels and contributed to floods. New European diseases devastated native communities.

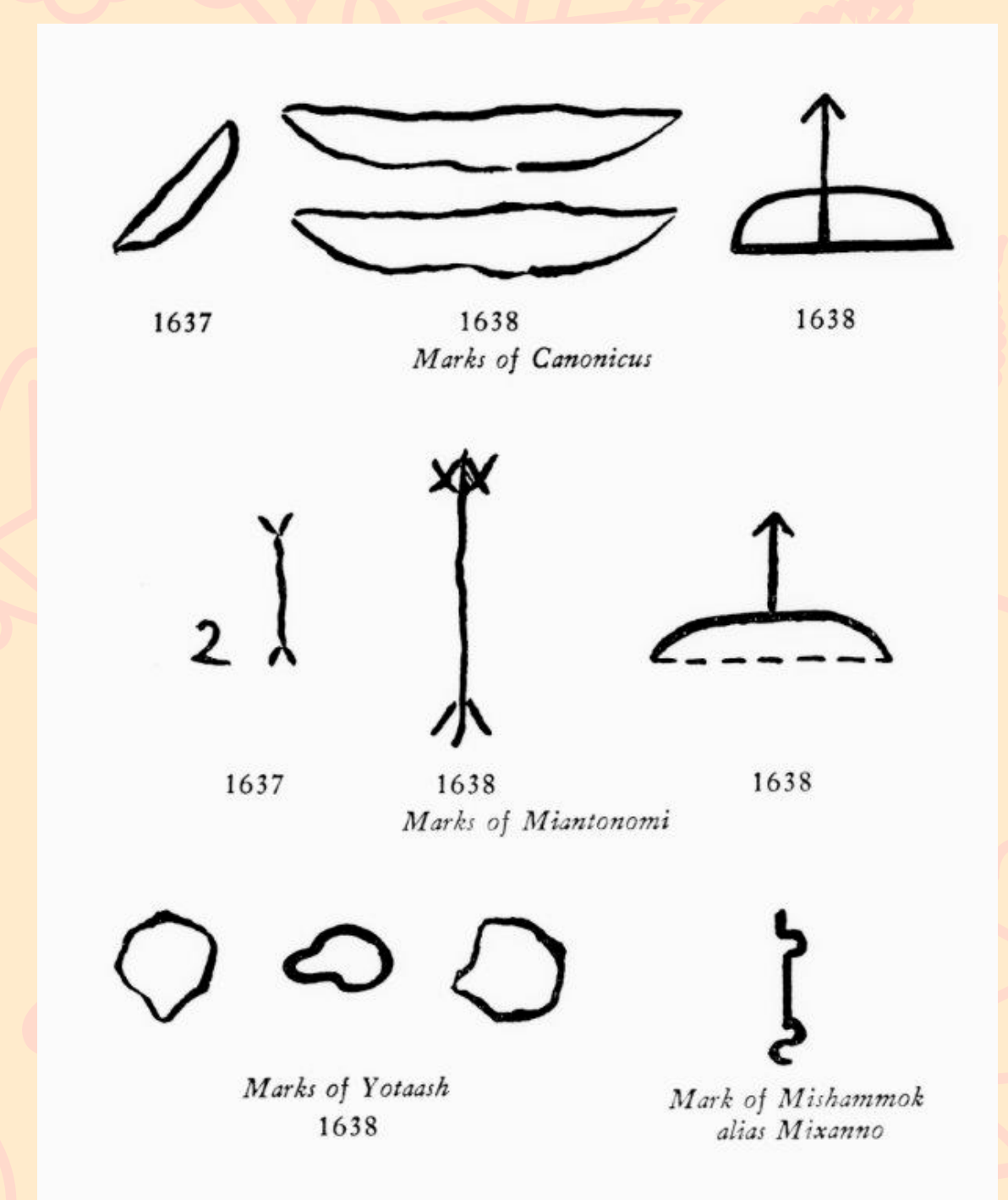


Environmental Awareness - This 1708 law deals with the problem of cattle and horses “running at Large and feeding upon the Beach” in Truro. “The beach grass is destroyed, and by reason thereof...Sand is driven from the beach upon the meadows and a great part of the meadow is already buried.” To preserve meadows for grazing this law mandated a fine of 40 Shillings per head for cattle on the beach. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

A Narraganset Perspective

“Our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, our plains were full of deer, as also our woods, and of turkies, and our coves full of fish and fowl... But these English having gathered our land, and with scythes cut down the grass, and with axes fell the trees; their cows and horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks, and we shall all be starved.” Miantonomi, Narraganset Sachem, 1641.

A complex figure, Miantonomi aligned with English colonists but later attempted to destroy their settlements. Sentenced to death in Boston he was turned over to Indian adversaries for execution.



Pictograms of Narraganset Indians, including Miantonomi, used in signing colonial era documents. RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Many country roads in Massachusetts pass stone walls in the midst of woods. These were likely farms during the colonial period. Clearing forests for planting, grazing, and building was seen as essential for progress. As farming declined the forest returned.

New World / Old World

The Great Migration

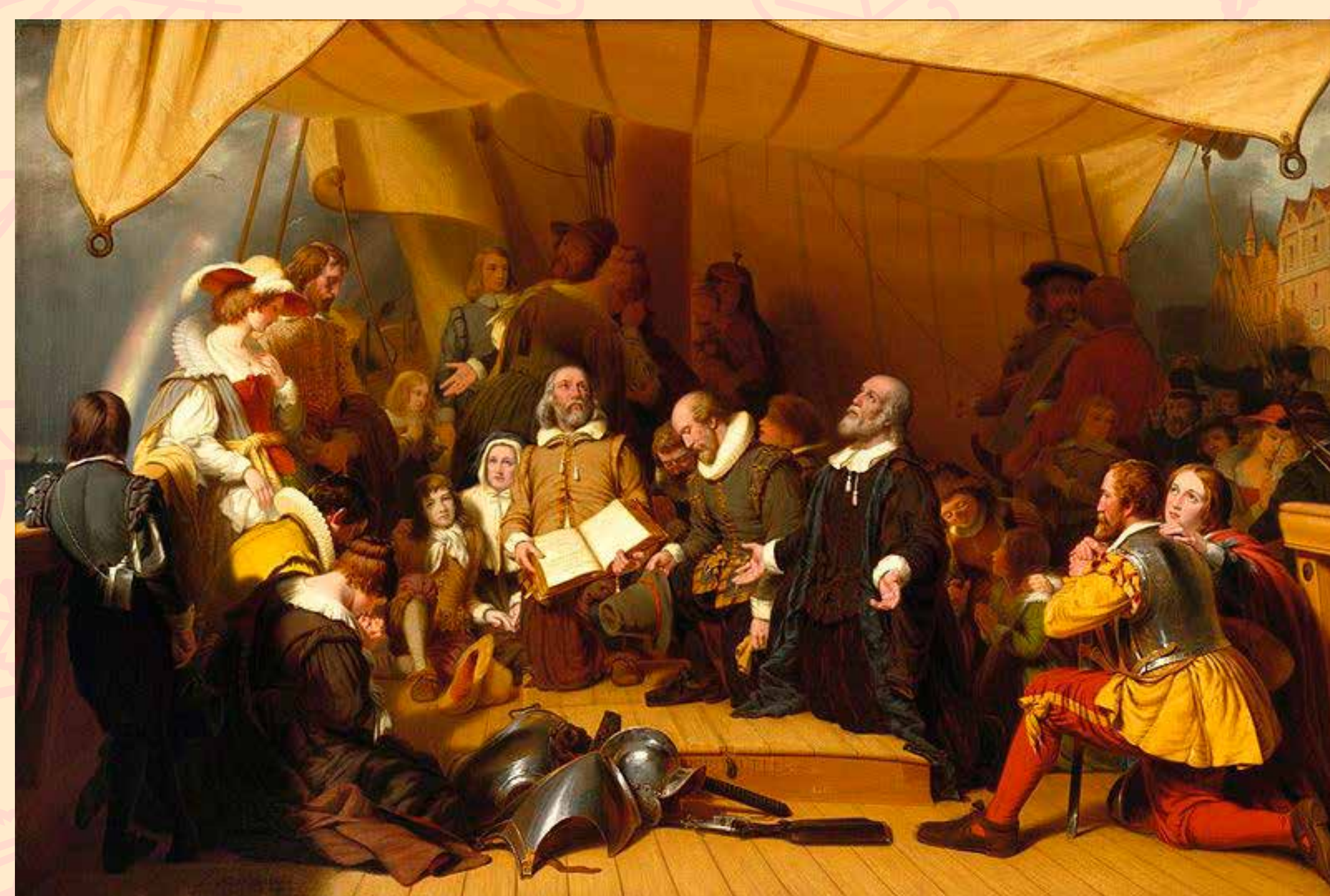
In 1629 English Puritans were planning to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. (Boston would become its capital.) They prepared a list of foods to be brought to the New World: “wheat, rye, barley, oats... beans, pease, stones of all sorts of fruits, as peaches, plums, filberts, cherries, pear, apples, quince kernels, pomegranates,... liquorice seed...potatoes,” and “tame turkeys.” Ironically turkeys had new world origins having been introduced to Europe by Spanish explorers.

