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From Youghco to Black John: Ethnohistory of Sylvester Manor, ca. 1600–1735

Katherine Lee Priddy

The 17th-century residents of Sylvester Manor were a culturally diverse group, comprised of Native Manhanset, European settlers, and enslaved Africans. To understand the archaeological remains of this plantation, documentary remains both specific to Sylvester Manor and more generally of the region have been examined. This article presents the synthesis of relevant historical documents, with an emphasis on the ethnohistoric component, drawing out perspectives on the Manhanset and African residents in their interactions with the Sylvester family and other European settlers.

Les résidents du Sylvester Manor formaient, au XVIIe siècle, un groupe culturellement diversifié composé d'Autochtones de la nation Manhanset, de pionniers européens et d'esclaves d'origine africaine. Afin de mieux comprendre les vestiges archéologiques de cette plantation, on a examiné de près les documents associés spécifiquement au Sylvester Manor de même que ceux portant sur la région en général. Cet article présente une synthèse des documents historiques pertinents, particulièrement ceux présentant un aspect ethnohistorique. On en a retiré des indices sur la perspective des résidents Manhanset et Africains en ce qui concerne leurs interactions avec la famille Sylvester et les pionniers européens.

Introduction

Carter Woodson claimed in 1920 that “One of the longest unwritten chapters in history of the United States is that treating of the relations of the Negroes and the Indians” (Woodson 1920: 45). Information about their interactions has been primarily recovered from documentary evidence, overwhelming composed by European colonists. A lack of historical documentation and inherent bias of those records has resulted in limited scholarship about the significant roles that non-European groups played in colonial history. Even today, the relationships between Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans during the colonial period are poorly understood.

While the examination of ethnicity is becoming more routine in historical archaeology, scholars have often underestimated the diverse nature of colonial life. Previous researchers have concentrated on the study of one ethnic group in isolation and its relationship to Europeans. However, inhabitants of colonial North America were utilizing the same social spaces and interacting on a regular basis. Isolating Native Americans, Europeans, or Africans for analysis limits our understanding of the processes of creolization or hybridity that each cultural group experienced in the same geographical setting. Ignoring the interconnectedness of these inhabitants oversimplifies the cultural transformation that all New

World inhabitants were experiencing, and thus hinders our understanding of social dynamics in American history.

The colonial residents of Shelter Island, New York exemplify this cultural diversity. After the 1651 purchase of Manhansack-Ahaquatuwamock from the Manhanset tribe, the Sylvesters transported indentured servants and African slaves to the northern plantation. In addition, some Manhansets continued to live locally and may have become a vital source of labor in the colonial economy of Sylvester Manor. These residents produced goods, such as agricultural crops and livestock, for export to Barbados. They also filled other roles necessary for the operation of the plantation, including domestic service, skilled artisans, and guides. Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans interacted daily on Shelter Island as all three groups worked and lived together on this northern plantation.

This article details the history of Sylvester Manor, concentrating on the African and Native American residents, from 1600 until 1735. Sylvester Manor is an ideal place to examine interactions between cultural groups because it contains intact archaeological remains and associated primary documents and secondary sources. The primary documents detailed below, dating from the 1650s to the present, can be located at New York University, the Shelter Island Historical Society, the East Hampton Library, and other repositories throughout New York. These documents

give clues about the lives of its former inhabitants, including Africans and Native Americans. The close living conditions and daily interactions on Shelter Island create a unique situation in which to study cultural plurality.

Manhansack-Ahaquatuwamock¹

Even though the exact date of European contact is unknown, the arrival of Europeans for trading purposes transformed the traditional lifestyle of the Manhansets'² Native American population on Manhansack. European diseases, such as smallpox, typhus, influenza, and measles, greatly decreased the Native American population on Long Island. Around 1600, the Pequots of southern Connecticut expanded to subjugate the Manhansets and other communities on eastern Long Island, including the Shinnecock, Montauk, and Corchaug Indians, to tributary status. To form larger and stronger political units, the Native Americans on Paumanack (eastern Long Island) paid tribute to the Pequots in exchange for protection. Thus, the groups on eastern Long Island became closely connected through language, kinship, and cultural traditions to Pequot communities in Connecticut (Ales 1993; Strong 1997: 147, 154; Witek 1990: 42–44, 46).

The Pequots therefore controlled coastal trade networks to obtain European goods. As Spain, Holland, and England all claimed Long Island and the Connecticut River Valley as their domain, Europeans made alliances with local Native American groups to validate their claim and to establish and monopolize trade networks. When the Pequots united with the Dutch, the tributary Manhansets produced wampum as part of their annual payment to the Pequots. Wampum, from an Algonquian word meaning “strings of white shell beads” (Ales 1993: 13), had previously been used by Native Americans as both a type of currency and a decorative ornament. The Peconic Bay, which surrounds Shelter Island, was one of the most important sources of quahog (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) and whelk (*Busycotypus aruanum* and *Busycotypus canaliculatum*) shells in the region used to produce the purple and white

wampum beads. Both the Dutch and English adopted wampum as currency during the 17th century and the center of its production was focused along the shores of eastern Long Island (Strong 1997: 69, 144, 146, 147, 151–54).

The Native American inhabitants of eastern Long Island were strategically positioned between Dutch settlers in New Netherland, English settlers in New England, and the Pequots, Narragansetts, Niantics, and other Native American groups in Connecticut during the first half of the 17th century. When the English built Fort Saybrook at the mouth of the Connecticut River in 1635, they demanded that the Pequots acknowledge English sovereignty by relinquishing two warriors who had killed two English traders and paying a fine of wampum and pelts. When the Pequots refused to comply with their demands, the Pequot War resulted in 1637 and decimated the Native American population in Connecticut for two years (Strong 1997: 154–58).

Algonquian sachems on eastern Long Island, particularly Wyandanch of Montauk and his elder brother Youghco³ of Manhansack, the chief sachem of Paumanack, used this colonial conflict to advance their own interests by manipulating other Native American groups and engaging one colony against the other. On May 29, 1637, three days after the massacre of an estimated eight hundred Native Americans at a Pequot village near Mystic, Connecticut, the sachems of Long Island terminated their tributary status to the Pequots. Wyandanch approached Lion Gardiner, engineer and commander at Fort Saybrook, and asked to trade with the English. Gardiner responded that there would be no trade or alliance until all Pequots taking shelter on Long Island were executed. Wyandanch replied, “I will go to my brother, for he [Youghco] is the great Sachem of all Long Island and if we may have peace and trade with you, we will give you tribute as we did the Pequits” (Gardiner 1980: 137–138). Gardiner sent Thomas Stanton, an English interpreter, to Manhansack to search for refugees from Connecticut. Stanton discovered that Youghco had kept Wyandanch’s promise

¹ Algonquian name for Shelter Island meaning “an island sheltered by islands” (N. Sylvester 1680: 1; Tooker 1911: 92). All Native American and English names have been spelled as the majority of scholars have written them.

² Also spelled as “Menhansacks,” “Manhansetts,” and “Menhansicks” (Lightfoot, Kalin, and Moore 1987: 30).

³ Also known as “Poggatacut,” “Yovowan,” “Yokee,” and “Unkenchie.” Native Americans of eastern Long Island chose new names in response to dreams, unusual experiences, or achievement (Witek 1992: 181). Youghco was the chief sachem of Long Island and elder brother to Wyandanch, who inherited the title after his death.

and was not sheltering Pequot refugees on the island (Ales 1993: 14; Gardiner 1980: 137–38; Strong 1997: 156).

