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Professor Turner wrote only one book and that was not on the frontier, but he made his contribution to this topic in a speech before the World's Congress of Historians and later published "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in the American Historical Association's Annual Report for 1893. Subsequent essays in magazines expanded on his ideas on the frontier and its impact on sectionalism, sectional power, the American character, and American history in general. The single most significant aspect of Turner's Thesis is the notion of free land, and that fact had enormous repercussions.

So long as free lands exist, the opportunity for a competency exists and economic power secures political powers. ² The presence of vast amounts of land just beyond the settlement was too attractive an inducement to pass up. Europeans came to the east coast of America and from the eastern settlements to land further west seeking economic betterment or a chance for adventure. ³ Other reasons could be cited as well, such as religious freedom and political refuge. Turner saw this westward movement as an ever-recurring process of expansion out from settled areas to the wilderness in search of new opportunities. This process of westward migration became characteristic of Americans, some moving several times in one lifetime. The process would go on until it was stopped by some physical barrier. Turner saw this recurring process as an evolutionary one where the wilderness constantly reshaped the colonist. It was seen as a crucible where newcomers were "Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race." The characteristics of this new man were coarseness and strength, acuteness and inquisitiveness, an inventive turn of mind, a restless energy, a strong spirit of self-reliance, dominant individualism, emphasis on materialism, buoyancy and exuberance that comes with freedom. ⁴

The return to the primitive conditions and simplicity of the frontier fostered democracy in this country because said Turner, it produced individualism and reduced the effect and complexity of institutions:

Complex society is precipitated by the wilderness into a kind of primitive organization based on the family. The tendency is anti-social. It produces antipathy to control and particularly to any direct control. ⁵ The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization, he said. It finds the early colonist a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel and thought. "The wilderness masters the colonist." It takes him from the material things of civilization and forces him into the things of the wilderness: From railroad to canoe, civilized garb to hunting shirt, the wilderness forces him to live in log cabins, plant with sticks and even to take scalps in Indian fashion. ⁶

The frontier has been described in terms of horizontal and vertical developments that parallel Turner's various geographical and chronological frontiers. The horizontal frontiers include specific areas of the country: Colonial Frontier (1607-1763), Appalachian Frontier (1736-1812), Mississippi Frontier (1812-1840), Far Western Frontier (1825-1865), and the Last Frontier (1865-1900). The vertical frontiers, which occurred to some degree in each horizontal frontier, each had its own unique character: Warrior, Fur Trader, Miner, Cattlemen, Farmer, and Urban Man's Frontiers. ⁷ Turner, in spite of his critics, was not monocausal. He saw the frontier as the meeting place of complex forces, cultural, historical and geographical; but more than that, he saw it as a multidimensional process of change wherein differing physical and cultural environments confronted different waves of westward moving peoples bent on their own specialized purposes and each bringing with them unique antecedent cultural experiences.

Turner said nothing about Connecticut and little about New England's particular experience. He was more continental in his perspective. The Atlantic Coast was, he said, the frontier of Europe:

At the Atlantic frontier . . . we have the complex European life, sharply precipitated by the wilderness into the simplicity of primitive conditions. ⁸ The Atlantic frontier was compounded of fisherman, fur trader, miner, cattleraiser, and farmer. ⁹ Connecticut's Frontiers were in fact compounded or mixed together and are difficult to discern. Nevertheless, Connecticut's Frontier experience will be examined next. What then was Connecticut's Frontier like in the early 17th century when the Dutch and English came to its shores and river valleys? How did her experience as a Puritan Frontier contrast with later Frontiers further west? Finally, does the Turnerian Thesis have any relevance to the Connecticut experience?

Connecticut and the Frontier

Free Land . . . Impetus and Safety Valve . Between 1635 and 1750, Connecticut's lands were granted, sold and settled. In that period, Connecticut's people experienced all the frontier conditions that Turner said helped to shape the American character and gave rise to American democracy and other local institutions. Conditions in the Connecticut wilderness were dangerous and primitive. To the Puritan colonists from Massachusetts Bay they must have seemed a drastic change from what they were used to even in that infant colony, but certainly different from what they had left in England or Holland.

Why did these Puritan pioneers come to New England, to Massachusetts, and finally to Connecticut? Without the availability of the vast land, so fertile and rich, would the Puritans have emigrated? Economic motives were present but more than that there was an idea, a Puritan idea of the ideal man and the ideal society that could not germinate or prosper where they were but would have a better chance with divine guidance in the wilderness. For a full discussion of the Puritan ideal in 17th century Connecticut, see Unit I of this volume. Turner saw this kind of opportunity afforded by the availability of free land as a safety valve wherein social, political or theological dissidents would be able to remove themselves or be removed without endangering the larger society. Thus a theological disagreement such as provided some of the impetus for Connecticut's first English settlers, could be made to contribute to the growth of the Puritan community without impairing its unity. ¹⁰

