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"An Insupportable Burden": Paying for King Philip's War on the Massachusetts Frontier

Michael J. Puglisi

King Philip's War cost the Massachusetts frontier dearly. The demographic toll represented the most traumatic loss, as hundreds of individuals perished in the conflict, and hundreds more abandoned their threatened communities. Most residents returned to the frontier outposts shortly after the return of peace, but the costs of the war did not end with the defeat of the Indians. King Philip's War drained the treasuries of the United Colonies, and recouping the various expenses incurred during the conflict represented an ongoing struggle in New England. The residents of the Massachusetts frontier, where most of the fighting took place and most of the property destruction occurred, felt particularly oppressed by the financial burden. They had the double tasks of recovering their own losses and responding to the demands of the provincial government. Therefore, the high costs of King Philip's War provided a persistent source of contention in the colony during the post-war years.

The first problem encountered involved raising and supporting troops to protect the frontier towns. Part of the soldiers' salaries was paid by the Massachusetts treasurer, at least early in the war, but the bulk came from the towns. The families of soldiers on campaign or garrison duty received payment from their local treasurers, and as recompense, the towns were granted an equal credit toward their provincial tax rates.¹ The responsibility for supplying

1. George M. Bodge, Soldiers in King Philip's War (Leominster, 1896), pp. 58, 367.

garrison troops with provisions and other necessities fell to "the families in the several fortifications where they [were] placed." When Captain Joshua Scottow requested supplies for his soldiers in November 1675, the Council replied that according to practice, "the country soldiers are provided for with victualls by the people they secure." Even this requirement represented a heavy burden for many frontier towns. The residents of Northampton, for instance, while expressing reluctance "to burden the country, whose expenses have been great already," related their inability to support a garrison unassisted, since "the losses & expenses by reason of the war have been such, as renders us uncapable of such a thing."² From the start, the war drained the resources of the Massachusetts colony; individual towns could not afford the costs of their own defense, and the resources of the provincial government were far too limited to assure the complete protection of all the exposed frontier communities.

As a result, many frontier residents had to abandon their "plantations" and flee to safer areas. In addition to the obvious trauma felt by the refugees themselves, the unsettled situation placed pressure on the towns which received the frightened fugitives. In an attempt to staunch the flow of colonists from the frontier, both for the better defense of the colony and for the relief of the towns which strained under the weight of the evacuees, Captain Samuel Appleton issued an order on November 12, 1675, to the soldiers and inhabitants of Springfield, Northampton, Hadley, Westfield, and Hatfield, forbidding anyone to abandon those towns without his permission.³ This order affected only the most secure settlements in the Connecticut Valley; Deerfield and Northfield, the two most exposed areas, had already been abandoned in September. The residents of these northernmost towns naturally followed the river south in their retreat, returning in many cases to the communities from which they had originally emigrated.

Regardless of ties of affinity or even simply sympathy, towns along the escape route must have felt adverse effects from the sudden influx, as evidenced by attempts of the colonial government to compensate them for the situation. On November 3, 1675, the Council declared that "such persons . . . who are so forced from their habitations & repaire to other plantations for reliefe, shall not, by virtue of their residence in said plantations they repaire unto"

2. Massachusetts Archives, 67:277, 68:48 and 59.

3. Massachusetts Archives, 68:54.

become burdens to the communities, "according to law, title Poore." In cases of extreme need, the Council allowed their care to "be supplied out of the publicke treasury."⁴ The colonial government, however, lacked the resources to meet the immediate and increasing demands caused by the war. As a result, authorities had to become more selective and stringent in allowing stragglers to impose themselves on the already encumbered localities.