In July 1637, Youghco and Wyandanch approached Israel Stoughton, a captain in the Massachusetts Bay militia, again requesting an alliance with the English. The following month, Youghco and Wyandanch presented Stoughton with forty fathoms of wampum to be distributed to Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut officials and sent five Pequot heads to confirm their allegiance. The sachems agreed to become tributaries of the English and shelter no Pequot refugees. With the Pequot population severely weakened, other Native American groups attempted to control and collect their wampum, an extremely valuable resource in the area. Native American sachems on eastern Long Island decided to form an alliance with the English for their future security and protection, instead of allying with the Dutch or Narragansetts (Ales 1993: 15–16; Strong 1997: 158).

The English used this alliance with Native American groups to likewise strengthen their claim to Long Island. This association would gain them control over the wampum trade and enable settlement in the area before the Dutch. England officially began its quest for colonization in 1635 when Charles I granted William Alexander, the Earl of Stirling, a land patent for the establishment of a permanent colony on Long Island and its adjacent islands. James Farrett, Stirling's appointed agent in New England, could only sell the right to buy property because the land also had to be purchased from local Native American groups. When Farrett arrived in New England in the spring of 1639, he claimed Manhansack-Ahaquatuwamock, renaming it Mr. Farrett's Island, and nearby Anchannock⁴ as part of his ten thousand acre grant from Stirling. Farrett may have built a house on the island, but it is unknown whether he ever resided on Manhansack during his ownership (Brodhead 1874: 297; Farrett 1641: 1; Mallmann 1985: 13; Strong 1997: 163, 167, 228).

The first permanent English settler on eastern Long Island reinforced the relation-

⁴ Algonquian name for Robin's Island, also referred to as Robert's Island, located in Peconic Bay. This word is believed to mean "place full of timber" (Tooker 1911: 9–11). An epidemic in 1617 devastated the population of New England and may have killed all previous inhabitants of the island (Strong 1997: 147).

ship between the local Native Americans and the English. On May 3, 1639, Youghco and his wife, Aswaw, sold Manchonat,⁵ an uninhabited island at the mouth of the Peconic Bay, to Lion Gardiner for ten coats of trading cloth. Gardiner renamed the island after himself and moved his family there the following year. On March 10, 1640, Gardiner agreed to pay Farrett an annual rent of five pounds for an official English patent. The further establishment of two towns in 1640, Southampton on the south fork and Southold on the north fork, initiated large-scale English settlement in the area. These English settlers bought official patents from Farrett and purchased the land from local Native American groups (Ales 1993: 17; Dyson 1960: 29; Mallmann 1985: 12; Strong 1997: 160, 166–67; Tooker 1911: 90–91).

After Stirling's death in February 1640, Farrett's funds were terminated, leaving him stranded in New England. To finance his return voyage to England in 1642, Farrett disposed of his boat, sold his title to Anchannock and Manhansack, and mortgaged the remaining, unclaimed land in the Stirling Patent to the colonies of Connecticut and New Haven. Stephen Goodyear, a wealthy New Haven merchant and later Deputy Governor of the New Haven Colony, bought Manhansack on May 18, 1641 and subsequently purchased Anchannock from Robert Carmand. On August 30, 1641, Goodyear offered Manhansack to New Haven, possibly extending New Haven jurisdiction in the area, but the petition was not accepted (Ales 1993: 17–18; Calder 1934: 59; Farrett 1641: 1; Hedges 1887: 97; Mallmann 1985: 13; Strong 1997: 185).

In 1644, Ninigret, chieftain of the Niantic Indians of Connecticut, sent a Narragansett captain to Wyandanch at Montauk to secure their support for an uprising against the English. Wyandanch took the captain prisoner and presented him to Lion Gardiner. With a letter of warning to Governor Eaton, Gardiner sent the prisoner and ten Native American guards to New Haven. Due to bad weather, the group "went to Shelter-Island, where the old Sachem dwelt- Waiandance's elder brother, and in the night they let him go, only my letter they sent to New-Haven" (Gardiner 1980: 144). Youghco did not appear to support the

⁵ Algonquian name meaning "the place where they all died" (Tooker 1896: 90–91).

same level of friendship with the English as his younger brother. Wyandanch and Lion Gardiner had become friends and allies, an advantageous relationship that would continue to benefit the Montauk sachem and English settlers after Youghco's death. For the English, this connection strengthened their alliance with the Native Americans for greater access to land, while for Wyandanch the association increased his power and authority within the Native American and English communities (Ales 1993: 18–22; Strong 1997: 211, 235–236).

In September 1644, Youghco, Wyandanch, and two other sachems from eastern Long Island appeared before the second annual meeting of the United Colonies in Hartford to reconfirm their position as English tributaries. In the signed certificate of agreement, Youghco acknowledged English authority, validated the legitimacy of the Stirling Patent, and accepted the supremacy of English courts in all affairs involving English citizens and their property. He also agreed not to bribe other Native American tribes nor harm or kill any European livestock. English domesticated animals often roamed freely, so Native Americans would kill stray livestock that destroyed their crops. In return, the four sachems were promised that they would “enjoy full peace without disturbances from the English or any in friendship with them” (Ales 1993: 18). Through this arrangement, the English commissioners gained the exclusive purchase rights from Native Americans for land on eastern Long Island (Strong 1997: 171, 184–85; Strong 1994: 563).

The Native Americans on Paumanack also maintained contact with the Dutch, however, even after their arrangement with the English. It appeared that Youghco and the other sachems of eastern Long Island wanted to form alliances with both the English and Dutch for trading purposes and military protection. In May 1645, Wittaneymen, sachem of the Shinnecock who claimed to represent Youghco, negotiated an agreement with the Council of New Netherland to protect several towns in the center of Paumanack. This friendship with the Dutch was again confirmed in August 1647 after word of a Native American conspiracy against Europeans on Long Island reached Dutch officials. Peter Stuyvesant, governor of the Dutch West India Company, sent

Cornelis Van Tienhoven, the colonial secretary, to eastern Long Island to investigate why the Native Americans had broken their alliance with the Dutch. After Youghco and Wyandanch reported that the peace agreement was still in effect, Van Tienhoven gave them three coats and other gifts (Ales 1993: 20; Strong 1997: 187, 192).

The relationship between the English and Dutch continued to disintegrate, partially from the uncertainty over their alliances with local Native American groups. The English were particularly concerned that Dutch peace expeditions into eastern Long Island involved the distribution of arms. Governor Eaton of New Haven sent a letter to Stuyvesant claiming that the Dutch were selling contraband weapons to the Native Americans on Long Island. The English believed that the weapons would encourage attacks against them and promote Dutch settlement in eastern Long Island. During a Dutch investigation of weapon smuggling, it was revealed that Govert Lockerman, a Dutch trader, had visited Youghco on Shelter Island near the end of 1647 to reportedly buy game fowl and venison. Lockerman detailed giving one pound of powder as a present to Youghco while in Gardiner's Bay. The English were convinced that Lockerman's visit with Youghco concerned more than the purchase of geese. Meanwhile, Youghco continued to pay tribute, including his yearly tribute to Englishman Thomas Stanton in May 1649, and bestow presents, such as sixty fathoms of wampum to Governor Winthrop in 1647 (Ales 1993: 20–22; Strong 1997: 192, 193).