A Puritan fleet of seventeen ships, including the flagship Arbella, arrived in 1630. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

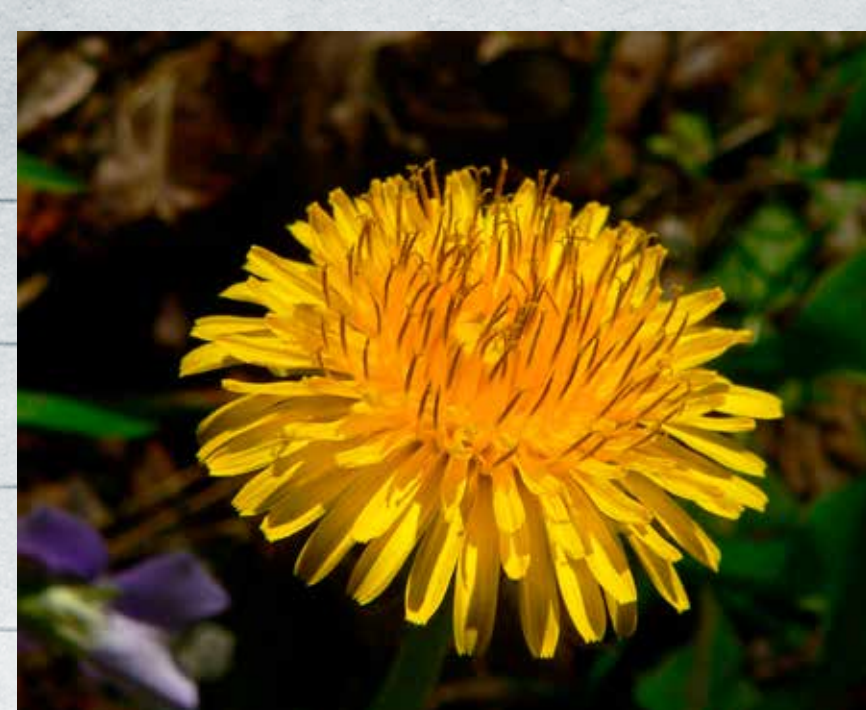


“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S GARDEN AND HE HAS GIVEN IT TO THE SONS OF MEN TO BE TILLED AND IMPROVED... [IT IS WRONG] THAT WHOLE COUNTRIES AS FRUITFUL AND CONVENIENT FOR THE USE OF MAN...LIE WASTE WITHOUT IMPROVEMENT.”

John Winthrop advocating emigration to Massachusetts, 1629



Embarkation of the Pilgrims BROOKLYN MUSEUM



Dandelion GREG HUME

INTRUSIVE

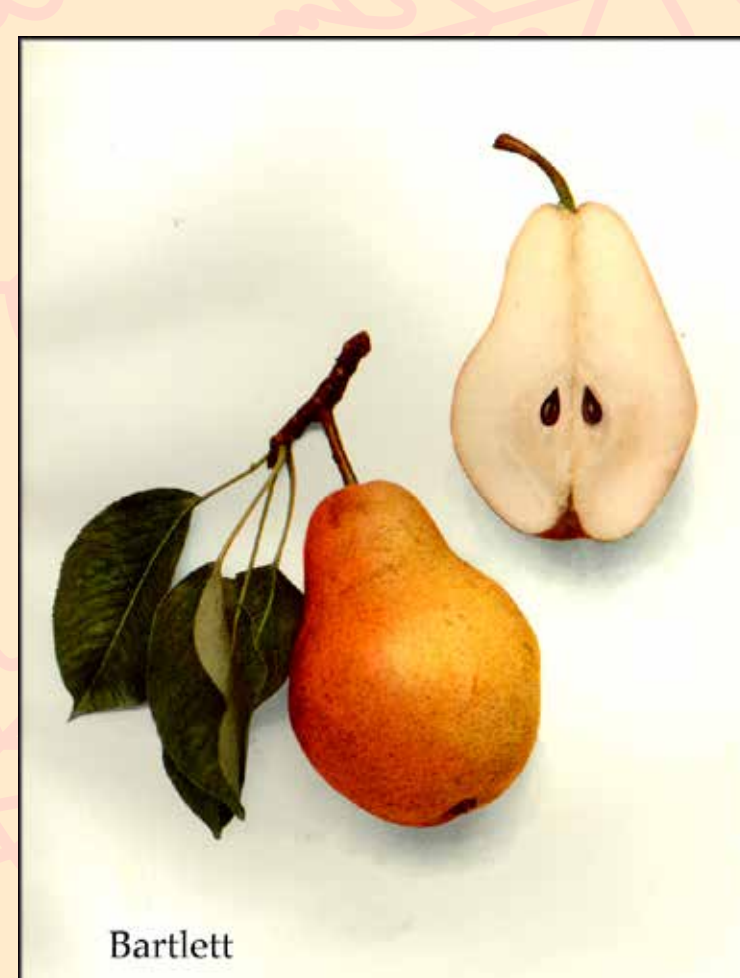
Sailing ships brought unwelcome visitors to the new world. Stowaways included rats, cockroaches, and fly species that were not native to North America. European weeds such as the dandelion also arrived.



Governor John Endicott planted a pear tree in present day Danvers during the 1630's that still stands. (It is the oldest European fruit tree in America.) PATRICE TODISCO/LANDSCAPENOTES.COM

Pear Review

Pears were brought to Massachusetts from England. In 1799 a new variety - the Williams pear - was imported from England and planted in Roxbury. Years later Enoch Bartlett bought the property. Unaware of its history he named the pear for himself. Today the variety is known as the “Bartlett pear” in North America.



Bartlett Pear
ULYSSES PRENTISS HEDRICK

COLONIAL MASSACHUSETTS 101

Massachusetts had two English colonies through much of the seventeenth century. The “Pilgrims” of Plymouth Colony were “separatists” making a complete break with the Church of England. The “Puritans” of the Massachusetts Bay Colony arrived in 1630 and hoped to “purify” the church. In practice both group shared similar Calvinist beliefs.

Chain of Custody: Peaches

In 1629, the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony listed peaches as one of the fruits to be planted here. Peaches were first cultivated in China. Ancient trade routes brought them to Persia (present day Iran,) After Alexander the Great conquered Persia, peach trees appeared in Greece. Greece’s Roman conquerors later planted them in Western Europe.



Peaches and plums were brought to Massachusetts by Puritan colonists.
GRAPHICS FAIRY

First Fruits

Arriving in 1623, Reverend

William Blackstone was the first

English settler in present day

Boston. Something of a hermit, he

lived on what is now Beacon Hill

and planted apple trees.

Red Apples

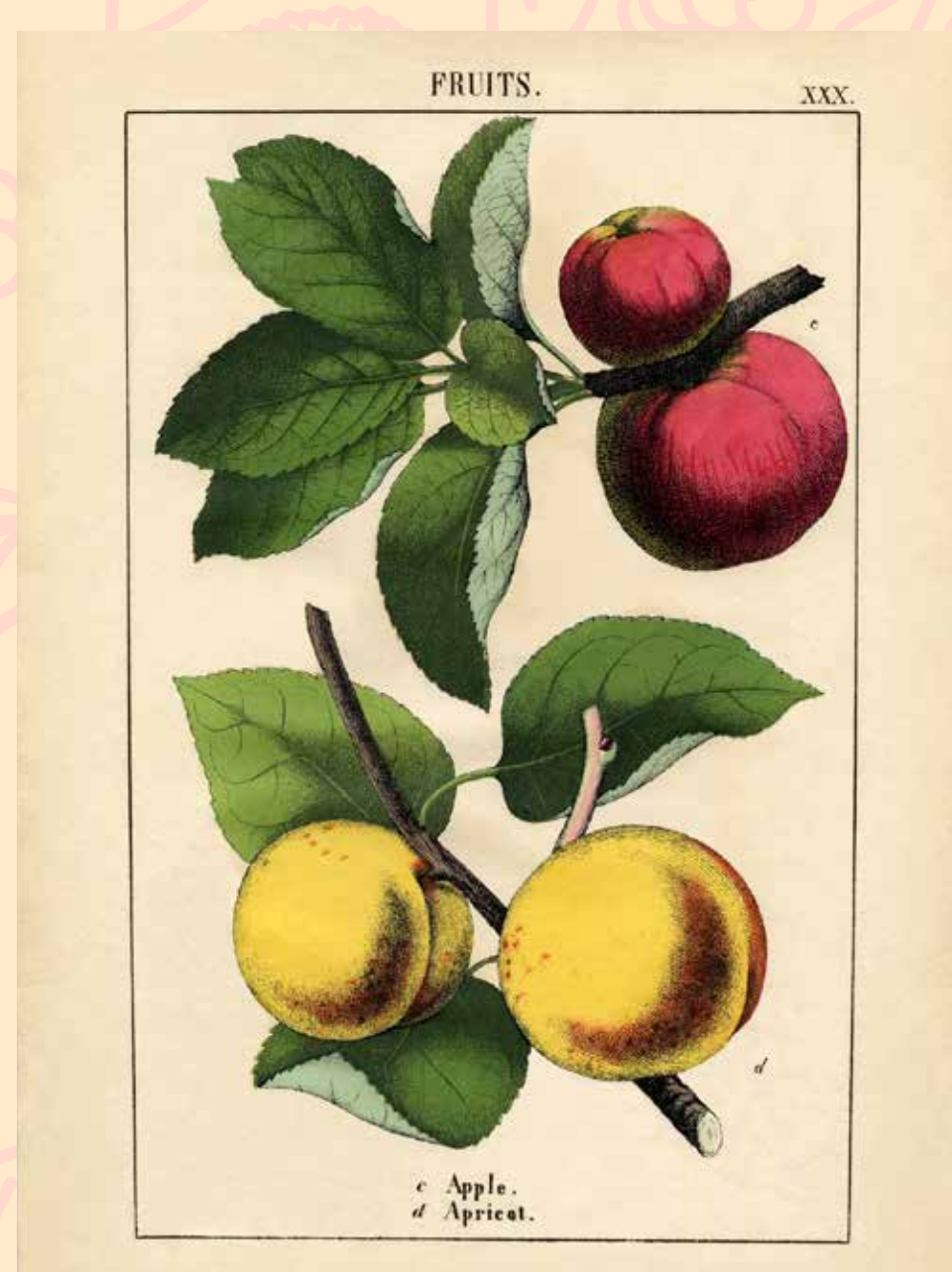
Russian scientist Nicolai Vavilov traced the first cultivation of apples to Kazakhstan in Central Asia. From there the practice spread, eventually reaching England.

(The Romans were enthusiastic planters of apple trees.)

Vavilov hoped to end famine in Russia by the scientific study of agriculture. Falling out of favor with Joseph Stalin, he died in a Soviet prison.



Nicolai Vavilov LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Apples and apricots were brought to Massachusetts from England. GRAPHICS FAIRY

“AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE...”



