

A Declaration of the Affairs of the English People that First Inhabited New England (Phineas Pratt, 1662)

In the time of spiritual darkness, when the State Ecclesiasti[. . .]¹ room ruled and overruled most of the nations of Europe, it plea[sed God] to give wisdom to many kings and people, in breaking that spiritual yo[...]; yet, notwithstanding, there arose great strife among such people that are known by the name of Protestants, in many cases concerning the worship of God; but the greatest and strongest number of men commonly prevailed against the smaller and lesser number. At this time the honored States of Holland gave more liberty in cases of religion than could be enjoyed in some other places. Upon which divers good Christians removed the[ir...] dwellings into the Low Countries.

Then one company that dwelt in the city of Leiden, being not well able outwardly to subsist, to counsel and agreed to remove into America, into some port northward of Virginia. The Dutch people offered them divers conditions to supply them with things necessary if they would live under the government of their State, but they refused it. This they did that all men might know the entire love they bore to their King and Country; for in them their was never found any lack of lawful obedience. They sent to their friends in England to let them understand what they intended to do. Then divers fr[iends...] disbursed some moneys for their furthering of so good a work.

It is f[urther...] to be understood that, in the year 1618, there appeared a blazing star over Germany that made the wise men of Europe astonished there² [...]

Speedily after, near about that time, these people begun to propose removal. They agreed that their strongest and ablest men should go [...] to provide for their wives and children. Then coming into England, they set forward in two ships, but their lesser ship sprung a leak and was returned [to...] England; the bigger ship arrived at Cape Cod, 1620 it being winter, then called New England but formerly called Canada. They sent forth their boat upon discovery. Their boat being returned to their ship, they removed into the bay of Plymouth and begun their planta[tion...] by the river of Patuxet. Their ship being returned and safely arrived in England, those gentlemen and merchants, that had undertaken to supply them with things necessary, understanding that many of them were sick and some dead, made haste to send a ship with many things necessary; but some indiscrete men, hoping to encourage their friends to come to them, writ letters concerning the great plenty of fish, fowl and deer, not considering that the wild savages were many times hungry, that have a better skill to catch such things than the English

¹ Portions of the original are unreadable.

² Edward Johnson in his *Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Savior in New England* (1651) reports “The summer after the blazing star (whose motion in the heavens was from east to west, pointing out to the sons of men the progress of the glorious Gospel of Christ, the glorious Kingdom of his Churches) even about the year 1618, a little before the removal of that Church of Christ from Holland to Plymouth in New England, as the ancient Indians report, there befell a great mortality among them, the greatest that ever the memory of father to son took notice of, chiefly desolating those places, where the English afterward planted.”

men have. The adventurers, willing to save their moneys, sent them weakly provided of victuals, as many more after them did the like; and that was the great cause of famine.

At the same time, Mr. Thomas Weston, a merchant of good credit in London, that was then their treasurer, that had disbursed much of his money for the good of New England, sent forth a ship for the settling a plantation in the Massachusetts Bay, but wanting a pilot we arrived at Damariscove. The men that belong to the ship, their fishing, had newly set up a maypole and were very merry. We made haste to prepare a boat fit for coasting. Then said Mr. Rogers, master of our ship, “here are many ships and at Mohegan, but no man that does undertake to be your pilot; for they say that an Indian called Rumhigin undertook to pilot a boat to Plymouth, but they all lost their lives.” Then said Mr. Gibbs, masters mate of our ship, “I will venture my live with them.” At this time of our discovery, we first arrived at Smith’s Islands, first so called by Capt. Smith, at the time of his discovery of New England, [...] afterwards called Islands of Shoals; from thence to Cape Anne [...] so called by Capt. Mason; from thence to the Massachusetts Bay. There we continued 4 or 5 days.