To protect English interests on eastern Long Island, Governor Eaton of New Haven Colony and Governor Edward Hopkins of Connecticut Colony, who purchased the rights to the Stirling Patent from Farrett, began to acquire more land on eastern Long Island for the English. In 1648, Youghco and three other sachems sold thirty thousand acres lying east of Southampton for goods estimated to be worth thirty pounds. They also began to purchase large tracts of land on the north fork of Long Island. Within two years, Eaton had secured almost the entire north and south forks of Paumanack for the English (Strong 1997: 193–196, 300–301).

Fears about the Dutch and their alliances with Native Americans continued to keep the English wary about their status on eastern

Long Island. In this period of uncertainty, local Native American groups used tensions between the Dutch and English to advance their own interests. Native American groups in Connecticut, particularly those previously allied with the Manhansets, were attempting to disturb the allegiance between the English and the local Native Americans. Uncas, the sachem of the Mohegans, appeared at a meeting of the United Colonies in 1649 to register a complaint about the actions of Youghco. Uncas claimed that the Manhanset sachem was attempting to kill him and some of his men through various means. Apparently, Uncas held a grudge against Youghco dating from the Pequot War, when he turned his alliance from the Pequots to the English. As a result, the Commissioners assigned four men to investigate the claim with unknown results (Ales 1993: 23).

Arrival of the Sylvesters

On June 9, 1651, Stephen Goodyear sold Shelter Island and Robin's Island to the partnership of Thomas Middleton, Thomas Rouse, Constant Sylvester, and Nathaniel Sylvester for sixteen hundred pounds of good Muscovado sugar. Constant Sylvester, Middleton, and Rouse were Bajan sugar planters who were heavily fined and banished from Barbados in 1650 as "disturbers of the Peace of the Island" (Smith 1998: 43) due to their refusal to acknowledge Charles II. Though ultimately never exiled, the three men may have invested in Shelter Island as a political refuge as well as a provisioning plantation for their sugar plantations on Barbados. Of the four men, Nathaniel Sylvester, younger brother of Constant, was the sole partner to relocate permanently to Shelter Island (Smith 1998: 38, 43–44; Strong 1997: 202).

Nathaniel Sylvester, his younger brother Giles Sylvester, and John Booth, a resident of Southold, traveled from Barbados to New England aboard the *Swallow* in 1652. Purchased by Stephen Goodyear from the Dutch in 1647, the *Swallow* often transported goods and individuals between New Haven and Barbados. During this voyage, Captain Greenfield Larrabee was carrying supplies and a number of indentured servants, including Bernard Collins and Stephen Daniel, to Shelter Island for Nathaniel Sylvester. Before reaching their destination, however, the ship went aground on

rocks at Conanicut Island in the Narragansett Bay. After Nathaniel Sylvester departed for Rhode Island for assistance, Greenfield Larrabee told the indentured servants that

"they were all free men, & no longer servants under ther Master A withall Declaring yt whatsoever they could lay hands on of what came out of the Reck ashore of Captaine Nathaniell Silvesters goods, was as much thars as thar Masters and as ffree for them to take as it was to the Master" (Hedges 1887: 93–95).

A cabinet containing valuable jewels, papers, and other items belonging to Nathaniel Sylvester and John Booth was opened and seized before the indentured servants fled. Later that night, the ship broke up, and all items aboard were destroyed. Nathaniel Sylvester brought suit against Greenfield Larrabee on May 11, 1653 for theft and won an award of one hundred twenty five pounds in damages for valuables contained in the cabinet (Dexter 1917: 64; Freiberg 1992: 284; Hedges 1887: 91–95, 106; O'Callaghan 1858, Vol. I: 167; Trumbull 1935: 117).

After Nathaniel Sylvester's departure on the *Swallow*, the three Bajan sugar planters formalized their joint venture for the provisioning plantation on Shelter Island. Signed on September 20, 1652, this document was probably drafted and confirmed on Barbados because Nathaniel's signature is noticeably absent. This business arrangement specified the equal share of all partners and their heirs to the land on Shelter Island as well as to the stock and commodities produced on the plantation. These men agreed to provide equal financial support to stock the island with cattle and other necessities and to share all pasture land, orchards, salt marshes, and common rights to fishing and fowling. Each partner had to agree for land to be rented or sold on the island. Of a less equal nature, this document also attempted to monitor Nathaniel Sylvester's behavior as he was the only partner relocating to Shelter Island. Nathaniel could not kill any cows for the first six years, had to report his personal trade with the "English Dutch Swedes or Indians" to the others, and was limited to building "a house with Six or Seven convenient rooms" (Middleton et al. 1652: 2). With Middleton, Rouse, and Constant Sylvester remaining on Barbados, it is apparent that they intended to carefully supervise the

actions of Nathaniel Sylvester to sustain a successful business partnership.

Meanwhile, the Manhansets were reacting to the information that Stephen Goodyear had sold the island to Middleton, Rouse, and the Sylvester brothers to protect their own interests. Youghco sent Cockenoe, a local Native American interpreter who understood the English political system,⁶ to complain to the United Colonies on September 2, 1652 that Thomas Middleton and his agents were trying to evict him from his island. Cockenoe argued that the four partners held a fraudulent title of ownership because neither James Farrett nor Stephen Goodyear had paid the Manhansets for the island. This charge was probably correct because new property owners negotiated and paid local Native Americans for land, even after purchasing the property rights from the English (see Siminoff 2004). The United Colonies could not dismiss a complaint from one of the most influential sachems on eastern Long Island, especially when the English were concerned with Dutch attempts to recruit Native Americans in case of war with the English. Though no documentation of the commissioners' findings survives, Youghco and three of his elders, Actoncocween, Captain Yowoconogus, and Sonquoquoehaesick, received payment for the island on December 27, 1652. A later document, dated March 23, 1653, confirmed that the Manhanset sachem Youghco gave Captain Nathaniel Sylvester and Ensign John Booth full possession of the island for the four partners. Youghco delivered "one turfe and twige" (Mallmann 1985: 17) to the two men, symbolizing the transfer of ownership of the property. Then, Youghco "with all his Indians that were formerly belonging to said Island of Ahaquatawamock did freely and willingly depart the aforesaid island, leaving the aforesaid Captain Nathaniel Sylvester and Ensign Booth in full possession of the same" (Mallmann 1985: 17). Numerous Manhansets joined local communities of the Montauk, Corchaug, and Shinnecock, while others remained on Shelter Island. After Youghco's death in 1653, Wyandanch became the next "grand sachem" of eastern Long Island (Ales 1993: 25, 32; Mallmann 1985: preface, 16–17, 24;

Strong 1997: 202; Tooker 1896 [1980]: 181; Witek 1992: 175).

With the legal title from the Manhansets, Nathaniel Sylvester quickly established his permanent residence on Shelter Island through the construction of a dwelling, warehouse, and various outbuildings to form the core of Sylvester Manor along the eastern shore of Gardiner's Creek. Nathaniel Sylvester then married Grissell Brinley, daughter of Thomas Brinley, the former Auditor of Charles I and later Charles II, in Rhode Island sometime between July 6 and August 8, 1653.⁷ Grissell brought among her personal items three enslaved Africans: Jaquero, his wife Hannah, and their daughter, Hope, to Sylvester Manor. The presence of this family group is the earliest reference to Africans on the plantation, though Nathaniel's will suggests that he purchased and transported Africans from Barbados to Shelter Island (see below). Despite the suggestion, the composition of the early labor force at Sylvester Manor remains unclear. It may well have included indentured servants and local Native laborers, but specific identities and specific roles are not clearly spelled out in the available documentary sources. What seems most likely is that Nathaniel Sylvester relied on a combination of enslaved Africans, indentured servants, and local Native Americans to provide labor and that these workers filled diverse roles necessary for the daily operation of the plantation (Coldham 1984: 165; Freiberg 1992: 320; G.B. Sylvester 1685: 1; Horsford 1915: 3; N. Sylvester 1680: 2).