Connecticut provided the young but growing Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies several opportunities: 1) a place for its growing population; 2) resources such as furs and fertile river lands; 3) an outpost to check Dutch colonial and commercial interests; 4) a means of planting new churches and 5) a safety valve for theological and political differences. ¹¹

Governor Winthrop reported in 1634 that the principal reason for migration to Connecticut was a need for room to accommodate the cattle and their friends, presumably late arrivals of Hooker's congregation. They complained, Winthrop reported, that the towns were too close together in Massachusetts. Further, the "fruitfulness and commodiousness of Connecticut" and the danger of the Dutch or other English getting there first was a factor. Finally, Winthrop said the people just had a "strong bent of their spirits to remove thither."¹² Still another reason for going to Connecticut that has been cited is that there was an overabundance of "men of mark, ambitious and deserving of high station."¹³ Such men would find an outlet for their ambition on the Connecticut frontier.

The emigration from Massachusetts to Connecticut, 1635-1636, was an emigration of communities rather than individuals.¹⁴ They were from the four original Massachusetts Bay towns and in the cases of Dorchester and Cambridge, churches and ministers moved with almost one-third of the towns' populations.¹⁵ This fact is an important one because it meant the wilderness with its power to transform was up against a group of settlers who were united politically, morally and spiritually. The communities they set up were civilized enclaves surrounded by wilderness. The records of the early General Courts are filled with references to the Puritan ideals and the prescriptions found in the law for realizing those ideals. They at least tried through sanctions to prevent the spiritual backsliding that comes to people outside the control and influence of the church. Examples of this will be given later in this paper. [See also Unit I] Connecticut's mother towns of Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield were to find this spiritual homogeneity difficult to maintain as the owners of the land sold it and moved to the abundant and cheap land available just a few miles out from the nuclear village. They moved once and many were willing to do it a second, third and fourth time. Free land was from the beginning both a reason for the creation of the Connecticut Puritan state and a cause for its eventual transformation to a secular state.¹⁶

The Puritan town organization was important and needs to be stressed further. The town stood between the individual and the wilderness. It protected him from its worst effects by providing collective direction, order and manpower. In the first years after settlement, the town helped reduce labor needs by making the entire town into pasture while fencing the cultivated land to keep the cattle out. The town provided fenceviewers and a common herdsman and laid out and maintained roads.¹⁷ The town's importance as a buffer against the wilderness will become clearer later in this paper with the description of the Farmer's Frontier. In spite of this buffer, the frontier effect was still profound. Turner's Frontier Thesis was supported by the Connecticut experience. The safety valve of free land continued to provide reasons and opportunity to leave the established settlements.

Connecticut's Frontier in the 1630's was the defensible area just outside the settlements on the west side of the Connecticut River valley. This was a very small area. Wild animals of every description and a native population of uncertain proclivity made life precarious. Distance from England and associated costs of transportation made everything from Europe (clothes, household goods, tools) very dear. Trade with the Indians for foodstuffs and furs was from the beginning very important to the economic life of the towns. Expansion outward from the mother towns proceeded for the next 150 years but not without two significant Indian wars that for a short time made this pattern of expansion stop and even recede.¹⁸

Nevertheless the pattern was set: When one or more of the influences making for a willingness to migrate was present, people had not only access to vacant and virtually free land but also an established habit and method of organization which they could use to reduce it to usefulness.¹⁹ Much of Connecticut's history up to the second quarter of the 19th century was marked by an exodus of its inhabitants to the frontier. By 1755, the

last lands of Connecticut had been settled, parishes formed and towns organized. The Frontier had moved to other regions. Areas of Vermont, Western Massachusetts, Northern Pennsylvania, New York, and Northeastern Ohio became safety valves in their turn for Connecticut's young, landless, restless, opportunists or dissidents. But did this ever-present free land in Connecticut and elsewhere, as Turner said, foster individualism and give rise to democracy? To answer this question we must look at Connecticut's colonial government.

Frontier and Democracy in Connecticut. The Connecticut Colony from the very beginning of her history exercised rights of self government largely independent of royal prerogatives and the king's executive officials in England,

. . . enjoying in all parts of its governmental system an approximately complete control of its own affairs.²⁰ She was isolated from England in many ways and as a colonial government tended to like it that way. Her towns were isolated also from one another which made for a large degree of self-reliance.

She was little touched by events outside her own boundaries and was little affected by the laws, customs, practices and principles in vogue elsewhere.²¹ In fact an examination of her laws passed up to 1721 found many that in the opinion of the counsel from the Board of Trade who examined them, gave civil and judicial authorities too much discretion allowing for injustice and even oppression. Some laws were seen as vague and unreasonable while so large number of crimes carrying capital punishment under the Mosaic Code was unusual. Finally, he found infringements of personal liberty and laws inferior to English law as they related to individual rights.²² For a discussion of Connecticut's tradition of independence during the Colonial period, see Unit IV of this volume.

