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ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLL FORT LEAVENWORTH KS F/G 15/3  
THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL MILITIA AND ITS ENGLISH HERITAGE: 1620--ETC(U)  
JUN 79 M W ANDRESEN

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER <u>6</u>	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER <u>9</u>
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The New England Colonial Militia and its English Heritage: 1620-1675.		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Final Report, 8 June 1979
7. AUTHOR(s) Andresen, Martin W., MAJ, USA		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Student at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
1. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATSW-SE		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS <u>11</u>
4. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) <u>10 Martin W. Andresen</u>		12. REPORT DATE 8 June 1979
6. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited <u>12 102</u>		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 95
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Master of Military Art and Science (MMAS) Thesis prepared at CGSC in partial fulfillment of the Master Program requirements, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027.		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Evolution of English militia. Evolution of New England colonial militias, 1620-1675. Comparison of English and New England colonial militias.		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The threefold purpose of this thesis is to examine the evolution of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay militias in relationship to the English militia; to trace their establishment in colonial law; and to describe how a changing New World environment altered the colonial militias during the period 1620-1675. SEE REVERSE		

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1620-1675

Martin W. Andresen, MAJ, USA  
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

Final report 8 June 1979

Accession For	
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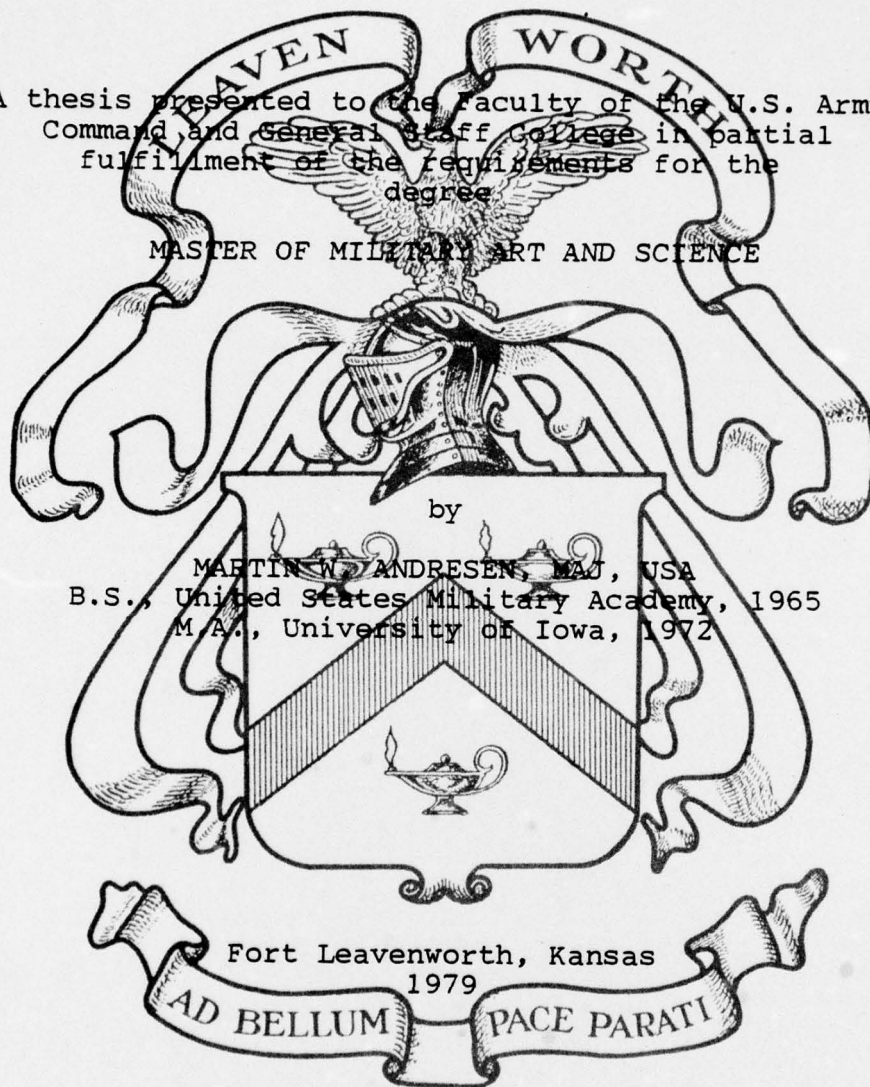
(Unclassified) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

A Master of Military Art and Science thesis presented to the faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL MILITIA  
AND ITS ENGLISH HERITAGE: 1620-1675

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE



by

MARTIN W. ANDRESEN, MAJ, USA  
B.S., United States Military Academy, 1965  
M.A., University of Iowa, 1972

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
1979

79 11 05 353

90-CGSC-3050

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of candidate MARTIN W. ANDRESEN, MAJ, USA

Title of thesis THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL MILITIA AND ITS  
ENGLISH HERITAGE: 1620-1675

Approved by:

[Signature], Research Advisor

Philip D Jones, Member, Graduate Faculty

David C. Shaffer, Member, Consulting Faculty

Accepted this 2nd day of Mar 1979 by  
Philip D Jones, Director, Master of Military  
Art and Science

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. References to this study should include the foregoing statement.

THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL MILITIA AND ITS ENGLISH HERITAGE:  
1620-1675, by Major Martin W. Andresen, USA, 95 pages.

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Research indicates that the New England colonial militias did bear an outward resemblance to the English militia. Both institutions were established on the principle, enforced by law, that every adult male had an inherent obligation to protect and defend his country and its government. Included in that obligation was the requirement to maintain and bear arms at one's own expense. However, while there were similarities between the two militia systems, the resemblance was more apparent than real. While the English militia rapidly declined in importance during the seventeenth century, the New England militias remained the cornerstone of the colonial military establishments until the American Revolutionary War. Another important difference between the two institutions pertained to control of the militia. In England the Crown controlled the militia through its royal prerogative. In New England control of the militias rested in the legislative bodies. In these and other essential characteristics, the New England colonial militias evolved differently from their English counterpart.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

"The Militia" .....	i
Introduction .....	1
A Heritage Rooted in English Antiquity .....	14
The Pilgrim Army .....	31
The Great Migration .....	51
Epilogue .....	75
Bibliography .....	81

## "THE MILITIA"

In free states...no man should take up arms, but with a view to defend his country and its laws; he puts not off the citizen when he enters the camp; but it is because he is a citizen, and would wish to continue so, that he makes himself for a while a soldier.

Blackstone

Mouths without hands, maintained at vast expense,  
In peace a charge, in war a weak defense.  
Stout once a month they march, a blustering band,  
And ever but in time of need at hand.

"Cymon and Iphigenia"

Everyone will now be mobilized and all boys old enough to carry a spear will be sent to Addis Ababa. Married men will take their wives to carry food and cook. Those without wives will take any woman without a husband. Women with small babies need not go. The blind, those who cannot carry a spear, are exempted. Anyone found at home after receipt of this order will be hanged.

Haille Selassie, 1935

## "THE HISTORIAN'S TASK"

What the historian needs is unflagging industry and unswerving honesty in seeking out the truth, imagination to interpret it aright, and literary art to bring it home not only with conviction but with welcome to men's minds and bosoms.

Sir John William Fortescue

## INTRODUCTION

### THE NEW ENGLAND MILITIA

During the pre-dawn of 19 April 1775, while William Dawes, Paul Revere, and Doctor Samuel Prescott were frantically galloping across the Massachusetts countryside warning the sleeping colonists that the British were coming, Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith and his detachment of British grenadiers and light infantry were steadily winding their way toward Concord with orders to destroy a cache of military stores.<sup>1</sup> Enroute to Concord, the British contingent confronted Captain John Parker's recently organized Lexington Company of Minutemen while in the midst of assembling. At the conclusion of their chance encounter, Captain Parker's "Motley collection of rebels,"<sup>2</sup> had fired the opening volleys of the American Revolution.

By nightfall the British forces regained the safety of Boston and began counting their losses which numbered over 270 killed, wounded, and missing in action. Later that evening, as General Thomas Gage tried to comprehend the full impact of what had happened, the glorious accounts of how the New England militia had defeated the "Lobsterbacks" were already on their way southward to Philadelphia, Jamestown, and points beyond. Literally overnight, America had acquired a new military hero, the militia "Minuteman." Even today, in an age of avowed cynicism, the epic tale of the Minuteman -- that self-sacrificing,

embattled farmer who unhesitatingly put down his plow and picked up his musket in the defense of America's liberty -- remains part of our military heritage.

Yet, contrary to what most Americans believe and a significant number of historians frequently imply, the poorly trained, ill-equipped militiaman who challenged the British regular was not a recent creation hastily concocted to confront the British. While Lexington and Concord were undoubtedly the Minuteman's "finest hour," it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, his debut.

As early as 12 August 1645, fearing imminent hostilities with the Narragansett Indians, the Massachusetts Bay General Court ordered "that there should be a [daily] military watch in all the townes," and that

The cheife comandars of every company [should appoint] thirtye souldiers of their companies in ye hundred, who shalbe ready, at halfe an houres warning, upon any service they shalbe put upon by their cheife millitary officers;<sup>3</sup>

Not content with merely putting a third of their military force on alert, the General Court further directed that

no man now inhabiting & settled in [Concord, Sudbury or Dedham] (whether married or single) shall remove to any other towne without the allowance of a magistrate, or other select men of that towne, untill it shall please God to settle peace againe, or some other way of safety to the said townes [can be provided].<sup>4</sup>

The General Court anticipated that this would provide the outlying communities with sufficient personnel to maintain an effective defense and would provide a military force capable of responding quickly to any emergency.

Although the Narragansetts did not strike in 1645, the imminent threat of warfare recurred in 1653. Again Massachusetts Bay responded by establishing the modern day equivalent of a quick reaction force. Recognizing the absolute "necessities of being in readiness in these tymes of danger," the Council ordered that one-eighth of all militia forces were to be placed, "in a readiness to march in a dyes warning shd the Lord call us to warre."<sup>5</sup>

Struggling for its very survival during King Philip's War, Massachusetts Bay once again revived the "minuteman" concept. Repeatedly the General Court warned militia units to "be ready at an hour's warning," or "to be ready to march on a moment's warning."<sup>6</sup> With regard to Middlesex, the Massachusetts Bay Council not only created a "minuteman" force, but carefully outlined a system for alerting the entire countryside. This system was almost identical to the one used a century later at Lexington and Concord. To establish the system the Council directed that

there be appointed a select number of persons in each town of Middlesex, who are, upon any information of the distress of any town, forthwith to repair to the relief thereof; and that such information may be seasonable, the towns are to dispatch posts, each town to the next, till notices be conveyed over the whole country, if need bee.

Unfortunately, the successful conclusion of King Philip's War did not mark an end of hostilities for the New England militia. It continued to see extensive service during King William's War (1689-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), King George's War (1744-1748), and the French and Indian Wars

(1755-1763). Throughout these periods, Massachusetts Bay continued to rely on the militia as its first line of defense. In 1711, concerned about the safety of Boston while a colonial expeditionary force was off attacking Quebec, the governor ordered that the local militia regiments, "be in readiness at a minute's warning" to defend the critical port city,<sup>8</sup> while in 1743, militia regiments were ordered to "hold themselves ready to march on the shortest warning."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, a specified number of militiamen in each unit were organized into an alert force with regimental commanders ordered

to Raise in the County of Hampshire Three Companys of Fifty able bodyede Effective Men in Each, Three Companys in the Countys of Middlesex and Worcester, and four Companys in the County of York of like number and quality with the first to situate and dispose as shall best serve the defense of the whole Frontiers, that he be pleased to Order and Direct that Each officer and private Centinel in said Companys provide himself with a good pair of Snowshoes, one pair of moggisons and one Hatchett, and that during the Warr that may happen they hold themselves ready to March on the shortest Warning.<sup>10</sup>

Known as the "snow-shoe" soldiers, these militia units were reasonably effective in patrolling the New England frontier during the war. Of course their efficiency was enhanced significantly by the government's added incentive of a fifty pound (Colonial) bonus for every Indian scalp.