In the spring of 1676, the Massachusetts Council authorized town selectmen "to take a particular account of all Persons and Families so coming unto them," inquiring specifically into their means of support. The order further required selectmen "to take effectual care that the Incomers . . . settle themselves, or be by them settled in some orderly and diligent way of Imployment and Government." The concern evidently focussed "especially [upon] single and younger persons," the unattached element which traditionally represented an internal threat to New England's communal cohesion. To justify their presence in the safe havens, refugees had to provide some positive contribution to their protectors. The most obvious service involved participation in the defense of their adopted localities. In May of 1676, the Council countered those "forced to remooove to other places, [who] doe account themselves free from duty in those places," by ordering "that all such persons . . . shall stand, in respect of charges and duty to the publicke, in the same capacitie wth the proper inhabitants amongst whom they make their aboade or residence."⁵

While such reluctance to welcome their brethren unconditionally in their time of need may seem callous, the tradition of tightly guarded community conformity was as old as the colony itself. The restrictions were no less apparent in frontier plantations than in established towns. As early as 1642, for instance, Springfield forbade its inhabitants "under the Coulour of friendship or otherwise [to] Intertayne" any strangers "for longer tyme then one month . . . without the generall consent and allowance" of the other residents. This ordinance was no mere formality; the selectmen used the law to evict outsiders who "thrust themselves" into the town and to punish

4. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England (5 vols., Boston, 1854), 5: 64.

5. William H. Whitmore, ed., The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts, 1672-1686 (Boston, 1887), pp. 246 and 337; Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 79.

citizens guilty of encouraging unwelcome strangers to linger.⁶ Springfield was not alone in "warning out" undesirable interlopers; on the eve of King Philip's War, for example, Lancaster evicted a William Lincoln "in his majesties name," "utterly disclaim[ed]" his right to live within the town, and ordered him and his family to depart immediately. In doing so, the selectmen took the opportunity to repeat their injunction against "any that should com to inhabit without [their] consent."⁷

Some writers, notably Douglas Leach, maintain that the experience of King Philip's War lessened the restrictions imposed by communities against strangers, but town studies suggest that if any liberalization occurred during the conflict, the results were temporary at best. During the early 1680s, Springfield continued to warn out persons of questionable motives or means and to require established residents to post bond for newcomers admitted into the town. Likewise, in 1680 a committee assigned to oversee the selectmen of Groton -- ironically a town which itself was abandoned in 1676 -- implored them to keep a constant watch against any transient persons who might "becom a charg to the towne" by their prolonged presence.⁸ Even after the shared upheaval of King Philip's War, New England towns still did not want to be burdened by outsiders who would interrupt the tranquility and prosperity of the majority.

Against this backdrop of Puritan tribalism, New England also possessed a tradition of charity and communal concern, dating back to 1630, when John Winthrop reminded his compatriots, "wee must be knitt together in this worke as one man." In times of trouble, "wee must be willing to abridge our selves of superfluties, for the supply of others necessities," he warned. Winthrop reasoned that God had a purpose in causing some to be wealthy and some poor, or in allowing some to suffer while others flourished. The result of such a configuration, as interpreted by the governor, was that "every man might have need of other[s], and from hence they might be all knitt more nearly together in the Bond of brotherly affeccion." In theory,

6. Henry M. Burt, ed., The First Century of the History of Springfield; the Official Records from 1636 to 1736 (2 vols., Springfield, 1898), 1: 169, 264, 269-270, 2: 56.

7. Henry S. Nourse, ed., The Early Records of Lancaster, Massachusetts, 1643-1725 (Lancaster, 1884), pp. 89-90.

8. Douglas Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk (New York, 1958), p. 187; Samuel A. Green, ed., The Early Records of Groton, Massachusetts, 1662-1707 (Groton, 1880), p. 60; Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 1: 434-436, 2: 168.

all New England Puritans were united parts of the "one body in Christ"; they were "made soe contiguous in a speciall relation as they must needs partake of each others strength and infirmity, joy and sorrowe, weale and woe."⁹ Admittedly, New England had become a much more complex and diversified milieu between the establishment of Massachusetts Bay in 1630 and King Philip's War in 1675. But the summons to Christian charity never faded, at least in the sermons of the orthodox clergy. Over a decade after the conflict, Cotton Mather still reminded his fellow colonists that "every Christian should Readily and Chearfully Venture his All to serve the people of God, when a Time of Distress and Danger calleth for it."¹⁰ Such exhortations, at least at first glance, seem to indict New England townsmen for serious transgressions in their reluctance to unconditionally welcome their needy brethren.

