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# The Early New England-Barbados Trade

Larry D. Gragg

From their earliest years of settlement, some New Englanders had traded with islands in and around the Caribbean Sea. Between 1630 and 1640 at least twenty vessels sailed between New England and Barbados, Bermuda, Providence Island, St. Christopher, and Tortuga.<sup>1</sup> A need for salt to preserve fish and meat, and a demand for tropical and semi-tropical products, prompted the initial ventures.<sup>2</sup> By the early 1640s, a sense of economic urgency fueled New Englanders' efforts to expand this trade. Dwindling immigration from England caused a disastrous drop in trade and prices. "All foreign commodities grew scarce," Governor John Winthrop wrote, "and our own of no price. Corn would buy nothing: a cow which cost last year £20 might now be bought for 4 or £5, etc."<sup>3</sup>

Some sought new markets in Spain and the eastern Atlantic wine islands. Over the next four years, about a dozen vessels sailed to Malaga and the Canaries loaded with clapboard, pipe staves, wheat, Indian corn, and peas. But it was to the West Indies that most New England traders looked for salvation of their commerce. In 1641, Connecticut's governor and general court

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1. There were most certainly others lost to the historical record, but 20 are recorded in Vincent T. Harlow, History of Barbados, 1625-1686 (Oxford, 1926), pp. 269 and 272n; Notebook Kept by Thomas Lechford, Esq., Lawyer, In Boston, Massachusetts Bay, From June 27, 1638, to July 29, 1641, in Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society (Cambridge, 1885), p. 46n; and James K. Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal, 1630-1649 (New York, 1908), 1: 66-67, 126, 151, 176, 222, 227-228, 260, 309-310, and 2: 7.

2. Shipmasters brought tobacco, potatoes, oranges, limes, cotton, sugar, indigo, and blacks to New England from the islands.

3. Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal, 2: 31. Through 1640, about 20,000 had immigrated to Massachusetts. In the early 1640s, however, with the hope for religious and political reform in England, fewer Puritans migrated. In July of 1642, Winthrop noted the arrival of two ships from England which carried only five or six migrants; see *ibid.*, p. 69.

even sponsored the "furnishing and setting forth" of a ship to develop "a trade of Cotten wooll." It was an effort which paid dividends if not for Connecticut at least for Massachusetts. John Winthrop reported in 1643 that because of recent West Indian shipments, some in his colony "fell to a manufacture of cotton."<sup>4</sup>

Most of the cotton had come from Barbados and it was that island which became the greatest attraction for New Englanders. They had known about it for some time; as early as 1631 some had sent letters to London by way of Barbados.<sup>5</sup> Through that connection they learned of, but had displayed little interest in, the islanders' unsuccessful effort to raise marketable tobacco.<sup>6</sup> When planters shifted to cotton and sugar cane production, however, New Englanders took greater notice. They saw Barbados as a source of raw materials to be sure, but increasingly more as a potentially lucrative market for their goods. In making a rapid conversion to sugar in the 1640s and 1650s, Barbadians accelerated the clearing of their island of trees and greatly reduced the cultivation of other crops, a development which forced them to import the greater part of their wood products and food.<sup>7</sup> Letters from migrants and visitors to Barbados, as well as reports from ship captains and crew members who had sailed there, alerted acquaintances in Massachusetts to the growing commercial

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4. Darrett B. Rutman, Winthrop's Boston: A Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965), pp. 184-185; The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford, 1850), 1: 59; Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal, 1: 122.

5. Harlow, Barbados, p. 269. John Winthrop knew of the island even earlier because of the effort of his son, Henry, to succeed as a tobacco planter there between 1627 and 1629. See Allyn B. Forbes ed., Winthrop Papers (Boston, 1929), 1: 356-357 and 361-362.

6. Barbados' planters consistently produced a plant inferior in quality to Virginia tobacco. John Winthrop described it as "fowle, full of stalkes and evill coloured." Richard Ligon explained that it was so "worthless, as it could give them little or no return from England," Forbes, ed., Winthrop Papers (Boston, 1931), 2: 67; Richard Ligon, A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes (London, 1673), reprint, p. 24.

7. One planter noted the rapidly disappearing timber in 1655, and planters in the 1660s complained of a shortage. See Charles M. Andrews, The Colonial Period of American History vol. 2, The Settlements (New Haven, 1936), p. 252n; and Richard S. Dunn, Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713 (New York, 1973), reprint, pp. 27-28.

possibilities. An enthusiastic Sir George Downing described Barbados as a "flourishing island" to John Winthrop, Jr. in 1645, and he advised that the "certainest commodities" one could sell there were "mackrill basse, drye fish, beefe porke" and "linnen cloath." Two years later, Richard Vines, who had moved from Maine to Barbados, explained to John Winthrop that "men are so intent upon planting sugar that they had rather buy foode at very deare rates then produce it by labour, soe infinite is the profitt of sugar workes after once accomplished."<sup>8</sup>

Traders from other regions heard similar reports and likewise responded to the demand. Barbados planters, in the 1640s and the 1650s, bought goods from England, France, Holland, Russia, the wine islands, and the Chesapeake colonies, as well as New England.<sup>9</sup> The primary carriers were the Dutch who, according to one English observer, "had three if not four Sail of Ship for our one."<sup>10</sup> Passage of the 1651 Navigation Act and warfare between the English and the Dutch did diminish for a time the number of Dutch ships able to reach Barbados. This afforded the New Englanders a better opportunity, one which some eagerly embraced. The number of New England vessels sailing to the West Indian island increased dramatically in the 1650s and 1660s. By 1667, officials noted that Boston had a "great trade to Barbadoes with fish and other provisions." By 1680, Barbados' planters were shipping more sugar, cotton, and ginger to New England than to all the other British possessions combined.<sup>11</sup> Barbados Governor William Lord Willoughby noted the essential

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8. Forbes, ed., Winthrop Papers (Boston, 1947), 5: 43-44 and 172.

