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Captain Myles Standish's Military Role at Plymouth

John S. Erwin

"In the Old Colony, in Plymouth, the land of the Pilgrims," wrote Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, "to and fro in a room of his simple and primitive dwelling, clad in a doublet and hose, and boots of Cordovan leather, strode, with martial air, Miles Standish the Puritan Captain." Longfellow's poetic depiction of Standish through nostalgic New England eyes of mid-nineteenth century America, corresponds to the military characteristics of the seventeenth century historical figure found in primary sources. The early biographies of Standish, while propagating the colorful exploits of this man-of-arms among the Pilgrims, fail to give an interpretive framework for the adventurous Captain. Even recent scholarship on the armed colonization period of Anglo-America has given little attention to the rusty-bearded soldier.¹ This essay will assess Standish's role as military commander in Plymouth plantation from 1620 to 1623 in order to explain the survival of the colony.

The Pilgrims who settled New England wanted an adequately equipped defense system to protect their colony against the possible dangers of Indian attack or foreign invasion. Standish, the seasoned soldier of the Low Countries, performed a vital military function in establishing Plymouth as one of England's permanent plantations. Originally Captain John Smith, famous for his exploits at Jamestown, Virginia, headed the list of candidates for the military bodyguard for the Pilgrim venture. Standish was second, despite his obvious qualifications as an experienced soldier. Smith heard about the Pilgrims' plan to colonize northern Virginia and immediately envisioned himself leading the Separatists to their promised land. Because of his numerous adventures, Captain Smith exuded confidence in his ability to defend the colonial enterprise and it is doubtful he would have accepted interference from anyone trying to usurp his position, especially the Pilgrim patriarchs. The Separatists, motivated primarily by religious principles, could not tolerate Smith's arrogant disposition. Instead of hiring Smith, the colonists bought his maps and books, then turned to Myles Standish, a captain four years younger.²

The Pilgrims had no preconceived military policy when they left Leyden, Holland. The lurid tales of William Bradford, later the governor of Plymouth, about a "savagely people, who were cruel, barbarous and most treacherous," prepared the colonists to expect the worst in their New World. Equally

disquieting to the future of the settlers was the threat of Spanish invasion. Rejecting a plan to locate in South America because of the fear of a Spanish conquest, they subsequently chose Virginia. Even after making this decision they could not be assured that Spanish claims to the region would not find military support. As Bradford noted, “the Spaniard might prove as cruel as the savages of America.”³

The Pilgrim Fathers pragmatically improvised defense plans in the early months of the settlement. Precedent buttressed the make-shift nature of the military system, with Standish adopting the British militia structure for Plymouth. The Anglo-Saxon Fyrd, a type of primitive national army which consisted of free landowners between the ages of sixteen and sixty, with a term of service fixed by custom at two months out of the year, preceded the Plymouth defense system. The Assize of Arms (1181), the Statute of Winchester (1285), and the Instructions for General Musters (1572) were important statutory landmarks in the development of a system for military service. Regulations required the citizens to train for battle and to supply their own arms. The leader ordered all militiamen to keep their equipment ready for immediate service as well as to train with the local company under the command of provincial officers.⁴

Captain Standish knew the various drills for the musket and pike, even though he served as a drummer during part of his duty in the Low Countries.⁵ His library included books such as Caesar’s *Commentaries* and William Bariffe’s *Militarie Discipline*.⁶ Bariffe’s various postures for musket and pike helped Standish to train the inexperienced Pilgrims. Standish gradually assumed full leadership in military matters. He first gained the trust of the “saints” by commanding one of three different landing parties from the *Mayflower*. Along with others on board, Standish instigated these early reconnaissance missions. Nonetheless fears and doubts assailed the passengers as they looked toward an unknown shore and an uncertain fate. The civilians among the colonists counseled Standish “with cautious directions, and instructions,” before he left, indicating reluctance concerning the missions and reservations about Standish’s leadership. Up to this point the Pilgrims had not faced any military encounters. The reputation of Standish rested upon whatever past laurels he attained in the Dutch Wars, not upon any actual defense measures taken up by the Leyden congregation. All three of the early exploring missions involving Standish were “to fetch food, to see what the land was,” and to discover “what inhabitants they could meet with.” On the second of these missions Captain Thomas Jones, the commander of the *Mayflower*, led the expedition, “for we thought it best herein to gratify his kindness and forwardness.” Since Jones received the Pilgrims’ gratitude by conducting his second mission, Standish waited for another opportunity to establish his military leadership. He finally earned unofficial sanction as the military expert for the Pilgrims after the third exploring party returned safely from a skirmish with the Nauset Indians.⁷