To understand how this could happen we need to understand that the Connecticut government was never intended to be a democracy in the generally understood meaning of the word. Its leadership was as opposed to general suffrage as it was to a royal governor and the reason lay in one of the essential motives for its creation, namely the worship of God. The Connecticut government was above all a religiously Puritan state. See Unit I

. . . there prevailed a system that was aristocratic, paternalistic, and to some extent clerical or at all events religious.²³ Nevertheless there is some evidence that indicates that seventy or eighty percent of the adult male population in Connecticut were eligible to become freemen in 1669 and thus could vote for any local office and could run for public office.²⁴

Further, church membership was not an unofficial requisite for voting or becoming a freeman in the earliest years most of the original settlers were probably both church members and freemen, but we have no reason to suppose that non-church members were hindered in getting the franchise at any time.²⁵ At the same time every adult male had to support and attend the church in his town member or not. Adults wanted membership, but could not apply until they had undergone the spiritual experience of conversion.²⁶ This last point is an important one for it reminds us that Connecticut's population in the 17th century at least was relatively homogenous in every important respect. Ethnically, socially, economically, Connecticut's people were alike.

Religiously, she possessed but one church, one prevailing habit of religious thought, one dominating religious purpose in the hearts of her people, one controlling policy that directed her government toward religious ends and proclaimed her for what she was, a religious Puritan state, set apart from the rest of the world as a home and refuge for the people chosen of God and sanctified to his glory.²⁷ According to Turner, people came to the

frontier experience with their own set of complex political, economic, social institutions which usually were out of place in the wilderness and the

'cake of custom' was broken a new customs better adapted to a primitive society were substituted. ²⁸ Were the Fundamental Orders and later the Charter of 1662 responses to the wilderness environment? Did the complex political forms of Europe and Massachusetts give way to the simple associations of settlers or rudimentary representative body? It appears that on the Connecticut Frontier the Puritan society for at least the 17th century was able to forestall to some degree the effect of the wilderness. [For a discussion of the Fundamental Orders and the Charter of 1662, see Unit II of this volume.]

The Puritan colonies were one of the most striking cases since the days of Ancient Greek colonization of the successful transplanting of cultural ideals to a new environment. ²⁹ . . . the frontier played no such political role as in other colonies . . . frontiersmen shared the ideals of the old Puritan group. ³⁰ So how does Turner's Frontier Thesis fit in with Connecticut's Frontier experience? Did the wilderness forge rugged individualism and transform the English (or at least the Massachusetts) political institutions into a new form closer to democracy if not actually democratic? The answer would have to be yes as the franchise in Connecticut was far more expansive than in Massachusetts where church membership was required and political power was held by a very small, select number of the Puritan elite. Hooker emigrated for several reasons, not the least of which was political. Had the frontier in Connecticut with its abundant free land not been there, what would the effects have been in Massachusetts Day of a dissident population? The fertile Connecticut lands were a safety valve for Massachusetts Day. Democracy in Connecticut was an outgrowth of English antecedents to be sure but its very existence and flowering in the wilderness of Connecticut was made possible by the ever present frontier.

What of Turner's other Frontier ideas? Did Connecticut experience the vertical Frontier zones of the Warrior, Fur Trader, Miner, Cattleman, Farmer and Urban Man?

Connecticut and Turner's Frontier Zones

Turner's image of frontier zones consisted of clear and distinct characters who came to the frontier for a short time, played out their unique purpose and moved further west. The Warrior Frontier would last as long as the Indian's ability to forestall the westward expansion of the colonists and usually ended with a particular Indian war. In the same way the Fur Trader Frontier would last just as long as the supply of beaver and other fur-bearing animals lasted. The Cattle Frontier out west conjures up vast herds of longhorns moving north from Texas in the post-Civil War days. Connecticut had no distinct cattle frontier, but cattle and cattle drives did play a part in its early history. The Miner's Frontier started and ended with the exploitation of mineral resources. Connecticut in the 17th and 18th centuries had few resources to exploit but very early on provided incentives and benefits to those who could find and exploit important metals and other minerals. Some of these, such as iron, became important locally. The most important and all encompassing Turnerian Frontier zone for Connecticut was the Pioneer Farmer. All the other zones really are part of this Frontier. It was Connecticut's farmers who were the Indian fighters, the fur traders, the investors in mines and cattle and above all in land; and it was he who leveled the timbers and plowed up the virgin soil. What follows is an effort to separate two of those frontier zones: the Warrior and the Fur Trader Zones, and then close this research effort with a closer look at that all encompassing Farmer Frontier in Connecticut.

The Warrior Frontier. The Indians were here when the Dutch and English arrived and were to have an effect on and be profoundly affected by the arrival of these newcomers. Early explorers and fisherman had touched the

shores of New England before Adriaen Block sailed up the Connecticut River in 1614. They brought home not only favorable descriptions of this new land, but also commodities acquired in trade with the native Indians.