9. Clayton Colman Hall, ed., Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684 (New York, 1910), p. 299; and Ligon, True History, pp. 33, 37, 58, and 113.

10. Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624-1690 (New York, 1972), p. 306. Barbados Governor Daniel Searle essentially confirmed this observation when he reported that his island's "trade was most of all carried on by the Dutch." See W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., Calender of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1660 (London, 1860), p. 390.

11. A. P. Thornton, "Some Statistics of West Indian Produce, Shipping and Revenue, 1660-1685," Caribbean Historical Review 3-4 (December 1954), pp. 255-256. The significance of the trade for the two regions is clearly shown by several tables in Ian K. Steele, The English Atlantic 1675-1740, An Exploration of Communication and Community (New York, 1986), pp. 284-285, 294, and 296.

economic link between the two locales in 1667. He claimed: "Collonys in these parts cannot in time of peace prosper, nor in tyme of War subsist, without a correspondence with the people of Newe England."<sup>12</sup>

The "people of Newe England" responsible for forging this important trade connection have remained largely a nameless group. Historians have written valuable studies of the development of New England commerce, of the rapid emergence of the Barbados sugar trade, and occasionally, of the link between the two.<sup>13</sup> Seldom, however, have they dealt with the individuals involved beyond a discussion of the "leading" merchants and planters. Certainly the lack of complete shipping records for the seventeenth century has been a leading cause of the neglect. Sufficient documents nonetheless exist to permit the identification of many individuals who participated in the trade between New England and Barbados between 1645 and 1660. The list is far from complete; the names of the numerous skilled and unskilled workers who equipped and maintained the vessels, as well as the names of the members of their crews, rarely can be found in surviving documents.<sup>14</sup> Some principals in transactions -- ship

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12. Harlow, Barbados, p. 268.

13. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, No Peace Beyond the Line; George F. Chever "Some Remarks on the Commerce of Salem from 1626 to 1740," Essex Institute Historical Collections (July 1859), 1: 67-76; William I. Davisson and Dennis J. Dugan, "Commerce in Seventeenth-Century Essex County, Massachusetts," *ibid.*, (April 1971), 107: 113-142; George Francis Dow, "Shipping and Trade in Early New England," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society (April 1931), 64: 185-201; Dunn, Sugar and Slaves; Harlow, Barbados; Richard Pares, Yankees and Creoles: The Trade Between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution (London, 1968); Gary A. Puckrein, Little England, Plantation Society and Anglo-Barbadian Politics, 1627-1700 (New York, 1984); Rutman, Winthrop's Boston; and Richard Sheridan, Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775 (Baltimore, 1973). An important exception is Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York, 1964). Also see Larry Gragg, "The Barbados Connection: John Parris and the Early New England Trade with the West Indies," New England Historical and Genealogical Register (April 1986), 140: 99-113.

14. There were some exceptions. Depositions filed in Boston in 1655 provide three examples. Rhoda Gore, Matthew Groase, and John Jephson spent part of a day helping load a cargo on the Barbados bound Good Fellow. Gore helped receive

captains, shippers, buyers, factors, and financial backers -- likewise have remained anonymous. Still, by utilizing a wide variety of sources, the geographical distribution, occupations, and the specific roles they performed can be determined for 170 men and women in the trade. Further, it is possible to discover how specialized these people were in the trade, how dependent they were on English financial backers, and most importantly why so few became heavily engaged in the formative years of this significant inter-colonial commerce.<sup>15</sup>

While individuals from Amsterdam and the Madeira Islands to Rhode Island and Connecticut participated in the trade, most were from Massachusetts and Barbados (see Table One).<sup>16</sup> In the Bay Colony, the port towns, particularly Boston and Charlestown, contributed the most participants, but a scattering of men from several inland communities, including Springfield, also sought to make a profit from the Barbados trade. Most of the Barbadians who participated lived in the chief port of Bridgetown or in the nearby parishes of St. Michael, Christ Church, and St. Phillip. Londoners played a minimal role; those directly involved made up only one-tenth of the total.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, this trade developed through the efforts of Englishmen living on the edge of the empire, and not those in Britain.

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and weigh refuse fish taken to the ship by Groase and Jephson in their boats. See Suffolk Deeds (Boston, 1883), 2: 166-167.

15. For a complete listing of the sources which provided data for this study, see the appendix.
16. This resulted not only from Boston having the pre-eminent port in the region, but also from a bias in the sources. Most from this period were from Barbados and Massachusetts.
17. Several of the participants in the trade, however, did draw upon accounts in London.

TABLE ONE

Geographical Distribution of Participants  
in the New England-Barbados Trade

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Boston	48
Barbados	33
London	17
Charlestown	14
Salem	6
Other Mass. towns	11
Rhode Island	4
Madeira Islands	3
Connecticut	2
Amsterdam	2
Maine	1
Other English towns	4
Unknown	25
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Total	170

Note: The above indicate locale at time of transaction.

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Two occupational categories dominated the group -- merchants and mariners (see Table Two). Not all who called themselves merchants fit the usual description of that occupation, but most dealt in goods and services in a traditional way. For example, Francis Norton of Charlestown, who along with townsman Robert Sedgewick supplied £1,468 worth of "goods & Merchandise" to a ship bound for Barbados in 1649, had been actively involved in trade throughout the 1640s. In addition to the fur trade, he imported goods from England, shipped fish to Spain, and joined a group which paid the provincial government to

collect the customs on imported wines.<sup>18</sup> John Manniford of Barbados, who sailed to Boston in 1647 for a cargo of food and who purchased an Indian man from John Winthrop in 1648, held little land on the island. Instead, he followed a career in trade. He imported goods from England, as well as from New England, notably horses to crush sugar cane, and he purchased shares in two ships to export the planters' tobacco, cotton, and sugar.<sup>19</sup>

TABLE TWO  
Occupations of Participants

Merchant	47
Mariner (Shipmaster)	34
Planter	7
Haberdasher	3
Physician	3
Carpenter	2
Draper	2
Unknown (Unclear)	62
Brassier, Brewer, Butcher, Feltmaker, Iron Works Manager, Mercer, Minister, Shoemaker, Soapboiler, Vintner	1 each
Total	170

Note: Some clearly had diverse occupations; the above indicates what appears to have been their chief calling. The most difficult to determine were the Barbadians who, though they owned property, usually identified themselves as merchants on documents.

