



Section 3

PRIMARY SOURCE *from John Winthrop's Journal*

John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, kept a journal in which he recorded events that took place in the colony from 1630 to 1649. In this excerpt, Winthrop describes battles with local tribes during and after the Pequot War.

May 25, 1637

Our English from Connecticut, with their Indians, and many of the Narragansetts, marched in the night to a fort of the Pequods at Mistick, and, besetting the same about break of the day, after two hours' fight they took it, (by firing it,) and slew therein two chief sachems, and one hundred and fifty fighting men, and about one hundred and fifty old men, women, and children, with the loss of two English, whereof but one was killed by the enemy. . . .

Presently upon this came news from the Narragansett, that all the English, and two hundred of the Indians, were cut off in their retreat, for want of [gun] powder and victuals [food]. . . . But, three days after, . . . some came from the army, and assured them all was well, and that all the Pequods were fled, and had forsaken their forts. The general defeat of the Pequods at Mistick happened the day after our general fast.

July 13, 1637

Mr. Stoughton, with about eighty of the English . . . sailed to the west in pursuit of Sasacus, etc. At Quinepiack, they killed six, and took two. At a head of land a little short they beheaded two sachems; whereupon they called the place Sachem's Head. About this time they had given a Pequot his life to go find out Sasacus. He went, and found him not far off; but Sasacus, suspecting him, intended to kill him, which the fellow perceiving, escaped in the night, and came to the English. Whereupon Sasacus and Mononotto, their two chief sachems, and some twenty more, fled to the Mohawks. But eighty of their stoutest men, and two hundred others, women and children, were at a place within twenty or thirty miles of the Dutch, whither our men marched, and, being guided by a Divine Providence, came upon them, where they had twenty wigwams, hard by a most hideous swamp, so thick with bushes and quagmire, as men could hardly crowd into it. Into this swamp they were all gotten. Lieut. Davenport and two or three more,

that entered the swamp, were dangerously wounded by the Indian arrows, and with much difficulty were fetched out. Then our men surrounded the swamp, being a mile about, and shot at the Indians, and they at them, from three of the clock in the afternoon till they desired parley, and offered to yield, and life was offered to all that had not shed English blood. So they began to come forth, now some and then some, till about two hundred women and children were come out, and amongst them the sachem of that place, and thus they kept us two hours, till night was come on, and then the men told us they would fight it out; and so they did all the night, coming up behind the bushes very near our men, and shot many arrows into their hats, sleeves, and stocks, yet (which was a very miracle) not one of ours wounded. When it was near morning, it grew very dark, so as such of them as were left crept out at one place and escaped, being (as was judged) not above twenty at most, and those like to be wounded; for in the pursuit they found some of them dead of their wounds. Here our men got some booty of kettles, trays, wampom, etc., and the women and children were divided, and sent some to Connecticut, and some to the Massachusetts. The sachem of the place, having yielded, had his life, and his wife and children, etc. The women, which were brought home, reported that we had slain in all thirteen sachems, and that there were thirteen more left. We had now slain and taken, in all, about seven hundred.

from James Kendall Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal: History of New England, 1630–1649, Volume I (New York: Scribner's, 1908), 220–221, 226–227.

Research Options

1. Find out more about the Pequot War and create a time line of key events.
2. Find out about the culture of the Narragansett, the Pequot, or the Wampanoag and report your findings to the class.