Then we perceived, that on the south part of the Bay, were fewest of the natives of the country dwelling there. We thought best to begin our plantation, but fearing a great company of savages, we being but 10 men, thought it best to see if our friends were living at Plymouth. Then sailing along the coast, not knowing the harbor, they shot off a piece of ordinance, and at our coming ashore, they entertained us with 3 volley of shot. Their second ship³ was returned for England before we came to them. We asked them where the rest of our friends were that came in the first ship. They said that God had taken them away by death, and that before the second ship came, they were so distressed with sickness that they, fearing the savages should know it, had set up their sick men with their muskets upon their rests and their backs leaning against trees. At this time, one or two of them went with us in our vessel to the place of fishing to buy victuals. 8 or 9 weeks after this, two of our ships arrived at Plymouth—the lesser of our 3 ships continued in the country with us. Then we made haste to settle our plantation in the Massachusetts Bay—our number being near sixty men. At the same time there was a great plague among the savages, and, as themselves told us, half their people died thereof. The natives called the place of our plantation Wessagussett. Near unto it is a town of later time called Weymouth.

The savages seemed to be good friends with us while they feared us, but when they see famine prevail, they began to insult, as appeareth by the sequel; for one of their pnieses or chief men, called Pecksuot, employed himself to learn to speak English, observing all things for his bloody ends. He told me he loved Englishmen very well, but he loved me best of all. Then he said, “you say Frenchmen do not love you, but I will tell you what we have done to them. There was a ship broken by a storm. They saved most of their goods and hid it in the ground. We made them tell us where it was. Then we made them our servants. They wept much. When we parted them, we gave them such meat as our dogs eat. One of them had a book he would often read in. We asked him what his book said. He answered, ‘It saith, there will a people, like Frenchmen, come into this country and drive you all away, and now we think you are they.’ We took away their clothes. They lived but a little while. One of them lived longer than the rest, for he had a good master and gave him a wife. He is now dead, but hath a son alive. And another ship came into the bay with much goods to truck, then I said to the Sachem, I will tell you how you shall have all for nothing. Bring all our canoes and all our beaver and a great many men, but no bow nor arrow, clubs nor hatchets, but knives under the skins about our loins. Throw up much beaver upon their deck; sell it very cheap and when I give the word, thrust your knives in

³ The *Fortune*, which arrived in November 1621 and departed in December.

the Frenchmen's bellies. Thus we killed them all. But Monsieur Finch, master of their ship, being wounded, leapt into the hold. We bid him come up, but he would not. Then we cut their cable and the ship went ashore and lay upon her side and slept there. Finch came up and we killed him. Then our sachem divided their goods and fired their ship and it made a very great fire." Some of our company asked them "how long it was ago since they first see ships?" They said they could not tell, but they had heard men say the first ship that they see, seemed to be a floating island, as they supposed broken off from the mainland, wrapped together with the roots of trees, with some trees upon it. They went to it with their canoes, but seeing men and hearing guns, made haste to be gone.

But after this, when they saw famine prevail, Pecksuot said, "why do your men and your dogs die?" I said, "I had corn for a time of need. Then I filled a chest, but not with corn and spread corn on [...] him come opened the cover and when I was sure he see it, I put down [...] as if I would not have him see it." Then he said "No Indian so [...] You have much corn and English men die for want." Then they h[...] intent to make war they removed some of their houses to the [...] a great swamp near to the pale of our plantation. After this yer[...] a morning I see a man going into one of the houses, weary with traveling and galded on his feet. Then I said to Mr. Salsbery, our surgeon, surely their sachem hath employed him for some intent to make war upon us. Then I took a bag with gunpowder and put it in my pocket, with the top of the bag hanging out, and went to the house where the man was laid upon the mat. The woman of the house took hold of the bag, saying, what is this so big? I said it is good for savages to eat, and struck her on the arm as hard as I could. Then she said, Matchet powder Englishmen, much Matchit. By and by Abordikees bring much men, much sannups, and kill you and all Englishmen at Wessagussett and Patuxet. The man that lay upon the mats, seeing this, was angry and in a great rage, and the woman seemed to be sore afraid. Then I went out of the house and said to a young man that could best understand their language, go ask the woman, but not in the man's hearing, why the man was angry, and she afraid? Our interpreter, coming to me, said, "these are the words of the woman—the man will [...] Abordikees what I said and he and all Indians will be angry with me [...] This Pecksuot said, "I love you." I said "I love you." I said "I love you as well as you love me." Then he said, in broken English, "me hear you can make the likeness of men and of women, dogs and deer, in wood and stone. Can you make [...]. I said, "I can see a knife in your hand, with an ill-favored face upon the haft." Then he gave it into my hand to see his workmanship, and said, "this knife cannot see, it cannot hear, it cannot speak, but by and by it can eat. I have another knife at home with a face upon the haft as like a man as this is like a woman. That knife cannot see, it cannot hear, it cannot speak, but it can eat. It hath killed much, Frenchmen, and by and by this knife and that knife shall marry and you shall be thear[...] knife at home he had kept for a monument, from the time they had killed Monsieur Finch;" but as the word went out of his mouth, I had a good will to thrust it in his belly. He said, "I see you are much angry." I said, "Guns are longer than knives."