During the French and Indian Wars similar provisions were enacted. By this time even the militiamen began referring to themselves as "minutemen,"<sup>11</sup> since they were always "in readiness to march at a minute's warning to such part of the frontiers" as may be required.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, the militiamen who withstood the British onslaught on 19 April 1775, were not of recent vintage; rather, they possessed a long and proud heritage - a heritage that actually transcended the New England colonies and had its origins in Anglo-Saxon antiquity.

Although past historians may have ignored the colonial militia as a military institution, others have recognized its importance. As early as 1782, John Adams informed the Abbé de Mably that the key to interpreting American colonial history was an understanding of the four fundamental colonial institutions: the New England towns, the schools, the congregations, and the militia.<sup>13</sup> Historians have concentrated on the first three institutions but they have generally ignored the colonial militia as a review of current literature will confirm.<sup>14</sup> As Don Higginbotham, a Revolutionary War historian, noted, "the military institutions of the colonies have been sadly neglected by scholars."<sup>15</sup>

This shortcoming certainly cannot be attributed to any absence of warfare during the colonial era. Between 1620 and 1775 the New England colonies alone were involved in six wars and three major Indian uprisings covering nearly one-third of the entire period. This does not include, of course, the day-to-day struggle for survival along the frontiers which were subjected to frequent Indian raids. Thus, the colonial period was truly one of conflict and offers an excellent opportunity for investigating the growth and development of the militia as a colonial institution.

Clarence Clendenen may have noted part of the explanation for this lack of research on the colonial militia when he remarked that, "most writers on American military history assume that it started with the assembly of the New England militia before Boston, in the spring of 1775."<sup>16</sup> Thus, during the first half of the twentieth century, Herbert L. Osgood's description of the seventeenth century colonial militia was the only historical treatment available. Unfortunately, his treatment was less than satisfactory as it generally ignored the militia's English antecedents and portrayed the institution as a rather static and uncomplicated one having little impact on colonial society.<sup>17</sup>

Only recently has Osgood's interpretation come under scrutiny. For example, in 1951, Douglas Leach focused on Plymouth Colony's militia and concluded that not only was it "borrowed directly from the English militia system,"<sup>18</sup> but that it was far from being a static institution. Rather, his research indicated that it frequently underwent change enabling it to keep "in step with the colony's growth" and that by 1675, it had developed into "a complex military pyramid of companies, regiments and staffs, all controlled by a series of rigid regulations."<sup>19</sup>

In 1963, John Shy directly challenged the contention that the colonial militia was a "fairly static institution" that remained "politically healthy and militarily inefficient," and "relatively uncomplicated."<sup>20</sup> Conceding that much more research was necessary, Shy remained confident that such

research would demonstrate that the militia was "a more complicated - and more interesting - institution" than has been previously acknowledged.<sup>21</sup>

Both Leach and Shy, however, continued to disregard the militia's English heritage and focused their attention, instead, on the impact of the "New World" environment on it. One historian, Jim D. Hill, did recognize the importance of the militia's English antecedents. Indeed, by the time he had completed his preliminary research he had twelve chapters on it. But, because his monograph was a history of the American National Guard, Hill regretfully deleted the twelve chapters and synthesized them into a short introductory paragraph which simply acknowledged that the colonial militia had its origin in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>22</sup>

To date, no American historian has published a comprehensive study of New England's colonial militia or fully explored the similarities between the colonial militia and the English militia. The closest thing to it are two unpublished dissertations: Darrett B. Rutman's, "A Militant New World: 1607-1640," and David R. Millar's, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts."

This hiatus, however, may soon be resolved with the pending publication of Stephen Saunders Webb's monograph, The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1569-1680. In a recent article Webb maintained that English colonization was inherently imperialistic and that colonial leaders frequently sought to impose control

through military force. Referring to the colonial political machinery as a "garrison government," Webb found that many colonial political leaders frequently received their military and administrative experience while serving with the English military in either Ireland or the Low Countries. Thus, according to Webb, "the governmental institutions of England's colonies...were shaped by military men, intent on establishing security and imposing social order within their jurisdictions."<sup>23</sup>

Considering the thrust of Webb's intriguing interpretation, one may anticipate that it will focus attention on the development of England's military institution, particularly during the Tudor era, and that institution's eventual transfer to the New World. However, pending the publication of Webb's monograph, the void remains. Accordingly, the threefold purpose of this thesis is to examine the evolution of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay militias in relationship to the English militia; to trace their establishment in colonial law; and to describe how a changing New World environment altered them during the period 1620 to 1675.

As noted by past historians, the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay militias did bear a marked resemblance to the English militia. Both institutions were established on the principle, enforced by law, that every adult male had an inherent obligation to protect and defend his country and its government. Included in that obligation was the additional requirement to maintain and bear arms at one's own expense. Likewise, both England and the New England colonies envisioned

the militia as primarily defensive hence, legislative constraints as to the locale and duration of militia service were common to both military organizations.

However, while there were similarities between the two militia systems, there were also significant differences; differences that developed as the colonists adapted their militia systems to the New World environment. The most important difference, no doubt, pertained to control of the militia. In England the answer to that fundamental question was achieved only after a civil war and the eventual restoration of the Stuarts and their royal prerogative over the militia (coupled, however, with stringent parliamentary fiscal controls over its use). In the colonies the question of who controlled the militia was never in doubt -- from the beginning the legislative bodies, working in consort with the colonial governors, controlled the militia.

Equally important, during the seventeenth century the English militia steadily declined in importance particularly after 1661, with the establishment of an English standing army. In New England, however, the militia continued to remain the bulwark of the colonial military establishment until the American Revolutionary War.

Another significant difference between the two militia organizations pertained to the leadership. In England militia officers were either appointed directly by the Crown or by the Crown's representative, the Lord-Lieutenant. In the colonies, the vast majority of militia officers and non-

commissioned officers were elected by their fellow militiamen. Thus, in these and other essential characteristics, the New England colonial militias evolved differently from their English counterpart.\*

\*Where possible archaic spellings have been retained and dates are given in the Old Style. During the first quarter of the year dates are given as 1621/22 to avoid confusion.

## INTRODUCTION

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This narrative of the events on April 19, 1775, represents a synthesis of the following sources: John R. Alden, The American Revolution 1775-1783; Frank W. Coburn, The Battle of April 19, 1775; Marcus Cunliffe, Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America 1775-1865; Allen French, The First Year of the American Revolution; John R. Galvin, The Minute Men; Don Higginbotham, The War of American Independence; Bruce Lancaster, From Lexington to Liberty: The Story of the American Revolution.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Forney Steele, American Campaigns, I, 24.

<sup>3</sup>Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, (ed.), Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, II, 121-123; Arthur Vollmer, Military Obligation: The American Tradition, II, Part 6, 33-34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 122; Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 34.

<sup>5</sup>Massachusetts Archives, LXVII, 137; Quoted in John R. Galvin, The Minute Men, 24.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 206-207; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 25.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 169; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 28.

<sup>8</sup>John Noble, (ed.), Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, 1630-1692, V, 424; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 34.

<sup>9</sup>Massachusetts Archives, LXXII, 672; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 36.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 36.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., XCV, 119; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 41.

<sup>12</sup>Noble, Records, XIII, 284-285; Quoted in Galvin, The Minute Men, 41.

<sup>13</sup>John Adams, The Works of John Adams, ed. Charles Francis Adams, V, 494-496; Quoted in David Richard Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts," unpublished dissertation, 1.

<sup>14</sup>A review of current literature indicates that nearly 175 years of colonial military developments have been either ignored or treated in a very cursory manner. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, Military Heritage of America, treats colonial military developments in less than two pages which are not even based on original research but represent, as the authors admit, an adaptation of Oliver Lyman Spaulding's, The United States Army in War and Peace. This is particularly disappointing since Spaulding summarized the military aspects of the colonial era in less than seventy-five words. William A. Ganoe, The History of the United States Army, contains absolutely no reference to the colonial militia or its English ancestry. James R. Jacobs, The Beginning of the U.S. Army, 1783-1812, covers exactly what the title indicates. There are no references to colonial military institutions prior to 1783. Maurice Matloff, (ed.), American Military History, does provide a brief treatment of colonial military developments but focuses primarily on King William's War forward, while providing only vague generalizations about the period 1607 to 1689. Emory Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, focuses entirely on America's military developments after 1775. Although Upton denigrated the militia as a viable military institution on which to base America's security, he never examined the origins or development of that institution prior to 1775. Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army, provides only six pages out of five hundred pages to the colonial era. Included in this brief summation is a review of the colonial militia's Anglo-Saxon and Elizabethan military heritage.

<sup>15</sup>Don Higginbotham, The War of American Independence, 471.

<sup>16</sup>Clarence C. Clendenen, "A Little Known Period of American Military History," Military Affairs, XIX (Spring, 1955), 37. A similar view was espoused by Louis Morton. "All too often, those who write about the American military tradition start with the Revolution, or with the beginning of the Federal government. They would have us believe that the founders of our nation created and formulated out of thin air a military policy at once complete and perfect." Louis Morton, "The Origins of American Military Policy," Military Affairs, XXII (Summer, 1958), 75.

<sup>17</sup>Herbert L. Osgood, The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, I, Chapter XIII.

<sup>18</sup>Douglas Edward Leach, "The Military System of Plymouth Colony," The New England Quarterly, XXIV (September, 1951), 342-343.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 363-364.

<sup>20</sup>John W. Shy, "A New Look at Colonial Militia," William and Mary Quarterly, XX (April, 1963), 175.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>22</sup>Jim D. Hill, The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard, vii.

<sup>23</sup>Stephen Saunders Webb, "Army and Empire: English Garrison Government in Britain and America, 1569 to 1763," William and Mary Quarterly, XXXIV (January, 1977), 6.

## CHAPTER I

### A HERITAGE ROOTED IN ENGLISH ANTIQUITY

The word, militia, derives from the Latin term, miles, meaning soldier. First employed by the Greek city-states, the concept required military service of all able-bodied, free male citizens. Traditionally such service was of short duration, employed locally, and primarily used in the defense of the city-states. Although some of its characteristics were similar, the militia that emerged in New England had its origins in Teutonic antiquity, was transplanted to England during the Saxon invasions of the fifth century, and matured as England's military cornerstone.

There is general concurrence on the fundamental tenets governing the Anglo-Saxon militia or fyrd: every male was obligated to bear arms when summoned by his liege; and each individual equipped and maintained himself at his own expense. Historians also agree that, lacking any systematic training in the use of arms or accouterments, the real value of the fyrd lay in the substantial numbers it could contribute to the nation's host. However, while the basic framework of the fyrd is understood by historians, specific data on the institution's characteristics, development, and employment are sadly lacking. This has led historian F. W. Maitland to remark that, "No matter with which [historians] have to deal

is darker than the constitution of the English army."<sup>1</sup>

Another student of English military history lamented that historians could, "search in vain...for enactment of Wtan or decree of King fastening this obligation of national defence [the fyrd] upon the Saxon race."<sup>2</sup> However, rather than discredit his own research, he quickly concluded that, "the obligation was so well known, so well understood and so inherent in the very nature of citizenship of a free state, that the craft of lawyers was not needed to define it, the force of law not needed to exact it."<sup>3</sup>

Certain facets of the fyrd's evolution, however, are documented. During the ninth century, when Anglo-Saxon England found itself under mounting pressure from the Danes, Alfred the Great (circa 871-901), found that the poorly trained and ill-equipped fyrd offered little protection. Whenever the Danes appeared, only those in immediate danger responded to the royal summons and they quickly melted away once the immediate threat was over. Therefore, Alfred reorganized the fyrd into three groups, one of which was always prepared to respond to his summons.<sup>4</sup> Alfred's reforms did not prevent the Danes' eventual success but they did delay it. More important, his reorganization marked the first recorded effort to assign specific responsibilities to the fyrd and marked a major step forward in the institution's evolutionary process.