Puritans saw no shame in poverty, as long as it resulted from ill fortune or divine providence rather than from personal negligence, and they did not question why God would present some members of His flock with such adversity. "The only reason why God sets his love on one man and not upon another," said the Reverend Solomon Stoddard, "is because he pleases."¹¹ New Englanders were not entirely devoid of sympathy for their less fortunate brethren, but they showed a marked preference for aiding members of their own local community. Before the war, poor relief came almost entirely through the town meeting and the selectmen. For instance, as early as 1667, Springfield residents voted to allow their selectmen to provide four or five pounds "to help a little against the want of some families." The meeting also voted, in consideration "of the poore estate of Some in the Plantation, who it is thought by Some need releife," to empower a committee to study the overall degree of privation in the community and to report on the most "convenient" solutions.¹²

Relief for familiar neighbors naturally continued during the war, but the emphasis shifted from solving cash poverty to replacing material estates destroyed by the Indians. The effectiveness of these

9. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity (1630)," in Edmund S. Morgan, ed., Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794 (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1965), pp. 76-77, 85, 92.

10. Cotton Mather, The Present State of New England (Boston, 1690), p. 9.

11. Cited in Perry Miller, The New England Mind, From Colony to Province (Cambridge, 1962), p. 233.

12. Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 47 and 85.

efforts varied from town to town. In response to petitions from people like Preserved Clapp, who had his home and barn burned, Northampton formed a committee "to view what other Land may be found to Suite other Persons in the like Condition & to Accomodate them as far as may be." By the end of 1678, the committee had "laid out Sundry Small Parcels of land to Several persons on Condition they build on it & live on it three years." The good intentions of this plan were not entirely realized in all cases, however. William Smead, who had lived in Northampton since 1660, asked for relief after his home, barn, and crops were destroyed in 1675. Two years later, the town awarded him a half-acre house lot in the town. Apparently angered by this slight allowance, Smead packed up and moved to Deerfield, where land was more obtainable, even if security was not.¹³ Other towns made efforts to acquire title to parcels of land vacated by local Indians during the war and to confirm those tracts to townspeople who sustained losses in the conflict. Still, most of these efforts were designed to aid established residents and generally excluded recent arrivals.

With provincial resources insufficient to completely meet the new needs and with towns unwilling to encourage refugees to seek aid from them, the answer had to come from private sources or church collections. During specified fast days, congregations collected voluntary donations "for the distressed Families Relief." On three days in August 1676 alone, for example, the "Old Church" (First Church) in Boston procured sixty-nine pounds, the "North Church" (Second Church) sixty-eight pounds, and the Charlestown congregation seventy-eight pounds for the needy. This represents a shift in relief measures from a system of direct aid granted to specific persons who were well acquainted with the donors to the maintenance of persons in need throughout the colony. When the residents of Brookfield had to leave their "plantation" in September of 1675, they fled to Boston, "where they were plentifully relieved out of the Church Stock there."¹⁴ This sort of aid corresponded closely to the spirit of charity and "brotherly affection" Winthrop had outlined in

13. Northampton Town Records (Forbes Library microfilm reel 56), pp. 97 and 99; Russell W. Mank, Jr., "Family Structure in Northampton, Massachusetts, 1654-1729," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1975, p. 33; see also Massachusetts Archives, 69: 124a and 223.

14. [Nathaniel Saltonstall], "The Present State of New-England with Respect to the Indian War, 1675," in Charles H. Lincoln, ed., Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699 (New York, 1913), pp. 36, 38, and 41.

1630. Expressions of generosity even came from England, in the form of money, provisions, and clothing. On December 13, 1677, the Massachusetts Council drafted a letter of thanks for "the Charity of those many Pious Christians" in England, describing how their contributions helped "thousands of persons in great Distress without Habitation or Succor & Many families consisting only of weomen & children utterly incapable to subsist themselves."¹⁵