Some time after this their sachem came suddenly upon us with a great number of armed men; but their spies seeing us in a readiness, he and some of his chief men, turned into one of their houses a quarter of an hour. Then we met them without the pale of our plantation and brought them in. Then said I to a young man that could best speak their language, "Ask Pecksuot why they are thus armed." He answered, "our sachem is angry with you." I said, "Tell him if he be angry with us, we be angry with him." Then said their sachem, "Englishmen, when you came into the country, we gave you gifts and you gave us gifts; we bought and sold with you and we were friends; and now tell me if I or any of my men have done you wrong." We

answered, "First, tell us if we have done you any wrong." He answered, "some of you steal our corn and I have sent you word many times without number and yet our corn is stolen. I come to see what you will do." We answered, "It is one man which hath done it. Your men have seen us whip him divers times, besides other manner of punishments, and now here he is bound. We give him unto you to do with him what you please." He answered, "that is not just dealing. If my men wrong my neighbor sachem, or his men, he sends me word and I beat or kill my men, according to the offense. All sachems do justice by their own men. If not we say they are all agreed and then we fight, and now I say you all steal my corn."

At this time some of them, seeing some of our men upon our fort, began to start, saying, "Machit Pesconk," that is naughty guns. Then looking around about them went a way in a great rage. At this time we strengthened our watch until we had no food left. In these times the savages oftentime did creep upon the snow, starting behind bushes and trees to see whether we kept watch or not [...] times I have rounded our plantation until I had no longer [...] strength; then in the night, going into our Court of Guard, I see one man dead before me and another at my right hand and another at my left for want of food. O all the people in New England that shall hear of these times of our weak beginning, consider what was the strength of the arm of flesh or the wit of man; therefore in the times of your greatest distress put your trust in God.

The offender being bound, we let him loose, because we had no food to give him, charging him to gather ground nuts, clams, and mussels, as other men did, and steal no more. One or two days after this, the savages brought him, leading him by the arms, saying "Here is the corn. Come see the place where he stole it." Then we kept him bound some few days. After this, two of our company said "we have been at the sachem's house and they have near finished their last canoe that they may encounter with our ship. Their greatest care is how to send their armies to Plymouth because of the snow. Then we prepared to meet them there. One of our company said "they have killed one of our hogs." Another said, "one of them striked at me with his knife;" and others say "they threw dust in our faces." Then said Pecksuot to me, "give me powder and guns and I will give you much corn." I said, "by and by men bring ships and victuals." But when we understood that their plot was to kill all English people in one day when the snow was gone, I would have sent a man to Plymouth, but none were willing to go. Then I said if Plymouth men know not of this treacherous plot, they and we are all dead men; therefore if God willing, tomorrow I will go. That night a young man, wanting wit, told Pecksuot early in the morning. Pecksuot came to me and said in English, "Me hear you go to Patuxet; you will lose yourself; the bears and the wolves will eat you; but because I love you I will send my boy Nahamit with you; and I will give you victuals to eat by the way and to be merry with your friends when you come there." I said: "Who told you so great a lie that I may kill him." He said, "it is no lie, you shall not know." Then he went home to his house. Then came 5 men armed. We said, "Why come you thus armed." They said, "we are friends; you carry guns where we dwell and we carry bow and arrows where you dwell." These attended me 7 or 8 days and nights. Then they supposing it was a lie, were careless of their watch near two hours on the morning. Then said I to our company, "now it is time to run to Plymouth. Is there any compass to be found?" They said, "none but them that belong to the ship." I said "they are too big." I have born no arms of defense this 7 or 8 days. Now if I take my arms they will mistrust me. Then they said "The savages will pursue after you and kill you and we shall never see you again." Thus with other words of great lamentation, we parted. Then I took a hoe and went to the Long Swamp near by their houses and dug on the edge thereof as if I had been looking for ground nuts, but seeing no man I went in and run through it. Then looking round about me, I run