Just how large and how diversified was the Indian population? One population estimate made by the Smithsonian in 1928 states that about 25,000 Indians were in New England in 1600. This was before the epidemic of 1616-17 which killed an estimated one-third of the native population leaving 15,000 to 18,000 Indians in all of New England mostly along the coast and up the river valleys. These estimates appear to be far too low with one scholar estimating Connecticut's pre-contact era Indian population to be around 35,000. ³¹ An account drawn up by the General Court in 1680, five years after Connecticut's last Indian war, puts the number of warriors in Connecticut at 500 and the total number of individuals at around 2,500. ³² Others have estimated the warriors numbered around 1,000. ³³

Prior to the arrival of the colonists in Connecticut, a great plague or disease such as yellow fever or smallpox hit the Indian tribes of Connecticut very hard, wiping out entire villages and reducing tribes by thirty to ninety percent. This may explain the ease with which the Pilgrims and later the colonists of Connecticut were able to find a place for themselves among the Indian tribes of Connecticut. (See DeForest's Map of 1851 showing Indian Tribes of Connecticut which follows this section).

(figure available in printed form)

The Indian population was far from unified as intertribal warfare reduced the native population. This meant that the Puritans of Connecticut did not have to face a united military opposition. In fact the Puritans usually had Indian allies to fight for them. In weapon technology, the colonists were superior to the Indians, according to one writer, and often faced numbers far superior only to repulse them. ³⁴

This technological advantage may be questioned to some degree when one considers the ability of the Indians to fire as many as seven arrows accurately in the time it takes to load a 17th century musket. Nevertheless, Connecticut's Anglo-Indian wars were vicious affairs despite the fact that they were short-lived and small in terms of men involved. Some historians have written about how inevitable the victories were for the colonists. ³⁵ To the Connecticut-New England Puritans, this inevitable victory was far from sure. Vigilance was the watchword as the General Court ordered each town to keep a portion of the able-bodied males on watch, required that men come to meeting with their weapons, that the militia companies train regularly, and that supplies of powder and shot on hand be kept adequate. ³⁶

The Pequot War of 1636 involved an army of approximately 430 colonists. Connecticut provided ninety men: forty-two from Hartford, thirty from Windsor and eighteen from Wethersfield. Massachusetts Bay sent two hundred and Plymouth forty men. ³⁷ The effect on Connecticut can be measured when one considers that only about 280 men were in the entire colony at the start of the Pequot War. ³⁸ The Pequots failed in their attempt to gain the help of their old adversaries, the Narragansetts. In a battle at the Pequot Fort in what is now the town of Groton today, the Pequots lost an estimated 600 to 1,000 men, women and children. ³⁹ Eyewitness accounts, including the leader John Mason, estimated the number of Indians who died at 300-400 and 600-700. ⁴⁰ Regardless of the exact number, the effect was the same, the elimination of one of the more powerful Indian threats to the young Connecticut colony.

King Phillip's War of 1675 was much more general in character and much more expensive in lives and in the destruction of property. It is estimated that several thousand of the colonists in New England were killed, while twelve of their settlements were burned and 100,000 pounds of debt incurred to put an end to the conflict.

Contacts between Indians and Colonists were highly regulated by the Connecticut General Court of the 17th century. Trade with the Indians, especially of furs and Indian corn, was put into the hands of highly respected citizens who were given a monopoly. Trade in firearms was forbidden, and even the Indians' handling of an English weapon was not allowed. Indians who moved about after dark near towns in 1640 took very serious risks as the Public Records of the General Court four years after the Pequot War indicates:

It is ordered that if any Indian be discovered by the Watch in the night wth in any of the Plantations of the Jurisdiction, or be found by the ward in the day breakeing open any house or offering any desperate assaults, w^{ch} may endanger the life of any person, it shall be lawful for the watch or ward in such case to shuttle any Indian or Indians, if he or they shall not subject themselves to the watch or ward. And that Tho: Steynton shall, wth in fourteen days, give notice of this Order to all the Chiefe Indians who haue ordinary recourse to these Plantations. ⁴² The General Code of Connecticut for 1650 as it relates to the Indians, gives us a clear view of how the Puritans perceived them. (See the Appendix A for selected passages from that Code.) Indians were important to the Colonists as a source of vital commodities. Furs, wampum and Indian corn were all important as medium of exchange. While the Indians were seen as a very serious danger to life, limb, and property they were sometimes also seen as God's children in need of enlightenment.

Connecticut's Indian Frontier experience appears to be very similar to the Indian Frontiers later on. It was trade especially in furs and metal goods, that brought the cultures together. The Indian population was reduced by disease and warfare, and their intertribal conflicts prevented united Indian reaction to the westward march. Nevertheless, the Indian presence was a constant concern necessitating extraordinary security measures and on-going vigilance. The Connecticut colony was in effect a military outpost in the wilderness. The Indians met an organized, highly motivated population. The differences in the two societies were extreme. "One was unified, visionary, disciplined and dynamic. The other was divided, self-satisfied, undisciplined and static." ⁴³

The Fur Trader's Frontier in Connecticut . The image we have of the western fur trader is a heavily bearded, buckskin clad, smelly fellow who was more at home in the wilderness and with the Indians than in the cities of the East. They were the forerunners of civilization who blazed the trails and set their traps. They did not change conditions in the West because they adapted themselves to the Indian ways, adopted Indian habits and even their women, but they helped to set up the Indian for the fall. They weakened the natives with diseases among them and gave them guns to slaughter other tribes. Most importantly the frontier trapper advertised the West, explored it and guided settlers to it. Were there comparable people in Connecticut? There may have been as indicated in the letters from Roger Williams to John Winthrop and from William Coddington to John Winthrop. They speak of individuals who have "turned Indian."