As a proprietor of Shelter Island, Nathaniel Sylvester became involved in local politics, particularly witnessing land purchases between Native Americans and English settlers. To procure money for tribute and other fines, Wyandanch sold his only available resource, land. For example, Sylvester witnessed a deed on September 20, 1654 when Wyandanch sold land known as *Camusit* (today called Horse Neck) to Samuel Mayo and Daniel Whitehead, for three coats, three shirts, two cuttels, three hatchets, three hoes, two fathoms of wampum, six knives, two pairs of stockings, and two

⁷ The exact date of Nathaniel and Grissell Sylvester's marriage is unknown. A jointure signed before the marriage was sealed between William Coddington, Grissell's legal guardian, and Nathaniel Sylvester for one hundred pounds per annum during Grissell's lifetime on July 6, 1653. Nathaniel's subsequent letter on August 8, 1653 to John Winthrop announced his marriage to Grissell Brinley.

⁶ Cockenoe is believed to be the Native American interpreter that John Eliot trained in New England (Ales 1993: 44; Strong 1997: 193–94; Tooker 1896: 181).

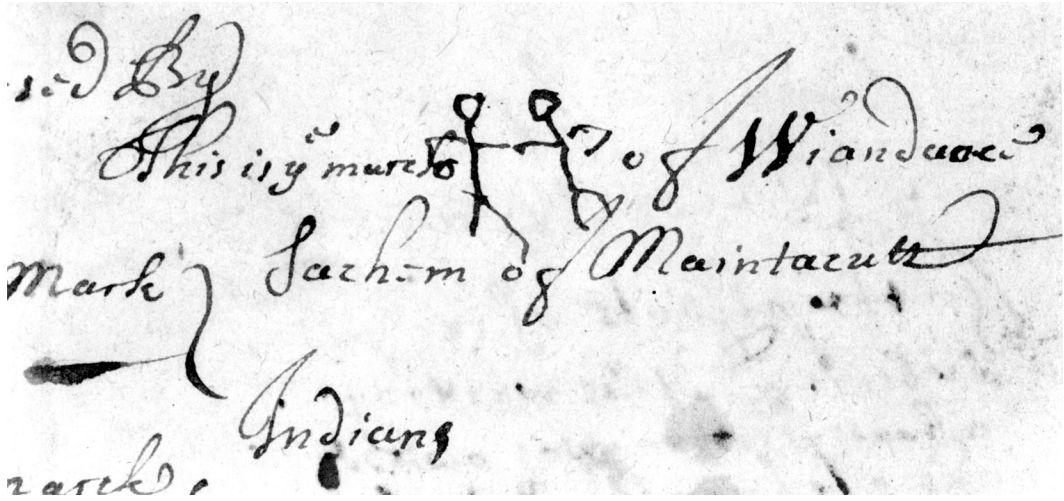


Figure 1. "This is ye marcke of Wiandanc, Sachem of Maintacutt," Detail, Confirmation of an Indian Deed for Horse Neck, 1658, 14 May 1658. (Sylvester Manor Archive, Database #41, Scan #00325_41a-b_1654, Sept. 20.tif, Shipping Box #62. Bobst Library, New York University.)

pairs of shoes. In May of 1656, Sylvester was further involved in the dispute between Samuel Andrews, who purchased the land from Whitehead, and the town of Huntington, as both parties claimed to have deeds from the local Native Americans for the purchase of Horse Neck. Andrews traveled to Nathaniel Sylvester's home on Shelter Island to get the confirming deed from Wyandanch on May 4, 1658 before the arrival of the town representative (FIG. 1) (Ales 1993: 33; Barck 1926: 1, 2, 19; Mayo 1654: 1, 2).

After the purchase of Shelter Island from the Manhansets, Thomas Rouse sold his quarter share of Shelter Island to Thomas Middleton. Middleton purchased this property and stock for John Booth, who, in turn, became the legal owner of one quarter of Shelter Island. Due to debt, John Booth agreed to sell his quarter share to Nathaniel Sylvester on May 8, 1656 for the sum of seven hundred pounds, to be paid over a seven year period. The Articles of Agreement, dating February 20, 1657 between Nathaniel Sylvester and John Booth, detailed the methods of payment for this purchase. Constant and Nathaniel would pay Booth's debts in New England, Barbados, and England and forgive his personal debts to them. In return, Booth was granted lifetime rights for his family to one half of Robin's Island, if he remained on Long Island and kept the island under Shelter Island's jurisdiction. Booth also agreed to permit the Manhansets from Shelter Island to

come to Robin's Island to fish and collect shells for wampum production. With successful payment of four hundred pounds, Nathaniel and Constant Sylvester jointly owned three quarters of Shelter Island with the remaining one-quarter belonging to Thomas Middleton (Barck 1926: 219; Hedges 1887: 104–109; Mallmann 1985: preface).

Nathaniel Sylvester's desire for independent governmental jurisdiction of Shelter Island was in part because he and his wife Grissell were known Quaker sympathizers, if not Quakers themselves. Numerous Quakers visited Shelter Island and sought refuge there when neighboring colonial governments were persecuting and evicting them (Calder 1934: 95, 98, 128; Hoadly 1857: 217, 238, 364, 380, 412). One such visitor was John Taylor, an early Quaker from England, who visited Shelter Island in 1659. Taylor traveled extensively around New England and the West Indies combining missionary work with trade. His journal, *An Account of Some of the Labours, Exercises, Travels and Perils, by Sea and Land*, described his experience on Shelter Island. This Quaker visitor noted that "a great many Indians lived on it [Shelter Island], and they were Friendly and Sober, and made Serviceable to Friends for Guides, &c when we travelled in the Countries" (Wortis 1973: 109). Nathaniel Sylvester sent an Indian guide named Robin with Taylor when he visited the nearby towns of Gravesend, Seatancott, Oyster Bay, and

Hempstead. During his second visit to Shelter Island, Taylor met and had several meetings with Mary Dyer, another Quaker refugee. In 1660, Dyer was hanged for her Quaker beliefs in Boston (Freiberg 1992: 414; Wortis 1973: 108–111).

Other events in 1659 caused a major transformation in the lives of Native Americans living on eastern Long Island and directly affected their future relationship with Europeans. Wyandanch died from an apparent poisoning in the second half of the year. Europeans no longer needed a “Grand Sachem of Long Island” (Ales 1993: 32) to negotiate land deeds as they owned the majority of the land on eastern Long Island. Furthermore, a major smallpox epidemic began and continued through 1664, killing an estimated two-thirds of the existing Algonquian population. This smaller populace had to develop new strategies to negotiate with the continually growing English and Dutch population. These developments were major factors that led to a decline in Native American sovereignty, changes in their traditional ways of life, and a transformation in labor relations with Europeans in the latter half of the 17th century. With an increasing dependence on European goods, Native Americans became further incorporated into the European labor system after this date, often as whalers, domestics, unskilled laborers, and guides (Ales 1993: 35; Strong 1994: 565; Strong 1997: 233–35, 237).