southward till 3 of the clock, but the snow being in many places, I was the more distressed because of my footsteps. The sun being beclouded, I wandered, not knowing my way; but at the going down of the sun, it appeared red; then hearing a great howling of wolves, I came to a river; the water being deep and cold and many rocks, I passed through with much ado. Then was I in great distress—for want of food, weary with running, fearing to make a fire because of them that pursued me. Then I came to a deep dell or hole, there being much wood fallen into it. Then I said in my thoughts, this is God's providence that here I may make a fire. Then having made a fire, the stars began to appear and I saw Ursa Major and the [...] pole yet fearing [...] beclouded. The day following I began to travel [...] but being unable, I went back to the fire the day fall[...] sun shined and about three of the clock I came to that part [of...] Plymouth Bay where there is a town of later time [...called] Duxbury. Then passing by the water on my left hand [...I] came to a brook and there was a path. Having but a short time to consider [...] fearing to go beyond the plantation, I kept running in the path; then passing through James River I said in my thoughts, now am I as a deer chased [...by] wolves. If I perish, what will be the condition [...] of distressed Englishmen. Then finding a piece of a [...] I took it up and carried it in my hand. Then finding a [...] of jerkin, I carried them under my arm. Then said I in my [...mind] God hath given me these two tokens for my comfort; that now he will give me my life for a pray. Then running down a hill J[...] an Englishman coming in the path before me. Then I sat down on a tree and rising up to salute him said, "Mr. Hamdin, I am glad to see you alive." He said "I am glad and full of wonder to see you alive: let us sit down, I see you are weary." I said, "Let [...] eat some parched corn." Then he said "I know the cause [...] come. Massasoit hath sent word to the Governor to let him [know...] that Abordikees and his Confederates have contrived a plot hoping [...] all English people in one day here as men hard by making canoe [...] stay and we will go with you. The next day a young [...man] named Hugh Stacy went forth to fell a tree and saw two [...] rising from the ground. They said Abordikees had sent [...] the governor that he might send men to truck for much beaver, but they would not go, but said "Was not there an Englishman come from Wessagussett." He answered "he came" [...] They said he was their friend, and said come and see who [...] But they turned another way. He said, "You come to let us [...]" Providence to us was great in those times as appeareth [...] after the time of the arrival of the first ship at Pl[ymouth...] forenamed Massasoit came to Plymouth and there made a covenant of peace, for an Indian called Tisquantum came to them and spoke English. They asked him, how he learned to speak English? He said that an Englishman called Capt. Hunt came into the harbor pretending to trade for beaver and stole 24 men and their beaver and carried and sold them in Spain. And from thence with much ado he got into his own country. This man told Massasoit what wonders he had seen in England and that if he could make English his friends then [...] enemies that were too strong for him would be constrained to bow to him; but being prevented by some that came in the first ship⁴ that [...] recorded that which concerned them I leave it.