Others who called themselves merchants, however, did not pursue a single economic course. Martin Bentley identified

18. Aspinwall Notarial Records, pp. 199, 295, 356-357; Baily, New England Merchants, p. 51; and Shurtleff, ed., Records of Massachusetts Bay, 2: 276-277.

19. Forbes, ed., Winthrop Papers, 5: 172 and 196-197; RB3/1, pp. 842-843; RB3/2, pp. 73-74; RB3/3, p. 599; and Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 404 and 452.



himself as a merchant in 1650 when he served as an agent for London merchants Daniel Farvax and Isaac Legay, who ordered goods shipped from Boston to Barbados. Yet, in partnership with fellow Barbadian Robert Hooper, Bentley owned several hundred acres of land, imported slaves, and exported sugar, rum, and ginger.<sup>20</sup> Merchant John Parris, while involved in several trading voyages between New England and Barbados in the late 1640s and early 1650s, also managed a substantial sugar operation on three plantations.<sup>21</sup>

Of the twenty-three mariners whose residence could be determined, fourteen resided in New England and nine of those lived in Boston or Charlestown. Eight claimed England as home and one lived on Barbados. Most had substantial experience in the trans-Atlantic trade. George Dell moved from Salem to Boston in the 1640s, and served as shipmaster on several voyages across the Atlantic prior to a Boston to Barbados venture in 1654. Between 1647 and 1650, he had been to the West Indies for tobacco and to the eastern Atlantic islands for wine. In England, in September of 1653, he received a license from Oliver Cromwell's Council of State to secure children from Ireland to sell as servants in Virginia and New England. He had apparently completed the transaction in May of the next year, when he "sould unto Mr Samuell Symonds two of the Irish youthes I brought over." By August, he had readied the *Goodfellow*, which had transported the young servants, for a trip to Barbados carrying fifty quintals of refuse fish.<sup>22</sup> In the 1630s and 1640s, London shipmaster Henry Taverner piloted vessels from London to Virginia and to Barbados. In 1648, he brought a ship to Boston from the West Indies with a

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20. Suffolk Deeds 1: 271; Brandow, ed., Barbados Families, pp. 338-342; Hawtayne, "Records of Barbados," pp. 110-111; Custom House of Barbados, March 29, 1665 to November 12, 1666; Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 496-497; and RB3/5, pp. 9-11.

21. Gragg, "Barbados Connection," pp. 99-113.

22. A quintal averaged 112 pounds. See Davisson and Dugan, "Commerce in Essex County," p. 115n. Dell's career can be followed in Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, 2: 34; Roberts, ed., English Origins 3: 885-886; Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal 2: 329; Forbes, ed., Winthrop Papers 5: 223; Aspinwall Notarial Records, p. 418; and Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 407 and 410. Dell died shortly after the Barbados voyage, leaving an estate in excess of £1,500; see Roberts, ed., English Origins 3: 886.

cargo of tobacco. Then, in the fall of 1649, he sailed the *Providence* from Boston to Barbados with £1,468 worth of goods.<sup>23</sup> Other mariners with prior trans-Atlantic trade experience included Thomas Webber and Isaac Addington of Boston, and William Greene, John Thompson, and John Wall of England. As is clear from Table Two, there were people other than merchants and mariners in the trade. Indeed, the New England-Barbados trade attracted individuals whose occupations ranged from haberdasher to carpenter and from physician to butcher. Collectively, however, they represented a minority of the participants, and they were only occasionally involved, usually in single ventures.

An examination of the specific roles participants played in the trade yields a greater understanding of the dynamics of the commerce (see Table Three). There is, unfortunately, little information in the available documents on passengers and financial backers. There is more information about the men who served as agents or who were given power of attorney to collect debts for others. There is surprisingly little evidence of New Englanders or Barbadians acting on behalf of Londoners. To be sure, exceptions can be found. Theodore Atkinson, a Boston feltmaker, served as an agent for London hat haberdasher John Wilkins when he secured a cargo of fish for Barbados in 1650. A year earlier, Henry Shrimpton of Boston had sent a cargo of cattle and provisions to Barbados on behalf of a Mr. Bell of London.<sup>24</sup> Most cases, however, were like those of Boston's Paul Allistree, who served as an agent on a ship to Barbados for townsman William Phillips in 1650, and William Vassall of Barbados, who agreed in 1648 to collect debts on the island owed to Boston joiner John Crabtree.<sup>25</sup>

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 23. *Index of Ships*, p. 17; RB3/1, pp. 37-38 and 502-503; Forbes, ed., *Winthrop Papers* 5: 223; and *Aspinwall Notarial Records*, pp. 356-357.

24. *Aspinwall Notarial Records*, pp. 287-288 and 255. A few others are alluded to elsewhere in this article. There may have been a greater London connection than suggested here, but the available evidence does not support that speculation.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 341-342 and 177.

TABLE THREE  
Function in Transactions  
Shipper Buyer Master Agent Attorney Backer Passenger

Boston	22	5	6	6	4	6	5
Charlestown	9	2	5	1	1	1	1
Salem	6	1	3	0	0	0	0
Other N.E. towns	12	3	4	0	1	0	2
Barbados	17	14	1	5	1	1	1
London	8	3	6	0	1	0	0
All others	11	0	20	6	1	1	0

Note: The total number of the above is greater than the number of people in the study, because some had more than one function and some were involved in more than one voyage.