Harold II and Anglo-Saxon England may have succumbed to William in 1066, but the fyrd did not. After the Norman conquest feudalism, complete with its inherent military

obligations, flourished but never supplanted the fyrd as a military institution. Indeed, Norman kings frequently employed it against their own rebellious barons and came to recognize that the fyrd represented a convenient counterpoise against feudal levies raised against the Crown.<sup>5</sup> Thus, according to C. Warren Hollister, "the military structure of late Saxon-England was far from obsolete;"<sup>6</sup> rather, "the Anglo-Norman military organization [represented] a synthesis of Old English and Norman elements."<sup>7</sup>

By 1172, as civil war racked England, it became apparent that the ill-defined, ad hoc fyrd was no longer sufficient to meet Henry II's military needs. Hence, in preparation for his confrontation with Philip Augustus and his own rebellious sons, Henry II promulgated the Assize of Arms in 1181. The Assize perpetuated the Anglo-Saxon fyrd by defining the military obligation of every adult male in the defense of the realm. One significant modification to the ancient concept of the fyrd contained in the Assize was its expanded economic focus. Not only did every male Englishman owe his liege a military obligation, but the extent of that obligation was directly related to his economic status. Thus, a free layman worth "sixteen marks in chattel or in revenue," was required to possess "a coat of mail, a helmet, a shield and a lance," while an individual worth only "ten marks" was expected to possess "a hauberk, a head-piece of irone and a lance."<sup>8</sup> "All burghers and the whole body of freemen" possessing less than ten marks were required to

maintain, at a minimum, "a doublet of mail, a head-piece of iron and a lance."<sup>9</sup> Designed to establish the legal foundation for a more efficient and effective fyrd, the stipulation as to the type of arms and equipment that each individual had to maintain became a fundamental aspect of England's military system.

The Assize of Arms did not eliminate the fyrd's inherent problems of poor training and leadership or overcome its weak organizational structure, but its formal recognition in English law represented "a turning point in the history of military obligations," and was to have a major influence on the future developments of the English and colonial militias.<sup>10</sup>

A far more important modification of the fyrd was incorporated into Edward I's Statute of Winchester (1285). The Statute represented a formalized embodiment of each Englishman's military obligation and placed a greater emphasis on the mandatory aspects of that obligation. According to the Statute, "every man between fifteen years of age and sixty years" was required to possess "harness for to keep the peace after the ancient assize."<sup>11</sup> In addition to increasing the arms requirement "according to the quantity of [an individual's] lands and goods," the Statute also required, for the first time, "that view of armor be made every year two times."<sup>12</sup> Disobedience of the Statute was to be reported to the Crown who would "provide remedy therein."<sup>13</sup>

As England became deeply involved in European affairs, both Edward I (1272-1307), and Edward II (1307-1327), sought

to compel the fyrd to serve overseas. Maintaining that such service violated the ancient usage of the fyrd, Parliament extracted a pledge from Edward III (1327-1377), that:

no man from henceforth should be charged to arm himself otherwise than he was wont in the time of the king's progenitors; and that no man be compelled to go out of his shire but when necessity requireth and sudden coming of strange enemies into the realm; and that it shall be done as hath been used in times past for the defence of the realm.<sup>14</sup>

Still concerned about the wholesale impressment of soldiers, Parliament sought to further limit the Crown's authority over the fyrd in 1351 and again in 1402 when it stipulated that no man should be compelled to perform military service except "by common assent, or grant, made in Parliament."<sup>15</sup> Parliament further stipulated that the fyrd should not be used outside its shire except in case of "great necessity."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, somewhat restricted in their ability to employ the fyrd overseas, the English monarchs turned their attention away from the fyrd and focused, instead, on mercenaries, Commissions of Array, and Indentures as a way of supplying their manpower needs. Accordingly, by 1455 the fyrd had evolved into "a role of defence levies regulated by a series of parliamentary statutes."<sup>17</sup> As such, it remained poorly trained, ill-equipped, virtually leaderless, and of little importance during the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485).

Although Henry VII (1485-1509) emerged victoriously from the Wars of the Roses, he still had to contend with the Yorkist pretenders Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck as well as the cantankerous Scottish monarch, James IV. Thus, he

became very security conscious. In addition to abolishing all private armies of retainers and establishing a royal bodyguard, he also sought to revitalize the morbid fyrd by ordering all sheriffs to faithfully execute the provisions of the Statute of Winchester. His efforts, however, met with little success.

Neither Henry VIII (1509-1547), nor Edward VI's regent (1547-1553), took much interest in the national levy other than to confirm the Statute of Winchester.<sup>18</sup> However Mary's reign (1553-1558), was markedly different from her predecessors. Facing civil turmoil, religious fanaticism, and renewed foreign entanglements as a result of her marriage to Philip II of Spain, the capability (and loyalty) of the national levy acquired new importance; an importance that resulted in a totally revised and upgraded national militia.

In accordance with Mary's revised militia statute, "An Acte for the Having of Horse, Armour and Weapon," all previous legislation pertaining to the national levy was rescinded. Like the Statute of Winchester, the new act required all males between sixteen and sixty to serve at the Crown's pleasure. However, the economic classifications and the type of weapons that each group was expected to maintain was significantly changed. Dividing the nation into ten economic groups, an individual worth from £5 to £10 sterling was required to maintain "one long bowe, one sheaf of arrows, a steel cap or skull, and one black-bill or halbert."<sup>19</sup> Individuals worth over £1,000 sterling were required to maintain sixteen horses, eighty complete suits or light armor, forty pikes, thirty bows,

twenty bills or halberds, twenty arquebuses, and fifty helmets.<sup>20</sup> Besides modernizing the militia's armaments the act also declared that individuals below the £5 level would receive arms at public expense during times of national emergency. This provision explains why the wealthy were now required to provide additional arms and accouterments. The new statute also established the position and defined the duties of the Lord-Lieutenant. He was expected to muster the local militia, inspect its arms and equipment, conduct periodic training, and allocate public arms as appropriate.

A correlative statute, "An Acte for the Taking of Musters," was aimed specifically at eliminating the fraud, mismanagement and malfeasance that had developed over the centuries with regard to manning and equipping the militia. Through these two acts the Crown had hoped to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of England's ground forces.

Although the early years of Elizabeth's long reign (1558-1603), were peaceful, she still ordered at least four general musters between 1559 and 1564.<sup>21</sup> Despite Mary's efforts to improve the militia, these musters continued to demonstrate the marginal utility of such a force. In 1560, Sir Thomas Gresham complained to Elizabeth that, "we have men enough if they were armed and trained to the wars that now be raised."<sup>22</sup> However, Elizabeth's parsimonious nature prevented her from taking any action on Gresham's complaint. It was this lack of concern and royal interest that resulted in the northern shires mustering in 1569 with less than sixty firearms

and even fewer horses out of a total strength of 2,500 men.<sup>23</sup>

In 1572, England again entered a period of apprehension as a result of repeated conspiracies involving Mary Stuart, the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and major disagreements with Spain. Once again royal interest was focused on the militia. However, finally conceding the impossibility of arming and training the entire male population, Elizabeth favored the establishment of "trained-bands," specialized in the skills of warfare. Therefore, she ordered that

out of that total and universal number being viewed, mustered, and registered, to have a convenient and sufficient number of the most able to be chosen and collected to be by the reasonable charge of the inhabitants in every shire tried, armed and weaponed, and so consequently taught and trained for to use, handle and exercise their horses, armour, shot and other weapons both on horseback and on foot for the service and defence of her Majesty, her crown and realm, against all attempts, both inward and outward.<sup>24</sup>

By late 1573, the London trained-bands alone, numbered 3,000 men and were training three times a week under the watchful eyes of experienced officers fresh from military campaigns abroad.<sup>25</sup>

While the creation of trained-bands may have improved England's ability to defend herself by enabling a few to train together at frequent intervals, the drawback was that they appeared to release the masses from their obligation to maintain arms or to be trained in their use. Thus, by 1575, of 180,000 men on the muster rolls, only 12,000 were serving in trained-bands. Another 63,000 men were purportedly armed but not trained.

During the summer of 1588, as the Spanish Armada approached England, the trained-bands and militia were summoned. Yet, at this moment of potential employment the status of the militia units was less than satisfactory. Edward Stanley complained to the Privy Council that the Cheshire and Lancashire trained-bands, although reportedly having trained on twelve separate occasions during the previous two years, "have not been trained one day, so that they have benefitted nothing, nor yet know their leaders."<sup>26</sup> Even more depressing was Sir John Smythe's evaluation of the national host gathered at Tilbury:

I did see and observe so great disorder and deformitie in their apparrell to arme withall, as I saw but very few of that army that had any convenience of apparrell and chieflie of doublets to arme upon, wherof it came to passe that the most of them did weare their armors verie uncomelie, uneasilie.<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately, the combination of the English Channel and competent English seamanship turned what may have been a military debacle into just another haphazard general muster.

During the remainder of Elizabeth's reign and the majority of James' reign (1603-1625), the militia was simply allowed to deteriorate. Based on the pacific desires of James, the shire militias were mustered only infrequently at which time they only "paraded in rag-tag array before the Lieutenant and his representative," and then were dismissed.<sup>28</sup>

By 1639, the situation had decayed to such a point that one militia officer, Colonel Robert Ward, conceded that musters were "matters of disport and things of no moment."<sup>29</sup>

Colonel Ward also predicted that

As trainings are now used, we shall, I am sure, never be able to make one good soldier; for our custom and use is, nowadays, to cause our companies to meet on a certain day, and by that time the arms be all viewed, and the muster master hath had his pay (which is the chiefest thing many times he looks after) it draws towards dinner time; and, indeed, officers love their bellies so well that they are loath to take too much pains about disciplining of their soldiers. Wherefore, after a little careless hurrying over of their postures ...they make them charge their muskets, and so prepare to give their captain a brave volley of shot at his entrance into his inn; where after having solaced themselves for a while after this brave service every man repairs home.<sup>30</sup>

Colonel Ward's pessimistic assessment of the English militia was confirmed a few short months later during the First Bishops' War when Charles I gathered over 20,000 militiamen from the northern shires in Newcastle. With this force Charles intended to confront the Scottish Calvinists and impose by force of arms, the Anglican prayer book on Scotland. Once summoned, the militia again demonstrated the presence of all its past problems: the lack of competent leadership, a lack of organization, a lack of discipline, the lack of proper equipment, and the woeful inadequacy of its training. Equally important, the political and religious sentiments of the average militiaman were much more in consort with Scotland rather than with Charles which seriously undermined the reliability of his "army". The deplorable condition of this militia force led Sir Edmund Verney to complain that

Our men are very raw, our arms of all sorts naught, our victuals scarce, and horse provisions worse... I dare say there was never so raw, so unskilful, and so unwilling an army brought to fight.<sup>31</sup>

The Marquis of Hamilton, in command of a 5,000 man expeditionary force, was equally shocked to discover that his militiamen were so poorly trained, particularly in the use of firearms, that "there were not 200 that could fire a musket" out of the entire force.<sup>32</sup> Needless to say, Hamilton's force was soundly defeated by the Scots as was Charles' attempt to coerce Scotland.

In addition to Scottish Calvinists, Charles I was also facing growing discontent in Parliament over his control of the militia. As early as 1628, Parliament had remonstrated against his military prerogatives with the Petition of Right which sought to establish new statutory limitations on the Crown's use of the militia. Although Charles accepted the Petition of Right and its prohibition on billeting troops in private homes or exercising martial law within the realm, he also prorogued Parliament for the next eleven years.

By 1642, the rift between Charles I and Parliament (reconvened to finance Charles' endeavors in Scotland), had reached the breaking point. Fearful of Charles' control over the militia, Parliament passed the Militia Ordinance in March, which empowered itself to appoint all militia commanders. The Ordinance further declared that henceforth the militia would obey only the directives of the "Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament."<sup>33</sup> Charles immediately countered Parliament's usurpation of his authority by proclaiming that anyone who mustered "contrary to [his] command" would be considered "violators of the laws and disturbers of the peace of this

kingdom."<sup>34</sup> Recognizing that Charles was not going to acquiesce to the Militia Ordinance, Parliament resolved on 12 June 1642, to raise an army for "preserving of the true religion, the laws, liberty and peace of the kingdom."<sup>35</sup> That same day Charles attempted to muster the shire militias "for the defense of us, our kingdom and country."<sup>36</sup> Almost without realizing it, England suddenly found herself involved in a civil war.