The political turmoil between the Dutch and English settlers continued as English forces, under Richard Nicolls, invaded and conquered the territory known as New Netherland in the early summer of 1664. Charles II granted his brother James, the Duke of York, permission to establish the colony of New York, ignoring the territorial boundaries of the colonial charters of Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut. The Duke of York appointed Richard Nicolls, the victorious commander, to govern the new colony and to establish a legal code, known as the “Duke’s Laws,” for the colonial inhabitants. This set of stipulations established a government in New York and further limited the actions of Native Americans. The Manhansets were denied the right to hold powwows or other religious celebrations where large groups would congregate, forbidden to sell land without the approval of the governor, and

allowed trade only with licensed Europeans for furs, weapons, gunpowder, and alcohol (Ales 1993: 39–40; Dyson 1960: 23–24; Stone 1983: 78–79; Strong 1994: 567–569; Wortis 1974: 2).

The incorporation of Shelter Island into the new colony of New York directly affected the methods in which Nathaniel Sylvester had previously obtained enslaved Africans. Constant Sylvester had previously sent slaves from his two Bajan plantations, Constant and Carmichael, to Shelter Island with other supplies. In a letter to John Winthrop, Jr. in 1664, Constant Sylvester stated his belief that the monopoly of the Royal African Company would threaten the trade with New England. Sylvester felt that the company was trying “to engross the whole trade of Barbados to themselves” (Wortis 1974: 4–5) and discontinue the previous trade relations between Barbados and New England (Wortis 1974: 3–6).

Duke’s Laws also caused European settlers to strengthen their land claims from Native Americans before the governor reviewed them. In 1665, Governor confirmed the sale of Hog’s Neck by the Manhansets to the town of Southampton. On July 22, 1666, Isaac Arnold and Nathaniel Sylvester witnessed a document describing the words of Chegono from May 19, 1666. This Native American confirmed that Catawamock, an early name for Shelter Island, was the land of Wyandanch’s father, thereby confirming the legality of the four partner’s purchase of the property. With a payment of one hundred and fifty pounds paid in beef and pork on May 25, 1666, Governor Nicolls granted manorial rights to Nathaniel and Constant Sylvester and exempted them from all taxes and military assessments, other than for the defense of their island from foreign invasion or Native American disturbance. Six days later, Governor Nicolls ratified and confirmed Constant and Nathaniel Sylvester’s ownership of Shelter Island and validated it as an independent township with the same privileges as any town or manor within the colonial government. In return, the Sylvesters agreed to provide the Duke of York and his heirs with one lamb, upon the first day of May each year (Dyson 1960: 17; Mallmann 1985: 26–27; Maro 1666: 1; R. Nicolls 1666: 1–3).

In response to pressures from the English to purchase more Native American land, individuals within the Montauk and Manhanset tribes

rebelled against their leadership and sought assistance from Ninigret, the Niantic sachem. These tribal members traveled to Rhode Island in 1669, negotiated an alliance of tributary status, and agreed to pay Ninigret yearly tribute. Early that summer, the Montauks sent Ninigret five pounds in wampum and the barrel from the late Wyandanch's gun with the pledge "that they would be subject unto him for the future" (R.I. Records vol II, cited in Ales 1993: 47). Afraid of an uprising, the men of Easthampton went to Montauk and confiscated the tribes' guns. When questioned about the alliance by Rhode Island officials, Ninigret claimed that a yearly tribute was promised when he returned Wyandanch's daughter in 1653. Governor Arnold of Rhode Island forbade Ninigret to collect tribute from the Montauks by force, only if they were willing. The Native Americans, who sent tribute due to their weakened state, agreed not to pay Ninigret more tribute and acknowledged the Governor of New York as their "Chiefest Sachem" (Ales 1993: 47–48; Strong 1997: 250).

The use and periodic abuse of alcoholic beverages further contributed to the weakened position of Native Americans on eastern Long Island. On July 8, 1672, the New York Court at Fort James granted Nathaniel Sylvester's petition for constabulary powers to arrest unruly Native Americans on Shelter Island. Sylvester claimed that the Manhansets had

"yet sometimes in his absence, & at other while hee hath been there present, have presumed in their Drink to breed Disturbance and make Comotions there, the apprehensive of the Dangr whereof hath been ye occasion of great ffrights and trouble in his ffamily" (O'Callaghan 1858 Vol. XIV: 671).

Sylvester, or another person in his absence, was granted the ability to arrest unruly Native Americans, resulting in further English control of the Manhansets. The colonial government acknowledged that the presence of the Manhansets on Shelter Island was strictly a courtesy of Nathaniel Sylvester as Sylvester permitted only Ambusco, late Sachem of Southold, and his family to emigrate to Shelter Island (O'Callaghan 1858 Vol. XIV: 670–71, 703; Witek 1992: 175).

Despite Nathaniel Sylvester's complaint to New York officials, alcohol trade with Native Americans had become an important colo-

onial enterprise. Sylvester was apparently providing local Native Americans with rum that he received from Barbados and liquor from his cider mill at Sylvester Manor. Alcohol was a regular method of payment for furs, labor, and other services that the Manhansets provided. Native Americans infused alcohol into their celebrations and mourning rituals, but the liquid also became a method in which they dealt with the transformation of their society. Local Native American abuse of alcohol continued as Nathaniel Sylvester wrote Governor Andros twice in 1675 complaining about the drunkenness of Native Americans in East Hampton "to the disquiet of others, at least himself & whole family" (Mancall 1995: 66, 41, 43; O'Callaghan 1858, Vol XIV: 713).

Besides the members of the Sylvester family, the Manhansets also interacted with numerous Quaker visitors, including John Jay, William Edmundson, and George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends. Fox arrived on Shelter Island after a three day voyage from Rhode Island and led a meeting the following day. Through a Native American interpreter, this preacher led a two hour service to approximately one hundred Manhansets, including the King and his council during his first week on the island. The Manhansets were described as sitting "down like Friends" (Fox 1975: 128) and confessed that he spoke the truth. The following Sunday, Fox again guided a large gathering for the Manhansets and possibly the African residents of Shelter Island. Before Fox's departure, meetings were arranged with the Manhansets for every two weeks and Joshua Sylvester, Nathaniel's brother, was scheduled to read Scriptures to them (Fox 1975: 128–129; Penney 1911: 224–25).

Political uncertainty again ensued in 1673 when the Dutch reconquered New York and once more placed Long Island under Holland's control. Nathaniel Sylvester offered his submission to the Council of War of New Netherlands on August 25, 1673 and requested verification of former freedoms granted to him and his island. The Dutch government granted Nathaniel Sylvester the rights to his share of the island, including "his real and personal goods, effects and furniture, negroes or whatever else is lawfully belonging to him within this government" (O'Callaghan 1858 Vol II: 589). However, the Dutch governor issued a

formal act on August 28, 1673 confiscating the "lands, houses, goods, negroes, and effects of whatever sort they may be" (O'Callaghan 1858 Vol II: 590) of Colonel Middleton and the heirs of the late Constant Sylvester, who were deemed subjects of England and thus enemies of the state. Nathaniel claimed his entitlement to his late brother's interests that same day because the heirs of Constant Sylvester owed him large sums of money.⁸ After hearing his plea, the Council of War decided that Nathaniel could pay the sum of five hundred pounds sterling in provisions by bond for the interest of his two partners. Under the Dutch government, Nathaniel Sylvester acquired "all interest, right, title and propriety" (O'Callaghan 1858 Vol II: 590) of Thomas Middleton and the heirs of Constant Sylvester and consolidated Shelter Island under one proprietor. Before the English reconquered New York, a Dutch man-of-war carrying fifty soldiers landed at Sylvester Manor and demanded payment of the bond to the Dutch government. Nathaniel Sylvester again asserted his exclusive ownership of Shelter Island and its goods from the payment of five hundred pounds sterling to the Dutch government in his Last Will and Testament, claiming that soldiers surrounded his house and struck "Dread in my familie [as] they beset my house, the better to obtaine the Money which they forced from mee" (Duvall 1932: 33-34; Jaray 1968: 9, 98; N. Sylvester 1680: 1).