The most abundant evidence concerns buyers and sellers in the trade. Many people, particularly in New England, contributed to the cargoes of ships in the Barbados trade. Most striking was the number of people who contributed small cargoes. In 1658, John Cromwell, a small-scale trader from Billerica, shipped 751 pounds of fish to Barbados. Edward Burt of Charlestown, whose chief economic pursuit was the production of salt "in a new way," had a share in a house frame worth just over £40, which was sent to Barbados in 1652. Even a wealthy man like Springfield fur trader, land owner, and merchant John Pynchon shipped only relatively small cargoes, such as 4,600 pounds of flour and 2,900 pounds of bread in 1653, and 151 bushels of wheat and 84 bushels of peas in early 1658.<sup>26</sup> Most of the purchases, on the other hand,

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26. Records of Essex County 2: 430; Shurtleff, ed., Records of Massachusetts Bay 3: 275; Suffolk Deeds 2: 156; and Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, eds., Pynchon Papers 2: 149-151.

were made by well-established merchants and planters, or by those in the process of becoming so. In 1653, John Richards, a Boston merchant who knew about the Barbados market from his previous handling of the financial affairs for others on the island, agreed to buy over thirty thousand pounds of sugar.<sup>27</sup> Edward Chamberlayne, a young Barbados planter, bought fifty quintals of New England refuse fish in 1654. Chamberlayne was in the process of acquiring several parcels of land in St. Phillip's Parish, and he certainly purchased the fish for the slaves on his growing estate.<sup>28</sup>

Whether their participation was substantial or negligible, few in the 1640s and 1650s engaged in the trade for long, particularly the New Englanders. The allure of large potential profits remained strong; indeed, prices increased for goods they could supply. Barbados' planters, for example, could never obtain a sufficient number of horses for turning their sugar mills.<sup>29</sup> In 1651, "if in good Cause" a horse cost 3,000 pounds of sugar; ten years later, a horse of similar quality commanded double that amount.<sup>30</sup>

Yet, a host of reasons convinced potential investors to forego the opportunity despite the possible rewards. As in the case of Barbados planter John Allen, poorly-maintained vessels often led to losses. In late 1659, Mahalaleel Munnings of Boston shipped 17,250 white oak pipe staves on the *Rebecka* to John Carter of Funchal in the Madeira Islands. The ketch's master, Salem's John Jackson, then took an unspecified cargo to Allen. The Barbadian directed Jackson to another island, probably Tortuga, to take on a cargo of salt for the return voyage to New England.

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27. Suffolk Deeds 2: 27-28.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167; Brandow, ed., Barbados Families, p. 653; RB3/3, pp. 810-812; and RB3/7, pp. 270-275.

29. On sources for and uses of horses, see Ligon, True History, pp. 56, 58, 89-90.

30. "A Letter from Barbados by ye Way of Holland Concerning ye Condidcon of Honest Men there, 9 Aug. 1651," in Vincent T. Harlow, ed., Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667 (reprint, Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1967), p. 52; and Alexander Gunkel and Jerome S. Handler, eds., "A Swiss Medical Doctor's Description of Barbados in 1661: The Account of Felix Christian Spoeri," Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (1967) 33: 5.

Unfortunately, as the obviously embarrassed carpenter who "fitted the vessel" for the cargo of salt admitted, "the vessel began to be leaky so that the voyage was abandoned and they returned home, without freight."<sup>31</sup> A variation on this problem confronted Salem merchants William Browne, George Corwin, and Walter Price, who drew up an agreement with Edward Prescott in 1652. Prescott, "freightor of the Ship Blessing," agreed to handle their shipment to Barbados. Twelve days after the ship's scheduled departure, nothing had been taken aboard and the three merchants complained to Prescott, who in turn registered a protest with shipmaster Thomas Carrick. Carrick had failed to have the *Blessing* properly prepared for the voyage, and it remained "weake and leakey and Sailes not suficiet." The merchants worried not only about an unreliable vessel, but also that the delay in departure threatened a loss "by not coming to a market in Convenient time."<sup>32</sup>

The consequences of a lost cargo were particularly serious for investors of modest means. In 1647, Thomas Joy, a carpenter, Clement Campion, a shipmaster, and John Shaw, a butcher, financed a shipment of fish from Boston to Barbados, with Campion in command of the vessel. In July, he reported to his partners from Barbados: "We had a very leake ship, that we have been forced to pump every glasse since we came from thence." As a result, the "beere leakt out our bread mouldly or fish rotten." Complicating matters, Campion's crew had been "very unruly" throughout the voyage. To cap off the miserable venture, Campion noted, "here is no freight to be had, all things are scarce." Unfortunately, he had arrived at a time when the islanders were in the midst not only of a drought, but also of an outbreak of yellow fever, a combination which considerably slowed commercial exchange.<sup>33</sup> A master of understatement, after detailing all his problems, Campion confided to Joy and Shaw: "I have little comfort in this voyage."<sup>34</sup> For Joy and Campion, the

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 31. Records of Essex County 2: 203-204.

32. Suffolk Deeds 1: 251.

33. Richard Ligon noted the "plague" on his arrival on the island in September of 1647, in True History, p. 21.

34. The account of the disastrous voyage is in Aspinwall Notarial Records, p. 86.

failed venture had immediate repercussions. Joy gave up on international trade, sold his house and wharf in Boston, and moved to Hingham where he purchased a mill. Campion's losses contributed to an escalating debt problem which forced his creditor to engage an attorney to recover his money.<sup>35</sup>

Campion's problems with a recalcitrant crew proved less difficult than the experience of James Smith. Soapboiler David Selleck, brewer Isaac Grosse, and mariner Thomas Keyser, all of Boston, "adventured" money on a voyage to the Madeiras, Guinea, Barbados, and back to Boston. They selected Smith, who commanded the *Rainbow*, to carry out the commercial enterprise. Keyser, who had served under Smith previously, went on the voyage to protect the investors' interests, a role which brought him into conflict with the shipmaster. After obtaining wine and slaves on the first leg of the voyage, they proceeded to Barbados. While Smith arranged for the sale of the wine and handled some personal matters on the island, Keyser took control of the vessel. He refused to unload the wine; instead, apparently under instructions from David Selleck, who had sent him a letter, Keyser stranded Smith and sailed for Boston.<sup>36</sup> After Smith secured passage back to New England, he initiated a series of lawsuits and appeals to the General Court, an effort which resulted in losses for all involved. The General Court ruled that Keyser had to pay Smith £140 in damages and that the three financial backers would receive no interest on their investments.<sup>37</sup> This reversal particularly hurt Grosse, although it failed to dampen his ardor for trade. Three years later he invested in a voyage which also failed, and in 1649 he died deeply in debt.<sup>38</sup> Even Captain Smith,