Wm. Baker of Plymouth . . . who is there hid, is turned Indian in nakedness and cutting of haire, and after many whoredomes, is there married; this fire brand with those Pequots may fire whole Townes. ⁴⁴ "There is a rude Felowe, one Tho Saverye who has had a yellow haired child by an Indian woman." He in 1640 had been arrested and whipped for breaking into a house when the people were at church. ⁴⁵

It was this process of turning Indian that Turner spoke of when he described how the wilderness stripped off the woolens and shoes of the colonist and put buckskins and moccasins on him. By and large, however, Connecticut's Fur Trader's Frontier was different in several ways from what occurred later on. It was the New England and Connecticut practice to regulate very closely contacts with the natives in general and trade in particular. The Puritans were well aware of the effects of living away from established settlements with their

churches and schools. To live like an Indian was to backslide away from God, not to mention civilization, therefore, Puritans were careful to put this Indian trade in the hands of some of its most trusted and ablest citizens. Usually the most orthodox Puritans were given exclusive control of the fur trade for a period of years.

General Court Record April 5, 1638 It is ordered that none shall trade in this River with the Indians for beaver but that are hereafter named (vize) For Agawam Mr Pyncheon, for Windsor Mr Ludlowe, Mr Hull, for Hartford Mr Whytinge, Tho: Staunton; Wythersfeild Geo: Hubberd and Rich: Lawes, and if any trade for beaver other then are fornamed they shall forfeit 5s pr pounce to be paide pr eury pounce they soe trade. ⁴⁶ The Connecticut fur traders used the Indians as trappers and thus removed the need and the danger to the colonists of going primitive. The Connecticut fur trader was a merchant trading the relatively cheap (to him) metal goods (hoes, pots and pans) for the relatively very valuable furs of the Indians.

The fur trade was important to Connecticut as a medium of exchange along with wampum and Indian corn. The General Court in taxing the towns of "Aggawan, Windsor, Hartford, Wethersfeild" for the Pequot War said payment could be made in "monney," in wampum "at fower a penney" or "in good and marchantable beaver at 9s per pounce." This Indian trade especially in furs, was important to Connecticut because it helped Connecticut to pay for their heavy importation of materials from England.

The volume and wealth of Connecticut's fur trade cannot really compare with the great fortunes amassed in the Western fur trade, nevertheless it is helpful to Connecticut youngsters to know something about the volume of fur trade on streams in or around the Connecticut River. The Dutch, for example, before 1634 were annually exporting 10,000 pounds of furs, By comparison, the Pilgrims in the Plymouth Colony in 1634 were exporting 3,738 pounds annually. A drop in beaver trade in the 1630's forced the Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay to look for additional sources. Plymouth went north to Maine and the Bay to the Merrimack River and settlement of Concord. At the same time and for the same reason the interception of the fur trade at its sources closer to the "Lake of the Iroquois" the Puritans located trading ventures on the Connecticut River at Wethersfield, Hartford, Windsor and Agawam, and on the Quinnipiac at New Haven.

The volume of the fur trade in the Connecticut River Valley can be seen from figures recorded by John Pynchon of Agawam Springfield in his account books for the years 1652-1657. Pynchon had a monopoly for a time on the trade from north of Windsor to Northampton. During this period Pynchon exported forty-seven hogsheads (barrels of approximately sixty-three gallons) containing 8,992 skins weighing a total of 13,802 pounds. In England each skin brought about eight shillings per pound for a total value of 5520. ⁴⁷ The eastern fur trade like that of the West was quickly exploited and exhausted. Its drop in volume after 1630 was sharp and by 1675 it was entirely gone. ⁴⁸ This was caused at least in part by indiscriminate trapping but also by the low offspring rate of the beaver.

The fur trade in Connecticut did not involve a large part of the colony's population. One economic historian put it this way:

Operating, so to speak, over the heads of the settlers, it affected their lives only indirectly as remittances for goods they needed or as local currency. ⁴⁹ Furs were useful as a medium of exchange due to the lack of money in the colony. Indian corn and wampum were also accepted. Exchange and prices for all of these commodities were regulated by the General Court, and the exchange became standardized to the extent that furs and pelts had an established table of values:

One pound of hides two pounds of old iron one and one-half pound of hides = buckskin of 4 1/2 pounds two

pounds of hides one pound of old pewter. ⁵⁰ Connecticut's Fur Trading Frontier existed before the period of colonial settlement and was one of the reasons for settlement of the Connecticut River Valley. The extent and value of the fur trade was relatively small but afforded the Connecticut colony a much needed medium of exchange and a valuable commodity for export. The trapping itself was done by the Indians while the trade was managed by the most orthodox of Puritan leaders. Concern for the effects of the wilderness and the profits of the trade made the Puritans highly selective of the individuals involved in such trade. ⁵¹ The fur trading frontier vanished by the 1670's but the people who had lived by it did not. ⁵² The fur trader was also a land owner, a farmer, and a proprietor. ⁵³ As a farmer he would bring the most far reaching impact on the Connecticut landscape for the farmer changed the land to suit his purposes.