Initially both Charles and Parliament relied on the trained-bands for the bulk of their military manpower. Both parties, however, found such endeavors were futile. Although Cornishmen quickly rallied to the royal standard, they just as quickly mutinied when ordered to march against parliamentary forces in Devonshire. Likewise, the Yorkshire militia refused to march southward outside of York contending that to do so would violate ancient custom and their constitutional rights. Parliamentary leaders encountered similar defiance from the trained-bands supporting their cause. In retrospect, Charles made the best use of the trained-bands when he mustered the Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and Derbyshire militias and "borrowed" their arms to equip his royalist volunteers.<sup>37</sup> Thus, by 1645, as the historian, Rudolph Gneist noted, the English militia "no longer served any purpose," in the civil war.<sup>38</sup>

By 1660, following the bloodshed, the creation of a New Model Army, the regicide, the establishment of a military dictatorship, and the existence of an ineffectual Protectorate, a weary England recalled Charles II home from Europe and gratefully restored the Stuart heir on the English throne.

Having witnessed the military defeat and eventual execution of his father, Charles II returned to England adamant about establishing a permanent military force to protect both him and England. Accordingly, a reluctant but pliable Parliament stood by while Charles II incorporated elements of his own royalist contingent and General George Monck's forces into a standing army of six regiments. Although frequently complaining that the standing army was a grievance to the people, Parliament was unwilling to revive the same military issues that had previously led to the civil war. Thus, although not sanctioned by Parliament until 1689, Charles II was able to establish his "extra-parliamentary" standing army in 1661.

In addition to the standing army there remained, of course, the English militia. Coupled with the Stuart restoration, Parliament also resolved in the Militia Act of 1661, that "the sole supreme government, command and disposition of the militia... was the undoubted right of his Majesty," thus ending the long-standing constitutional issue over control of the militia.<sup>39</sup> In acknowledging the royal prerogatives, Parliament also conceded that "both or either of the Houses of Parliament cannot, nor ought to, pretend to the same."<sup>40</sup> A year later Parliament recognized the office of the Lord-Lieutenant as the Crown's county representative for military affairs with authority to appoint all subordinate deputies and officers subject only to the Crown's concurrence.<sup>41</sup> Not forgetting, however, the importance of military force in future constitutional crises, Parliament also established stringent fiscal constraints upon

the Crown which effectively reduced the Crown's ability to employ the militia in a roll other than maintaining local law and order. By 1670, then, the English militia entered yet another era of rapid decline which lasted until its revival nearly a century later during the Seven Years War.

What, then, was the military heritage that the early colonists took with them to the New World? First of all, it was a heritage embodied within the militia, an institution with which they were all familiar in a constitutional sense if not through actual experience. Included in that heritage was a recognition that every male had an obligation to maintain and bear arms in the defense of the realm but that such service was localized, of limited duration and to be used only in dire emergencies. Furthermore, the colonists took with them a recognition that militia service, both in what an individual was required to maintain and in what position he could hold, was directly related to his economic and social status.

Hence, at the same time that the English militia was declining in importance and about to be replaced by a standing army, the concept was to provide the New England colonists with a model for their military establishment; an imperfect model to be sure, but one that was perhaps more adaptable to the New World than it was to England.

## CHAPTER I

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>F. W. Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond, 156; Quoted in C. Warren Hollister, Anglo-Saxon Military Institutions, 3; Michael Powicke, Military Obligation in Medieval England, 1. Hollister also acknowledged the paucity of source material and general obscurity of the fyrd. This is why one of his critics remarked that, "whoever advised [Hollister] to turn to the Anglo-Saxon army was [not] being very kind," because it represents a "treacherous bog to stray into." Hollister, Anglo-Saxon Military Institutions, vii.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Potter Berry, A History of the Formation and Development of the Volunteer Infantry, 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>The narrative on Alfred the Great's reform measures represents a synthesis of the following sources: Montagu Burrows, Commentaries on the History of England; David Hume, The History of England, Vol. I; John Lord, Beacon Lights of History, Vol. II, The Middle Ages; Arther H. Noyes, The Military Obligation in Medieval England; Charles Oman, "Alfred as a Warrior," Alfred the Great, ed. by Alfred Bowker; Richard A. Preston, Sydney F. Wise, and Herman O. Werner, Men in Arms.

<sup>5</sup>The fyrd was utilized against Norman rebels in 1068, again in 1069 against Sweyn, and yet again in 1074 and 1075 against rebellious barons. At one time or another William I, William II, Henry I, Stephen, Henry II, Richard I, and John all relied on the military capabilities of the Anglo-Saxon fyrd.

<sup>6</sup>Hollister, Anglo-Saxon Military Institutions, 151.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>8</sup>George B. Adams and Morse H. Stephens, (eds.), Select Documents of English Constitutional History, 23-25.

- <sup>9</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup>Powicke, Military Obligation, 54.
- <sup>11</sup>Adams and Stephens, (eds.), Select Documents, 76-79.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup>I Edw. III, stat. 2, c. 5; Quoted in F. W. Maitland, The Constitutional History of England, 277; Hannis Taylor, The Origin and Growth of the English Constitution, Part II, 197.
- <sup>15</sup>Noyes, Military Obligation in Medieval England, 34.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., 37-38.
- <sup>17</sup>Powicke, Military Obligation, 245-246.
- <sup>18</sup>If numbers alone could win battles, Henry VII had nothing to fear. During the May, 1539 muster of London, approximately 15,000 citizens appeared at Mile's End prepared to defend the realm. Sibbald David Scott, The British Army: Its Origins, Progress, and Equipment, Vol. I, 326.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., 259.
- <sup>20</sup>Correlli Barnett, Britain and Her Army 1509-1970, 23.
- <sup>21</sup>Richard B. Wernham, Before the Armada: The Emergence of the English Nation, 278.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., 279.
- <sup>23</sup>Alfred Leslie Rowse, The Expansion of Elizabethan England, 328-329.
- <sup>24</sup>C. G. Cruickshank, Elizabeth's Army, 24.
- <sup>25</sup>John W. Fortescue, A History of the British Army, Vol. I, 135.

<sup>26</sup>Letter, Sir E. Stanley to Privy Council, S.P.O. MS;  
Quoted in Scott, The British Army, 379.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 378-379.

<sup>28</sup>L. M. Hill, "County Government in Caroline England  
1625-1640," The Origins of the Civil War, ed. by Conrad  
Russell, 70.

<sup>29</sup>Barnett, Britain and Her Army, 59.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted in H. Watteville, The British Soldier, 37.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Barnett, Britain and Her Army, 73; Watteville,  
The British Soldier, 37.

<sup>33</sup>Samuel R. Gardiner, The Constitutional Documents of the  
Puritan Revolution, 1628-1660, 247.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 249.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 261.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 260.

<sup>37</sup>Watteville, The British Soldier, 39; Charles H. Firth,  
Cromwell's Army, 16.

<sup>38</sup>Rudolph Gneist, The History of the English Constitution,  
II, 263.

<sup>39</sup>Andrew Browning, English Historical Documents, 1660-1714,  
793; Quoted in Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency  
in Colonial Massachusetts," 24.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.; Quoted in Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and  
Independency in Colonial Massachusetts," 24.

<sup>41</sup>Charles M. Clode, The Military Forces of the Crown,  
I, 34.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PILGRIM ARMY

#### - THE FIRST DECADE -

When the one hundred Pilgrims first landed at Cape Cod on 11 November 1620, they came not as an army but as a small band of Englishmen seeking to build a better way of life. Indeed, the majority of the men did not even possess swords, let alone firearms or suitable armor.<sup>1</sup> The colonists were particularly concerned about this lack of armaments because they recognized that they were likely to encounter savages. Based upon the written accounts of past voyages in American waters and the exaggerated tales that sailors inevitably circulated, the colonists were predisposed to the premise that they would never "find or meet with any Indians, except it be to do [them] mischief."<sup>2</sup> Even William Bradford, a leading proponent of American colonization, acknowledged that they would always be in "continual danger of the savage people, who [were] cruel, barbarous and most treacherous."<sup>3</sup>

Convinced that the Indians would be "readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise," the Pilgrims had given some thought to their military needs prior to departing Leyden.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the colonists apparently sought the advice of Captain John Smith. Indeed, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Captain Smith even offered his

services to the Pilgrims but they rejected him because, according to Smith, they believed that his "books and maps were much better cheape to teach them, that [himself]." <sup>5</sup> The colonists did, however, enlist the support of Myles Standish. Though not of their religious persuasion, he was a veteran of several campaigns in the Low Countries and seemed ideally suited to serve as their military advisor.

In addition to Captain Standish's military expertise, the colonists were also familiar with the English militia as an institution which, when established in the New World, could provide them with a bulwark against whatever dangers they would encounter.

There is scant documentation pertaining to the evolution of Plymouth Colony's militia during the first decade. The colony remained extremely small during those first difficult years. Virtually everyone lived within the confines of Plymouth. Given their common English military heritage and ability to confer on a daily basis, there was little need to formalize their military institution through legislation. There are, however, several indirect references to Plymouth's military establishment which provide some clues as to its organization and evolutionary development.

Complaining that "the Indians came skulking about them, and would sometimes show themselves aloof off," <sup>6</sup> Bradford noted that "as time would admit, they met and consulted of laws and orders, both for their civil and military government as the necessity of their condition did require." <sup>7</sup>

However, despite their willingness to suspect the worst from the Indians, the Pilgrims failed to accomplish anything conclusive with regard to organizing their militia until compelled to do so. That catalyst occurred on 16 February 1620/21, when the colonists spotted twelve armed braves moving towards Plymouth. Although they eventually disappeared, the Indians did steal some tools that had been left unattended during the alarm. Was this the prelude to an Indian attack? If so, the colonists were in dire straits. Nearly half of their original number had died since their arrival in the New World. Of those remaining Bradford wrote that there were but "six or seven sound persons," among them.<sup>8</sup> Reviewing their situation, Edward Winslow candidly observed that, "if God had let [the savages] loose, they might easily have swallowed us up, scarce being a handfull in comparison of those forces that might have gathered together against us."<sup>9</sup>

In direct response to this perceived threat, the Pilgrims met the following day expressly for the purpose of "establishing military orders among [them]selves."<sup>10</sup> During that meeting the colonists formally elected Captain Standish to be "their Captain and military commander,"<sup>11</sup> granting him complete "authority of command in [military] affairs."<sup>12</sup>

The selection of Captain Standish as the colony's military commander, though a logical choice, represented an alteration from the English militia system. In England the question of who controlled the militia -- the Crown or Parliament -- remained unanswered at the time of English

colonization. Eventually that issue would become a contributory cause to the English Civil War. However, in Plymouth, as well as Massachusetts Bay, control of the militia was not the prerogative of the colonial governor; rather, it became the responsibility of the colonial legislative bodies. True, the legislators worked in consort with the governors but they always retained ultimate control of the military establishments during the period in question. Thus, in accordance with the provisions of the Mayflower Compact, the Plymouth "legislators" designated Captain Standish as their first commander of the Plymouth militia.