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35. Boston Records, p. 127, and Shurtleff, ed., Records of Massachusetts Bay 4 (part 1): pp. 32 and 94. After some hard times in Hingham, Joy returned to Boston in the 1650s to pursue the carpentry trade. See Boston Records, pp. 153 and 160. For Campion's debt problems, see Aspinwall Notarial Records, p. 236.

36. Keyser told Boston officials that he had taken the action to protect the value of the cargo. See Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal 2: 252.

37. The details of this episode are in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America (Washington, D.C., 1932) 3: 4-9; Shurtleff, ed., Records of Mass. Bay 3:58; Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal 2: 251-253; and RB3/1, pp. 615-616.

38. Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, p. 200.

who had secured the favorable judgement, faced such high maintenance costs on the *Rainbow* while he awaited the outcome of his appeals that he had to sell the ship in early 1646.<sup>39</sup>

Changing political conditions in the empire also caused uncertainty for potential investors in the Barbados trade, especially during the first half of the 1650s. Royalists gained control of the Barbados Assembly and during the spring of 1650 proclaimed Charles Stuart as sovereign of the island, banished their Roundhead opponents, and confiscated Roundhead property.<sup>40</sup> In response, Parliament passed an act in October prohibiting trade with Barbados and three other colonies -- Antigua, Bermuda, and Virginia -- which had also defied the Commonwealth government.<sup>41</sup> Within days, Edward Winslow, an agent for the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies, in an effort to protect their growing West Indian commerce, asked the Council of State to permit merchants from his region to continue trading with Barbados. His lobbying effort initially received a favorable response when the Council of State drafted a license to permit

the inhabitants of New England to trade to Barbadoes, Virginia, Bermudas, and Antigua, until the last day of July of 1651, notwithstanding the Act of 3 Oct. 1650, prohibiting such trade, by reason that the distance being so great they cannot have any certain knowledge of that Act as to observe the times therein limited.

Winslow could not clear the final hurdle. The Council ultimately decided against approval of his petition.<sup>42</sup>

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39. Shurtleff, ed. Records of Massachusetts Bay 3: 58; Massachusetts Archives 60: 143-144, and 144b; and Aspinwall Notarial Records, p. 19.

40. For a contemporary anti-Royalist account of this episode, see Nicholas Foster, A Brief Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion Acted in the Island of Barbados, in the West Indies (London, 1650).

41. Stock, ed., Proceedings of Parliaments 1: 218-220; and Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 343-344.

42. Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 344-345 and 347.

In May of 1651, the Massachusetts General Court also made trade with the four rebellious colonies illegal. Some New Englanders disregarded the prohibitions, and when Winslow learned of it, he worried about Parliamentary retaliation against his fellow colonists for furnishing the outlawed colonies with "provisions of powder and shott . . . and other commodities."<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, no punishment was forthcoming, and in October, when word reached New England that an English fleet commanded by Sir George Ayscue had been dispatched to subdue the Barbadians, four Boston area merchants seized the opportunity to resume the commercial connection legally. John Parris, Isaac Addington, Thomas Martin, and Richard Martin petitioned the General Court for permission to send a ship to Barbados, with assurances that they would comply with the order of the fleet's "generall." The Court approved with an order that the men not land their cargo until Ayscue had "reduced" the island, which he did in January of 1652.<sup>44</sup>

Actions taken by the home government did not always interrupt or hinder the New England-Barbados trade. English actions against the Dutch, for brief periods at least, actually reduced the competition for English colonials. In 1651, Parliament passed an act which excluded the Dutch from the British colonial ports. Although not rigorously enforced, it provided the justification for the occasions in the 1650s when British warships seized Dutch vessels. Upon Sir George Ayscue's arrival in Barbados in October of 1651, his fleet "surprised in the bay 15 sail, most of them Dutch." When another fleet under Admiral William Penn stopped at Barbados in early 1655, enroute to a conquest of Jamaica, it captured sixteen Dutch ships. Three years later, Captain Christopher Myngs took six more.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the lack

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43. Harlow, Barbados, pp. 275-276.

44. Massachusetts Archives 60: 21 and 21a; and Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 372-374.

45. Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, p. 362; C. H. Firth, ed., "Extracts From Henry Whistler's Journal of the West India Expedition," in The Narrative of General Venables, With an Appendix of Papers Relating to the Expedition to the West Indies and the Conquest of Jamaica, 1654-1655 (New York, 1900), p. 145; and Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh, No Peace Beyond the Line, p. 177.



of sustained enforcement of trade regulations and the widely accepted view on the island that Englishmen were more "great extortioners" than merchants led many Barbadians to choose Dutch traders over either Englishmen or New Englanders when they had the opportunity.<sup>46</sup>

Losing one's cargo to pirates or foreign warships was another concern of potential participants in the Barbados trade. Richard Ligon's experience illustrates the fear of shipmasters when they discovered a pirate in the vicinity. After being on Barbados for almost three years, Ligon booked passage on a merchant vessel headed for England in April of 1650. The master changed the time of departure to midnight so that he could evade "a well known Pirate, that had for many dayes layn hovering about the Island." The pirate, an Irishman named Plunquet, had a huge vessel, a 500-ton frigate, and the reputation of being "merciless and cruel."<sup>47</sup> In that case, the subterfuge worked for the English vessel, but many shipmasters anticipated the worst in preparing for voyages. When the previously mentioned James Smith agreed to take the *Rainbow* to the Madeiras, Guinea, and Barbados in 1645, he joined with two other vessels captained by Robert Shopton and Miles Causon. Even with the increased security afforded by the additional ships, in their shipping agreement the three men revealed their understanding of the dangers that awaited them. They decided that if any of the ships should "come to any casualty, . . . by sea, or force of enemy," the two other shipmasters would share with them the value of their cargoes "equally divided tunn for tunn, and man for man." Further, if one ship "be taken by any enemy," the others pledged "to the utmost of their power to redeeme them."<sup>48</sup> On occasion, the colonists appealed to England for protection against these threats. Noting the "Dutch pickeroons and ships of war that annoy us," Barbados Governor Daniel Searle pleaded with Oliver Cromwell

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46. Thomas Birch, ed., A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe (London, 1742) 3: 142.