On December 6, 1620, eighteen men from the *Mayflower* went ashore to continue to seek an appropriate place for planting a new colony. They sailed the shallow along the craggy coast until they met “with a tongue of land, being flat off from the shore, with a sandy point.” By this time illness afflicted two of the

men, Edward Tilley and the master gunner of the ship. Chilled by the extreme cold which caused everyone to suffer, Edward Winslow, one of the Pilgrim passengers, said, "the water froze on our clothes, and made them many times like coats of iron." When the Pilgrims came ashore they made a barricade, retrieved wood, and set out sentinels as they prepared for their lodging that night. The small band spent the next day exploring an Indian graveyard and an abandoned native village. That evening musketfire awakened the slumbering camp—the watchmen heard noises and thought that wolves or fox stalked the shelter. The next morning they tested their muskets to make sure they were in good working order. Some of the men carried their armor and firearms down to the shallop to prepare to leave. Just as they accomplished this task, one of the men a short distance from camp ran shouting, "Indians!" Through pluck and foresight, Standish brought the first battle with the natives to a short and successful conclusion. Several varying accounts of this episode with the Nauset Indians at Eastham credit Standish with ending the skirmish by firing upon the leader of the aborigines. "His shot, being directed by the provident hand of the most high God, struck the stoutest sachem among them on the right arm." Before the ambush began, during the early morning hours, some of the men took their muskets down to the shallop and wrapped them in coats to protect them from the cold. Such nonchalance could have proved fatal for the small group of explorers if Standish had not kept his own firearm ready.⁸

A veteran soldier, Standish disapproved of the lax manner in which some of the men handled their muskets. But his advice went unheeded. Perhaps the discreet Pilgrims listened to his suggestion to keep the muskets nearby, but, as is evident in the disorientation of the surprised scouting party, many others did not. More likely, the sailors of the *Mayflower* chose to take orders from Captain Jones, rather than from the short, bluff outsider. In this instance Standish's valor proved the sailors' judgement to be wrong.⁹ Improvisation and slack organization characterized these first reconnaissance missions. The company, organized solely for each expedition, resulted in a temporary military unit. Counsel and advice given to Standish by the Pilgrim leaders consolidated the leadership he had to share with Captain Jones, as well as with Bradford, Carver, Winslow, and Hopkins.¹⁰ Standish's inspired leadership during the Eastham conflict, coupled with the fact that Jones eventually had to return to England, enabled him to ascend to a formal military command position. Between February 17 and March 23, 1621, the Pilgrims held four meetings to organize their defenses and establish military regulations. Scarcity of food and sickness plagued the settlers. William Bradford tells us "there died some two or three of a day." Standish, Bradford adds, was one of "six or seven sound persons who . . . spared no pains night or day," endearing himself to the survivors.¹¹ A series of events in the weeks after the Eastham conflict prompted further organization of the military system at Plymouth and strengthened Standish's leadership. One of the men of the plantation had gone to hunt ducks and geese about a mile and a half from the settlement. As he crouched in the reeds beside a creek, twelve Indians marched past him heading toward the village. After they had passed, he rushed to the colony to give the alarm for all to muster. Standish hurried from the woods where he had been working. But the alarm was premature. No confrontation between the worried Pilgrims and a curious group of natives developed, but it did hasten preparations for a more thorough defense structure.

“The coming of the savages gave us occasion to keep more strict watch,” Edward Winslow recalled, “and to make our pieces [muskets] and furniture ready, which by the moisture and rain were out of temper.”¹²

On February 17, 1621, the Pilgrims gathered to appoint Standish as their supreme military commander. Up to this time Standish did not have official sanction for his military position. The “civil body politic” acted to make him the officially nominated military commander of the plantation—the mantle of authority replaced his second-rate bodyguard function. Directly upon accepting the honor, Standish put his authority to good use. Two Indians appeared on the hill overlooking the plantation. They motioned for the settlers to follow them. Standish, the cautious soldier, decided to allow only himself and Stephen Hopkins, one of the few men experienced with firearms, to approach the two suspicious looking natives. Each carried a musket, but as they approached the natives, they laid down the firearms and made gestures of peace toward the aborigines. The Indians quickly retreated behind the hill where noise of a great many more of them could be heard. Standish decided that this incident necessitated more efficient measures for the common defense of the settlement. The next day the master gunner of the *Mayflower* came ashore with three of his sailors and they mounted five cannons of various sizes on the hill, where they had earlier constructed a platform for artillery.¹³

Further advances to strengthen the settlement’s defense system typified the first few months of Standish’s leadership. A substantial palisade surrounded the east side of the hill to the harbor and southward from the hill to the town brook. To secure the wall of the pale, flankers embraced the top of the hill and a fort formed where the walls came together. As an example of the industriousness of the people of Plymouth, John Pory, a visitor in 1622, commenting upon the military structure of the infant colony, said that this defensive perimeter on the west and north sides of the town extended 2700 feet in length and was stronger than any he had seen in Virginia.¹⁴

