

Annotations for: “Mapping Colonial New England”

a. 1630s

- Edward Johnson, [“Thus This Poore People Populate This Howling Desart”: Edward Johnson Describes the Founding of the Town of Concord in Massachusetts Bay, 1635](#) Of the laborious worke Christ’s people have in planting this wilderness, set forth in the building the Towne of Concord, being the first in-land Towne.

Now because it is one of the admirable acts of Christ[’s] Providence in leading his people forth into these Westerne Fields, in his providing of Huts for them, to defend them from the bitter stormes this place is subject unto, therefore here is a short Epitome of the manner how they placed downe their dwellings in this Desart Wildernesse, the Lord being pleased to hide from the Eyes of his people the difficulties they are to encounter withall in a new Plantation, that they might not thereby be hindered from taking the worke in hand; upon some inquiry of the Indians, who lived to the North-west of the Bay, one Captaine Simon Willard being acquainted with them, by reason of his Trade, became a chiefe instrument in erecting this Town, the land they purchase of the Indians, and with much difficulties traveling through unknowne woods, and through watery scrampes [swampes], they discover the fitnessse of the place, sometimes passing through the Thickets, where their hands are forced to make way for their bodies passage, and their feete clambering over the crossed Trees, which when they missed they sunke into an uncertaine bottome in water, and wade up to the knees, tumbling sometimes higher and sometimes lower, wearied with this toile, they at end of this meete with a scorching plaine, yet not so plaine, but that the ragged Bushes scratch their legs foully, even to wearing their stockings to their bare skin in two or three houres; if they be not otherwise well defended with Bootes, or Buskings, their flesh will be torne: (that some being forced to passe on without further provision) have had the bloud trickle downe at every step, and in the time of Summer the Sun casts such a reflecting heate from the sweet Feme, whose scent is very strong so that some herewith have beene very nere fainting, although very able bodies to under-goe much travell, and this not to be indured for one day, but for many, and verily did not the Lord encourage their naturall parte (with hopes of a new and strange discovery, expecting every houre to see some rare sight never seene before) they were never able to hold out, and breake through: but above all, the thirsting desires these servants of Christ have had to Plant his Churches, among whom the forenamed Mr. Jones’ shall not be forgotten.

Comment [DPJ1]: Model Annotation: Johnson begins his discussion of the arduous task of settling Concord by referring to the Puritans’ belief that they were the chosen people (Christ’s people) and it was their mission to take the wilderness or unoccupied land, and transform it by planting it with towns, turn it into a settled region.

Comment [DPJ2]: Model Annotation Johnson and the Puritans believed in the concept of Providence; they were directed by God to follow a divine plan. And their goal is to demonstrate their role by such activities

Comment [DPJ3]: Model Annotation Johnson emphasizes the hardships of the migrants as they migrate to Concord through the woods and swamps. The entire journey is both a physical ordeal but also a spiritual trial that they must endure to test their faith.

Comment [DPJ4]: Model Annotation Again, Johnson uses thirst in its physical sense but also its religious one as a sacrifice for their mission that is directed (servants) by God