47. Ligon, True History, p. 119.

48. Donnan, ed., Documents of Slave Trade 3: 4-5.

for one or two frigates "to spend some time here for the preservation of the trade."<sup>49</sup>

Some sought to reduce the individual risks resulting from all these factors through partnership with one or more other interested shippers or investors. In many of the arrangements one of the partners served as shipmaster or supercargo on a voyage, to supervise the disposition of the cargo. Edward Burt and another Charlestown resident Abraham Palmer reached such an agreement in October of 1652. Obviously aware of the growing lumber shortage on Barbados, the two men decided to ship a house frame to the island on the *Mayflower* of Boston, with Palmer serving as shipmaster. They agreed that Burt would receive forty percent and Palmer sixty percent of the profits from the sale of the frame.<sup>50</sup> Few, however, chose to pursue the New England-Barbados trade in this way. Although it was difficult to determine them precisely from the available documents, it appears that only 37 of the 170 individuals sought out partners in the trade.<sup>51</sup> Further, the evidence of kinship ties in these trade efforts is slim. John Parris did have the financial backing of his London brother Thomas, yet few other examples emerged of such ties which might have reduced the uncertainties. This may not have been due to a lack of effort, but rather because participants had not had sufficient time to develop personal commercial links.<sup>52</sup> Others sought to reduce their risks by pursuing commercial opportunities in several locales. Sixty-nine of the men in the Barbados trade shipped, transported, or bought in other trade networks. Some New Englanders, for example, also traded with other Caribbean islands, with England, with the eastern Atlantic wine islands, with various places in North America, and with ports in West Africa.

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49. Birch, ed., State Papers of Thurloe 2: 199.

50. Suffolk Deeds 2: 156.

51. There were almost certainly more which have escaped documentation, although it is unlikely that the number would be dramatically higher.

52. Gragg, "Barbados Connection," pp. 107-111. The strongest effort to establish the existence of a network of kin and friends in the early English trans-Atlantic trade is in Bailyn, New England Merchants.

Those most interested in reducing their risks apparently believed that a diversity of investment in local economic activity produced the best results. There were several men like William Phillips, a Boston vintner and innholder, who took only two chances in the Barbados trade. Phillips purchased some white sugar from Barbados in 1649, and the next year he shipped three quintals of fish and three gallons of his wine to the island. Instead, Phillips concentrated on his local wine business, one successful enough to attract the upper house of the General Court to dine at his wine shop between 1647 and 1650. Beyond his shop and inn, Phillips owned only a house and a few small lots in Boston. In 1648, he began to extend his range of activities when he gained both an appointment as a collector of wine customs and the exclusive right to sell wine to the Indians. The following year, he joined with seven other Bostonians in a contract with Richard Thurston to build a ship.<sup>53</sup>

Phillips' venture into the Barbados trade was part of this cautious expansion of economic activity. Similarly, Alexander Lindsay, a Barbados merchant and planter, had only an incidental connection to the trade with New England; rather he focused on surviving in the intensely competitive Barbados economy. On the island as early as 1638, Lindsay collected debts for London merchants, backed the enterprises of other islanders, and bought and sold several hundred acres and several dozen slaves. His many ventures left Lindsay in debt to London merchant William Thompson for £400 in 1648. He sailed for England to handle the matter, and on his return in 1649 he served as the supercargo on the *Providence* for merchants Maurice Thompson and William Pennoyer. The ship docked at Boston, where Lindsay purchased for Thompson and Pennoyer's Barbados plantations "goods & merchandise" from Charlestown merchants Francis Norton and Robert Sedgewick. Back home, Lindsay continued to struggle financially, selling more land and slaves in the 1650s.<sup>54</sup>

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53. Aspinwall Notarial Records, pp. 323-324 and 341-342; Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, p. 172; Shurtleff, ed., Records of Massachusetts Bay 4 (part 1): 187; 2: 242 and 258; Boston Records, pp. 16, 20, and 41.

54. RB3/1: 117, 152, 337-338, 432-433, 545, 913-914, and 943-944; RB3/2: 15, 70-71, 198-199, 327, and 610-612; RB3/3: 501 and 831-832; RB6/13: 186; Davis Manuscripts, box 4, envelope 33 and box 7, envelope 2; and Aspinwall Notarial Records, pp. 255 and 356-357.