The Pioneer Farmer's Frontier . The first settlers in Connecticut were farmers. This was their main preoccupation, but these pioneers were also opportunists who saw the value of land, furs, cattle, and minerals to their over-all survival and economic betterment. We find the Pioneer Farmer's Frontier in Connecticut establishing itself in 1635 with the first division of land in Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford. These original settlers came overland from Dorchester, Newtown, and Watertown with not only farming implements but also with a herd of cattle. This trip which today would take one and one-half hours took several weeks. ⁵⁴

It might be argued then that one of the first cattle drives in the country occurred between Boston and Hartford. The pattern was to continue only in reverse at a later time. ⁵⁵ So from the beginning there was something of a cattle frontier in Connecticut and it served as one of the reasons for migrating to the Connecticut coast and the Connecticut River valley with their "precious meadow and marshes where grass grew naturally." The new towns were selected for their proximity to meadows rather than rich land because of the feeding needs of the cattle. ⁵⁶ Cattle virtually took care of themselves in summer, foraging on the meadows, the partly cleared lands or in the woods. Cattle-raising was less laborious to the Puritan farmer and gave him an important commodity for market. Nevertheless, it did take some labor. The underbrush had to be cleared in the woods, and fields had to be fenced to prevent damage to crops. Sometimes these fences, Winthrop complained, "cost almost as much as the land is worth."⁵⁷ Connecticut law required the entire town to spend one day a year making pasture; ⁵⁸ it also required brands for horses. Hartford had an A, Windsor, an I, and Norwalk, an O, in 1665. A person in town was also to be designated to brand the animals and record its markings. ⁵⁹ Wild animals played havoc with these animals and the General Court offered bounties on wolves from the very beginning. ⁶⁰ According to frontier historian Ray Allen Billington:

Like the fur trader the cowmen contributed little to the conquest of the wilderness; instead they reverted to the primitive themselves before the stronger force of nature. ⁶¹ The Puritan cattleman/farmer struggled with the wilderness and sometimes lost. The early cattlemen seeing the lush pastureland underestimated the winter feed needs of their cattle as well as the severity of the climate. ⁶² Hay was often in very short supply and was expensive in terms of manpower. Animals were poorly housed and fed, but surviving cattle were hardy, but smaller than English cattle. Hogs were larger due to the abundance of food for which they could forage. Sheep-raising was encouraged for wool, but never attained the quality of English animals, but Connecticut was noted by other colonies for its flocks. ⁶³ Herds were small and little surplus was generated for export or sale in the first generation of colonists. ⁶⁴ Some Connecticut cattlemen in the 17th century did, however, have a surplus and sent their animals to market, especially to Boston and the fishing fleets. Winthrop noted in 1686 that in a bad year he made close to three pounds on each head of cattle. ⁶⁵

During the 1690's Woodstock merchants carted surplus farm products to Boston and many farmers drove

cattle overland.

Even the Winthrop's, whose vast farms lay directly on the sea, found the drover's pay and the cost of fattening in Boston cheaper than shipping the animals. ⁶⁶ Grains fed the family while cattle provided the surplus that was sent to market and allowed the family to purchase commodities, such as a gun or tools and possibly a luxury item.

Linen pewter on the table, a suit of clothes made of English fabric, or lace for a dress were marks of prestige. ⁶⁷ In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Connecticut farmer was limited by the wilderness because to conquer it needed labor which was even more scarce. With land abundant, few individuals were content to work for wages when they might easily be independent. The advantage of the smaller farm lay in its low overhead in that sons did not have to be paid. ⁶⁸ This scarcity of labor and of capital and inadequate transport kept most farmers in Connecticut (an estimated ninety percent of the population) at the subsistence level. ⁶⁹ To conquer the wilderness, the land had to be cleared of trees, so the ground could be planted. Frequently trees were girdled Indian fashion, cut later and ground plowed around the stump, sometimes for many years, before the stumps were raised. ⁷⁰ Towns near rivers had a transportation advantage that interior towns did not have. Sometimes the General Court waved taxes to help towns complete the important roads connecting them to rivers or to other towns. ⁷¹

The Pioneer Farmer from the beginning used the forests as a source of commodities for export. Planks, shingles, tar, turpentine, pipestaves used in construction of barrels, ashes (potash) for soap were sold when the Farmer's labors permitted their accumulation. ⁷²

The most important early crop the Pioneer Farmer grew was Indian corn. It was made legal tender as early as 1641. ⁷³ The corn was raised in all sorts of soils and was the staple of new towns and was the main diet "until nearly rivaled by wheat in the beginning of the 18th century." It also depleted the soil.