The Winslow Family by Joseph Blackburn. Along with fashionable clothing and gardens, apples are included in this family portrait as a symbol of colonial prosperity. MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

A Massachusetts Variety

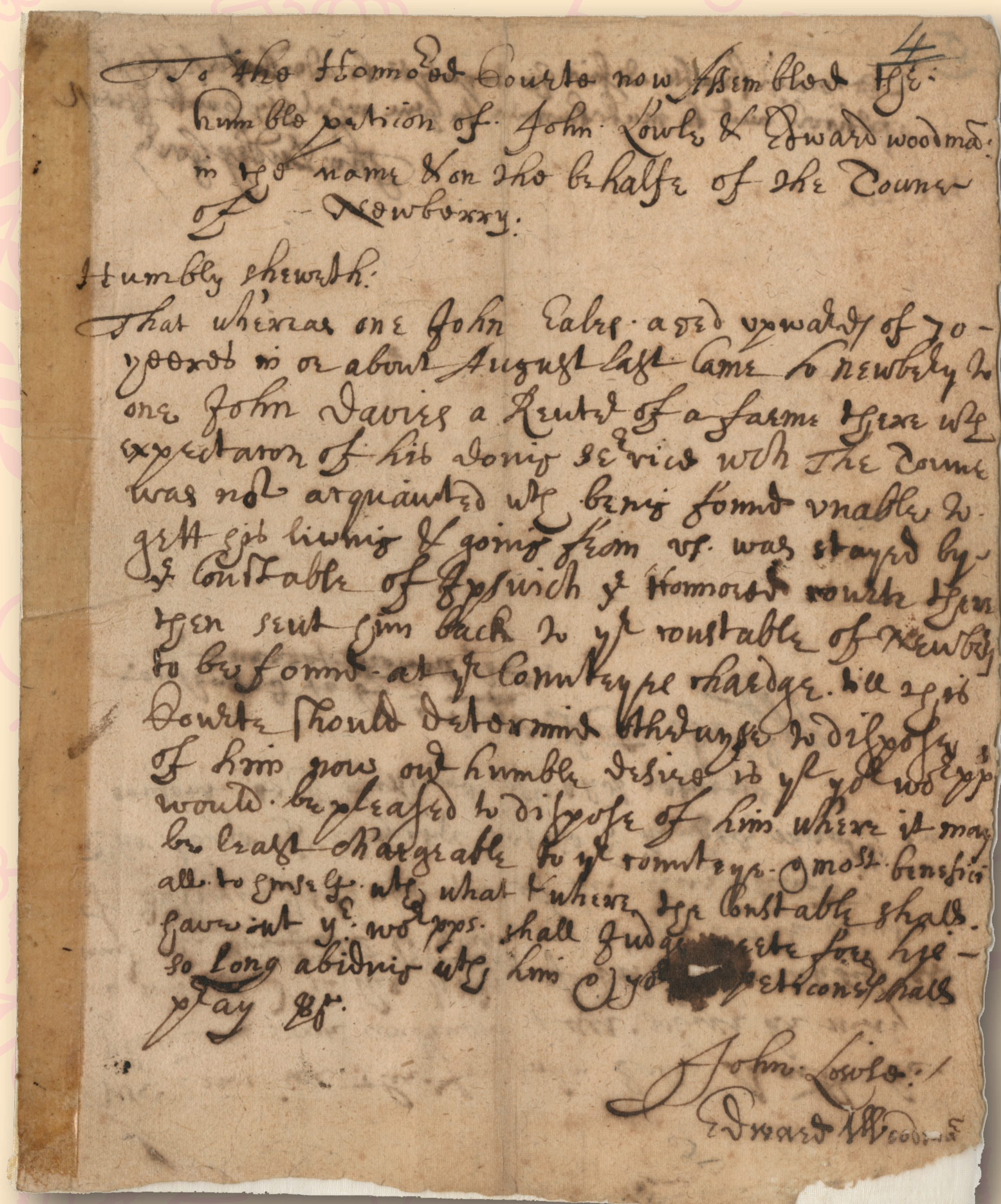
Baldwin apples were found in Wilmington Massachusetts on the farm of John Ball around 1740. They are named for Laommi Baldwin, a Revolutionary War officer who fought at Lexington and Concord. Colonel Baldwin later supervised the construction of the Middlesex Canal connecting the area around present day Lowell to Boston. Baldwin noticed the apple, took grafts, and planted and promoted the “brand.” Appropriately, Baldwin was a second cousin to “Johnny Appleseed.”



Laommi Baldwin

JOHNNY APPLESEED

The official Massachusetts folk hero, Johnny Appleseed, was born in Leominster in 1774. His real name was John Chapman. Although eccentric, he had a practical side. Anticipating settlement in western Pennsylvania and Ohio, he bought land, increased its value by creating orchards, and sold out at a profit. He mostly planted seeds for the variety of apples used to make “hard cider.” Some of Chapman’s trees were chopped down during prohibition.



Honeybees were brought from England to pollinate apples. (They were called “English flies” by native people.) This petition from the town of Newbury, requests assistance for John Eales “age upward of 70 years...a beehive maker incapable of making a living.” MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

Don't Know Beans about Beans

Although beans were familiar to Europeans, most popular varieties originated in the New World probably in Peru. These include kidney beans, lima beans, black beans, and small, white “pea” beans.

“A SMART FIRE FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF IS A GENERAL RULE FOR COMMON SIZED FAMILY OVENS, PROVIDED BROWN BREAD AND BEANS ARE TO BE BAKED.”

Lydia Maria Child

ABOLITIONIST COOKBOOK

Lydia Maria Child of Medford was a prominent abolitionist. She also contributed to the holiday tradition with a poem that begins, “Over the river and through the woods to grandfather’s house we go.” In addition to anti-slavery works she wrote *The American Frugal Housewife*, a book of recipes and advice.



Lydia Maria Child

An iconic recipe SHUTTERSTOCK



Who knew? Among many accomplishments, Paul Revere created illustrations for this colonial era cookbook. BOWDOIN COLLEGE



Not As Simple As It Looks

What could be simpler, or more rooted in New England, than Boston baked beans and brown bread? Actually it is a cosmopolitan dish. Pea beans probably originated in Peru. By the 1600’s they were cultivated by native people in Massachusetts and farmers in England (having been carried to Europe by the Spanish.) Pigs (and pork) came to Massachusetts with early colonists.

Molasses had a long route to Boston. It was produced by African slaves on Caribbean plantations. Its basic ingredient, sugar cane, originated in Papua New Guinea and eventually arrived in the New World via Spain. Brown bread was often made of rye (brought from England) and Native American corn meal.

Bean Town

The name Bean Town may be part of the Puritan legacy. Nineteenth century Beverly author Lucy Larcom wrote about the “Puritanic custom of saving Sunday-work by baking beans on Saturday evening, leaving them in the oven over night.” Saturday night bean suppers remain popular in some rural New England churches perhaps reflecting that legacy.



The warmth of a colonial kitchen, perhaps baking beans on a Saturday night PASSION FOR THE PAST, HISTORICAL KEN

Pigs were hardy and dangerous animals that were sometimes released into the wild and later hunted. Unlike other farm animals they could hold their own with wolves. This 1658 law deals with “the regulation of swine in all townships...whereby many children are in great danger of loss of life or limb.” Some laws required that pigs be “ringed” through the nose to prevent rooting out crops. Others mandated yokes to hold them behind fences. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Corn Meals

Native corn became the most important grain for English colonists although they also planted European crops of wheat, rye, barley and oats.



Grainy image: English colonists introduced European grains to North America. SHUTTERSTOCK

Nasaump, Samp and Indian Pudding

Native Americans boiled dried corn, berries and nuts, until it thickened into a porridge called Nasaump. English settlers called a similar dish “samp” and sometimes added bacon or sweeteners. Today’s “Indian Pudding” follows the tradition. While there are various recipes corn meal is the most important ingredient. It may be sweetened with molasses or brown sugar.



Farmers planted corn and brought the grain to grist mills to make flour. The Dexter grist mill in Sandwich dates to approximately 1654. ANDREW RABBITT

Indian pudding is derived from native traditions. In America, similar recipes have been called “Hasty Pudding.”



Wheat

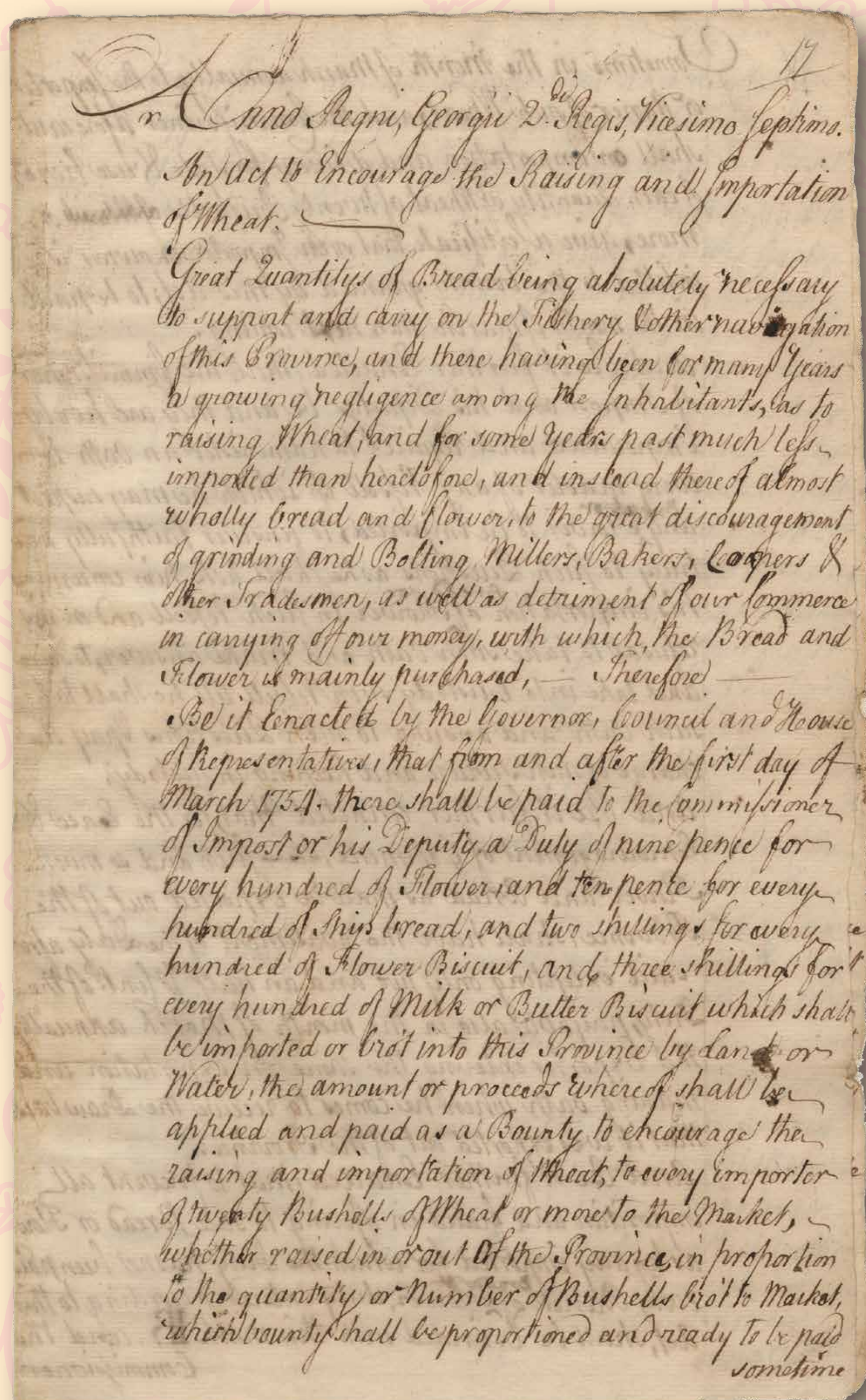
English colonists prized wheat above other grains. The lighter texture worked better for breads and pie crusts. Unfortunately, wheat did not grow well in Massachusetts. Throughout the colonial period there were attempts to encourage the cultivation or importation of wheat. Not until the opening of the Erie Canal in the nineteenth century, was there an adequate supply from the mid-west.