Among the most publicized and widely renowned charitable efforts involved raising the funds needed to ransom captives taken by the Indians. Mary Rowlandson, captured from Lancaster on February 10, 1676, benefitted from twenty pounds "raised by some Boston gentlemen," and the ransom of seven pounds paid for her son was raised by the people of Portsmouth. Upon their release, unable to return to Lancaster, the Rowlandson family lived in a house rented for them by the South Church of Boston. Their trials were eased considerably because, in the former captive's words, "the Lord so moved the hearts of these and those [i.e., diverse strangers] towards us, that we wanted neither food, nor raiment for ourselves or ours." Similarly, public contributions played a large role in securing the return of hostages captured from Deerfield and Hatfield by a raiding party of Canadian natives in 1677. In that instance, on May 30, 1678, the Council ordered a public fast day and designated the proceeds for the support of the "redeemed" captives and their families, who incurred significant expenses in tracking them down.¹⁶ Such signal examples of need naturally brought benevolence from total strangers who sought to help specific, dramatic causes.

When New England's charity toward the victims of King Philip's War is viewed as a whole, town orders to strictly regulate unattached intruders do not indicate any real stinginess or callousness. New Englanders, either individually or collectively through their churches, responded with an outpouring of contributions to meet specific solicitations as well as the general needs of the masses who suffered materially during the conflict. The traditional means of

15. Massachusetts Archives, 69: 180; Increase Mather, "The Autobiography of Increase Mather," in M. G. Hall, ed., Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 71 (1961): 302.

16. Mary Rowlandson, "Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," in Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, eds., So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-1677 (Middletown, Connecticut, 1978), pp. 362-364; Massachusetts Archives, 69: 206; George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, Massachusetts (2 vols., Deerfield, 1895), 1: 181-187.

providing aid through the town governments could not meet the unprecedented demands created by the great Indian war because they were never designed to do so. Charity had to come from larger and more general efforts. Towns in vulnerable positions had to maintain their standards in order to keep their own resources from becoming overburdened and to hope that outside sources could compensate for the new exigency. Not surprisingly, the bulk of the private contributions to the cause came from the more secure towns which were most able to share their wealth.

Not only refugees sought relief for their wartime experiences; the soldiers who protected them also desired recompense for their services. Long before the war ended, the Council began to receive requests for aid from wounded soldiers and from the survivors of the deceased, and the petitions poured in for many years after the conflict. Countless requests arrived from soldiers like John Barnes, wounded at Brookfield, who in January of 1676 reported that "he yet remains under the Chirurgions hand: and is altogether unable to doo any business." He was awarded forty shillings as compensation. Entreaties also came from widows, such as Ruth Upham, who was left with seven children. She received ten pounds for the loss of her husband.¹⁷ The numbers of such petitions and the costs to the colonial government compounded during the years immediately following the war.

To cope with the worsening situation, colonial officials attempted to handle the requests in an organized fashion. On October 17, 1678, the Council, in response to the many soldiers who "Lost the use of their limbs and Are becom uncapable of Labor: or maintaining themselves," ordered an "annual Allowance or pention paid by the Country . . . for the relief of Such as Are soe Reduced into distress." The order provided for "the orderly Regulating of this matter, [that] the Court of Each County Consider the cases of such as make Application to them," and report worthy petitioners to the provincial treasurer. To further regularize the system of compensation, the General Court set up a committee the following year, to hear the cases of all those "men wounded in the late warr, who moove for releife." Later, in 1684, the Court authorized anyone owed money by the colony "for salleries or otherwise, . . . to receive their pay in the Towns where they lived out of the Country Rates."¹⁸

 17. Massachusetts Archives, 68: 113; Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 122; see also Massachusetts Archives, 68: 123a, 125a, 127a, 247, 250, and 69: 237.

18. Massachusetts Archives, 69: 220 and 236a; Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 226-227 and 453.



Soldiers and their dependents were not the only persons requesting compensation from Boston. Civilians who had provided services to the colony or its soldiers also swelled the ranks of those seeking financial satisfaction. These petitions for reimbursement covered a wide range of services rendered, including supplying garrisons, boarding wounded soldiers, operating ferries, making shoes, and repairing firearms, and the amounts requested varied from only a few shillings to hundreds of pounds. Although the requests came from all over the colony, a good number of them came from the frontier areas, where most of the war-time activity took place. For instance, prominent Northampton residents David Wilton, Lt. William Clark, and Medad Pomeroy, all applied for reimbursement, ranging from twenty to forty pounds, for quartering or supplying garrison soldiers.¹⁹ Similar claims came from all over the colony. Such individual expenses, multiplied by hundreds of cases, inevitably compounded the strain on the colonial treasury, and forced the provincial government to initiate drastic measures to recover the financial losses.