With King Phillip's War beginning in 1675, the English quickly terminated the possibility that the Native Americans on eastern Long Island would join the rebellion. Governor Andros ordered that neither alcohol, guns, nor ammunition were to be sold to Native Americans, that all Indians be disarmed and remain in their own villages, and that all canoes on the north shore be secured by local town officials. The suspension in trade of liquor, powder, and lead and the confiscation of canoes on the Long Island Sound kept local Native American tribes isolated from any influence in Connecticut. Guns were returned to the local Native American groups that September, with the exception of the Manhansets and Montauks

because they had paid tribute to Ninigret a few years earlier. However, this isolation policy adversely affected the economic prosperity of eastern Long Island because whaling companies had relied on Native American men for labor during the winter months since the mid-17th century. One whaling company owned by Jacob Schallenger, Stephen Hand, and James Loper of Easthampton asked Governor Andros for an exemption of the wartime restrictions on local Native Americans who worked on their whaling vessels. This company sought and was granted a petition on November 18, 1675 for four Manhansets and eight other Native Americans from eastern Long Island to man two whaling vessels, much to the agitation of Giles Sylvester, son of Nathaniel Sylvester who probably required Native American labor for Sylvester Manor. The following spring, the guns of the Manhansets and Montauks were returned after the conclusion of King Phillip's War as wartime restrictions against local Native Americans were lifted (Ales 1993: 40, 43-44, 49; Matthiessen 1986: 14; Stone 1983: 248; Strong 1997: 254-255).

The death of Nathaniel Sylvester in 1680 signaled the end of sole proprietorship of Shelter Island. Sylvester's Last Will and Testament, written on March 19 but confirmed on October 1, detailed Nathaniel's aspiration for the future of Sylvester Manor. First, Sylvester declared that he was the sole proprietor of Shelter and Robin's Islands and claimed ownership of most stock previously held in partnership. This declaration was the result of Constant Sylvester's unpaid debts since 1652 and Nathaniel's payment to the Dutch government for the interests of Thomas Middleton and the heirs of Constant Sylvester in 1673.⁹ Second, Nathaniel divided his personal property between his wife and eleven children. His wife Grissell received the dwelling house, garden, orchards, and cider mill and press, totaling over forty acres, for the remainder of her lifetime with the property reverting to his eldest son, Giles, after her death. Nathaniel's five unmarried daughters were to receive one hundred pounds on the date of their marriage or at the age of twenty-one and were allowed

⁸ Constant Sylvester died between April 7, 1671, the date of his will, and January 24, 1672, the date that his will was proven. Constant Sylvester bequeathed Nathaniel Sylvester one-sixth of the lands on Shelter Island with the remainder going to his children.

⁹ In contrast, Francis Brinley claimed in 1717 that Nathaniel Sylvester (his brother-in-law) told him that his brother, Constant, had purchased Captain Middleton's quarter part of Shelter Island, but a deed for the purchase was never signed (Barck 1926: 220).

to remain at Sylvester Manor until their marriage. Nathaniel's eldest daughter, Grissell Sylvester Lloyd, presumably received the same sum at the time of her marriage to James Lloyd on July 13, 1676. Nathaniel's five sons and their future heirs were bequeathed Shelter Island and an equal share of stock which they would hold as "tenants in Common" forever (N. Sylvester 1680: 3). Sylvester further proclaimed that "I doe hereby Declare, order and appoint that neither all nor any part of the land hereby given to my sonns or any of them shall be sold alienated, or made away for Ever or any term of years, by my sonns or any of them their or any of their heirs" (N. Sylvester 1680: 3). Evidently, Nathaniel Sylvester wanted Shelter Island to remain solely in the possession of his descendants (N. Sylvester 1680: 1-5; Torrey 1985: 469).

Nathaniel Sylvester's 1680 will contained the most explicit information about the African residents during the first thirty years at Sylvester Manor. Twenty-three Africans, consisting of six family groups and one single male, were distributed between Grissell and their eleven children (TAB. 1). Listed in family groups of husband, wife, and children, Nathaniel Sylvester chose not to separate husbands and wives but did bequeath children to different family members. Grissell was given two family groups, including Black John and his daughter Prescilla and J:O and Maria his wife, along with the single male Jenkin. These individuals are in addition to Jaquero, Hannah, and their daughter Hope, whom Grissell had brought with her to Shelter Island (Budd et al. 1680: 1-3; N. Sylvester 1680: 1-5).

Nathaniel's inventory, dating to September 22, 1680, gave additional details about the African residents at Sylvester Manor. His estate, worth one thousand five hundred and fifty-nine pounds sterling, thirteen shillings, included goods that he owned personally and in partnership with Thomas Middleton and the heirs of Thomas Middleton. The executors of Sylvester's estate paid John Tuttle of Southold two shillings to appraise the Africans from Sylvester Manor. Listed before the livestock, Nathaniel Sylvester's inventory listed twenty slaves, eleven claimed personally and nine held in partnership. Individually, Nathaniel claimed three African men with an estimated worth of

Table 1. Individuals claimed as property in Sylvester wills.

Nathaniel Sylvester's 1680 Last Will and Testament	
<i>Family Group</i>	<i>Bequeathed to</i>
Tammero and Oyou	Peter Sylvester
2 Unnamed Children	Constant Sylvester
2 Unnamed Children	Benjamin Sylvester
Black John	Grissell Sylvester
Daughter Prescilla	Grissell Sylvester
J:O and Maria	Grissell Sylvester
Jenkin	Grissell Sylvester
Tony and Nannie	Giles Sylvester
Daughter Hester	Patience Sylvester
Daughter Grace	Ann Sylvester
Daughter Semenie	Mercie Sylvester
Daughter Aby	Mary Sylvester
Japhet and Semenie	Nathaniel Sylvester
Jacquero and Hannah	Personal property of Grissell Sylvester
Daughter Hope	Personal property of Grissell Sylvester
Daughter Isabel	Elizabeth
Grissell Sylvester's 1685 Last Will and Testament	
<i>Family Group</i>	<i>Bequeathed to</i>
Jaquero and Hannah	Daughters, then to Giles Sylvester
Daughter Hope	Elizabeth

sixty pounds, three women worth forty-five pounds, and five girls worth forty pounds. The appraisers also listed three African men worth forty-five pounds, two women worth thirty pounds, three boys worth thirty pounds, and one girl worth eight pounds as property of the partnership. However, Sylvester claimed these nine Africans as his own personal property after the bill of sale from the Dutch government (Barck 1926: 115; Budd et al. 1680: 1-3).