“THERE IS VERY GOOD BREAD MADE OF [INDIAN CORN] BY MIXING HALF, OR A THIRD PARTE, MORE OR LESS OF RY OR WHEATE-MEALE OR FLOWER AMONGST IT.”

John Winthrop Jr., 1662

JOHNNY CAKE

Although not precise, this term refers to corn meal flat bread, often a pancake. Wrapped in cloth it could be carried when traveling by native people and later by Europeans. Possibly “Johnny cake” is a corruption of the phrase “journey cake.”



An Act for Encourage the Raising and Importation of Wheat, 1754. This legislation was one of many attempts to increase wheat production. “Great Quantities of Bread being absolutely necessary to Support and carry on the Fishery and other navigation of this Province.” Bounties are offered to encourage “raising wheat or import or imports of bread four, biscuit.” MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

THE UPPER CRUST

Pies were popular in Massachusetts and in England. Because of shortages, some reserved wheat for the more delicate “upper crust,” creating a popular term for the upper class.



Today's apple pies have a lighter crust than some colonial versions.

Coffee, Tea and Chocolate

Because of events leading to the American Revolution, tea will always be linked with Boston.

In fact, tea, coffee, and chocolate all arrived in Massachusetts during the seventeenth century.



After marrying King Charles II, Catherine of Braganza popularized tea drinking in England.
PETER LELY

Tea Time

Despite its association with England, tea was slow to catch on at first. Cultivated in China, it took several routes into Europe. By the seventeenth century Dutch merchants were aggressively involved in the tea trade while Portuguese merchants brought it to the Iberian Peninsula. When England’s King Charles II married Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza in 1660, tea was suddenly favored in court. Its popularity spread among the English upper classes.

Coffee in Massachusetts

In 1670 Dorothy Jones received the first license in Massachusetts to sell “coffee and cuchaletto” (chocolate.) Coffee may have originated in Ethiopia. It then spread to Arab nations and Turkey, its popularity enhanced by Islam’s ban on alcohol. Italian and Dutch merchants, trading with the Middle East, bought the drink to Western Europe. By the 1660’s coffee houses were opening in London. Several coffee houses also opened in seventeenth century Boston.

How Do You Take Your Tea?

When tea was a novelty, the Philip English family of Salem heard that it should be prepared by boiling. After boiling, they poured off the water and served the tea as a vegetable. Later some Salem residents improved the taste with salt and butter before discovering that tea was a drink.

“I HAVE DRANK COFFEE EVERY AFTERNOON SINCE, AND HAVE BORNE IT VERY WELL...TEA MUST BE UNIVERSALLY RENOUNCED, I MUST BE WEANED, AND THE SOONER THE BETTER.”

John Adams to Abigail, 1774 (one year after the Boston Tea Party)



A London coffee house. Some in England associated Protestantism with a growing business culture. Coffee was seen as an appropriate drink for industrious Protestants, unlike alcohol that dulled the senses. PUBLIC DOMAIN REVIEW

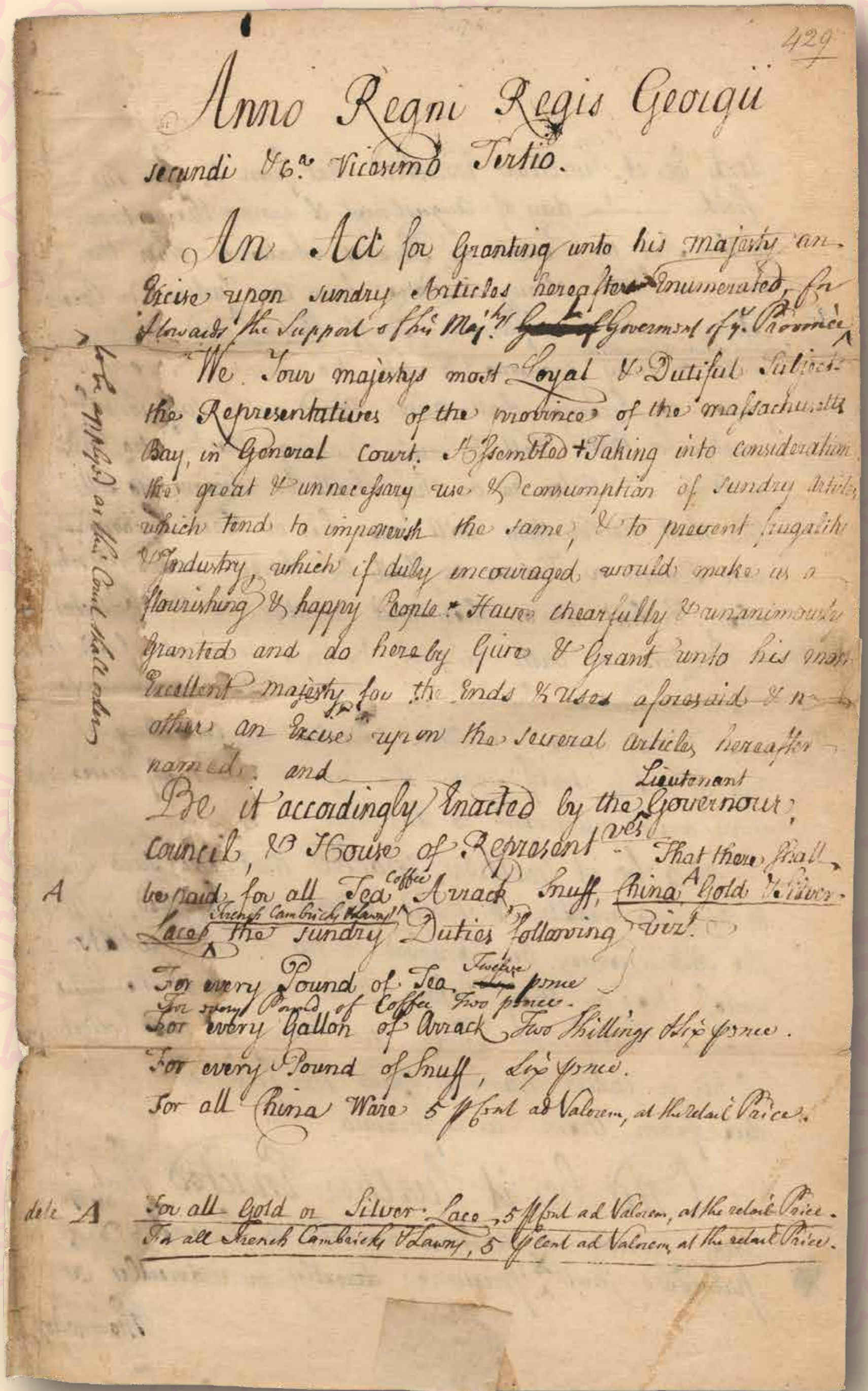


Coffee beans in a holiday mood
GRAPHICS FAIRY



The Green Dragon, a tavern and coffee house, later became a gathering place for patriots before the American Revolution. BLANDON CAMPBELL

This 1750 Massachusetts law presents a skeptical view of tea and coffee. “Taking into consideration the great and unnecessary use & consumption of Sundry articles which tend to impoverish the [people]...& to prevent... industry... there shall be paid for all Tea, Coffee... the Sundry Duties following...To every Pound of Tea...Ten pence...For every pound of coffee Two pence. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Chocolate



*The Chocolate Maiden by
Jean Etienne Liotard*
OLD MASTERS GALLERY, DRESDEN

“I SAID MASSACHUTSET
AND MEXICO MET AT HIS
HONOUR’S TABLE.”

*Judge Samuel Sewall
after a breakfast of venison
and chocolate with the
Lieutenant Governor,
1697*

Sugar or Spice

Chocolate originated in Mexico and Central America. Served as a drink, it was often spiced with chili peppers. Columbus was shown cocoa beans on his fourth voyage to America but apparently decided not to indulge. Later the Spanish sweetened chocolate with sugar and vanilla (also a new world flavor) and its popularity spread in Europe.