It is evident that in the years from 1645 to 1660 the Barbados-New England trade attracted no single type of individual. There were acquisitive men who gambled that the trade would facilitate their accumulation of property and profit. Most of the early Barbados planters and merchants shared this outlook.<sup>55</sup> When Father Antoine Biet visited the island in 1655, he was struck by their greed, and he reported that "they came here in order to become wealthy."<sup>56</sup> They were men caught up in an almost continuous round of purchase, lease, and sale of land, and a seemingly insatiable demand for slaves to work their fields and for livestock to crush their sugar cane. They eagerly sought to enlarge their holdings, expand their sugar production, and find new markets for their crops. John Allen, Martin Bentley, Edward Chamberlayne, Robert Hooper, Thomas Middleton, William Pead, and John Read followed this pattern. Their names can be found throughout the deed and record books of the 1640s and 1650s. Bentley and Hooper, who were often partners, had a particularly large operation. An inventory taken of one of their plantations in 1654 included two hundred acres, a mill house, boiling house, still house, curing house, stables, smithshop, cook room, overseer's room, store house, a dwelling for the owners, and quarters for sixty-six slaves and thirty-five indentured servants.<sup>57</sup>

The ambitions of these planters did not end with the creation of great fortunes. Many used them as a means to a lavish lifestyle. As Father Biet discovered in 1655:

The ladies and young women are as well dressed as in Europe, and they economize on nothing to dress well. One will not find it difficult to pay eight or ten pounds of sugar in order to buy a bit of silk lace. One can judge by this little thing what they will do in order to have a suit of clothes. For the cut of one very simple dress coat a tailor is paid

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55. Richard Dunn, in Sugar and Slaves, has provided the best account of these materialistic planters.

56. Jerome S. Handler, "Father Antoine Biet's Visit to Barbados in 1654," Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (1965-1966) 32: 67.

57. Brandow, ed., Barbados Families, pp. 339-340.

one hundred pounds of sugar. One furnishes his house sumptuously. Things that are the finest in England and elsewhere are found in the island. Men and women go well mounted on very handsome horses which are covered with very rich saddlecloths. The extravagance of the table is not less. Everything is there in abundance, except that game is very rare. They lack no other meats and have all sorts of fowl with which their farm yards are filled. They have all kinds of drinks: the best wines from more than six areas in Europe, brandy, *Rossolis*, and many artificial drinks which are excellent. One could always drink whatever one wished.<sup>58</sup>

Others hoped to use their wealth to return to England in financial triumph. After two decades on Barbados, Thomas Middleton did just that. By the early 1650s, Middleton had several hundred acres in St. John and St. Michael parishes. Though most land sold for under £1,000 per hundred acres, in 1652 he sold 215 acres in St. Michael for £4,000 and 60,000 pounds of muscovado sugar. Shortly afterward, he sailed for England. To afford a successful return home, he maintained a financial interest in the West Indies. He purchased over 130 acres in St. George Parish between 1645 and 1660, and he leased out a plantation which he had acquired on Antigua.<sup>59</sup> Middleton had realized the hope articulated by Barbados planter James Drax in the late 1640s to "not look towards England, with a purpose to remain there, the rest of his life, till

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58. Handler, "Biet's Visit to Barbados," pp. 67-68. For an extended discussion of their lifestyles, see Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, pp. 263-299.
59. RB3/3, pp. 928-929. For land prices on the island in the 1640s and 1650s, see Dunn Sugar and Slaves, p. 66. Middleton's acquisitions prior to 1652 are in RB3/1, pp. 394-395, 402, and 705; RB3/2, p. 285; RB3/3, pp. 752-753; Davis Manuscripts, box 4, envelope 33; and Waters, Genealogical Gleanings 1: 19. His post-1652 transactions are in RB3/2, pp. 679-680; RB3/5, pp. 18-20, 26-27, 65-67, and 735-737; RB3/7, pp. 282-283; and Vere L. Oliver, The History of the Island of Antigua, One of the Leeward Caribbees in the West Indies, From the First Settlement in 1635 to the Present Time (London, 1899) 3: 270 and 276.

he was able to purchase an estate of ten thousand pound land yearly . . . ."<sup>60</sup>

A few New Englanders like David Selleck shared the boldly acquisitive ambitions of the Barbadians. A soapboiler and merchant, Selleck first settled in Dorchester in 1639 and moved to Boston in the early 1640s. Between 1645 and his death nine years later, he furiously pursued wealth. He had sole ownership or shares in several vessels and ordered the construction of another. He invested in many trading voyages, notably in the ill-fated 1645 venture of the *Rainbow*. Three years later, he turned to the tobacco trade; several Virginia planters collectively agreed to deliver to him about eight tons of it. Drawing upon the credit of others to finance some of his enterprises, Selleck also extended credit to many men, and those who did not pay promptly soon encountered Selleck or his debt collectors. He did not restrict his endeavors to the local retail business and the trans-Atlantic trade. In 1646, he purchased 300 acres in Rhode Island, along with the accompanying buildings, equipment, and livestock. Seven years later, he obtained a license from the Council of State to ship "Irish children" as servants to New England and Virginia. Ever quick to seize the main chance, Selleck sought to take advantage of the outbreak of hostilities between the English and the Dutch. In 1653, he secured from the Council of State "letters of marque . . . for four ships against the Dutch." Selleck died the following year in Virginia, undoubtedly on a trip to extend his trade.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, New Englanders Edward Gibbons, Valentine Hill, James Oliver, Richard Russell, Thomas Savage, and Richard Sedgewick vigorously sought to build their fortunes. Collectively, their commercial ties linked them with the West Indies, England, the wine islands, West Africa, Virginia, and Canada. They were also involved in several speculative land ventures in New England, and in attempts to control the interior fur trade. Yet, these men were the exceptions. Most New Englanders in the trade had more

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60. Ligon, True History, p. 96.

61. Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, p. 253; Aspinwall Notarial Records, pp. 20-21, 30-31, 79-80, 122, 151-152, 161, 166-170, 173, 177, 193, 245, 255-256, and 327; Carl Bridenbaugh, Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience: Rhode Island, 1636-1690 (Providence, 1974), pp. 18-19; Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660, pp. 407, 409-410; and Savage, Genealogical Dictionary 4: 50-51.

limited ambitions. For them, putting up a small cargo for a ship heading for Barbados typified a cautious economic life. They rarely took great risks. Seeking a land grant from the General Court, opening a small retail shop, purchasing a sawmill, or expanding their fish trade were as far as most were willing or able to go. For them, the trade with Barbados offered an infrequent, though always tantalizing, chance to make a profit.