Nathaniel Sylvester's wife Grissell continued to live on Shelter Island until her death in 1685. Her May 7, 1685 will (FIG. 2) divided her personal property from her 1653 jointure of one hundred pounds per annum among her eleven children. Among her household goods, Grissell bequeathed Hope, daughter of Jacquero and Hannah, to her daughter Elizabeth. Jacquero and Hannah were given to her five unmarried daughters, reverting to Giles Sylvester after their marriages. However, Black John, Prescilla, J:o, Marie, and Jenkin were not mentioned and were presumably distributed before her death to her children (G.B. Sylvester 1685: 1-3).

I give and bequeath unto my sons, Giles, Leber, Instant
 and Benjamin Sylvester to be equally divided among them
 Item I give unto all my aforesaid Sons all the books, to be
 equally divided amongst them. Item I give unto my five
 daughters last before mentioned my Negro Jacques and
 Hannah his wife for the use of the house for all my aforesaid
 daughters that are unmarried, living either here or else
 where; and after my said daughters are all married, and
 before unto my son Giles Sylvester. And lastly I do hereby
 nominate and appoint my son in Law James Lloyd, my Brother
 Francis and William Brinley to be my Executors in trust
 to see this my last will and testament performed. In witness
 whereof I have herunto put my hand and seal on this
 Island the 7th of May 1685

Grissell Sylvester

Sealed, signed and declared
 by Grissell Sylvester to be
 her last will and testament
 before us.

Math^r Sylvester
 Simon Grice
 Jacques Millet
 Peter Sylvester

Newport in Road Island the 2^d June 1685
 Grissell Sylvester then appeared before me and
 declared the above written will to be her voluntary
 act and deed, and that she did sign and seal
 the same.

Henry: full: Gou:

Figure 2. Last Will and Testament of Grissell Sylvester, 1685 (Sylvester Manor Archive, Database #1, Scan # 00001_1a-c_1685 (?) May 7.tif, Shipping Box #42. Bobst Library, New York University).

Giles Sylvester Ownership

After Nathaniel and Grissell Sylvester's deaths, Giles Sylvester, their eldest son, oversaw the daily operation of Sylvester Manor. Giles remained on the island with his nine unmarried siblings and continued trading with merchants in Rhode Island and Massachusetts and with local Native Americans.

An important source of commerce at Sylvester Manor was the ongoing trade with members of the Manhanset tribe, which Nathaniel Sylvester began after his arrival on Shelter Island. Giles Sylvester's account book with excerpts from 1680, 1682, 1687–89, 1692, and 1701 documented numerous exchanges with at least fifty individuals, some of whose names suggest they were local Native Americans, including four women, and one African man. This book detailed Giles's dependence on Native Americans for labor for a variety of activities and recorded their reliance on him for certain goods. Sylvester utilized three avenues of trade: the barter of goods, the exchange of labor for merchandise, and the promise of future labor to obtain supplies (G. Sylvester 1680–1701: 3, 15, 25).

Native Americans on Shelter Island performed a variety of activities including threshing and cutting cords of wood. In 1682, Giles hired seventeen Manhansets, including a man named Sachem, for reaping wheat at the rate of one pound for every three and a half days of labor. Most of those listed in the account book were credited with one shilling for a day's work at Sylvester Manor, except on several instances when Harry, Calo, and Wiamoxon were paid lesser amounts. As many activities were unspecified in the account book, these workers could have undertaken other tasks that did not pay the standard amount. Other laborers performed specialized duties, such as Harry who made the cider that Sylvester sold to the Manhansets and Isaac and Lawrence who took messages "to ye main" (G. Sylvester 1680–1701: 16, 8a) and New London for Sylvester (1680–1701: 7a; 8a; 5a, 16, 33, 14, 32).

Two of the most important items that Giles Sylvester used to pay for Native American goods and labor were cloth and alcohol. Native Americans sought yards of broad cloth, cotton, and duffel, a coarse textile, from trade with European settlers. Sylvester also traded pints

and quarts of Bajan rum and quarts, gallons, and barrels of cider and water cider (an inexpensive diluted cider) produced at Sylvester Manor's cider mill. The typical price for a pint of rum was one shilling six pence while a quart was three shillings in 1688 and 1689. However, Sylvester charged his laborers differing amounts for the same quantities of cider and water cider. For example, Giles charged Isaac, Niantois, and Sunsett each three shillings for six quarts of cider in 1688. Yet, Wiamoxon was charged three pence for a quart of water cider while Dick paid one shilling in the same year. With each gallon of cider costing six Native Americans two shillings in 1688, Giles charged Lawrence and Manhandup only one shilling six pence for a gallon of cider on January 4 and 9, 1689. Likewise, Calo only paid six pence for a gallon of water cider in 1688 while eight others paid one shilling for the same amount. Giles Sylvester also charged differing amounts for barrels of cider to European colonists and Native Americans. Jasper Griffin and John Gosby paid 15d for a barrel of cider, while Wiam paid one pound for the same amount in 1688 (G. Sylvester 1680–1701: 2–42, 5a–16a; Strong 1997: 153).

Giles likewise exchanged goods and services for Native American products. Giles Sylvester often bartered for produce that the Native Americans grew or collected, particularly bushels of pears and cranberries, and occasionally fish. Ambusco, the sachem that Nathaniel Sylvester permitted to relocate to Shelter Island, traded a bushel of Indian corn for one bushel of apples in 1688. Likewise, Goussons and Jo: brought loads of wood to Shelter Island, while Wiam built a canoe in order to obtain duffel and alcohol. One item that Nathaniel both sold to the Manhansets and purchased from them were hundreds of nails that each cultural group used in construction (G. Sylvester 1680–1701: 3, 39, 5a, 12, 19, 17, 22, 39, 37).

Giles Sylvester not only traded with Native American men but also women and Africans as well. Three women, identified as Pepan Squaw, Squaw Hannah, and Young Squaw, bought quarts and gallons of an unspecified type of alcohol from Giles Sylvester in 1692. Squaw Hannah paid for her purchase with deerskin, while Smiths Squaw traded ten bushels of corn for two yards of duffel. In July 1688, Black John

bought two gallons of cider at four shillings and two gallons of water cider at two shillings from Giles Sylvester. This African was mentioned in Nathaniel Sylvester's 1680 will and was bequeathed to Grissell Sylvester. However, Grissell must have left this gentleman to one of her sons before her death as he was absent in her will. Probably belonging to one of Giles's younger brothers, the account book never detailed how Black John repaid Giles Sylvester for the alcohol he purchased (G. Sylvester 1680–1701: 25, 34, 6a, 41).

To settle and finalize their parents' estates, Giles, Peter, and Nathaniel Sylvester sold some of the Africans they were bequeathed from their father's will to other family members. On September 11, 1687, Peter Sylvester sold Tammero and Oyou to his brother-in-law James Lloyd of Boston for thirty-eight pounds, Giles Sylvester sold African Tony for twenty pounds to Lloyd on September 20, and Nathaniel sold a boy named Tom to James Lloyd and Isaac Arnold, a cousin, for twenty-five pounds. As part of the settlement of Nathaniel Sylvester's estate, Isaac Arnold subsequently claimed four Africans, Tony, Tammero, Oyou, and Opium as his payment as Executor on September 26, 1687, totaling eighty-three pounds. Arnold agreed to pay the estate of Constant Sylvester nine pounds for his share of the division of the Africans once held in partnership. Opium lived many years with the Lloyd Family of Lloyd's Neck and could have been one of the unnamed sons of Tammero and Oyou, bequeathed to brothers Constant and Benjamin.¹⁰ Other Africans possibly once belonging to Nathaniel and Grissell Sylvester, particularly Tony, Prescilla, Grace, and Hope, were listed as Southold residents in the 1698 census¹¹ (Barck 1926: 109, 110, 115; O'Callaghan 1979: 51; N. Sylvester II 1687: 1; Wortis 1978: 22–23).