Two events prompted the completion of the fort and palisade which Pory observed in 1622—the news in a letter from Captain John Huddleston that the Virginia colony at Jamestown had been massacred by the Indians and a gesture of war by the Narragansett Indians, a powerful tribe to the west of Plymouth.¹⁵ The psychological impact of the Huddleston letter upon the survival-minded Pilgrims cannot be overemphasized. The military structure of Plymouth grew out of a frontier milieu conditioned by the harsh realities of the wilderness, and survival emerged as the harshest of these realities. Plymouth had just completed a winter during which food deprivation caused half the original settlers to die. Concern for the scarcity of food and dread of sickness among the colonists, along with the potential threat by a hostile enemy in the forest, created an aggressive mindset. Standish consequently took defense measures which ultimately protected the vulnerable plantation by encouraging the completion of the construction. If the Huddleston letter made fear of an Indian uprising a possibility, the gesture of war by the Narragansetts made it a probability.

According to William Bradford, the Narragansetts considered the weakened state of the colony and thought it an opportune moment for a demonstration of

power, when a small vessel of fifty-five tons, the ill-named ship *Fortune* arrived in November of 1621 with thirty-five passengers “unexpected or looked for.” More people drawing upon an overtaxed food supply created tremendous pressure. A Narragansett warrior stalked into Plymouth with a bundle of arrows wrapped in a snakeskin and presented it to the settlement’s leaders. When Squanto, the Indian interpreter for the Pilgrims arrived, he declared this symbol to be a challenge to the settlers. After consultation, Standish decided to let the Indian who brought the symbol of war go free. Protective status followed a messenger, according to Standish, because it was “against the law of arms amongst them as us in Europe to lay violent hands on any such.” Plymouth’s military leaders, Governor Bradford, Edward Winslow, Assistant Governor Isaac Allerton, and Standish, responded by filling the snakeskin with powder and bullets and sent it back with the warrior to the Narragansett Chief Canonicus. When Canonicus received the war message of Plymouth “it was no small terror to the savage king; insomuch as he would not once touch the powder and shot or suffer it to stay in his home and country,” Winslow writes. “Having been posted from place to place for a long time, at length came whole back again.” By accepting Standish’s ingenious counsel in meeting the Narragansett threat, the Pilgrims successfully avoided conflict.¹⁶

Since Standish did not believe the symbolic return of the snakeskin filled with powder and shot could be relied on for the defense of the village, he proceeded to organize those able to bear arms into four companies, each with their own defensive assignment. He then held “a general muster or training,” at which each company, after a discharge of their muskets, took their positions in the proper defense stations. To each of these four squadrons Standish appointed a commander whom he deemed qualified. After the muster, each company escorted its leader to his house, where “again they graced them with their shot, and so departed.” The institution of this simple military ritual by Standish inspired confidence among the settlers in the newly formed defense organization. Fearing that the Indians might take advantage of the flammable materials used to build the houses of the town, Standish shrewdly appointed a company to respond to fire. Upon notice of a fire, these specialists grabbed their muskets and quickly surrounded the endangered house with their backs toward the fire to prevent any Indian attack while others fought the flames. The only occasion to offer the company relief from fire duty was if a blaze enflamed their own guard house “but not otherwise without special command” from Standish.¹⁷

Because of the Narragansett threat of war and the letter informing the Pilgrims of the Jamestown massacre, Standish divided his forces, finished a palisade for town protection, mounted existing artillery on the blockhouse, and instructed his men in the proper use of firearms. The great trust placed in Standish by the Pilgrim leaders gave him distinct authority which rested solidly on Plymouth’s government. John Billington incurred a severe sentence when summoned before the civil authorities for insubordination to Captain Standish. As punishment, Billington had to lie in a public place with his neck and heels tied together. Release came only after he begged for pardon and humbled himself. The government’s unhesitating support of Standish’s authority set an important precedent.¹⁸ Deference to his military expertise replaced the doubts earlier harbored by the Pilgrim leaders while on board the *Mayflower*. Standish earned

prestige among the settlers who looked for their common security to his military and administrative abilities.