In September of 1678, the United Colonies claimed total expenditures resulting from the war of over eighty thousand pounds, with Massachusetts alone reporting an outlay of over forty-six thousand pounds. Such a huge deficit proved as long-lasting as it was unprecedented. So great were the demands on the colony's finances that in 1678 the Council had to inform its agents in England, "in very truth the whole country is now . . . greatly impoverished by our late trouble with the Indians, sicknesses & mortallity, &c." Due to this situation, the Council reported "that wee are not able to procure any more money to be sent over to you, our treasury being not only empty, but many thousands of pounds indebted to merchants here and in England." Early the next year, the General Court ordered the treasurer to send the agents, William Stoughton and Peter Bulkeley, one hundred fifty pounds each as "an expression of our good affection to them" and "a personall gratuity," but this action does not necessarily indicate that the colony's financial problems disappeared so quickly. More than a decade after the conflict had ended, the deficits continued. By 1690, Massachusetts still counted a debt of forty thousand pounds, with "not a penny in the treasury to pay it withal."²⁰

19. James R. Trumbull, History of Northampton, Massachusetts (Northampton, 1898), pp. 279, 283, 288; Massachusetts Archives, 69: 175 and 184.

20. Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 203, 263; Increase Mather, "A Brief Account Concerning Several Agents of New England," in Charles M. Andrews, ed., Narratives of the

King William's War, which began in 1689, compounded the problem and sustained the chronic indebtedness which began in 1675.

To compensate for the unprecedented demand on its funds, Massachusetts had to resort to greatly increased taxation, in the form of multiple tax rates. Colonists in seventeenth-century New England generally paid two types of taxes: town levies, assessed by the selectmen to meet normal operating expenses, and a "country rate" for the support of the provincial government, assessed on towns by a quota of one penny per pound of estate value, plus one shilling, eight pence per poll. Town constables had responsibility for collecting the tax and presenting it to the treasurer, either in cash if a "rate in money" was demanded, or in bushels of grain at values set by the General Court. During the years preceding King Philip's War, the burden on Massachusetts colonists was fairly light; the bulk of the levies came from the towns and the provincial treasury generally survived on a single rate per year. But on July 9, 1675, the Court instituted a policy of multiple rates, ordering three rates, and it followed up on October 13 with an additional "seven single country rates . . . three of the said rates to be payed at or before the last of November next, & the other fower rates at or before the last of March next." The Court allowed payments in kind, with wheat valued at 6 shillings per bushel, rye at 4 shillings, 6 pence, barley and peas at 4 shillings, Indian corn at 3 shillings, 6 pence, and oats at 2 shillings. Those who paid in cash received a twenty-five percent abatement. A single rate for the whole colony amounted to 1,553 pounds, 5 shillings, and 4 pence, so this initial levy of ten rates for the year must have come as a shock to the colonists. Boston, naturally, paid the highest amount, three hundred pounds in a single rate, but even the oppressed frontier towns received warrants from the treasurer. Springfield, for instance, was assessed twenty-six pounds, five shillings, and five pence per rate, Northampton twenty-two pounds, two shillings, ten pence, Hadley eighteen pounds, ten shillings, nine pence, Lancaster eleven pounds, sixteen shillings, Westfield eleven pounds, sixteen shillings, Groton eleven pounds, ten shillings, and Hatfield eight pounds, twelve shillings.²¹ Multiplied by ten, this burden brought immediate hardship, especially to frontier towns where other anxieties also mounted.

Insurrections, 1675-1690 (New York, 1915), p. 293; Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (2 vols., Hartford, Connecticut, 1855), 1: 190-191.

21. Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 45, 55-56; Massachusetts Archives, 68: 29a; for a discussion of taxation during the post-war period, see Timothy H. Breen, Puritans and Adventurers: Change and Persistence in Early America (New York, 1980), pp. 81-105.