Connecticut farming in the 17th century can best be described as extensive and wasteful rather than intensive and careful. Farmers never manured, they rotated fields rather than crops. ⁷⁴ When the yield was down, the field was abandoned and new acreage was brought under cultivation. As long as new land was available, it was cheaper to move and clear new land than to fertilize the old land. Not until 1750 did crop rotation become widespread in Connecticut. ⁷⁵ This was also the pattern of the Pioneer Farmer Frontier as it crossed the country and was made possible by the everpresent abundant land.

A word should be said here about how a person qualified for a farm in a town. A person had to be of "sober conversation," needed only to possess a freehold valued at 50's in the common list and be admitted as an inhabitant.

The property qualification was a small barrier, and the town gave its approval to virtually all who supported the social order. In effect, those who submitted to the rule of law and authority received in periodic divisions all the advantages that land brought. ⁷⁶ Connecticut's Pioneer Farmer Frontier lasted as long as his wasteful subsistent practices allowed him to survive. Early in the 18th century, changes came to Connecticut in the form of specialization by region and town that were due to different types of soils and terrain. Commercial farming increased. Meat and dairy production surpassed grain farming to become the dominant form of agriculture. ⁷⁷ This development was the advent of what Billington refers to as the Equipped Farmer Frontier. Farmers with capital came to stay and develop their acreage, cleared more land and produced a surplus.

Connecticut's Pioneer Farmer Frontier was much like the farming frontiers further west. Pioneers faced the real threat of Indian attack, hated Indians from experience and wanted more settlement and safety.⁷⁸ Because they made little compromise with the wilderness, theirs was the fiercest struggle for the Indians and the forest gave in grudgingly. Out of this crucible of experience, the individual American was forged. The qualities of courage, rugged individualism, self-reliance and inventiveness were honed into the American character. Without these individuals, Connecticut's wilderness and those frontiers further west would not have been transformed into the land we know today.

NOTES

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Appendix A

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES FOR UNIT, CONNECTICUT AND THE FRONTIER

1. *Objective* Understanding of Frederick Jackson Turner's Thesis. *Materials* Use the section of this paper on Turner's thesis or review Turner's essay in F. J. Turner's, *Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner* . Also books by Ray Allan Billington review and expand Turner's positions. See the diagram below.

Strategy Readings by the class or teacher lecture. The following may be copied and used as a transparency to illustrate Turner's Frontier Process.

TURNER'S FRONTIER PROCESS Source: Thomas F. Howard Conn. and Frontier

(figure available in printed form)

2. *Objective* See Connecticut as an outgrowth of Massachusetts' settlement. *Material* William Hubbard's *Map of New England 1677* . The original was a woodcut 12 x 15 13/16 inches found in William Hubbard's, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England* . Boston, 1677. It is considered to be the first map ever engraved and printed in the British North American colonies. The map is provided courtesy of Yale University, Bienecke Library. A transparency may be made from it for best results.

Strategy Review map with students and ask questions about it. You may want to see if the students are really looking at it. Ask them if they can find their town. (Chances are they will not Ask them why not?) What is the

compass orientation of the map? (West is at the top; North to the right.) What Connecticut towns are shown? (See top of map.) What Connecticut rivers and streams are shown? (Check DeForest Map of Connecticut in text following page 20.) What Indian tribes are shown between the Connecticut settlements and those in Massachusetts? (Compare the names of those tribes to those on DeForest's map.) Can you name and locate the Massachusetts' towns from which Connecticut's first settlers came? (Dorchester, Cambridge, Watertown) What symbolism does Hubbard use? Is the scale in miles accurate? Do you see any unusual spellings?

3. *Objective a)* To locate on a map specific Indian tribes such as Pequots, Mohegans, Niantics, Podunk, Poquonocks, etc.

b) To understand the relationship of those to each other and with the colonists in the 17th century.

c) To be able to identify and explain, through specific General Court orders how the colonists perceived of and treated the Indian. (The relationship should be seen in terms of 17th century frontier reality.)

(figure available in printed form)

Materials See map showing the location of Connecticut Indian tribes by DeForest (1851) found in the text of this paper. The section of the text on the Warrior Frontier may be used by teachers and students but further reading is suggested. (see text footnotes and bibliography) Hubbard's *Map of New England 1677* may be used as well for this objective. The Connecticut General Court *Code of 1650*, section on the Indian, has been reproduced in part and includes discussion questions. These may be used with students just as they appear and represent the Court's effort to summarize all legislation passed between 1635-1650 relative to the Indians. (only portions have been reproduced.) How the colonists located, as they were, in their small enclaves surrounded by Indians, perceived of those Indians is clear from that reading. A look at Indian place names may stimulate student interest and may make them more aware of colonial history around them. The following are suggested for that purpose;

1. Bradshaw, Harold Clayton. *The Indians of Connecticut*. Privately printed. 1935. pp. 59-60. (based on Trumbull)

2. Hughes, Arthur H. and Morse S. Allen. *Connecticut Place Names*. Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1976: (This large work goes farther than any other. Arranged alphabetically by town with large appendix, it lists rivers, streams, towns and villages of Indian origin. Large and useful bibliography.)