While residing in Boston, Giles Sylvester continued to manage the plantation on Shelter Island for the Sylvester family. On December 1, 1693, Giles Sylvester leased the dwelling, house, and farm to Edward Downing of Boston for a seven year period. Downing was permitted to occupy the eastern section of the

house containing the hall, chamber, garret, and lean-to, while Giles's unmarried sisters remained in the other section. For annual rent, Giles Sylvester received one half of the cider, grain, butter, cheese, wool, and swine and obtained two-thirds of the increase of the horses, mares, and cows. While the document contained no reference to Native American or African laborers, Sylvester Manor appears to have continued to function as a fully-developed farm which utilized a large labor force at the end of the 17th century. Nevertheless, the permanent relocation of Giles Sylvester to Boston resulted in a virtual absence of documentary evidence about Sylvester Manor during the remainder of his ownership (Sylvester and Downing 1693).

Beginning in 1695, Giles Sylvester began to sell sections of his property on Shelter Island to non-family members, dividing the former Sylvester estate. That year, Giles Sylvester sold two thousand two hundred acres on Sachem's Neck, approximately one-fifth of the entire island, to William Nicoll for five hundred pounds. With the death of his brothers Peter in 1696, Constant in 1697, and Benjamin at sea, Giles and Nathaniel jointly owned all the property on Shelter Island. Giles Sylvester then sold Cornelius Pain two hundred acres of upland and meadow on May 3, 1698. In 1699, Nathaniel and Giles Sylvester validated an Articles of Agreement that bestowed Nathaniel with a thousand acres on Shelter Island on March 21, 1699. Nathaniel Sylvester in turn sold this parcel to George Haven for six hundred pounds on March 20, 1701 (Duvall 1932: 42; G. Sylvester 1699: 1–2; Mallmann 1985: 43; Schwartz and Griswold 2000: 9–11).

On March 5, 1698, Nathaniel Sylvester, then a resident of East Hampton, contracted Hanable, a Manhasset Indian, to hunt for wolves and to search the woods, meadows, and marshlands on Sachem's Neck for missing and mired cattle during a six week period starting on March 20. As this land was now the property of William Nicolls, Nathaniel Sylvester was probably retrieving all his livestock from this section of the island. Hanable received six royalls (approximately two pounds sterling) at the signing of the contract and would obtain an additional six royalls at the end of the six weeks. If Hanable failed to locate all the livestock, he agreed to pay his employer ten

¹⁰ Additional information about the life of Opium with the Lloyd family can be found in Barck (1926), *Papers of the Lloyd Family of Lloyd's Neck, New York*, Volume I.

¹¹ The 1698 census of New York detailed that Suffolk County contained 3,009 African inhabitants with African slaves making up 19% of the population (Wortis 1978: 25).

pounds sterling. This Native American only earned about three shillings a day but ran the risk of a debt twice his salary for the six weeks labor (N. Sylvester II 1698: 1; Strong 1997: 284).

After Nathaniel's death in April 1705, his young son Brinley Sylvester inherited his estate in East Hampton and on Shelter Island. Giles Sylvester bequeathed most of his property to friend and neighbor William Nicolls after his death in June 1708. Therefore, Brinley Sylvester became the young heir to the Sylvester property on Shelter Island, and his interests were managed until he came of age (Schwartz and Griswold 2000: 12).

Brinley Sylvester

Brinley Sylvester, resident of Newport, Rhode Island, married Mary Burroughs in Southold on December 2, 1718. Three months after his marriage, William Nicolls presented Sylvester with the manor house, its surrounding acreage, and all its appurtenances on Shelter Island, as specified in the 1699 Articles of Agreement between his father Nathaniel Sylvester and uncle Giles Sylvester. Maintaining his family commercial activities, Brinley managed the farm on Shelter Island and continued his mercantile business in Newport. To obtain goods to sell in New England, Sylvester traded directly with Caribbean merchants and their local agents. For example, a May 14, 1719 letter confirmed that Sylvester owed Colonel George Bennett of Jamaica money for a shipment of rum, molasses, and negros. Brinley received a receipt for sixty-eight pounds, seventeen shillings from Richard Bill, Bennett's Boston agent, on June 17, 1720 (Bennett 1719: 1; Mallmann 1985: 46; W. Nicolls 1719: 169).

Beginning in 1717, Brinley Sylvester, with the aid of family members, began to organize a court case to dispute Giles Sylvester's will which bequeathed William Nicolls a large amount of property on Shelter Island. The basis for their argument was that Nathaniel Sylvester's 1680 Last Will and Testament stated that "in case any one of them [his sons] or their heirs shall go about to make any such sale or alienation, he so doing shall for Ever after forfeit and loose all right title and Interest unto the same" (N. Sylvester 1680: 3). Therefore, Giles Sylvester lost his interest in the property on Shelter Island when he

bequeathed his land to William Nicolls in 1708. Letters from his brother-in-law William Sanford and great-uncles Francis Brinley and James Lloyd detailed the process of collecting and organizing family papers to support their claim. Henry Lloyd even gained a lease from Constant Sylvester's heirs, Lady Pickering and Mrs. Worsam, on Barbados for their share of Shelter Island on April 14 and 15, 1727. By 1728, an inventory entitled "A Schedule of Papers" had been compiled of original documents for use in the court case (Anonymous 1728: 1; Barck 1926: 219–221, 272–274, 281–82, 292–294, 297–298, 304–306, 342; Brinley 1720: 1; Sanford 1720: 1).

Meanwhile, Brinley Sylvester set about improving the property he inherited on Shelter Island while the case was being heard in the New York courts. The original house and other outbuildings were dismantled to reinforce a new Georgian landscape complete with a new symmetrical house, completed in 1733. Yellow Dutch bricks and ceramic roofing tiles from the original Manor house, along with other domestic trash, were spread across the yard covering the ornamental cobbled surface and other architectural remains, in essence burying the 17th-century facade and refuse of Sylvester Manor. When the New York court sided with Brinley Sylvester in 1735, he again consolidated a large amount of property on Shelter Island under a single Sylvester proprietor. The current two hundred and forty acres of Sylvester Manor have remained in the possession of descendants of Nathaniel Sylvester with little alterations to Brinley Sylvester's Georgian facade and landscape (New York Superior Court 1735: 14–17).

Conclusion

A combination of archaeological evidence and documentary research has begun to unravel the interactions of Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans on Shelter Island, New York during the colonial period. Scholars can no longer view these cultural groups as homogenous and distinct as they were all sharing the same social space. Scholarly research on Shelter Island is beginning to detail the complex nature of colonial life, particularly the integral roles that Africans and Native Americans played at Sylvester Manor. Their

importance in colonial society remains untold due to the lack of documentary evidence and the inherent bias of those records that do exist, but the surviving colonial documents from this northern plantation are beginning to add a new perspective to their roles in early American history.

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