

Early European Origins of the Andovers, Massachusetts: The Research of Clifford Smith Wrigley (1922 – 2006)

Clifford Wrigley had two main points he wanted to share with the community of the Andovers.

Firstly, that the “1646 thing NEVER HAPPENED” and secondly, that “the 1629 thing DID HAPPEN”. Mr. Wrigley felt that his copious research had led to the conclusion that people had settled in the vicinity of the Great Pond (today’s Lake Cochichewick) and the Merrimack River waterfall (the “Great Cascade” later called Bodwell’s Falls) much earlier than 1646. In fact he was convinced there was an established village here in the Andover area in 1629. He called this place several things, including Pemtuckett, Pemtucket-upon-Merrimack, Cochichewick-by-Shawsheen, Merrimack, and Wood’s Indian Trading Station.

Prior to 1646 many historians, past and present, agree there was settlement in the Andover area. The first mention of Cochichewick Plantation is in the General Court Records, 1635. It would appear that growth was slow, perhaps because of its distance in-land, but certainly by 1640 the village existed, as evidenced again by references in the General Court records in 1642 and 1643. That fact has never been in contention. So it can be said Wrigley is correct in asserting that nothing really “happened” in 1646. It was not the inception of the settlement, but a confirmation that the existing settlement had changed its name. No ceremony was held, no ribbon-cutting. It was a memo point on a long list of matters discussed during an official meeting.

Wrigley’s “proofs” of a 1629 settlement included looking at 17th century maps, the General Court Records, and other contemporary documents such as the correspondence of Governor Winthrop. He also accessed original town records, local town histories, 19th and 20th century general histories and some genealogical material. His sources were good, if incomplete, and his dedication was deep, but his conclusions were speculative, often driven by what he wanted to prove. In fact no map from the 1630s of New England (Wood, Winthrop) shows any settlement in-land. Winthrop’s map indicates the Great Cascade, marked as “fall,” but there is no habitation even remotely close to it. Wrigley explains this is a flaw in the map, that the scale is skewed, and in another case that the quality of the map is so poor one cannot see if a name is marked or not. But clear images of the map are available, and nothing is marked there.

In another example, Wrigley wrote as a “proof”: *“This 1629 village of “Pemtuckett-or-Cochichewick-by-Shawsheen” and this Plantation of “Merrimac” are SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED by Depty. Gov. Dudley. Gov. Winthrop, and by the General Court. In 1640 Gov. Winthrop mentions that the Gen. Court “earlier” RE-GRANTED this 1646 land-grant to the original settlers, probably in 1634 after Winthrop attempted to appropriate it for his personal company and was removed from the Governorship, etc., for the attempt.”* No citations are given, no specific dates, no session, and no quoted text. He also provides no documentation for a punishment of Winthrop or that Winthrop had designs on an in-land “Indian Trading Station.” If these points exist, they have not been found.

William Wood is said to have been the settler of this 1629 settlement, but Mr. Wrigley provides no document or evidence, other than his opinion, that such an event happened, or had the potential to happen. As William Wood himself pointed out in his 1634 book, at that time the present day area of the Andovers was outside of the bounds of the 1629 Charter, and furthermore was too close to the feared Sachem Passaconaway for such an isolated settlement.