3. Roberts, George S. *Historic Towns of the Connecticut River Valley*. Schenectady, N.Y.: Robson and Adee, 1906, pp. 14-17.

4. Trumbull, J. Hammond. *Indian Names of Places*. Hartford: Case Lockwood & Brainard, 1881. Reprinted as an Archon Book, 1974. *Strategy* Student readings on the Indians, their relations with other Indians and with the colonists, the Pequot War and King Phillip's War would help in any general discussion of this period. The map, either as a handout or as a transparency, should serve as a basis for discussion as well as faster map reading skills. The *Code of 1650*, relative to the Indian should be read carefully, perhaps aloud in class, with

discussion following each paragraph, using the discussion questions provided. Student research or projects may be a spin-off to these discussions.

4. *Objective* To understand the settlement of Connecticut as a movement out and from towns along the coast and on the Connecticut River, and to develop skills especially the interpretation and analysis of maps.

Materials *Sketch Map of Approximate Town Bounds as Initially Laid Out* by Christopher Collier may be used in order to illustrate how today's towns were once a part of larger sections of Connecticut wilderness. Some boundaries may be at variance as this map is a preliminary one. The Northcentral towns of Suffield, Enfield, Somers and Woodstock were, in fact, part of Massachusetts up to 1749 and East Granby grew out of Granby and part of Windsor.

Map of the Colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island by Thomas Kitchin, a geographer, in 1758. This map was produced for an article in the *London Magazine* (1758) and is believed to be the first printed map that is primarily of Connecticut now in existence. The date it shows of township lines is not found on any existing earlier sources. (Source: E. Thompson, *Maps of Connecticut Before the Year 1800*, 1940). The clarity of the map should make a good transparency or

(figure available in printed form)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the colonists trying to accomplish by their regulations? 2. Notice that the footnote indicates this regulation was passed in 1640, only five years after the first settlers arrived and three years since the Pequot War. What does it imply about Indian values? Did the colonists' culture have technological advantages that would appeal to the Indians? What about the punishments, do you think they were fair? What is a halfe a fathom of wampum? ** * Thomas Stanton was used as an official translator in most dealings with the Indians. He lived for a time in Hartford, before moving to Stonington, Connecticut.

3-5. Why is trade with the Indians regulated? What are the Puritans concerned about?

6. What does it mean when we say that a colonist has "gone Indian"? Why was it a 'prophane course of life' to the Puritan leaders?

(figure available in printed form)

7. What is the image or perception the colonists have of the Indians, especially as to their religious salvation? How do the colonists propose to correct the situation? ** Wampum a good discussion of what it was and its economic importance can be found in Alden T. Vaughan's *New England Frontier : Puritans and the Indians 1620-1675*. Little Brown, 1965. pp. 220-224.

(figure available in printed form)

adequate student copies. Map illustrating the *Chronological Order of Official Establishment of Incorporation of Connecticut Towns* by Christopher Collier. The information provided can be found in the *Connecticut State Register and Manual* but it is useful having it shown in this way. *Strategy* The use of a good wall map on Connecticut, showing rivers and town and county lines would be helpful. (Blank maps such as Denoyer-Geppert's No. 7107 may also be a useful classroom tool.) Each of the maps above relate to one another and should be used together. The first map could be viewed to best effect without town names. By shading or coloring the first seventy-five towns (either in groups or individually), a movement of settlement can be seen

to take place. Gaps in the map between towns represent bounds of towns incorporated later but which probably were part of the earlier incorporated town. The article, "Connecticut Towns in the Order of their Establishment: With the Origin of their Names," found in all *State Register and Manuals* since 1935 should be copied by the teacher and used by students in conjunction with these maps.

The Kitchin Map of 1758 presents a unique opportunity to stimulate student map analysis and interpretation. It is a good map, an original from the colonial period, but it has some errors or omissions. Using the Collier maps as a base, have the students find the errors or omissions. Not all will be able to do it, but those that do will be challenged. The following is a summary of the errors or omissions. The colony is drawn too narrowly in longitude by about one-sixth of a degree on both the east and west sides. Only three counties are named at a time when there were six. The dip in the northern boundary leaves out Suffield, Enfield, and Somers, all annexed to Connecticut and decreed by the Crown in 1755 to be part of Connecticut rather than Massachusetts. Stafford and Mansfield are shown but not labelled. Coventry and New Milford are misplaced. Durham, Wallingford and Waterbury are labelled but lines are not given. Many small rivers are not labelled. (Others may be found by the students but these have been noted by Thompson, mentioned above, and by Taylor in *Colonial History* , 1978.

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