Two or 3 days after my coming to Plymouth, 10 or 11 men went in a boat to our plantation, but I being fainted was not able to go with them. They first gave warning to the master of the ship and then contrived how to make sure of the lives of two of their chief men, Wituwamat, of whom they boasted no gun would kill, and Pecksuot, a subtle man. These being slain they fell upon others where they could find them. Then Abordikees, hearing that some of his men were killed, came to try his manhood, but as they were starting behind bushes and trees, one of them was shot in the arm. At this time an Indian called Hobomok, that formerly had fled

⁴ i.e. the story had already been published by some of the *Mayflower* passengers: a reference to "*Mourt's Relation*."

for his life from his sachem to Plymouth, approved himself a valiant man in fighting and pursuing after them. Two of our men were killed that they took in their houses at an advantage [...] this time pl[...] were instruments in the [...]nds of God for [...] their own lives and ours. They took the head of [...] and set it on their fort at Plymouth at [...] 9 of our men were dead with famine and one died in the ship before they came to the place where at that time of year ships came to fish—it being in March. At this time ships began to fish at the Islands of Shoals and I having recovered a little of my [...heal]th went to my company near about this time [...] of the first plantation at Piscataqua the [...] thereof was Mr. David Thompson at the time of my arrival at Pascataqua. Two of Abordikees' men came thither and seeing me said “when we killed your men they cried and made ill-favored faces.” I said, “when we killed your men, we did not torment them to make ourselves merry.” Then we went with our ship into the bay and took from them two shallop's-loading of corn and of their men prisoners there as a town of later time called Dorchester. The third and last time was in the bay of Angawam. At this time they took for their castle a thick swamp. At this time one of our ablest men was shot in the shoulder. Whether any of them were killed or wounded we could not tell. There is a town of later time, near unto this place called Ipswich. Thus [...] plantation being deserted, Capt. Robert Gorges cam[e into...] the country with six gentlemen attending him and divers men to do his labor and other men with their families. They took possession of our plantation, but their ship supply from England came late. Thus was famine their final overthrow. Most of them that lived returned for England. The overseers of the third plantation in the bay was Capt. Wollaston and Mr. Rosdell. These seeing the ruining of the former plantation, said, we will not pitch our tents here, least we should do as they have done. Notwithstanding these gentlemen were wise men, they seemed to blame the overseers of the former companies not considering that God plants and pulls up, builds and pulls down, and turns the wisdom of wise men into foolishness. These called the names of their place Mount Wollaston. They continued near a year as others had done before them; but famine was their final overthrow. Near unto that place is a town of later time called Braintree. Not long after the overthrow of the first plantation in the bay, Capt. Levett and another to Mr. Thompson, but on that was there said, “How can you trust these savages. Call the name of one Watt Tyler, and the other Jack Straw, after the names of the two greatest rebels that ever were in England.” Watt Tyler said “when he was a boy Capt. Dermer found him upon an island in great distress.”

Petition of Phineas Pratt to the General Court at Boston, 1668

To the Honored the General Court, holden at Boston this Oct. 1668.

I acknowledge myself truly thankful unto the Honored Court for that they gave me at the time I presented an History called "A Declaration of the Affairs of the English People, that First Inhabited New England." Yet my necessity causeth me farther to entreat you to consider what my service hath been unto my dread Sovereign Lord King James of famous memory. I am one of that little number, ten men that arrived in Massachusetts Bay for the settling of a Plantation, and am the remainder of the forlorn hope of sixty men. We bought the south part of the Bay of Abordikees their Sachem. Ten of our company died of famine. Then said the natives of the country, let us kill them, whilst they are weak, or they will possess our country and drive us away. Three times we fought with them, thirty miles I was pursued for my life, in time of frost, and snow, as a deer chased with wolves. Two of our men were killed in war, one shot in the shoulder. It was not by the wit of men, nor by the strength of the arm of flesh, that we prevailed against them. But God, that overrules all power, put fear in their hearts. And now seeing God hath added a New England to old England and given both to our dread Sovereign Lord King Charles the second, many thousand people enjoy the peace thereof; now in times of prosperity, I beseech you consider the day of small things; for I was almost frozen in time of our weak beginnings, and now am lame. My humble request is for that may be for my subsistence, the remaining time of my life. And I shall be obliged.

Your thankful servant,

Phineas Pratt.