No longer merely a military advisor, Captain Standish's selection as commander gave him the authority to handle military matters with the full backing of Plymouth's leadership. Thus, when John Billington was insubordinate to him, he received a severe sentence from the Plymouth General Court which was remitted only after he had humbled himself and sought forgiveness. Several months later when John Oldham, a constant thorn in Plymouth's side, refused to stand watch and called Captain Standish a "beggarly rascal," the Governor ordered him "clapped up a while," until he regained his senses, after which he was released "with some slight punishment."<sup>13</sup> The manner in which the Plymouth authorities responded to each of these infractions of military discipline also represented a significant departure from the way in which such infractions were handled in the English militia. Although the Lord-Lieutenants and muster-

masters were encouraged to enforce militia laws, the institution's rapidly declining importance virtually nullified any such endeavors. In Plymouth the colonists were convinced that the barbarians were just waiting for an opportunity to massacre them. To them the militia represented their first and only line of defense between survival and extermination. The colonists could ill afford any diminution of its effectiveness. Accordingly, the authorities acted quickly and decisively against anyone undermining the institution. Yet, within a very short time, as the colonists grew in strength and their fear of the Indians subsided, they also relaxed their discipline much like their English brethren had done.

The next reference to Plymouth's military establishment occurs in January 1621/22, when Plymouth Colony received a "threatening" snakeskin filled with arrows from the Narragansett Indians. In addition to returning the skin filled with bullets, Bradford also noted that the episode caused them to "carefully ...look to themselves."<sup>14</sup> In addition to enclosing Plymouth with a "good strong pale," Captain Standish also instituted the ancient English system of watch and ward.

Close on the heels of that challenge the colonists were shocked to learn of the Virginia Massacre from the captain of a passing fishing vessel. Included in Captain John Huddleston's letter of warning was the statement that, "Happy is he whom other men's harms doth make to beware."<sup>15</sup> Always receptive to good advice, the Pilgrims further improved

their overall defensive posture by constructing "a fort with good timber, both strong and comely."<sup>16</sup> In addition to the pale and fort, Captain Standish also took a significant step forward in reorganizing the colony's available manpower by dividing it into "four squadrons" each of which "had their quarter appointed them unto which they were to repair upon any sudden alarm."<sup>17</sup> One of the squadrons, according to Bradford, was also "appointed for a guard with muskets...to prevent Indian treachery," in case a fire should break out.<sup>18</sup>

Not only did Captain Standish reorganize the colony's militia, but he apparently also instituted frequent musters and training sessions. Thus, in late 1621, Edward Winslow noted that during their first thanksgiving celebration the colonists "exercised [their] arms."<sup>19</sup> Following his creation of the four squadrons, Captain Standish purportedly conducted training on the care and handling of firearms then "held a general muster or training" to evaluate the effectiveness of his new organization and to acquaint the men with their specific duties. Following the completion of their training the men escorted their commander home and "graced him with shott."<sup>20</sup> Another reference to training is contained in Emmuanuel Altham's letter to his cousin in early 1623. In it Altham mentioned that Governor Bradford's recent wedding had been concluded with the "shooting off of many muskets and training [of the] men."<sup>21</sup>

Although there is no direct evidence as to who actually served in Plymouth's militia during the first decade,

there is circumstantial evidence which supports the premise that it consisted of every adult male. In late 1621, the colonists were informed by some natives that a ship was approaching Plymouth. Convinced that it was a French ship, Winslow noted that "the governor commanded a great piece to be shot off," to warn everyone about the pending crisis. "Where-upon," according to Winslow, "every man, yea, boy, that could handle a gun, were ready, with full resolution [to] stand in [their] just defense."<sup>22</sup> Winslow's statement plus common sense would indicate that the colonial militia probably consisted of every male capable of bearing arms (at least theoretically if not in actual practice). Not only is such a premise consistent with the Pilgrims' English military heritage, but logic would dictate that during periods of danger everyone would assist in the colony's defense if only out of concern for his own safety.

However he accomplished it, by 1627, Captain Standish had apparently developed an impressive looking, though untested, militia. In describing Plymouth's militia the Dutch visitor, Isaack de Rasieres, Secretary of the New Netherlands Colony, wrote:

They assemble by beat of drum, each with his musket or firelock, in front of the captain's door; they have their cloaks on, and place themselves in order, three abreast, and are led by a sergeant without beat of drum. Behind comes the governor in a long robe;...and on the left hand the captain with his side-arms, and cloak on, and with a small cane in his hand; and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him. Thus, they are constantly on their guard night and day.<sup>23</sup>

- THE SECOND DECADE AND BEYOND -

Organization and Leadership

Confronted with population growth and territorial expansion, Plymouth Colony found it necessary to expand and institutionalize her military structure during the 1630s. No longer able to maintain a consolidated military force in Plymouth and still protect the colony's exposed frontier settlements, the central government ordered the establishment of a militia company in every town under the command of a local commander while overall command was retained by the General Court acting through its representative, Captain Standish. By 1639, militia companies were functioning in eight communities: Scituate, Taunton, Plymouth, Duxbury, Sandwich, Yarmouth, Barnstable, and Marshfield.

Recognizing that the expanded militia system would require more supervision than the General Court could provide, it established a five member Council of War in 1643, with "full power to order all things concerning the genall warrs," for the colony.<sup>24</sup> Although the Council of War seldom got involved in the day-to-day affairs of the local militia companies, it did provide the means through which the General Court continued to retain its overall control over the colony's military force.

Fifteen years later, in 1658, Plymouth Colony had grown to eleven militia companies. Adopting the lead of Massachusetts Bay, the colony organized the companies into

a regiment and placed it under the command of Major Josiah Winslow. Subject to the authority of the Council of War, Major Winslow was given a written commission which empowered him "to bee as cheife Officer over the milletary Companies of [Plymouth, and that] all Captaines Inferior officers and souldiers are heerby required to be Reddy subjection to [him] during [his] continuance in the said Office."<sup>25</sup>

In 1671, acknowledging the "many appearances of danger towards the Country by enemies from abroad," the Plymouth General Court synthesized all of its military laws into a two page document entitled, "Military Affairs."<sup>26</sup> Included in that document was a reconfirmation "That there be at all times a General Officer, under the Title of a Major...who shall have command of all the Horse and Foot of this Government."<sup>27</sup> The document also made it very clear that the militia and its officers were still subject to the directives of the Council War thus maintaining legislative domination over the colony's military establishment.

While the Council of War appointed the regimental commander there was still the question of appointing company officers. Initially all militia officers were appointed by the General Court. However, in September, 1642, the Court succumbed to the pressures of localism (and the example recently set by Massachusetts Bay), and authorized each town to submit "two or three persons to the Court to be in any cheefe place above the degree of Serjeants."<sup>28</sup> From this list the Court would then appoint individuals to fill

all existing vacancies. Four years later the Court further limited its own appointive authority to only the company commander. Commanders, in turn, were empowered "to choose their under officers with consent of the Body."<sup>29</sup> Despite the facade of requiring that two or more names be submitted to the General Court for each vacancy, the Court usually received only one name; a name that had been obtained through company-level elections.

The election of militia officers and noncommissioned officers represented a radical departure from the selection process used in the English militia. There the leadership was appointed directly by the Crown. Such appointments were based, of course, strictly on social and economic considerations. The more socially or economically prominent an individual was within his shire, the higher his militia rank. Despite the costs involved, both financially and in time and energy, the English aristocracy considered such service as part of their noblesse oblige and accepted it gracefully. Even during the civil war neither party sought to alter the method of selecting officers for the militia; rather, the issue revolved around who was going to enjoy the privilege of appointing the officers -- the Crown or Parliament. With the passage of the First Militia Act in 1661, Parliament acknowledged that such appointments were, and of right ought to be, a royal prerogative.

In the New England colonies, however, the situation was quite different. At least initially there was a distinct absence of any significant social or economic stratification.

Virtually every adult male was or quickly became a freeman and member of the "middling" class which was struggling to establish a better way of life in a new and sometimes hostile environment. Thus, lacking a readily identifiable colonial elite, if the Plymouth General Court continued to appoint its militia officers, it would be selecting from among contemporaries. Such a procedure always ran the risk of disrupting a community's (and the colony's), harmonious relationships, particularly if there was not overwhelming local approval for the Court's appointees. Furthermore, faced with the potential of Indian hostilities at any moment, each town naturally sought to develop an effective military deterrent through its local militia company. To create such a deterrent required quality leadership. Who better knew the leadership potential and strengths and weaknesses of an individual than his neighbors? If the colonists were going to risk their lives in the defense of their homes, they desired that it be under a commander of their own choosing rather than under an appointee of the central government. Thus, while the Crown's continued appointment of the English elite as militia officers satisfied the needs of the English militia (it seldom if ever faced a serious threat anyway), such a system was not viable in New England where the threat was real and frequently explosive. The solution, then, as adopted by both Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, was the direct election of militia officers and noncommissioned officers by the militiamen themselves.

## Rank and File

Although necessity and ancient custom had made compulsory military service an established fact in Plymouth Colony since 1620, such service was legally mandated for the first time on 2 January 1633/34, when the Plymouth General Court declared that "all & every pson wthin the colony be subject to such military order for trayning & exercise of armes as shall be thought meet, agreed on, & prescribed by the Govr & Assistants."<sup>30</sup> Eight years later similar legislation was passed requiring that "the inhabitants of every Towne wthin the Government fitt and able to beare armes be trayned at least six tymes in the year."<sup>31</sup> Although this act remained in effect until 1685, it did not mention what age groups were expected to provide such military service. That issue was legally resolved in 1685, when the General Court specifically ordered, "That all Men between sixteen and sixty years of age constantly attend all Military Trainings...under the penalty of three shillings in Money."<sup>32</sup>

While not specifically mentioned prior to 1685, there are indications that Plymouth Colony had always conformed to the ancient English custom, first stipulated in the Statute of Winchester, that military service was expected of all males between sixteen and sixty. For example, in 1653, the Court ordered, "That all men, though aboue the age of sixty, bee required...to [stand] watch according to order."<sup>33</sup> The fact that the Court felt compelled to mention that the law applied

to men above the age of sixty would seem to indicate that they had been exempt from any such service in the past. Likewise, Plymouth's 1671 summary of her militia laws clearly stated that "every man from the age of sixteen years and upwards," was expected to maintain his own arms and accouterments and participate in periodic training.<sup>34</sup>

These two Court decrees indicate that Plymouth's militia had always consisted of men between sixteen and sixty years of age. The absence of any specific age limitations being cited in Plymouth's earlier legislation may simply indicate that it was such an established custom that it did not require further clarification.

#### Arms and Equipment

Recognizing that the key to an effective militia system was the armed citizen, the Plymouth authorities frequently legislated specifically what arms and equipment each man was expected to maintain. Thus, according to Douglas Leach, the Plymouth authorities borrowed a "principle from the Assize of Arms," and stipulated in January, 1632/33, that every adult male was to possess a musket or other suitable firearm, a cartridge belt, a sword, two pounds of powder, and ten pounds of bullets.<sup>35</sup> By 1643, the revised arms requirement included, "a muskett, either firelock or matchlock ...a paire of bandeliers, or a pouch for poder and bulletts, a sword and a belt, a worm & scowrer, a rest & a knapsack."<sup>36</sup> Three years later the General Court eliminated the matchlock

as a suitable weapon thus requiring every militiaman to possess a firelock. The Court's concern that every male possess a firearm also pertained to servants and children as they came of age. Hence, in March, 1635/36, the General Court ordered that "till such time as he or they be competently provided of arms & municon," "no servt...or other single pson, [would] be suffered to keep howse," on their own.<sup>37</sup> If unable to obtain the required arms and equipment, the individuals were expected to find a "master" who would continue to provide for them.

Plymouth Colony frequently revised her legislation both to modernize the colony's armaments as well as to remind newcomers of their specific obligations. Perhaps in response to the Court's noting that "there [was] a very great defect of appearance att the Generall trainings,"<sup>38</sup> its militia legislation became much more legalistic in tone over the years thus eliminating, to some degree, quibbling over what was or was not an acceptable firearm. Hence, by 1685, Plymouth's "Assize of Arms" stipulated that all males "sixteen years of Age and upward," must possess:<sup>39</sup>

a good Firelock Musquet not exceeding four foot three inches Barrel, nor shorter than three foot nine inches, nor under basterd Musquet Bore,... a Priming Wyre and Worm, and also with a good sword or Cutlase, one pound of Powder, twenty Bullets suitable to his piece, Bandileers or cattouch Box, and thirty Flints.<sup>40</sup>

Despite its frequent revision of laws, Plymouth Colony always adhered to the basic Anglo-Saxon principle embodied in the Assize of Arms and the Statute of Winchester that every adult male owed a military obligation to the

government and must maintain, at their own expense, arms and accouterments as required by the General Court.