“Boston Made”

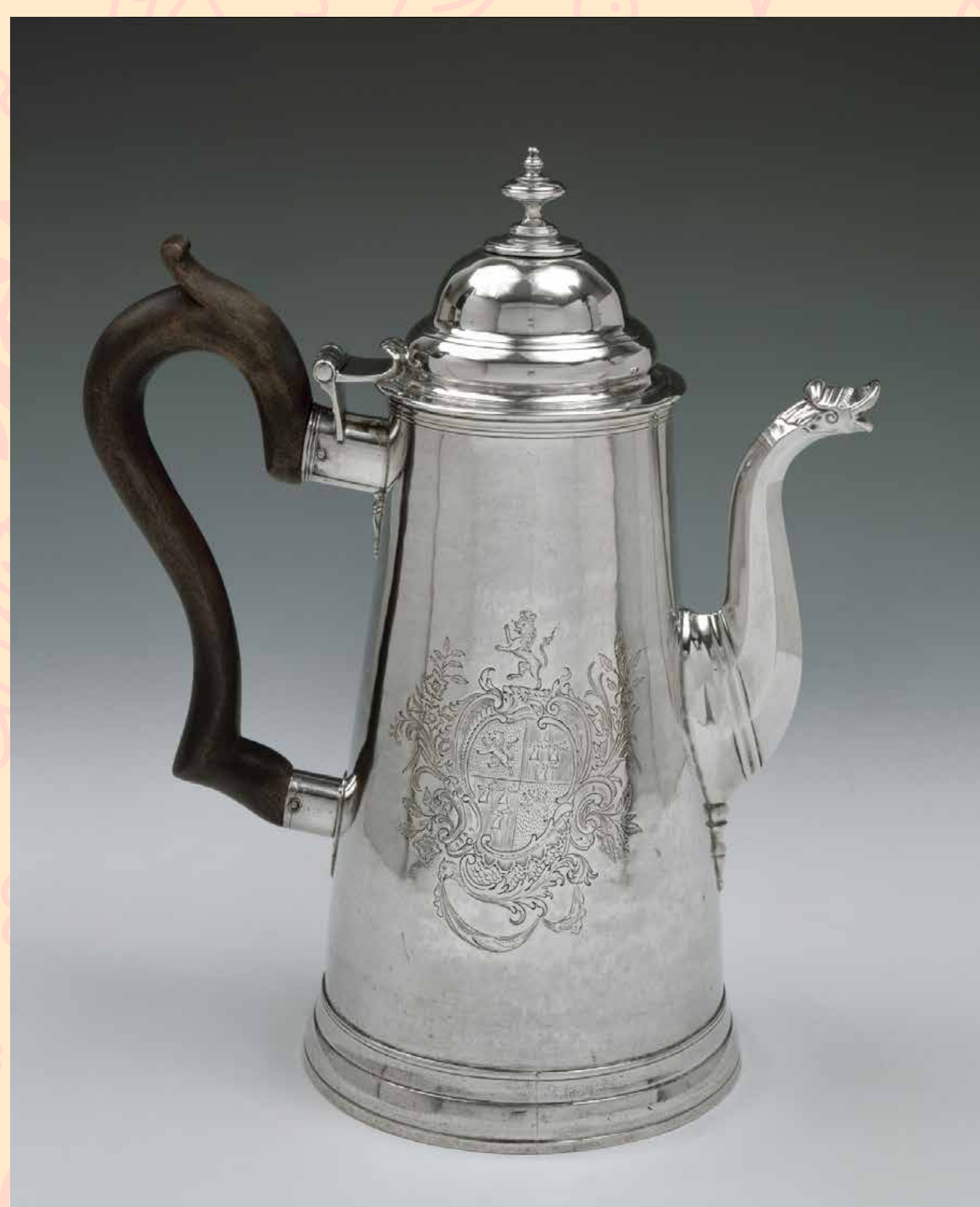
Cacao beans were shipped from Jamaica to Boston in 1682. During the colonial period Boston developed a reputation for producing high quality chocolate. It was superior to products imported from England because chocolate could take on the flavor of fish or other cargo on sailing ships. Importing beans from the Caribbean, and producing chocolate locally, improved quality. After the Revolution “Boston Made” appeared in ads for chocolate in other American cities.



Judge Samuel Sewall

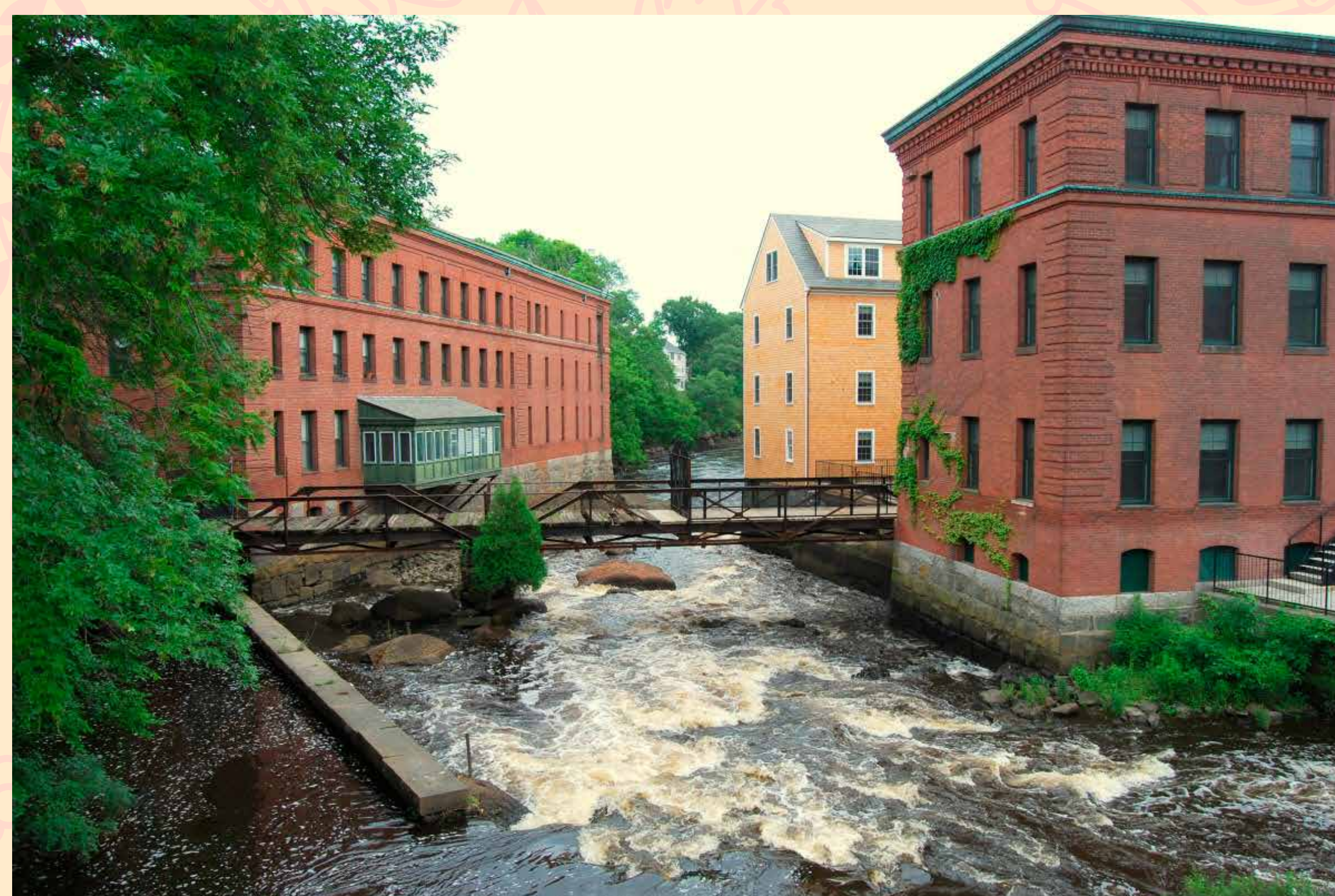
EVERY WITCH WAY

Samuel Sewall was a judge in the Salem Witch Trials. Admitting his error he was an early advocate of reform (and chocolate.) Sewall gave “2 Balls of Chockalett and a pound of figs” to a sick man named Samuel Whiting. He presented a pound of chocolate and three printed sermons to a “Mr. Gibbs.”



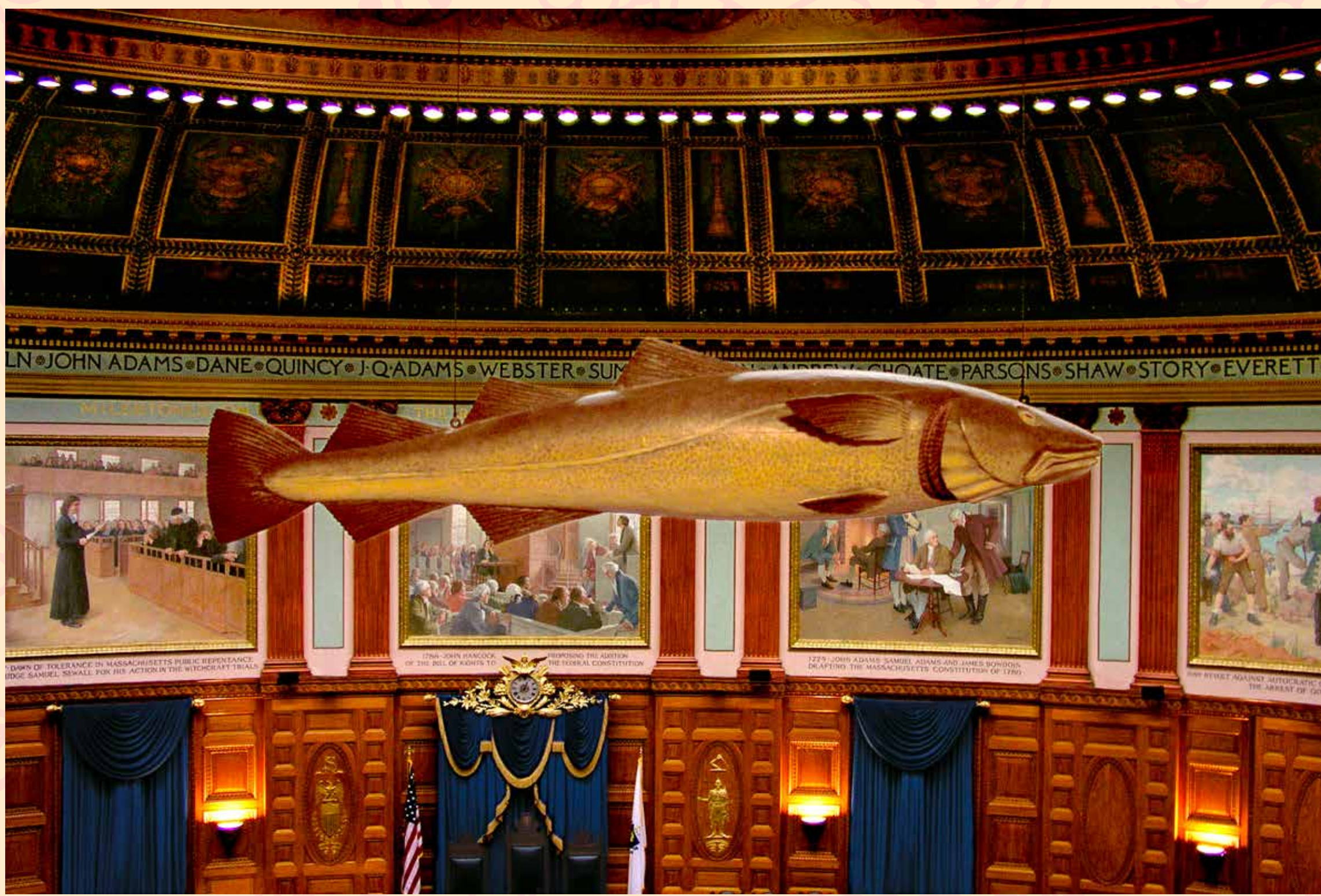
Perhaps this image does not remind you of hot chocolate on a cold morning. This elegant chocolate pot was made in Boston around 1760 by Zachariah Bridgden. The spout is higher than in coffee pots to contain chocolate solids while pouring. HISTORIC DEERFIELD

