Adam Blakeman (Blackman) and Stratford, Connecticut

From: *http://www.mfairlady.com/fairchild-genealogy/*

"The earliest shelters of the settlers at Cupheag (Stratford) were "cellars" dug into the banks at Stratford (Mac's) Harbor, or "English wigwams," a cross between the Indian wigwam made of thatch, bark or hides, and the English charcoal burner's hut…. The first reference to the name Cupheag is in a June 1640 court order to Mr. Ludlowe, Mr. Hopkins, and Mr. Blakeman to "sett out the bownds betwixt the Plantations of Cuphege and Uncoway." On April 13, 1643, the Records first referred to it as Stratford." (36; Knapp, p. 6)

The original Indian name of Stratford was Cupheag. It was purchased from the Indians by Mr. Fairchild in 1639, and settlements were commenced at the same time. Mr. Fairchild came directly from England, and was the first person vested with civil authority in the town. The first principal persons in the town were john and William Eustice, and Samuel Hawley, who were from Roxbury, and Joseph Judson and Timothy Wilcoxson, who were from Concord, Massachusetts. A few years from the commencement of the settlement, Mr. John Birdsey removed from Milford, and became a man of eminence, both in the town and church. There were also several of the chief planters from Boston, and a number by the name of Welles, from Wethersfield. "Mr. Adam Blackman, who had been episcopally ordained in England, and a preacher of some note, first at Leicester and afterwards at Derbyshire, was their minister, and one of the first planters. It is said that he was followed by a number of the faithful, into this country, to whom he was so dear that they said unto him, in the language of Ruth, 'Intreat us not to leave thee, for whither thou goest we will go; thy people shall be our people, and thy God our God.'" (42; Barber, p. 404-5)

"The following spring seventeen families, including about sixty persons, on foot and on horse-back, threaded their way through the wilderness from Wheathersfield, forded the Pootatuck, and halted at the red man's Cupheag and named it home. How familiar to us are many of the names on the lips of the settlers that day as they addressed one another—Blakeman, Fairchild, Curtis, Sherwood, Judson, Wilcoxson, Beardsley—a real Stratford in miniature, small in numbers but not in extent, as the original township embraced most of the land afterwards…They were landed at the mouth of Mack's Creek where the settlers made a temporary abiding place—huts, tents and meeting-house—until the division of the land could be affected." (39; Stratford's 250th Anniv.)

"Old histories say that seventeen families, sixty-five souls, made the trek in 1639 with Reverend Adam Blakeman from Wethersfield to this site, but the true story is long lost, and only cryptic notes in the Colonial Records of Connecticut and other scattered records give us hints of how many really came and for what reasons…. Adam Blakeman was born in Staffordshire in 1598. In 1617 he matriculated at Oxford's Christ Church College where only a few years earlier some of forty-seven scholars had labored to produce a new Bible for King James the First. Some of these men were doubtless Blakeman's teachers. He was ordained a priest of the Church of England, with parishes in Leicestershire and Derbyshire in a period when the Authorized Version of the Bible was influencing English life and knowledge of the gospel…. "

"Thomas was buried in the plot by the first meeting house on the shore of Mac's Creek. Without a doubt he and his first wife were removed to the present Congregational Burying-place, opened in February 1677-8."

“Early Stratford and Fairfield society seems to have been more free than Puritan communities elsewhere. This tolerance made possible the founding of Episcopal (Anglican), Methodist, and Baptist church in the area between Fairfield and Stratford, called by early settlers ‘Stratfield’ and now called Bridgeport.” (38; Orcutt, p. 15)

… Thomas Fairchild, a native of England who…became one the leading pioneers of the place, being named by both Barber and Hollister as the first magistrate there…. It is likely that the name was originally Fairbairn, and that the family went to England from Scotland at a very early period. Thomas Fairchild, the pioneer settler at Stratford, was twice married and had several children. (37; CBR)

Thomas was married twice, his first wife being Emma Seabrook, daughter of Robert Seabrook, whom he married in England before coming to America. In 1669 he is appointed one of the purchasers of Patatuck for a plantation, but the project was then abandoned for many years. From 1667-1670 he was a member of Mr. Chauncey’s Church, who differed in religious views which eventuated in the forming of a second church in Stratford, and whose 17 adherents removed to Pomperaug, thus forming the Woodbury Plantation. His name was on the tablet in the 200th anniversary of the Woodbury Church as a signer of the Fundamental Articles of the Church Covenant. He did not remove to Woodbury, but Thomas Jr. married and settled on the land taken up by his father in that plantation. Thomas was buried in the plot by the first meeting house on the shore of Mack’s Creek. Without a doubt he and his first wife were removed to the present Congregational Burying-place, opened in February 1677-8.” (Stratford Historical Society)

“We have strong proof of the high character, culture and civilization of the first settlers of Stratford…. In 1646 Stratford gave f614s. to maintain scholars at Cambridge, evincing wonderful zeal and self-sacrifice in behalf of learning, when the burdens of settling and protecting themselves had been well nigh too great to bear. 5th In the choice of a name, which, unlike Fairfield and Milford, has no local significance, and is suggestive, we believe, of their liberal and scholarly taste…. It is worthy of notice that the first institutions set up by our fathers were courts, so that all controversies could be promptly and legally disposed of. Our fathers believed in law and liberty, or “liberty under law,” and courts were necessary at the start.” (39; 250th Anniversary of Stratford; pp. 82, 83.)