The participants from the two regions in this trade offered a striking contrast. Englishmen in Barbados had created in only three decades, a slave-based plantation society committed to the aggrandizement of profits. Though often exhibiting a lifestyle best characterized as "exhibitionist" and "freewheeling," the planters nonetheless were astute managers of their operations, involving themselves directly in the supervision of an increasingly complex business. Following his three-year stay on the island, Richard Ligon lauded the planters' managerial talents:

Now let us consider how many things there are to be thought on, that go to the actuating this great work, and how many cares to prevent the mischances, that are incident to the retarding, if not the frustrating of the whole work; and you will find them wise and provident men, that go on and prosper in a work, that depends upon so many contingents.<sup>62</sup>

As David Galenson has shown, this attention to estate management was an essential element in their "diligent and systematic" pursuit of profit.<sup>63</sup> Bernard Bailyn has described some New England merchants in a similar fashion. He argued that the second generation who came to economic prominence in Boston in the 1650s and 1660s were fortune-seekers interested more in expanding commerce than in maintaining the values of

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62. Ligon, True History, p. 57. The description of the planters as "exhibitionist" and "freewheeling" is from Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, p. 337.

63. David W. Galenson, Traders, Planters, and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America (Cambridge, 1986), p. 143.

Puritanism.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, Darrett Rutman has identified several Bostonians of the 1640s who were increasingly oriented "to the broader community of the Atlantic."<sup>65</sup> Most New Englanders in the Barbados trade, however, had more limited outlooks than those portrayed by Bailyn and Rutman. Because of either a lack of capital or a reluctance to accept the risks, they did not fully embrace the market values of the more unrestrained entrepreneurs of Boston and Bridgetown.<sup>66</sup> Taking a loss in their initial venture was often sufficient reason to give up. As a wavering John Pynchon grumbled to an associate in 1663: "I have found so little profit by Barbados trade that unless I find readier and better returns I shall leave it off."<sup>67</sup>

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64. Bailyn, New England Merchants, pp. 110-111.

65. Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, pp. 252-253.

66. In this, they were more like their traditional, agrarian neighbors. See James A. Henrietta, "Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America," in William and Mary Quarterly (January 1978) 3rd series, 35: 3-32.

67. Bridenbaugh and Tomlinson, eds., Pynchon Papers 1: 43 and 2: 147-194. Fortunately for Pynchon, he had the capital necessary to sustain the risk, and he continued in the trade and made a profit. The risk in extending one's economic horizons to a full-scale involvement in the Barbados commerce proved too imposing for most.



## APPENDIX

Most of the data was drawn from A Volume Relating to the Early History of Boston Containing the Aspinwall Notarial Records from 1644 to 1651 (Boston, 1903); Carl Bridenbaugh and Juliette Tomlinson, eds., The Pyncheon Papers (2 vols., Boston, 1982-1985); N. Darnell Davis Manuscripts, in the Royal Commonwealth Society Library, London; Forbes, ed., Winthrop Papers (5 vols., Boston, 1929-1947); Charles J. Hoadley, ed., Records of the Colony and Plantation of New Haven, from 1638 to 1649 (Hartford, 1857); Hosmer, ed., Winthrop's Journal (2 vols., New York, 1908); Massachusetts State Archives, vol. 60; Records of Connecticut vol. 1; RB3/1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 (recopied volumes of deed record books in the Barbados Department of Archives, Black Rock, Barbados); Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts (3 vols., Salem, 1911-1913); Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, vol. 1 (Providence, 1856); Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (4 vols., Boston, 1853-1854); and Suffolk Deeds (3 vols., Boston, 1880-1885). In addition, scattered information was drawn from Charles Edward Banks, The Planters of the Commonwealth, 1620-1640 (Baltimore, 1967); James C. Brandow, ed., Genealogies of Barbados Families, From Caribbeana and The Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (Baltimore, 1983); A Coppie Journall Entries Made in the Custom House of Barbados Beginning August the 10th, 1664 and Ending August the 10th, 1665, ms. Eng. hist. b. 122 (Bodleian Library, Oxford); A Coppie Journall of Entries Made in the Custome House of Barbados 1665-1667, Ms. HC: 336/932 (Hispanic Society of America, New York City); Ralph J. Crandall and Ralph J. Coffman, "From Emigrants to Rulers: The Charlestown Oligarchy in the Great Migration," New England Historical and Genealogical Register (January 1977), 131: 3-27 and (April 1977), pp. 121-132; G. H. Hawtayne, "Records of Old Barbados," Timehri (1893), 7: 93-118; Index of Ships, Merchants, and Passengers to the American Colonies, 1618-1668, typescript, 1982, 8/53 (in Public Record Office, London); RB6/8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15 (recopied volumes of will record books in the Barbados Department of Archives); A Report of the Record Commissioners Containing Charlestown Land Records, 1638-1802 (Boston, 1883); Gary Boyd Roberts ed., English Origins of New England Families From the New England Historical and Genealogical Register (3 vols., Baltimore, 1985); Sainsbury, ed., State Papers, Colonial, 1574-1660; Joanne Mcrec Sanders, ed., Barbados Records, Wills and Administrations, 1639-1680 vol. 1 (Marceline, Mo., 1979); James Savage, A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England (4 vols., Baltimore, 1986); Second Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston Containing the Boston Records, 1634-1660 and the Book of Possessions (Boston, 1881); Leo Francis Stock, ed., Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, vol. 1 (reprint, New York, 1966); Norman C. P. Tyack, "English Exports to New England, 1632-1640: Some Records in the Port Books," New England Historical and Genealogical Register (July 1981), 135: 213-238; and Henry F. Waters, Genealogical Gleanings in New England (2 vols., reprint, Baltimore, 1981). The data drawn from these sources, besides neglecting some participants, may also reflect a tendency of contemporaries to record unsuccessful voyages more often than profitable ones, because of conflicts over losses. It is unclear that such a bias is present, but the possibility suggests an appropriate caution in drawing conclusions. Despite that potential limitation, the data collected offers a stronger basis for judging the participants in the trade than by utilizing purely anecdotal material.