Dr. James Baker and John Hannon began making chocolate in eighteenth century Massachusetts. (Chocolate was served as a drink.) Hannon left America but Baker’s Chocolate grew into a national brand. The Walter Baker chocolate factory, in Milton’s Lower Mills section, has been converted for housing. As late as the 1960’s the aroma of chocolate permeated the neighborhood. MARCELA



Fish Tales

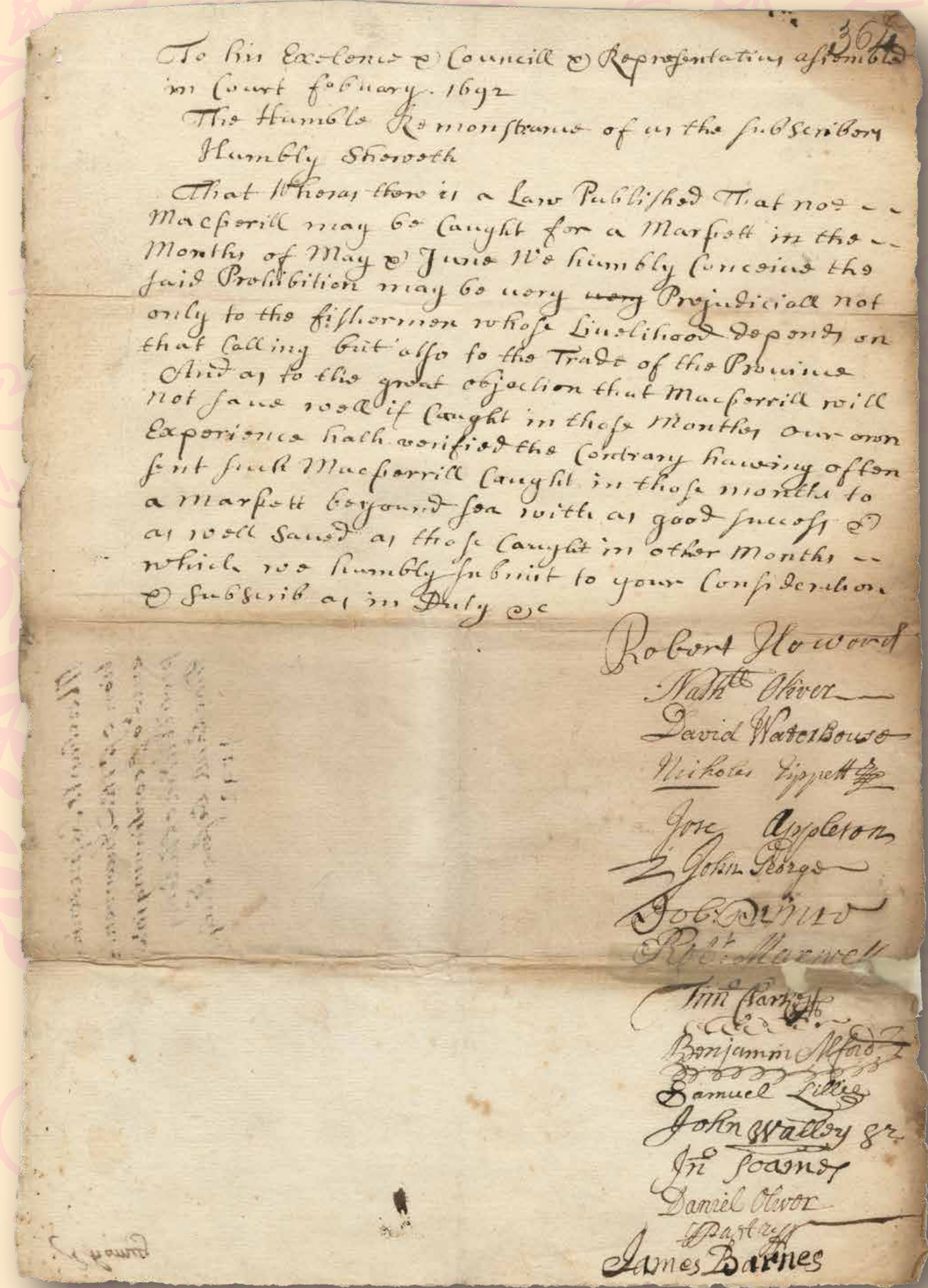
Explorer Bartholomew Gosnold
named Cape Cod for the fish that
became a source of wealth.



The “sacred cod” hangs above the house chamber in the Massachusetts State House, symbolizing the importance of cod to the early economy.
COPYRIGHT SALEM DESIGN, SHARON SHEA

Codfish Aristocracy

Along with domestic consumption, salted cod was sold to Catholic countries in Europe, including Spain and Portugal where eating meat was forbidden on Fridays. In a tawdry vein, cod that could not be sold on the open market because of damage or spoilage was sold to Caribbean plantations as food for African slaves. At first English merchants controlled the trade. As the colony grew, a local “codfish aristocracy” took control of fisheries.



Concerned about depletion of mackerel, a law prohibited taking them by hook in May and June. In this 1692 petition, merchants protest. Regarding decline of stocks, “our own Experience hath verified the Contrary.” Similar controversies persist today.
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

“THE ABOUNDANCE OF
SEA-FISH ARE ALMOST
BEYOND BELEEING, AND
SURE I SHOULD SCARCE
HAVE BELEEVED IT, EXCEPT
I HAD SEEN IT WITH MINE
OWNE EYES.”

Revered Francis Higginson,
1630

WHAT’S IN A WORD: SCROD

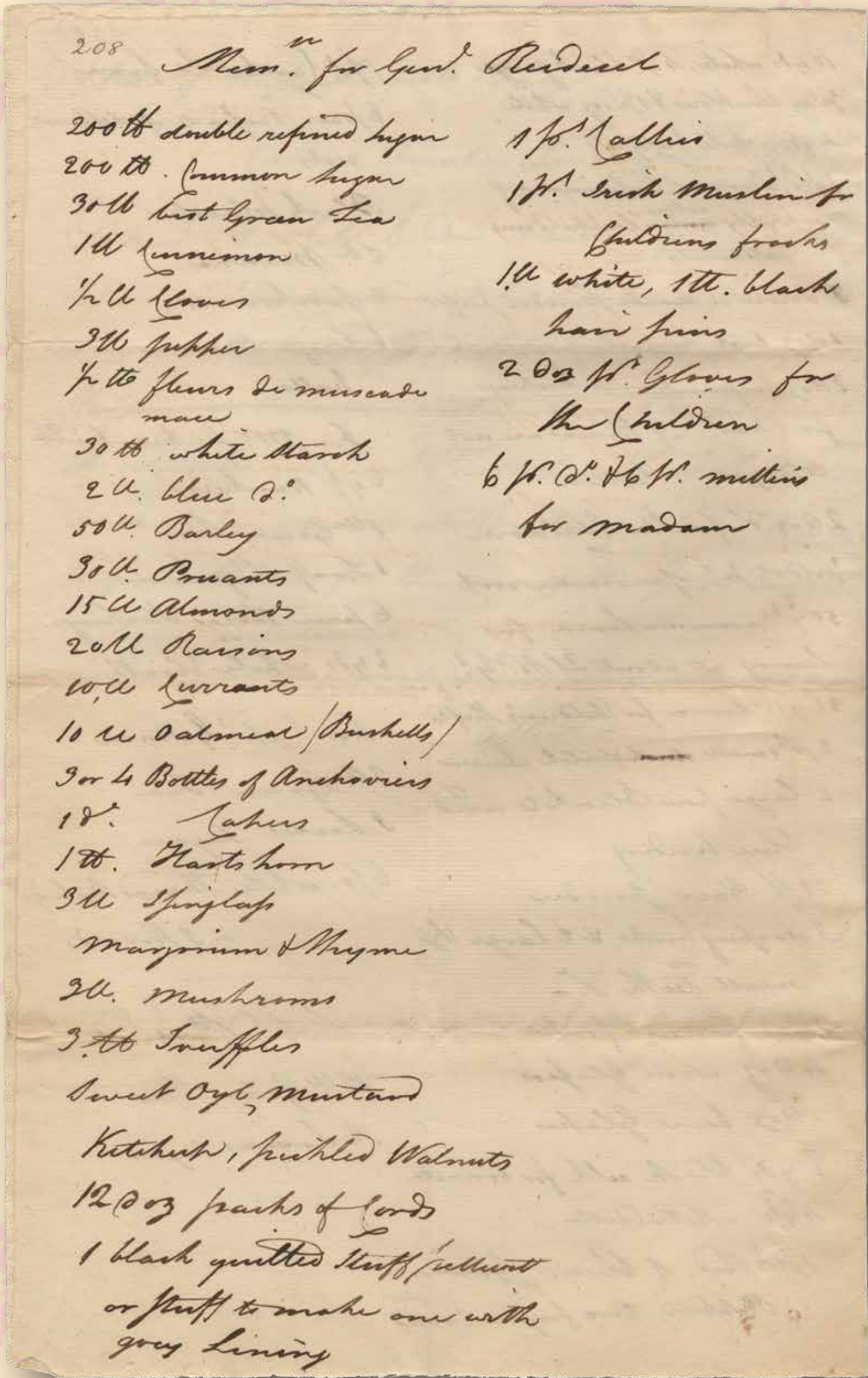
“Scrod” is derived from the Dutch word “schrode” (meaning strip.) It refers to the process of making fish filets. Used in Massachusetts by 1849, the term applied to cod filets at first but now may include haddock or other white fish.