“The men who settled Stratford were workingmen. Ships’ registers list them as weavers, masons, joiners, smiths, and husbandmen, or as servants and apprentices….it appears that most of Stratford’s settlers came from (or through) Essex, Suffolk, Kent, and Hertfordshire, in eastern England…. They sailed from London and from Ipswich ports for Massachusetts Bay. The statement that they came directly usually means they came to Massachusetts Bay, and transhipped or traveled overland to Connecticut from there. The names of the fence owners in the Old Field in Stratford, listed in the earliest town records, were recorded in 1649 or 1650….they came, in large part, from eastern England, and that they followed Church of England ministers who sought a more basic religion—Thomas Hooker and Adam Blakeman.” (36; Knapp, p. 12, 13)

“When Henry VIII removed England from the Church of Rome n 1531-33, followers of the Calvinistic doctrines that took shape in the Protestant Reformation hoped for a return to fundamental Christianity in England, but even Elizabeth, the last Tudor, retained the pomp and dogma of her father’s church, and turned away from these “Puritans” in annoyance…. When James the First (or Sixth) came down from Scotland to be king he treated the Puritans with

greater tolerance, but when his son, Charles I, succeeded him in 1625, England suffered from a trinity of ills: in religion, in government and in economy. The Church of England moved toward greater pomp and ritual—as put by a dissenting Parliament, to 'Popery, or Armenianism ….disagreeing with the true and orthodox Church.' Fundamentalist Thomas Hooker hid at Little Baddow, then, under pressure from the tyrant bishop William Laud, fled to Holland. When Laud was elevated to Archbishop of Canterbury by the king in 1633, Hooker crossed the sea to Boston."

"King Charles suspended trial by jury and in 1629 adjourned the Parliament for eleven years. The country writhed beneath the despot's rule. Meanwhile, in 1630 and 1631, harvests were bad and poverty prevailed…. Between 1629 and 1643, New England colonists increased from three hundred to fourteen thousand…. The record of the Blakeman family's passage is lost, but hey followed Thomas Hooker and their people followed them…. Reverend Adam Blakeman matriculated at Christ Church College, Oxford, on May 28, 1671. His instructors must have included the very scholars who wrote the Bible for King James…. The Church was the colony and the Church was the town. Only church members could become voters. The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut clearly state: 'where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to mayntayne the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Gouernment established according to God, to order and dispose to the affayres of the people…. [We join] to mayntayne and presearue the liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus wch we now profess, as also the discipline of the Churches, wch according to the truth of the said gospel is now practiced amongst us."

"By 1600 the majority of the country gentlemen and of wealthy merchants in the towns had become Puritans, and the new views had made great headway in both universities, and at Cambridge had become dominant," and he further says that our fathers belonged "to that middle-class of self-governing, self-respecting yeomanry that has been the glory of free England and free America."

"The Fundamental Orders governed Stratford and the state until 1818. Under this constitution, the General Court established capital punishment for twelve crimes; worshiping false gods, witchcraft, blasphemy, murder through malice, murder through guile, bestiality, homosexuality, adultery, rape, kidnapping, false witness causing loss of life, and insurrection. For other crimes, jailing, fining, whipping, pillories and stocks, and branding or cutting off ears sufficed…." (36; Knapp, p. 11, 12, 16.)

From: *https://www.ctexplored.org/milford-guilford-and-stratford-at-375/*

Connecticut Explored Inc. (Summer 2014)

"Milford, Guilford, and Stratford at 375"

By Gene Leach

In 1636 fledgling English settlements hugged the great river at Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford. The rest of the region we know as Connecticut belonged to Native Americans.

The next year a sudden war changed everything. The Pequots, a hostile tribe from the southeast, killed nine English settlers at Wethersfield. The three river towns organized a force to punish them.

The fighting was soon over. The heavily armed English massacred the Pequots at today's Mystic and Fairfield. But the brief war had deep and lasting consequences. It spurred the founding of a colony-wide Connecticut government and triggered a land rush. In pursuit of fleeing Pequots, soldiers from Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay got their first look at fertile places where rivers emptied into Long Island Sound, an area that was ideal for agriculture, trade, and transport. And now these delectable spots lay open to English expansion.

