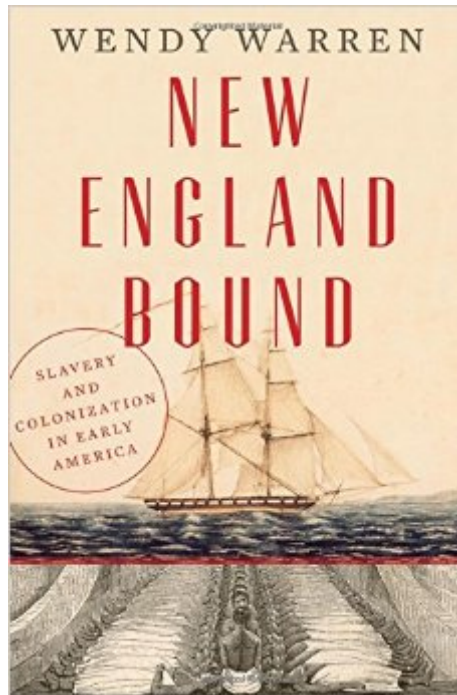


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New England Bound: Slavery And Colonization In Early America



Synopsis

A New York Times Editor's Choice "This book is an original achievement, the kind of history that chastens our historical memory as it makes us wiser." —David W. Blight

In a work that fundamentally recasts the history of colonial America, Wendy Warren shows how the institution of slavery was inexorably linked with the first century of English colonization of New England. While most histories of slavery in early America confine themselves to the Southern colonies and the Caribbean, *New England Bound* forcefully widens the historical aperture to include the entirety of English North America, integrating the famed "city on a hill" of seventeenth-century Puritan New England into the cruel Atlantic system from its very beginnings. Using original research culled from dozens of archives, Warren conclusively links the growth of the northern colonies to the Atlantic slave trade, showing how seventeenth-century New England's fledgling economy derived its vitality from the profusion of ships that coursed through its ports, passing through on their way to and from the West Indian sugar colonies. What's more, leading New England families like the Winthrops and Pynchons invested heavily in the West Indies, owning both land and human property, the profits of which eventually wended their way back north. That money, *New England Bound* shows, was the tragic fuel for the colonial wars of removal and replacement of New England Indians that characterized the initial colonization of the region. Warren painstakingly documents the little-known history of how Native Americans were systematically sold as slaves to plantations in the Caribbean, even in the first decades of English colonization. And even while *New England Bound* explains the way in which the Atlantic slave trade drove the colonization of New England, it also brings to light, in many cases for the first time ever, the lives of the thousands of reluctant Indian and African slaves who found themselves forced into the project of building that city on a hill. We encounter enslaved Africans working side jobs as con artists, enslaved Indians who protested their banishment to sugar islands, enslaved Africans who set fire to their owners' homes and goods, and enslaved Africans who saved their owners' lives. In Warren's meticulous, compelling, and hard-won recovery of such forgotten lives, the true variety of chattel slavery in the Americas comes to light, and *New England Bound* becomes the new standard for understanding colonial America. 10 illustrations, 3 maps

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Customer Reviews

Though it is Ecclesiastes that Warren cites occasionally to give "New England Bound" its distinctive mood, the book offers something of a story of genesis, about the days when the idea of America was still unsettled. Reading this history, you get a sense of how open the possibilities were for this new world, and how, in every sense of the word, the New Englanders settled. "New England Bound" unearths the complicity of seventeenth-century New England colonists in America's original sin of slavery, but there are here too enslaved people's own stories, sometimes stories of incendiary resistance, such as Maria Negro's arson, an act that led the authorities to execute her: in 1681, Maria was, Increase Mather recorded in his diary, "burned to death." As Warren observes, "servants' and slaves' quarters were naturally dens of resentment and grievance." What feels unique in Warren's writing, though, are the quieter stories of sorrow, such as that of an old man named John Whan (another enslaved man named Wonn, remarkably, testified in a Salem witchcraft trial). Warren writes of Whan's retirement to New York, after a life in the service of New Haven Governor Theophilus Eaton, in search of his "country folks" living in the Bowery. He explained that if he were to stay in New Haven, "no body would comfort him" if he became sick or frail. Whan left behind him a legal mess, as he sold his quarters on his way out of town "quarters that the late governor's daughter believed she, not the slave, had inherited. Could a slave sell his quarters?

I think this fine history can be best described as a real "eye opener." I assume it was written for folks just like me who had minimal knowledge of slavery in colonial New England, and are even surprised to learn that such existed, which indeed it did. It was even a greater revelation to me to learn that Indians were frequently enslaved in New England during the 16th and 17th centuries as well. In fact, slavery of Indians and Africans existed and flourished in New England from the very founding of the

Massachusetts Bay colony. The author makes clear that New England slavery was distinct in most ways from that found in Virginia, where it had been established as early as the founding of Jamestown. To be sure, while in New England there were some individual slaves serving families and businesses, usually 1-2 in number, obviously the vast plantation system of Virginia was absent. So what role did New England play in Atlantic slavery? The fascinating answer to this question is found in Part I, comprising three chapters of the book. While New England had relatively few slaves (Indians or Africans) resident within its boundaries, it was deeply involved in the Atlantic slave trade, particularly with its ships engaged in transporting slave cargo from Africa (but also including Indians), to the West Indies (especially Barbados and Jamaica) to be exchanged for sugar and other forms of payment, which then flowed back to New England. In addition, New England furnished fish, farm products, shipping and other services to the Sugar Islands' large plantations. All of this naturally linked back to Great Britain who owned the colonies in New England and the West Indies generating all this wealth.

Early on in *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*, a telling story is related that dates back to 1638, not even two decades removed from the Mayflower, of an English colonist near Boston who owned three enslaved Africans — “two women and one man” — that he sought to turn into breeding stock. When one of the females refused, he ordered the male slave to rape her in an attempt to impregnate her. The rape victim went out of her way to report what had occurred to another Englishman nearby, who in his written account of their conversation seemed to show some sympathy; however, his very next journal entry was a humorous description of his encounter with a wasp. [p7-8] It is clear that as property she otherwise lacked recourse under the circumstances. What does this one unusual anecdotal incident at the dawn of the colonial New England experience really tell us? It turns out that it is far more instructive than the reader might at first suspect, as Princeton University Professor Wendy Warren’s fascinating new contribution to the history of slavery in colonial North America reveals in the pages that follow. While many fine works of history in the past several decades have rightly restored the long-overlooked role of New England in the triangle trade that was central to the growth of slavery in the colonies, little attention has been paid to slavery as it actually existed in those northern colonies prior to abolition. The standard tale is that slavery never really caught on there, largely because the region lacked the climate and the crop for the plantation agriculture it was best suited for, and as such this untenable anachronism gradually faded away.

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