Sea Shells

Lobsters were abundant in the seventeenth century, sometimes reaching a weight of 25 pounds. They were not considered to be highly desirable but ranked higher on the food chain than shellfish for English colonists. Perhaps a weight of 25 pounds would limit the popularity of lobsters for some people today. Clams and other shellfish were valued by native people. European colonists also relied on them but later associated these foods with early poverty in the New World.



Shellfish were important to the Wampanoag diet. Colonists included them but preferred other foods. PLIMOTH PLANTATION



Ketchup. This document mentions the importation of ketchup to Massachusetts in 1778. This was not tomato ketchup but likely a fish based paste, possibly containing mushrooms and walnuts. European “ketchups” attempted to duplicate “ke-tsiap,” a Chinese sauce of fermented fish. Also included on the list were peanuts, almonds, and raisins. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

Rum and other Demons

Rum was an important product in Massachusetts both for consumption and export.



This nineteenth century image illustrates the rum trade on Antigua. Seventeenth century Massachusetts merchants traded with Antigua and other islands including Barbados, and Jamaica. WILLIAM CLARK, INFANT SCHOOL DEPOSITORY

Globalization

Molasses, for production of rum, was imported from Caribbean plantations. The Spanish had introduced sugar cane, needed for molasses production, to the islands. It originated across the world in Papua, New Guinea. Because Indians died of European diseases, and Europeans were susceptible to tropical diseases, African slaves became the main source of labor. Sugar cane was so profitable that English planters on Barbados often maximized production on the island while importing food and other essentials from mainland colonies, including Massachusetts.



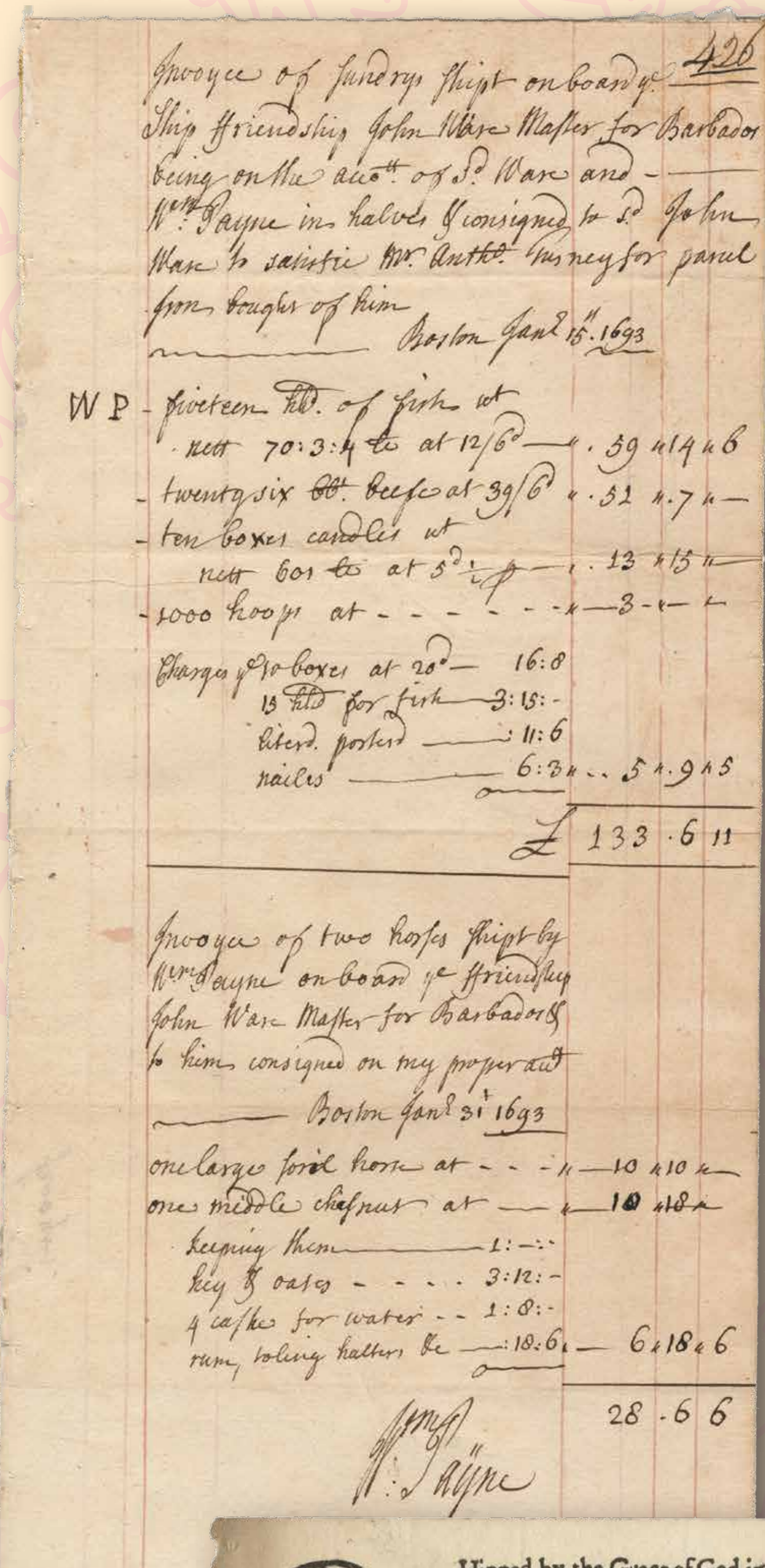
Until other ingredients were available colonists used pumpkins and corn to make beer. Hard apple cider became a staple. ALAMY

Beer and Hard Cider

Beer was highly valued by colonists but difficult to produce at first. In Europe, beer was safer than water, often the source of fatal illnesses like cholera. Roger Clapp, commander of the fort at Castle Island, said it was “accounted a strange thing in those days to drink water.” Some early beers were made from pumpkins or corn. Hard cider, made from apples, had a lower alcoholic content. Many drank it as we do water. John Adams started each day with a glass of hard cider.

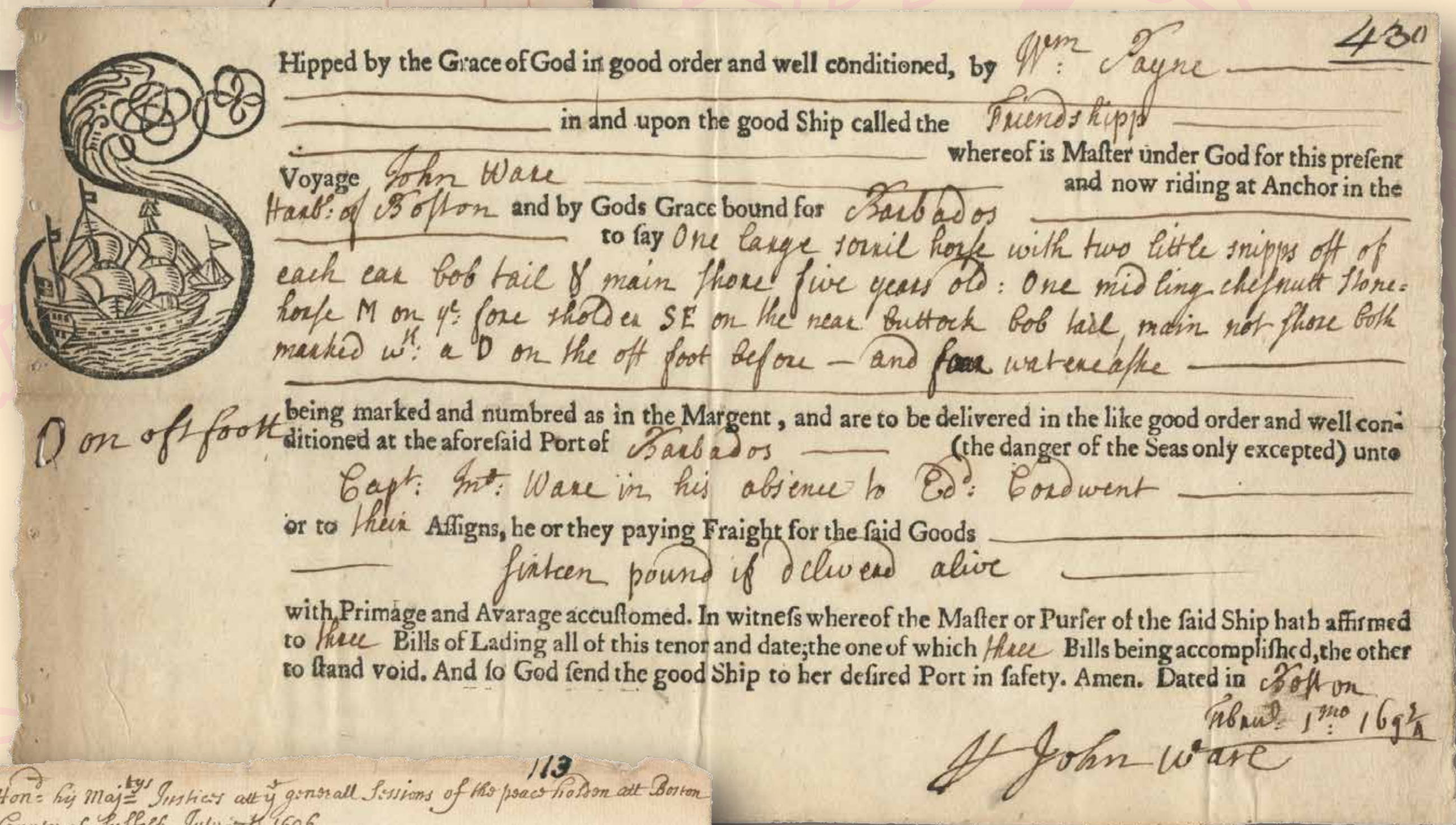
“IT IS AN UNHAPPY THING THAT...A KIND OF DRINK CALLED RUM HAS BEEN COMMON AMONG US. THEY THAT ARE POOR AND WICKED, TOO, CAN FOR A PENNY MAKE THEMSELVES DRUNK.”