A party of Puritans led by the Rev. John Davenport acted first, planting a town originally called Quinnipiac in 1638. They had come to Boston with plans to settle nearby, but, hearing of a beautiful harbor on the Connecticut coast, they decided to go there instead, buying land from the Quinnipiac Indians. Later christened New Haven, this pioneering settlement figured in the founding of the neighboring towns of Milford, Guilford, and Stratford in 1639. Along with Fairfield (see the companion article by Elizabeth Rose), these towns mark their 375th birthdays in 2014.

The leading man in the Milford story was Peter Prudden, a magnetic Puritan minister who led his Hertfordshire parishioners to Boston in July 1637. The following year, after attracting more followers from Wethersfield, Prudden and his company joined the Davenport group at Quinnipiac. In 1639 they moved yet again, this time to plant a colony of their own at a place called Wepawaug that they purchased from the Paugussets. The town adopted the name Milford in 1640.

If New Haven played patron to Milford, it was a sort of godfather to Guilford. When a company of Puritans headed by the Rev. Henry Whitfield sailed into Quinnipiac harbor in July 1639 (becoming the first arrival in that port), they brought with them John Davenport's infant son—a sign of a close bond between the two ministers. But Whitfield and his companions planned from the start to create their own community. They resolved to buy "the whole lands called Menunkatuck" from Shaumpishuh "the sachem squaw," as recorded in Edward E. Atwater's History of the Colony of New Haven to its Absorption into Connecticut (The [Meriden] Journal Publishing Company, 1902.) Months later they broke ground for a town they later named "Guilforde."

Originally New Haven, Milford, and Guilford were independent colonies, separate from Connecticut and from each other. In 1643, however, seeking protection from possible Indian attacks, the two smaller towns chose to unite with the larger one to form the New Haven Colony.

In the founding of Stratford, New Haven played the role of rival to Connecticut. The Connecticut colony claimed that its conquest of the Pequots and a treaty signed with other tribes gave it possession of lands along the sound. Regarding the Quinnipiac settlers as trespassers, Connecticut wished to plant its own settlements on the coast. This purpose dovetailed with the aspirations of yet another band of English migrants, this one brought to Boston by the Rev. Adam Blakeman in 1638.

As William Howard Wilcoxson tells it in History of Stratford, Connecticut, 1639-1939 (Stratford Tercentenary Commission, 1939), finding no land to their liking in Massachusetts, the Blakeman company trekked to Wethersfield, where again they discovered all the best land was already occupied. We have no record of when they journeyed south, but by August 1639 they were living on land claimed by Connecticut on the banks of the Pequonnock River, possibly as squatters. Two months later the Connecticut General Court dispatched the governor "to confer with the planters att Pequannocke, to give them the oath of fidelity." These planters renamed their place Stratford.

Thus Wepawaug became Milford, Menunkatuck became Guilford, Pequonnock became Stratford, all through episodes in which Englishmen displaced Indians in the wake of war. Yet that central fact can be misleading, for the displacements were neither sudden nor violent.

Although the triumphant English might have seized what they pleased, there were no invasions and no expulsions of any tribe except the Pequots. The planters of Milford and Guilford (like those of New Haven before them) bought their property from tribes they regarded as rightful proprietors. According to historians of Milford (Federal Writers' Project for the State of Connecticut, History of Milford, Connecticut, 1639-1939, Milford Tercentenary Committee, 1939), "Title to the region was based solely on land purchased from the Indians and not upon any grant from the English crown." Moreover, English purchasers conceded the Indians' right to reserve tracts for their own residence and use.

At a few places English settlers did seize Indian land. This appears to have happened at Stratford, where there are no records of the Blakeman company's receiving deeds from the Pequonnocks. But here too the Indians were allowed to remain on portions of their ancestral lands. And when the Pequonnocks demanded belated payments in the 1650s, the Stratforders paid—not to ease their consciences but simply to keep the peace. The Indians might be seen by the English as heathen nuisances, but they were still children of God, and they were neighbors.

To zealous Puritans the English Crown seemed almost as heathenish as the Indians. But King Charles was not much of a nuisance because he was so distant a neighbor. The founders of the Connecticut and New Haven colonies were strikingly oblivious to their sovereign, in part because they were beyond his reach, and in part because he was oblivious to them. Not until the 1680s did the king appoint officials to impose its will on its distant Connecticut subjects. The effort failed. Though technically an English colony, Connecticut (which absorbed New Haven in 1665) remained virtually self-governing.

While keeping the king and Indians at arm's length, the people of Milford, Guilford, and Stratford strived to keep themselves together in service to their pious mission. In June 1639, aboard ship on their way to Quinnipiac, the future Guilforders signed a humble covenant, recorded in History of the Colony of New Haven: "We do faithfully promise each to each, for ourselves and families, and those that belong to us; that we will, The Lord assisting us, sit down

and join ourselves together in one entire plantation; and to be helpful each to the other in every common work, according to every man's ability and as need shall require…."

Gene Leach is a professor of history and American studies emeritus at Trinity College and a member of the Connecticut Explored editorial team. He last wrote "The Scandalous Luna Park" in the Summer 2013 issue.