The multiple taxation did not end in 1675. In fact, the General Court issued sixteen country rates in 1676 and nine more in 1677. Fortunately, in its May 1676 levy, and again the following October, the Court "provided that such of the frontier townes as are considerably weakned . . . be allowed a meet abatement of their proportions in the rates."²² This allowance must have saved the beleaguered settlements invaluable resources both in cash and in taxable provisions. On the other hand, rates represented an advantage to those owed money by the colonial government, as they received either direct payments out of the funds collected, or credits in their assessments to cover their claims. To those who did not receive such allowances, however, the multiple rates must have seemed exorbitant, and any subsidence in the levies was gradual at best. Between 1675 and 1680, Massachusetts' colonists suffered through forty-seven and a half separate rates, and throughout the early 1680s the Court continued to assess at least two or three rates per year.²³

All the while, the towns continued to levy their own rates for local projects and expenses. These assessments usually did not fluctuate in direct response to the war, the largest and most constant charges being the minister's salary and local capital expenses such as the upkeep of the meeting-house. In Springfield, for instance, both before and after the war, annual town debts generally fell between 120 and 150 pounds; the major charge was invariably the minister's salary, which by the late 1670s reached one hundred pounds.²⁴ The constancy of town rates, however, did not mean that residents felt no inconvenience at the cumulative demands.

Despite noting "the Townes Poverty by reason of the warr," on August 24, 1676, the Springfield town meeting voted to go ahead with plans to build both a new meeting-house and a suitable residence for the minister. Undertaking these ambitious projects at such a time may seem improvident. Indeed, in January of 1677, the selectmen were instructed "to take care from time to time for the making & Collecting of Such Rates [as necessary] for the Carying on of the worke," and the building project resulted in an inordinately high town debt of over four hundred pounds as of February 1683. Perhaps Springfield bit off more than it could chew, because by early 1685 the

22. Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 81, 120-121, 124-125, 138-139, 156.

23. See *ibid.*, pp. 156, 195, 219-220, 245, 296, 324, 341, 376, 398, 417, 426, 443, 454, 505.

24. Burt, ed., Springfield Records, vol. 1, *passim*; see also Green, Early Records of Groton, pp. 20 and 39; Sheldon, History of Deerfield, 1: 198, 202-203.

town meeting enacted a restrictive economic policy. "For the satisfaction & ease of the Town respecting Charges," the residents voted that "the Select men shal contract no bargain or engage in any sum above Twenty pounds for the Inhabitants to pay by Rate, without first advising with & consulting the Town, & having their approbation concerning the same."²⁵ The residents of Springfield obviously wanted to keep an eye on the expenditure of their tax money.

They were not alone in this concern. In 1682 some inhabitants of Groton petitioned "that the reats mad by [the] salackt men be Justly proporshaned to every man his Just dew to pay and no more." As in other towns, the poor of Groton especially felt the strain of increased taxation, and since many found themselves unable to meet their obligations, the town meeting authorized the selectmen to search for some way of easing the demand.²⁶ Unfortunately, no such practical plan presented itself, and many New Englanders found no recourse to the high rates short of simply refusing to pay.

Not surprisingly, some colonists chose just that option, to the chagrin of many town constables charged with the increasingly difficult task of collecting the rates. Whether out of inability or unwillingness to pay their taxes, recalcitrant colonists made the post of constable an undesirable one in some towns because constables were responsible not only for collecting the assessments but also for turning over the collection to the provincial treasurer, regardless of any delinquency by their fellow townsmen. Some shortcomings were unavoidable. As late as 1681 Constable Samuel Reade of Mendon testified to the General Court that a thirteen pound, twelve shilling discrepancy in his payment of the 1675 town rates resulted from an Indian attack which interrupted his collection and caused the deaths of some of the town's taxpayers. In response, the Court finally remitted his obligation.²⁷

In a similar case a decade later, however, Cyprian Stevens of Lancaster defended a shortcoming of one pound, nineteen shillings, and seven pence in his town's country rate, with the claim that the number of people moving from the town or dying had upset the assessment, and he had the support of the selectmen in the matter. Stevens also noted the continuing difficulty of collecting both grain and money; "the scarcity of the [one] & not having the other, the

25. Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 127-128, 162-163, 171.