Increase Mather

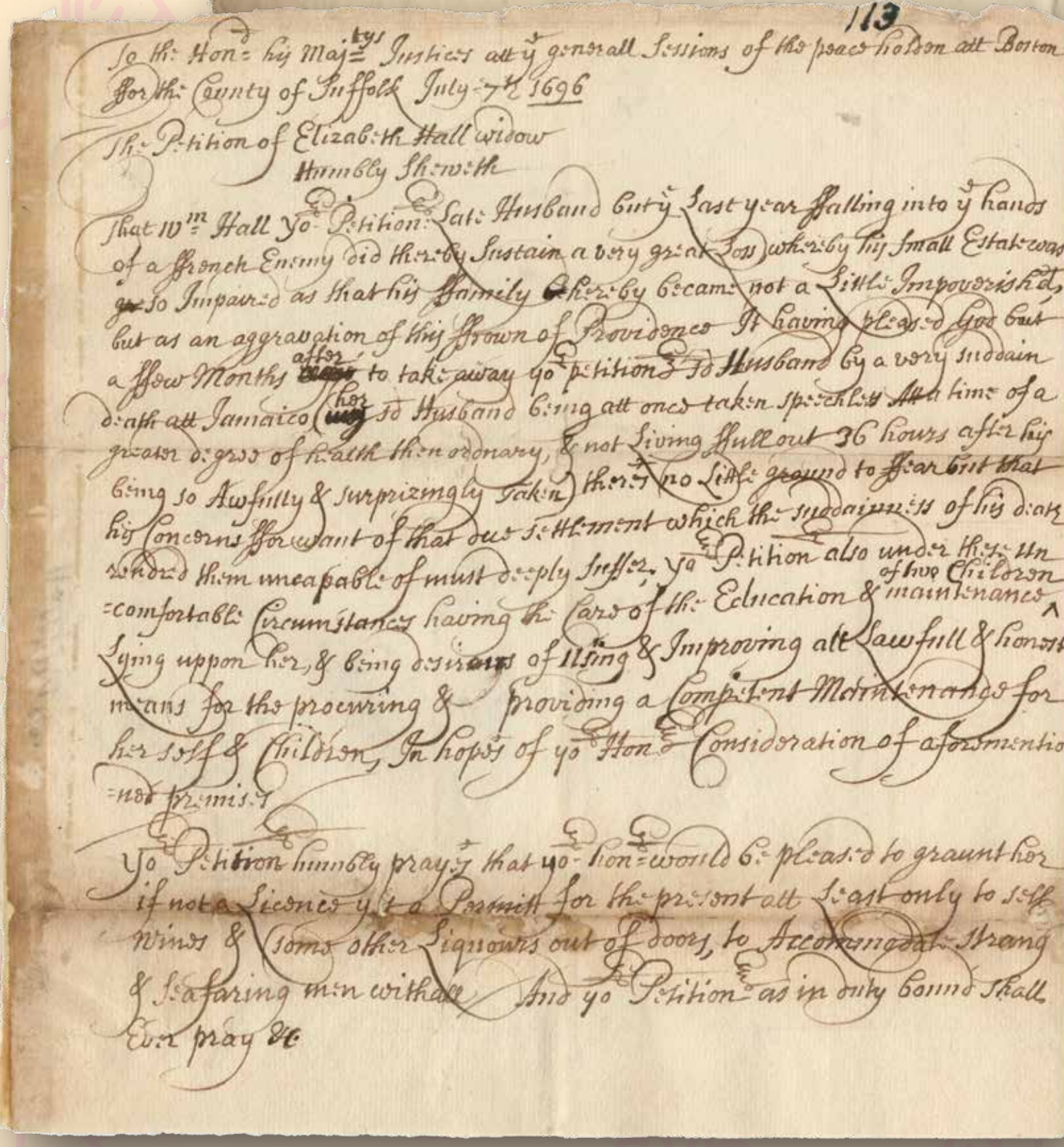


Invoice from Captain John Ware, 1693 for goods delivered to Barbados including fish, beef, candles, hoops, nails, horses and oats. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES

Bill of Lading, 1693 Captain John Ware of the ship Friendship “now riding at Anchor in the Port of Boston and by Gods Grace bound for Barbados” will carry horses including “one large...horse with two little snippis off of each ear, bob tail...five years old.” Horses were used for riding and powering mills on Barbados. To keep the slave population in a state of near exhaustion – and discourage revolt – horses did not help with labor in the fields. MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Liquor License for Elizabeth Hall, 1696 - Requests for liquor licenses were sometimes made in an apologetic tone and rationalized on the basis of bardship. A widow, Elizabeth Hall, explains her husband's death “Last year falling into the hands of French Enemies.” She requests permission...“only to sell wines and some other Liquors out of doors to Accomodate seafaring men.” MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES



Holiday Traditions

Pumpkins and other Native American foods have become associated with autumn in New England and with holiday celebrations.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pumpkins

Like corn, pumpkins have an origin in Central America. By the time of the Pilgrims they were cultivated by Native people in Massachusetts but also familiar in England (sometimes called “pompions.”) Spanish explorers had introduced them to Europe in the previous century. Pumpkins were baked, boiled or mashed in Massachusetts during the seventeenth century. By the nineteenth century sweet pumpkin pies were a Thanksgiving staple.

CRANBERRIES

Today Massachusetts is the second largest producer of cranberries in the United States. English colonists called them “bear berries” because they attracted bears and “cranberries” because pink blossoms in spring resembled the head and neck of a crane.



TURKEY ON THANKSGIVING

In England, game birds like pheasant and partridge were more prestigious than “butcher meat” like pork. They were favored at aristocratic tables. When turkey was introduced in England it was seen as a higher status food at first. Possibly this made it a “special occasion” choice in early American homes as well. By the nineteenth century it was a Thanksgiving standard.



Colonial Revival: Thanksgiving imagined at the Whipple House in Ipswich. COLONIAL HOMES MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER, 1975, HEARST COMMUNICATIONS

“LET NO MAN MAKE A JEST AT PUMPKINS, FOR WITH THIS FRUIT THE LORD WAS PLEASED TO FEED HIS PEOPLE TO THEIR GOOD CONTENT, TIL CORNE AND CATTLE WERE INCREASED.”

Edward Johnson, 1654

Turkey

Turkey is native to the western hemisphere. South American turkeys were introduced to Europe by the Spanish and were familiar to Pilgrims and Puritans before their arrival in America. Later, wild turkeys were hunted to near extinction in Massachusetts.

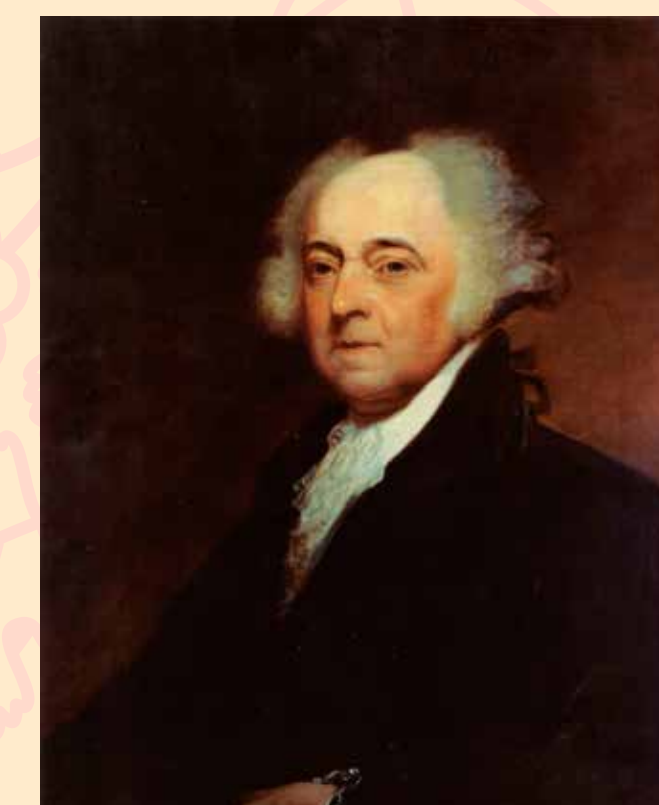
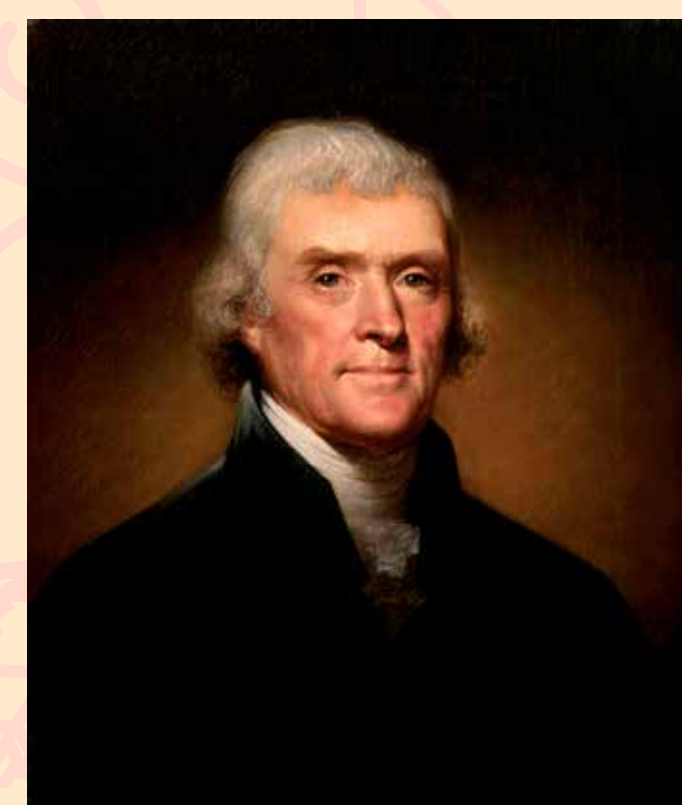
Merchants from the eastern Mediterranean purchased turkeys in Seville, Spain and sold them at European ports. These “Turkey merchants” (thought to be from Turkey)

may have popularized the name.



Pudding Politics

Early puddings, made with meat and vegetables, were a main course. By the late eighteenth century sweet dessert puddings were becoming popular. It was learned that John Adams preferred pudding early in the meal, while Thomas Jefferson served it as dessert. In Salem, “Federalists” followed Adams practice at mealtime, while “Republicans” (the forerunners of today’s Democrats) followed Jefferson’s example in politics and pudding.



Rivals: Thomas Jefferson and John Adams