Having ordered everyone to possess firearms, the General Court also conceded that some men would be unable to comply with the regulations due to the difficulty of obtaining such weapons in America or because of poverty. Therefore, as early as 1643, the Court ordered each town to maintain, at public expense, "two sufficient snaphaunes or firelock peeces, two swords and two pouches for every thirty men they have in their Towneship."<sup>41</sup> Perhaps relying on Mary Tudor's 1557 militia act as an antecedent, Plymouth continued to require that each town maintain a public armory throughout the remainder of her existence as an independent colony.

### Training

The mere existence of a militia would be of little value unless it was properly trained. Hence, Plymouth also legislated training requirements for each of its militia companies. In late 1635, the General Court even authorized a twenty pound salary for Captain Standish and Lieutenant William Holmes for "teaching the use of armes," to the Plymouth and Duxbury militiamen.<sup>42</sup> In 1640, the General Court stipulated that each militia company was to conduct training "at least six tymes in the yeare."<sup>43</sup> In 1662, the Court also ordered that the recently established regiment should hold an additional training day at least once every

year.<sup>44</sup> While the central authorities prescribed the minimum number of training days required, they also authorized each company's "cheefe millitary commanders...to call forth men & to exercise men in their armes," as often as they felt necessary.<sup>45</sup> It appears, however, that few militia captains ever exercised their prerogatives in this regard for fear of antagonizing their men and disrupting communal harmony.

#### Enforcement

As could be expected, military discipline remained a constant problem for the Plymouth authorities. Throughout the colony's existence, the central government continually sought to enforce the militia laws through the imposition of monetary fines. Thus, in March, 1635/36, the General Court ordered that "for every default of any pson fayling such order [to train]...wthout just occasion [shall] forfeit three shilling for the day."<sup>46</sup> Individuals arriving late were to be fined six pence. Eight years later the Court approved a scheduled listing of fines for individuals who mustered "without his armes or with defectiue armes."<sup>47</sup> By 1662, the central government had increased the fine to five shillings per day for any soldier who "shall unnecessesarily exempt himselfe from appearance att the generall trainings."<sup>48</sup> Suitable fines were also apportioned for any defects in an individual's arms or equipment.

Attempting to further improve their enforcement procedures, the General Court ordered in 1643, that local

commanders were authorized to "make orders for fineing all such as shall not have their armes compleat [or] shalbe defective in their appearance & exercise of armes."<sup>49</sup> As further enticement for commanders to enforce the statutes, the Court stipulated that all such fines collected would be employed "to the benefitt of that company."<sup>50</sup>

In 1660, perhaps out of frustration, the General Court adopted a new approach to enforcing its militia laws. Henceforth, the Court decreed that all militia officers who "shall neglect to take notice of...such as are defective in bringing their armes [to training] shalbee fined the sume of three pounds to the Colonies use."<sup>51</sup> If the Court could not get the officers to enforce its regulations, then it would fine the officers. However, considering the frequency with which the General Court continued to demand compliance with its militia laws, it appears that even this effort was just as ineffective as the Court's previous efforts had been.

Despite their legislative efforts, the status of the Plymouth militia never seemed to improve, at least not to the satisfaction of the central authorities who constantly complained of its glaring defects in equipment and training. Yet, regardless of the Court's endeavors, the local companies continued to function almost with immunity. It would take the shock of King Philip's War before the Colony would initiate serious efforts and enforce them, in order to overcome the numerous deficiencies that existed in Plymouth's militia.

## CHAPTER II

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, ed. by Samuel E. Morison, 50.

<sup>2</sup>Dwight B. Heath, (ed.), A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth (Mourt's Relation), 26.

<sup>3</sup>Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>5</sup>John Smith, Captain John Smith's Works, 1608-1631, ed. by Edward Arber, 892.

<sup>6</sup>Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 79.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>9</sup>Edward Winslow, "Good Newes From New England," Young's Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers, ed. by Alexander Young, 278.

<sup>10</sup>Heath, Mourt's Relation, 49.

<sup>11</sup>Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 77.

<sup>12</sup>Heath, Mourt's Relation, 49.

<sup>13</sup>Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 151.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Heath, Mourt's Relation, 82.

<sup>20</sup>Winslow, "Good Newes," 288; Quoted in George F. Willison, Saints and Strangers, 199; John A Goodwin, The Pilgrim Republic, 199.

<sup>21</sup>Sydney V. James, (ed.), Three Visitors to Early Plymouth, 29.

<sup>22</sup>Heath, Mourt's Relation, 85.

<sup>23</sup>James, Three Visitors, 76-77; Leach, "Military System," 349.

<sup>24</sup>Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, (ed.), Records of the Colony of New Plymouth, II, 63-65; Arthur Vollmer, Military Obligation: The American Tradition, II, Part 6, 6, 24.

<sup>25</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 67-68.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 81-82.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>30</sup>Shurtleff, Records of Plymouth, I, 22.

<sup>31</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 13.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>33</sup>Shurtleff, Records of Plymouth, III, 24.

<sup>34</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 81.

<sup>35</sup>Leach, "Military System," 351-352.

<sup>36</sup>Shurtleff, Records of Plymouth, II, 65.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., I, 38.

<sup>38</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 74.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>42</sup>Shurtleff, Records of Plymouth, I, 38.

<sup>43</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 13.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 72.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>46</sup>Shurtleff, Records of Plymouth, I, 38.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., II, 61.

<sup>48</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 72.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 70.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE GREAT MIGRATION

Like the Pilgrims, the Puritans did not embark on their Great Migration to America without first considering their military needs. As early as February, 1628/29, the Company of Massachusetts Bay records indicate that "five pieces of ordnance, long since bought and paid for [were] to be delivered to Samuel Sharpe, who is to take care having fit carriages made for them."<sup>1</sup> Likewise, the Company also purchased arms and accouterments for a proposed company of one hundred soldiers which included drums, muskets, bandoleers, swords, pikes, powder and shot as well as clothing.<sup>2</sup> Although not fully documented, it appears likely that this military company was actually transported to the New World in 1629, at the expense of the Massachusetts Bay Company to assist Captain John Endecott in preparing the proposed site for the new colony.<sup>3</sup> However, the cost of maintaining such a force was prohibitive hence, the Company quickly disbanded the unit. It may well have been members of this military organization that were among the 116 men that later received freeman status in early 1631. To further strengthen the colony's defenses, the Company also ordered Endecott to insure that all of the colonists were fully instructed in the use of firearms and that frequent periods were set aside

to conduct military training. To assist Endecott in this regard, the Massachusetts Bay Company forwarded additional arms and ammunition in the resupply ships.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike Plymouth Colony, the Massachusetts Bay Company obtained a royal charter in March 1629, which granted it extensive powers of self-government. Included in the charter was the authority "to make, ordain, and establish all manner of wholesome and reasonable orders, laws, statutes, and ordinances, directions, and instructions, not contrary to the laws of...England."<sup>5</sup> Specifically with regard to the defense and safety of the colony, the Company was authorized

to incounter, expulse, repell, and resist by Force of Armes, as well by Sea as by Land, and by all fitting Waies and Meanes whatsoever, all such Person and Persons, as shall at any Tyme hereafter, attempt or enterprise the Destruccion, Invasion, Detriment, or Annoyance to the said Plantation or Inhabitants, and to take and suprise by all Waies and Meanes whatsoever, all and every such Person and Persons, with their Shippes, Armour, Municon and other Goodes, as shall in hostile manner invade or attempt the defeating of the said Plantacon, or the Hurt of the said Company and Inhabitants.<sup>6</sup>

Of more immediate concern, however, was the king's permission for the Company to remove from the realm whatever ships, ordnance, armor, arms, and munitions were deemed necessary for their defense. Perhaps remembering the economic difficulties that the Pilgrims faced in trying to pay their port clearance fees, the Company also convinced Charles I to forgo any customs on the arms and equipment shipped to Massachusetts Bay for a period of seven years.<sup>7</sup>

John Winthrop and his cohorts immediately took advantage of Charles I's benevolence. As John Smith noted,

in 1629, the Company ordered six ships to set sail for the new colony. In addition to three hundred and fifty passengers (including the "company" of soldiers), the ships also carried "six peices of great Ordnance for a Fort, with Muskets, Pikes, Corselets, Drums, Colours [and] all provisions necessary for a plantation, for the good of man."<sup>8</sup>

Having acquired permission to transport arms and equipment to the New World and authority to use them as necessary, the Massachusetts Bay Company also sought to encourage people skilled in their use to migrate to the colony. In addition to Captain Endecott, who was already in America, the Company agreed to advance Samuel Sharpe two years salary and hired him "to have oversight of the ordnance to be planted in the fort to be built upon the plantation and what else may concern artillery business to give his advice in."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Thomas Graves, a reputed master of many military skills, was offered free transportation and £5 per month in exchange for one year's service in America. Furthermore, if Graves would agree to remain longer than three years, the Company promised him a horse, one hundred acres of land and free transportation for his family and servants.<sup>10</sup>

In early June, 1630. John Winthrop and his eleven ship fleet finally reached Massachusetts Bay. Almost immediately two militia companies were formed, one in Boston and another in Dorchester. During a second meeting of the Court of Assistants on 7 September 1630, Captains Daniel Patrick and John Underhill were appointed to command the two

militia units. Recognizing that military matters would consume a disproportionate amount of their time and energy during the colony's first few months, the Assistants also ordered that

Mr Patrick & Mr Vnderhil shall have allowed them, for halfe a yeares pvision, 2 hogsheads of meale, 4 bushells of malte, 10t of powder, & leade to make shott; also howseroome puided for them, & £5 12s in money, to make other provisions.<sup>11</sup>

Two weeks later, the Court of Assistants increased Patrick and Underhill's compensation by "£6 8s in money to buy them howseholde stuffe, & for helpe to washe, brewe & bake, XXs."<sup>12</sup> These expenses were to be "done att the publique charge."<sup>13</sup> Both Underhill and Patrick remained in the colony's service until 1637, when Patrick moved to Ipswich and Underhill was removed from office because of his support for Anne Hutchinson. Except for a brief period in 1635, all of the other militia officers were to be "mainetayned by [their] owne company."<sup>14</sup>

Obviously the contractual arrangements with Sharpe and Graves and the salaries afforded Patrick and Underhill represented a heavy financial burden on the Massachusetts Bay Company. Indeed, several years later, Edward Johnson estimated that Massachusetts Bay had spent an equivalent of over £22,000 (colonial) in behalf of its defensive needs during the first decade alone.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay was much more meticulous in the establishment of her militia. Hence, it is easier to document its evolutionary development though

both shared a common military heritage and followed almost identical development processes.

### Organization

As previously mentioned, within the first six months of colonization, Massachusetts Bay already had established two militia companies. As the population increased and spread out into new areas the Massachusetts General Court authorized the creation of additional militia companies. In 1635, the Court agreed "that Charles Towne & Waterton shalbe two distinct companyes, & to have officers of their owne."<sup>16</sup> By 1636, the colony already numbered ten companies. Each town sought as rapidly as possible to establish its own militia company. Not only did it enhance a community's defensive posture but it also meant that the militiamen could avoid training at some other distant place. Likewise, it also meant that the company's leaders who were empowered to impose penalties for minor infractions, would be neighbors. Therefore, it was less likely that such penalties would be imposed out of a regard for maintaining communal harmony. However, when necessary, smaller communities did join together to form one company and allocated leadership positions and costs "pporconably to the number of soldiers in each towne."<sup>17</sup> Companies normally ranged in size from sixty-four to two hundred men. Since only those companies numbering sixty-four or more men were authorized to elect their officers, communities actively sought to establish and then maintain that strength. Likewise, larger companies

tended to split so as to increase the number of leadership positions. Thus, by 1680, Boston, alone, had eight militia companies.