26. Green, ed., Early Records of Groton, p. 71.

27. Massachusetts Archives, 70: 38.

Loss in a great meashur became the Constables," he feared. The Court agreed; the constable was still responsible for the sum, and either he or the selectmen had to provide the balance due.²⁸ With the provincial treasury in such a depressed state, the General Court could allow very little leniency in tax collection.

At times, constables found themselves caught in an uncomfortable position between their town meeting or selectmen, who chose to resist specific levies *en masse*, and the colonial authorities who demanded payment of the assigned quotas. Two such cases occurred in Hampshire County during the decades after the war. In 1685, the Springfield town meeting voted, "after serious debate," not to pay a certain money rate in cash, but rather in corn. The residents agreed to remit extra grain in the hope of keeping constable Samuel Bliss out of trouble, but Bliss could not have felt comfortable with the responsibility of presenting to the provincial treasurer the product of his town's arbitrary decision.²⁹ In an even more extreme case, Northampton authorized its "Selectmen not to deliver [a 1692] rate to the Constable & did also engage to Secure the Select[men] from any Damage for their not delivering the Same."³⁰ Again, the constable, whether or not he agreed with the actions of the residents, had to fear confrontation with a colonial government which was desperate to clear its war-related debts.

Complaints against constables delinquent in their accounts also occurred on the town level. In 1684, the selectmen of Springfield complained to the Hampshire County Court that Thomas Merick, Sr., was short two pounds, nine shillings, three pence from an authorized town rate of thirty-five pounds. The court ordered Merick to pay the amount "out of his owne estate" if he could not raise it from the appropriate taxpayers. Not surprisingly, constables also heard from their neighbors when townsmen suspected any discrepancy in the opposite direction. Therefore, in 1681 Springfield created a committee to "make inquisition and search After the overplus [i.e., surplus collected] off all the severall Country rates in the severall yeares past since the unhappy Indean war & to endeavour the recovery of it out of the hands of the severall Constables or any other person or persons in whose hands they shall find the sayd Monies." The town vowed its willingness to take legal action if necessary, and no

28. Nourse, ed., Records of Lancaster, pp. 127-128; Massachusetts Archives, 101: 33.

29. Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 166-167, 170.

30. Northampton Town Records, p. 159.

amount proved too small for scrutiny.³¹ Given such examples, it comes as no surprise that filling the office of constable often was not an easy task in the years following King Philip's War.

Not all towns had to resort to obstinacy to escape their rates. In 1676 the General Court granted certain frontier towns special abatements; of the Hampshire County settlements, Springfield was allowed 150 pounds, Northampton 18 pounds, 12 shillings, 6 pence, and Hadley 9 pounds, 3 shillings, 4 pence.³² These liberal allowances helped meet immediate needs at the end of the war, but just as multiple taxation and indebtedness continued for years, so too did municipal attempts to avoid the increased burdens. In 1679 Groton inhabitants led the way with an eloquent petition to the General Court, presenting themselves as a people "who have been great Sufferers, by the hand of God, in the late wars by our heathenish enemyes, as is well knowne to all." "Apprehending it our duty, to addresse ourselves; not onely to our heavenly father; but earthly fathers also, in this time of need," the selectmen "humbly begg[ed] our case may be seriously considered, & weighed, & that some direction, and reliefe may be afforded unto us." Groton's desired solution was that the Court release them from the country charges until order returned to the town. The magistrates and deputies concurred, in part, abating Groton residents one rate per year for the ensuing three years.³³

Ironically, Springfield proved to be one of the most vocal and persistent communities involved in the effort to seek relief from the country rates, at the very time when the town undertook two major capital projects. On May 2, 1677, less than one year after receiving the generous abatement of 150 pounds from their rates, Springfield residents instructed their deputy in the General Court "to get a settlement of [our] accounts," taking care that every allowable credit from the war be applied to the town's ledger. By 1684, Springfield took the initiative in trying to convince the General Court that conditions on the frontier still prevented those towns from paying rates in money. The town meeting petitioned instead for the privilege

 31. Joseph H. Smith, ed., Colonial Justice in Western Massachusetts (1639-1702); The Pynchon Court Record (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 317-318; Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 146, 148-150.

32. Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 124-125.

33. Massachusetts Archives, 69: 224, 229a; see also 70: 14-15; Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 341.

of paying all their rates in produce, even when the Court requested cash, and voted to seek "the concurrence of the Neighbor Townes of [Hampshire] County therein."³⁴ The General Court found fault with sections of the Springfield petition, judging "sundry expressions therein doe deserve sharpe reproofe," and apparently the magistrates initially refused to grant the blanket request. In the end, however, the Court took into consideration "the difficulty of procuring money in those places" and allowed the residents to pay their rates "in good merchantable corne," in lieu of money, "at one third part lesse price then is set in the country rate," provided they "deliver the same to the Treasurer, at Boston, at their owne charge."³⁵ Springfield residents received their wish, but it cost them extra grain. Apparently, the shortage of hard cash in the region made such an arrangement worthwhile.

Paying rates in grain instead of money did not relieve the financial strain, however. As the colony's economic dilemmas persisted, along with lingering Indian threats, especially in Maine, frontier communities continued to experience difficulties in meeting their assigned rates. The outbreak of King William's War exacerbated the problem; the colonial treasury had not yet recovered completely from the last conflict, and neither had individual frontier town economies, at least by their own appraisals. Again, Springfield was in the forefront, petitioning the General Court on May 26, 1690, "that [our] want of Corn to live on [necessitated] some abatement and that what we must pay may be accepted in cattle, or may be forborne til we are able." Less than a month later, Springfield residents again addressed the Court about their extreme lack of provisions, due to which "many of the Petitioners have not their daily bread, but what they procure by their daily labors." The multiple tax rates had long ago become "an insupportable burden."³⁶

Northampton echoed Springfield's resistance to the tax burden. In fact, in 1690 Northampton hosted a meeting of commissioners from other Hampshire County towns whose mission was to choose special representatives to send to Boston with the message that the frontier towns simply could not pay their money rates in specie. Further, by 1692 Northampton had to claim an

34. Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 131, 166-167, 170.

35. Shurtleff, ed., Records, 5: 483-484; Massachusetts Archives, 100: 366, 112: 400 and 402; Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 73.

36. Massachusetts Archives, 36: 106; Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 200.

inability to meet its obligations for the year "in money or Provisions."³⁷ The same types of complaints resounded all over the frontier during the 1690s; Springfield, Northampton, Deerfield, Lancaster, and Groton residents, among others, complained about the rates, drove their constables to distraction, and repeatedly petitioned the General Court for relief.³⁸ Frontier residents seemed to have reached their practical limit in providing support for the overextended colonial economy.

The price which the Massachusetts frontier particularly had to pay as a result of King Philip's War certainly placed a strain on the relationship between individuals, local governments, and the provincial administration. Colonists faced the immediate shock of physical casualties and burned property, and frontier residents felt constant reminders of the high price they paid in the form of unprecedented multiple tax rates. No colonial records specifically document opposition to the government's overall handling of the war and its legacies, but indications of dissatisfaction surface in colonists' reactions to aspects of Boston's policies. Particularly revealing of discontent were the stratagems and devices employed by individuals and communities to lessen or escape entirely their financial obligations to the colony. Constables could make neither their fellow citizens nor, on occasion, their town selectmen comply with the provincial treasurer's levies. Mere inability to pay the taxes was accompanied by obstinacy evident in many of the petitions for abatement. King Philip's War started a pattern of chronic economic shortcomings in the Massachusetts treasury, and thus a period of sustained financial burden on the towns of the colony, a burden which weighed especially heavily on the disrupted frontier communities. The war left many legacies in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but perhaps the most durable, widely felt, and difficult problem proved to be recovering the many and varied costs of the conflict.

37. Northampton Town Records, pp. 133 and 139; Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 201.

38. Nourse, ed., Records of Lancaster, p. 131; Massachusetts Archives, 70: 199, 100: 466, 113: 57, 89, and 97; Burt, ed., Springfield Records, 2: 331 and 335; Sheldon, History of Deerfield, 1: 199; Trumbull, History of Northampton, pp. 419-422.