In 1636, twenty-two years before Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay organized her militia companies into three regiments each covering a geographic region. In conjunction with the creation of counties in 1643, the regiments were redesignated as the Suffolk, Middlesex, and Essex regiments. As the number of militia companies increased, the number of regiments also increased. Hence, by 1671, there were a total of six regiments. Nine years later, the General Court created three additional regiments for a total of nine at which time Boston acquired her own regiment.<sup>18</sup>

#### Leadership

Each militia company was normally commanded by a captain who was responsible for mustering, training, and disciplining his men. To assist him in these endeavors, he was normally authorized a lieutenant, an ensign, and several noncommissioned officers. Concerned about the "many defects in makeing appearance in fit armes for service,"<sup>19</sup> the General Court also ordered that each company appoint a company clerk who was required to conduct a roll call twice during each training day, review each individual's arms and accouterments twice yearly, and levy fines, as appropriate, for absences or deficiencies in arms or equipment.<sup>20</sup>

Initially leadership positions in the militia companies

were filled by the Governor as evidenced by the appointments of Captains Underhill and Patrick. However, as early as 1632, Winthrop wrote that "a proposition was made by the people that every company of trained men might choose their own captain and officers."<sup>21</sup> At the time Winthrop was successful in "giving them reasons to the contrary."<sup>22</sup> He was less successful in 1634. After a bitter dispute over the degree of influence that freemen were to have in governmental affairs, Governor Winthrop was not re-elected as Governor and the General Court proclaimed itself as the supreme civil authority and declared that "none but the general court hath power to make and establish laws, nor to elect and appoint officers, as... captains, lieutenants, ensigns, or any of the like moment, or to remove such upon misdemeanor, as also to set out the duties and powers of said officers."<sup>23</sup> Recognizing the difficulty of functioning efficiently through such a large body as the General Court, it established an eleven member Military Commission on 4 March 1634/35, with authority "to dispose of all millitary affaires wtsoever."<sup>24</sup> In addition, the Commission was empowered "to see all former lawes concerneing millitary men & municon executed, & also shall haue full power to ordeyne or remove all military officers, & to make & tendr to them an oathe suteable to their places."<sup>25</sup>

Under pressure from their constituency, the General Court resolved in December, 1636, that each town was to choose "some principal man, or two, or three...and present them to the council, who shall appoint one of them" as the

captain of the local militia.<sup>26</sup> This act represented the first step toward the popular election of military officers. Three months later, in March 1636/37, the General Court took the final step:

All persons of any trayned band, both freemen & others, who have taken the oath of residents, or shall take the same, & being no covenant servant in household wth any other, shall have their votes in nomination of those psons who are to bee appointed captaines, or other inferior officers of the same band, pvided they nominate none but such as shalbe freemen.<sup>27</sup>

Although distinctly different from its English counterpart, the popular election of company officers, subject to final approval by the General Court, remained the norm until 1668, when, perhaps concerned about the recent visit of royal commissioners, the procedure was suddenly altered. Noting the "direction of [their] patent relating to the stating of all military officers,"<sup>28</sup> the Massachusetts General Court declared:

All comission officers that at present are in power are confirmed according to their respective comissions; but for the time to come, where new are to be chosen, it is only in the power of the generall court...to nominate, choose, appoint, & impower all comission military officers.<sup>29</sup>

Although General Court records and private correspondence do not indicate why Massachusetts Bay suddenly eliminated the election of militia officers, it may well have been done simply to blunt growing accusations that the Bay colony was striving for independence. To substantiate such allegations one had only to note that Massachusetts Bay waited fifteen months after the Restoration before formally proclaiming Charles II as her sovereign. Furthermore, the colony was

suspected (correctly), of harboring English fugitives who had participated in the execution of Charles I. That, coupled with Quaker complaints of persecution, led the Council for Foreign Plantations to initiate an inquiry into the colony's affairs. In response to that inquiry, the Massachusetts Bay General Court published a declaration of colonial liberties and responsibilities as established under her royal charter. Although the Court professed unequivocal loyalty to Charles II, the document was far from submissive; rather, it boldly proclaimed that "the governor and company are...a body politique in fact and name," and that they "have full power and authoritie, both legislative and executive for the government of all the people here...both concerning ecclesiastical and civil, without appeals...."<sup>30</sup> That declaration plus the testimony of Thomas Breedon and others that Massachusetts Bay actually considered herself to be a "free" state, led Charles II to appoint a four member Royal Commission in April, 1664, with specific instructions to "examine and determine all complaints and appeals in all cases and matters as well military as criminal and civil, and proceed in all things for the providing for and settling the peace and security of the said country according to their good and sound discretion."<sup>31</sup> Privately, the Commissioners were also ordered to determine how the "militia should be putt under an officer nominated or recommended by [the Crown]."<sup>32</sup> Considering that Charles II, had finally gotten Parliament to acknowledge him as the commander-in-chief of the English militia, he may well have been attempting to establish a similar position with regard

to the colonial militias.

The Commission began its investigation in May, 1665, but from its opening session the Commissioners and colonial authorities clashed repeatedly over the fundamental issue of subjection to royal authority. In the end the Commissioners acknowledged defeat and informed the Massachusetts General Court that they would refer the entire affair "to his majesty's wisdom, who is power enough to make himself to be obeyed in all his kingdoms."<sup>33</sup> Included in their report, the Commission recommended that the colony's charter be revoked as the suriest and quickest means of subduing Massachusetts Bay.

Between 1665 and 1689, the colony continued to successfully thwart efforts to subjugate her to royal authority. Ordered to provide men and equipment for an expedition in 1666, the General Court refused. Ordered to send a colonial representative to England to answer the Royal Commission's allegations, the Bay colony sent several pine masts for the Royal Navy's use instead. Perhaps the most damaging charge levied against the colony during this period was that she repeatedly violated the English Navigation Acts. In reply, Massachusetts Bay simply plead that poverty necessitated the establishment of commercial arrangements with anyone and everyone.

Yet, despite her frequent circumvention of royal edicts, Massachusetts Bay did offer token compliance on minor issues simply to minimize the prospects of the Crown undertaking a concerted effort to revoke her charter. Even the

Council for Foreign Plantations noted that the colony obeyed a few royal commands "as acts of their favor...to delude the king with a show of compliance."<sup>34</sup> It is for that very reason that Massachusetts Bay may have decided to terminate the election of militia officers in 1668. By complying with her charter which required that the General Court appoint all military officers, it would appear to the Crown as if the colony was moderating her independency. Such compliance, however, was merely cosmetic. Rather than electing their militia officers directly, the companies now simply elected their leaders and submitted their names to their local (and elected), General Court representative. He then took the names and submitted them to the General Court which then formally commissioned those individuals to serve as militia officers and noncommissioned officers in the Massachusetts Bay Militia. Thus, the militiamen continued to have a major voice in the selection of their officers while the colony remained in total compliance with the provisions of its royal charter, at least with respect to the appointment of military officers.

Although usually conducted without much fanfare, militia elections occasionally became quite controversial. Such was the case with the 1645 Hingham elections.<sup>35</sup> Upgraded to a company that year, the members elected Lieutenant Anthony Eames as their captain and submitted his name for confirmation to the General Court's Standing Council. However, prior to his confirmation, Eames offended the community in some unknown way which resulted in the militia reconvening and electing

Bozoon Allen in Eames' place. Yet, based on Allen's reputed lack of military skill (according to the Standing Council he "had no other skill, but what he learned from Eames"),<sup>36</sup> and Eames' former prominence in the community, the Standing Council rejected Allen's election as the Hingham Militia Company's captain.

Considering the Council's actions to be an infringement of their prerogatives, the Allen faction "appointed a training day, (without [Eames'] knowledge;)." <sup>37</sup> As soon as Eames learned of the muster he immediately repaired to the town square and sought to assume his rightful place of honor as the commander. Yet, at the urging of several militiamen "they put it to a vote, whether [Allen] should be their captin."<sup>38</sup> Needless to say, the vote was overwhelmingly in his favor.

Not content to let the issue die, Eames appealed to the colonial magistrates while Allen's supporters appealed to the deputies or lower house of the General Court. No longer simply a disputed election, the issue revived the old antagonisms between the magistrates and the deputies that had been festering since 1631. In the end, the deputies were outmaneuvered by an adroit Winthrop; Captain Eames was confirmed as the Hingham militia captain, nine Allen backers were fined, and the magistrates continued to remain the dominant political power in Massachusetts Bay.

With the formation of regiments in 1636, the General Court appointed the first three regimental commanders. However, the Court noted that thereafter each regiment "shall

make choyce of such men as they shall thinke most fit safe for the servise...and present them by their deputies to the next session of this Court."<sup>39</sup> Although elected by members of the regiment, the General Court still had to approve the selection thus maintaining its position as the "supreame power of comaund of the forces."<sup>40</sup>

In 1645, the Massachusetts Bay General Court simplified the election process by directing that:

the traine souldiers of evry town in each sheire wthin this patent shall meete together & nominate such a man or men as they shall iudge fit for the office of srgent maior...& hee that shall have the greater number of votes, being a freeman, to be psented, by one of the matratts of each sheire town, to the Sergeant-Maior Genrall...who shall instaull, confirme, & establish each serieant maior in his place for one yeare...<sup>41</sup>

#### Rank and File

Like Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay did not stipulate that "all male persons from Sixteen years of age to sixty...shall bear arms," until 1693.<sup>42</sup> Again, like Plymouth, it was probably such an accepted practice that the authorities saw no need to mention it. There are indirect references to support this premise. First, several militia acts prior to 1693, make reference to the fact that, "Every person above the age of sixteen years shall duly attend all military exercise and service."<sup>43</sup> Second, and even more significantly, in 1652, the Massachusetts Bay General Court decreed that "all Scotsmen, Negro, & Indians inhabiting with or servants to the English, from the age of sixteen to sixty

yeares, shalbe listed, & are hereby enjoyned to attend trayninges as well as the English."<sup>44</sup> It seems highly probable that these individuals were being required to provide the same degree of service that Englishmen were. No doubt the General Court felt that it was necessary to stipulate the age requirements in this particular case because the individuals involved were not Englishmen hence, were not familiar with an Englishman's military obligations.

There is one exception to the above premise. Contending that "ye training up of youth...wilbe of great use in ys country," the General Court directed in 1645, that all youth "from ten yeares ould to ye age of sixteen yeares, shalbe instructed...in ye exercise of armes, such as small guns, halfe pikes, bowes & arrowes..."<sup>45</sup> Cognizant of parental concerns, the Court further stipulated that "no child shalbe [trained] against yir parents minds."<sup>46</sup>

#### Arms and Accouterments

Like Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay also accepted the Anglo-Saxon premise that every male owed his country a military obligation. Adopting the precedent established by the ancient Assize of Arms, the Massachusetts Court of Assistants ordered every town to insure that "euy pson within their towne [be] furnished with good & sufficient armes" as early as 22 March 1630/31. A month later the General Court further stipulated that anyone owning a firearm was required to "have ready 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  of powder, 20 bulletts, & 2 fathome of

match."<sup>48</sup> Similar to Plymouth Colony, Massachusetts Bay became much more specific with regard to the required arms with each passing year. By 1647, the General Court refused to accept as a suitable firearm, any musket that was less than three foot, nine inches, or greater than four foot, three inches. Furthermore, the Court ordered that every musketeer be equipped with a "primng wyer, worme, & scourer."<sup>49</sup> In 1671, Massachusetts Bay updated all of her past militia laws. With regard to arms and accouterments, the General Court stipulated that:

Every foot soldier shall be completely armed and furnished, the pikeman with a good pike well headed, corslet, head piece, sword and knapsack; the musketeers with a good fixed musket, not under bastard musket bore, nor under three feet nine inches in length, nor above four feet three inches long, with a priming wire, worm, scourer, and mould, fitted to the bore of his musket; also with a good sword, rest, bandeleers, one pound of powder, twenty bullets, and two fathoms of match,...<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly enough, it was not until 1675, that Massachusetts Bay finally abolished the pike as an offensive weapon. Prior to that time up to one-third of any militia company could consist of pikemen. However, based on experience gained during King Philip's War, the General Court finally ordered "that all pikemen are hereby required...to furnish themselves with fire armes."<sup>51</sup> Plymouth Colony's pikemen also disappeared shortly thereafter for the same reason.

Like Plymouth Colony, the Massachusetts Bay authorities also recognized that not everyone could afford to arm them-

selves in accordance with the law. Hence, as early as March, 1630/31, the General Court directed that "those that want & are [unable] to buy them themselves [shall] have them pvided by the towne."<sup>52</sup> To assist the towns in maintaining public stores, the General Court frequently purchased weapons and allocated them to the towns. Thus, in 1634, the General Court ordered that "all the musketts, bandeleroes, & rests lately come ouer," be equally divided amongst the several towns.<sup>53</sup> The maintaining of public stores for those unable to purchase their own equipment thus became an integral part of Massachusetts Bay's militia system.

### Training

Initially the General Court ordered Captains Patrick and Underhill to muster and train their companies "on Saturday in eurie weeke."<sup>54</sup> On 26 July 1631, the Court then altered its instructions directing Captain Underhill to conduct training "euy first Thursday in euy month," while Captain Patrick's unit was to train the "first Friday in euy moneth."<sup>55</sup> Both officers were also directed to commence training "att one of the clocke in the afternoone."<sup>56</sup>

If one can believe John Winthrop, such training was clearly in order. He noted that in late 1632, Captain Underhill sounded the alarm and mustered his company only to discover that the militiamen "knew not how to behave themselves, so as the officers could not draw them into any order."<sup>57</sup>

Three years later, on 3 September 1634, the General

Court further reduced its training requirement to only ten days per year, specifically delineating July and August (harvest months) as being free months. The Court did, however, agree that captains "shall haue liberty to traine all such vnskilled men...soe often as they please, provided they exceede not three dayes in a weeke."<sup>58</sup>

By 1637, following the successful conclusion of the Pequot War, mandatory training for each company was further reduced to only eight times a year. Furthermore, based on the increased number of militia companies, it was no longer feasible for the General Court to dictate specific training days; hence, in 1641, the central government decreed:

that the officrs & souldiers (servants excepted) shall haue powr, wthin their severall townes, to appoint what dayes & tymes they shall find to be most fit for avoyding of losse of time, & the opportunities of the furtherance of husbandry, & other business of the country.<sup>59</sup>

Further reductions in the number of training days occurred in 1660, and again in 1679, when the number was first reduced to six and then to only four training days per year.

In addition to the mandatory company training, the General Court also ordered that each regiment be mustered at least once a year so that "every man may know his place."<sup>60</sup> However, five years later the Court acknowledged that the militiamen needed "some relaxations of their pains and charges."<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, the Court ordered that each regiment need muster only once every three years.<sup>62</sup> In 1671, with the creation of nine regiments, the requirement was further re-

duced to only one regimental muster in every six years.<sup>63</sup>

Much like the English militia, the list of those exempt from militia training continued to grow with each passing year. Before long all magistrates (and one of their servants), deputies, ministers, church elders and deacons, officials and students at Harvard College, schoolmasters, physicians, millers, fishermen, and any others "as shall by any court be discharged, either for bodily infirmity or other reasonable cause," were excused from all such training.<sup>64</sup>

In 1645, Massachusetts Bay ordered that thirty soldiers out of each militia company be placed on alert status prepared to march "at halfe an houres warning,...with their armes ready fixed."<sup>65</sup> Similar legislation was again approved nearly thirty years later when the General Court directed each town to select "so many able persons...fitted with fire armes," who were "required to be in a readiness at all Warnings" to defend the colony.<sup>66</sup> Although these selected militiamen were not required to undergo any additional musters or training as were Elizabeth's trained-bands, they did represent a readily available military force with which to confront any emergency just like the trained-bands. Furthermore, by specifically stating that the force was to be armed with firearms, the General Court sought to insure that it was a much better armed force than a mere calling out of the militia would ever produce.

## Enforcement Procedures

Having established numerous laws pertaining to the militia, the Massachusetts Bay authorities also resorted to fines as a means of enforcing them. As early as April, 1631, the General Court noted that anyone deficient in the care and maintenance of his arms would be fined ten shillings for each offense.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps to impress the colonists that they were serious about enforcing the militia laws, the General Court levied a total of £5 in fines during its November, 1632, session.<sup>68</sup> In 1642, the General Court authorized militia officers "to punish any such pson," who "shall refuse or neglect to obey ye lawfull comaund of any millitary comaunder."<sup>69</sup> Although restricted to no more than a twenty shilling fine, the officers could also employ the use of "bilboes, stocks, or such like corporall punishmt as is usuall among souldiers," to enforce discipline.<sup>70</sup> In general, companies levied fines of five shillings for missing training and ten shillings for defects in equipment. Like Plymouth Colony, all fines collected reverted to the company's use for buying accouterments and "such armes as poore men want, & are not able to pvide themselves of."<sup>71</sup> In the event that someone refused to pay his fine, company clerks were authorized to "make distres upon ye goods of all such psons."<sup>72</sup> Needless to say, duty as a company clerk was not popular. Recognizing that fact, the General Court also stipulated that failure to serve as a Company Clerk was punishable by a forty shilling fine.<sup>73</sup>

Between 1630 and 1675, the Massachusetts Bay militia evolved in much the same manner as had the Plymouth militia. Indeed, Massachusetts Bay, because of her size, frequently preceded her sister colony. Although reflecting its English military heritage that every adult male was obligated to maintain and bear arms in the defense of the colony, the Massachusetts Bay militia had developed quite differently from the English militia. In Massachusetts, militia officers and noncommissioned officers were elected by their fellow militiamen. Likewise, control of the institution had always been firmly in the hands of the General Court rather than the prerogative of the Governor. Finally, and perhaps most significant, while England reverted to a standing army, Massachusetts Bay remained perfectly satisfied with its military establishment based on the militia. It adequately met the defensive needs of the colony but did not impose an undue burden on anyone. Thus, as Massachusetts Bay was about to undergo the rigors of King Philip's War, it was content with its militia and felt itself to be adequately protected.

### CHAPTER III

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, (ed.), Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, I, 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Darrett B. Rutman, "A Militant New World, 1607-1640," 448.

<sup>4</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Company, I, 392.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Newton Thorpe, (ed.), Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws, III, 1855-1857.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Works, 893.

<sup>9</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Company, I, 29, 34.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Johnson, Wonder-working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England, 54; David R. Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts," 29.

<sup>16</sup> Shurtleff, Records of the Company, I, 160.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., v, 294-296.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., II, 117-120.

<sup>21</sup>John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal "History of New England," ed. James K. Hosmer, I, 79.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Shuftleff, Records of the Company, I, 117.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 138; Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 7.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 187.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., IV, Part 2, 366, 422.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>31</sup>Edmund B. O'Callaghan and Barthold Fernow, (eds.), Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, III, 64; Quoted in Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts," 96.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 57-61; Quoted in Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts," 96.

<sup>33</sup>Shurtleff, Records of the Company, IV, Part 2, 210.

<sup>34</sup>O'Callaghan, New York Colonial Documents, III, 102; Quoted in Millar, "The Militia, The Army, and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts," 99.

<sup>35</sup>The controversy surrounding this case is presented in detail in Robert Emmet Wall, Jr., Massachusetts Bay: The Crucial Decade, 1640-1650, 93-120.

- <sup>36</sup>Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal, II, 271.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., II, 229-230.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup>Shurtleff, Records of the Company, I, 187.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., II, 42.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., I, 117.
- <sup>42</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 138.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., 87.
- <sup>44</sup>Shurtleff, Records of the Company, III, 268.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., II, 99.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., I, 84.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., I, 85.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., II, 222.
- <sup>50</sup>Vollmer, Military Obligation, II, Part 6, 86.
- <sup>51</sup>Shurtleff, Records of the Company, V, 47.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., I, 84.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., I, 125.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., 90.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup>Winthrop, Journal, I, 91.

- <sup>58</sup>Shurtleff, Records of the Company, I, 123-124.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., I, 327.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., II, 43.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid., II, 256.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., IV, 486; Vollmer, Military Obligation, II,  
Part 6, 95.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., II, 221-222.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., 122.
- <sup>66</sup>Ibid., IV, Part 2, 575.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., I, 85.
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., I, 102.
- <sup>69</sup>Ibid., II, 24-25.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., I, 137.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., II, 120.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid.

## EPILOGUE

Contending that the English colonists brought with them "the militia system indigenous to the land of their origin," Judge Advocate S. T. Ansell concluded in 1917, that "no other American institution bears a closer resemblance to its ancient English ancestor than the militia."<sup>1</sup> Nearly fifty years later Douglas Leach reached a similar conclusion about Plymouth colony's militia when he noted that it was "borrowed directly from the English militia system as defined by such documents as the Assize of Arms (1181), the Statute of Winchester (1285), and the Instructions for General Muster (1572)."<sup>3</sup> Considering only the fundamental tenets governing the English and New England colonial militias, both Ansell and Leach are accurate in their assessments of the two militia systems. Both the English and the New England militias rested on the premise, enforced through legislative means, that every adult male was obligated to protect and defend his country and its government. Furthermore, like the English Assize of Arms, both Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay enacted their own "Assizes" which carefully prescribed what arms and accouterments each colonist was expected to maintain for the defense of the colonies. There were other similarities between the two systems as well. Both were developed primarily for defense, and were limited in terms of locale and duration of service. Although en-

visioned for use only during extreme emergencies, both England and New England turned not to their militias during times of hostilities but rather, to volunteers or impressed soldiers. Thus, both militia systems came to represent nothing more than a pool of men theoretically armed and trained from which manpower could be extracted as necessary. Even during the height of King Philip's War, the New England colonies continued to rely on ad hoc military units raised for specific purposes rather than on her established militia units.

Despite the outward resemblance between the English and New England colonial militias, the similarities were more apparent than real. Indeed, there were significant differences between the two institutions. One important difference between them related to their overall importance to their respective military establishments. In England the militia quickly declined in importance after Elizabeth's reign and practically became a moribund institution after 1645, following the creation of a permanent standing army. In New England, however, the militias remained the very foundation of the colonial military establishments until after the War of 1812. This was feasible since the primary threat to the colonists during the majority of this period was the American Indian who remained widely scattered, lightly armed, and generally unable to effectively unite his forces. Accordingly, small contingents of volunteer militiamen were more than adequate for the colonies' defensive needs.

Another significant difference between the English

and New England militias related to the fundamental question of who controlled the militia -- the executive or legislative branch of government? In England that question remained unanswered when colonization began. The issue eventually led to a civil war and the establishment in 1661, of the royal prerogative controlling the militia. In New England, the spirit of localism prevailed. Soon after their establishment the colonial militias were subjected to legislative control manifested through the General Courts. Although the Courts worked very closely with the governors (both royal and colonial), they never relinquished their domination over the militias.

The selection of militia leaders marked another significant difference between the two militia systems. In England, militia officers were appointed by the Crown. Such appointments, of course, were based solely on social and economic considerations. In New England, however, conditions favored the election of militia officers by militia members, a practice which quickly became the norm. In these and other essential characteristics, then, the colonial militias evolved quite differently from their English counterpart.

There were problems confronting the New England militias to be sure. Indeed, many of these problems -- lack of adequate training, shortages of arms and equipment, and marginal leadership -- would become painfully evident during King Philip's War. Yet, despite these deficiencies, the New England colonial militias evolved into an important military

institution having significant social, political, and economic implications for colonial society which have yet to be thoroughly explored or analyzed.

## EPILOGUE

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>S. T. Ansell, "Legal and Historical Aspects of the Militia," Yale Law Review, XXVI (April, 1917), 472.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 474.

<sup>3</sup>Leach, "The Military System of Plymouth Colony," 342-343.

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