Standish's personal encounters with the natives give us a glimpse into his character. He was described as small in stature, immensely strong, and energetic. On occasion he could be kind, demonstrating an empathy for the sick and bereaved. He controlled his temper and tongue, but his eyes flashed, indicating anger just below the surface. These features mixed well with a good military sense which on more than one occasion kept Plymouth from blundering into possible fatal transgressions with the natives. While Standish's traits supported Plymouth's defense, they did not consistently create harmonious Anglo-American relations. Two episodes during early years illustrate the importance of Standish's blustering personality in Anglo-Indian affairs—Squanto's capture by the Pocasset tribe, and, more significantly, an Indian conspiracy to eliminate the struggling plantation of Wessagusset and Plymouth's own settlement.¹⁹

In August 1621, Hobomak, an Indian who had attached himself to the Pilgrim colony, brought word that Corbitant, sachem of the Pocasset tribe, had imprisoned Squanto and planned to kill him. Governor Bradford sent Standish and a group of militia with Hobomak as their guide to correct the wrong done to Squanto. Even if it meant the head of Corbitant, the Pilgrims could not "suffer their friends and messengers thus to be wronged." On arrival Standish announced that he had come to avenge the alleged death of Squanto, "but would not hurt any but those who had a hand in it." Chief Corbitant's absence from the native village allowed Standish time to discover that Squanto had only been threatened with stabbing and had not actually been killed. "So they withheld and did no more hurt, returning to Plymouth with Squanto and many other known friends," including a few Indians who had been wounded in the skirmish. Standish and the other leaders of Plymouth acted quickly to rescue Squanto, conscious of the necessity for survival and keeping their military image without blemish. After Squanto's capture at the hands of Corbitant, the colony realized more thoroughly the danger of complaisance and the advantages of quick reprisal. The military complex at Plymouth, both its physical accoutrements such as the fort, muskets, powder, and pikes, and its policy of preventive defense measures toward the Indians, stemmed from a need to preserve its vulnerable existence. In a wilderness environment where one's existence depended upon communal security and solidarity, the defense image of Plymouth acted as a bridle, according to the Pilgrims, to further violence. The successful recapture of Squanto represented Standish's strident military posture and outlined for the community the future direction of their policy toward the natives.²⁰

Standish's defense posture also protected Plymouth's trading interests with the aborigines, even though this economic activity became more difficult with the arrival of other settlers. What little influence Plymouth did have over its Indian neighbors rested upon the few trinkets and blankets used for trade.²¹ Trade with Indians usually consisted of an exchange for grain, and in the early years of 1620 to 1623, survival required protection of this arrangement.²² Not until 1625, when Plymouth had secured itself as a settlement, did the colonists achieve a profitable, rather than a subsistence, level of trade. Yet the primary

reason for further emigration rested erroneously upon the belief that trade with the aborigines was profitable. In July 1622, two trading ships from London, the *Charity* and the *Swan*, entered the port at Plymouth bringing sixty emigrants who intended to settle in the area. Their object entailed the establishment of a colony for trade with the Indians. The expedition, fitted out by Thomas Weston, a wealthy London merchant, consisted of men utterly devoid of principle, the dregs of the city's streets. "They are no men for us," wrote Robert Cushman, a friend of the Pilgrims in England. "I fear these people will hardly deal so well with the savages as they should. I pray you therefore, so to signify to Squanto that they are a distinct body from us, and we have nothing to do with them, neither must be blamed for their faults, much less can warrant their fidelity."²³ Immediately after their arrival, the insolent band perpetrated innumerable acts of violence and injustice. Settling at a place near Boston harbor called by the Indians "Wessagusset," they stole corn from the Indians and regarded them as not entitled to any rights. They went about building "castles in the air and making forts," wrote one observer, but "when winter came their forts would not keep hunger out." The outrages of Weston's men reported from tribe to tribe exasperated and prejudiced the Indians against the English. The Pilgrims did not exercise their military power to redress these abuses. Instead, they earnestly remonstrated—but in vain. The outrages continued unabated.²⁴

Not a month passed since their arrival before these reckless squanderers had used up their provisions. None of the Indians in the area dared venture into the colony with corn to sell, lest they should be robbed. John Sanders, the leader at Wessagusset, wrote to Governor Bradford wishing to unite the colonies in an excursion along the eastern and southern coast of Cape Cod to purchase corn from the Indians. The colony at Wessagusset furnished the vessel *Swan* for the voyage, while the colony at Plymouth supplied the men to protect the expedition, to trade with the Indians, and to bring the articles for trade. The corn received from the trade with the natives was to be equally divided between the plantations. Standish led several missions to fulfill the trade agreement. Facing Indian thievery, Standish used a threat to kill the chief as the method to force the return of stolen merchandise. He brandished the obvious military superiority of the English over the natives to secure a just restitution. Such action illustrates the strong-handed tactics Standish deemed necessary for dealing with the Indians.²⁵ A policy based primarily upon pugnacious diplomacy, not upon expediency, or upon a gripping fear of heathen neighbors, created tensions. The combative nature of Plymouth's relations with the natives during 1622 rested extensively on Standish's conflict with Wituwamut, an instigating Massachusetts warrior. Standish and Wituwamut primarily interacted on a personal level.²⁶ Standish came near death in an early confrontation with Wituwamut during a trading expedition, which set the stage for a final battle between them at Wessagusset. Rumors of an Indian conspiracy filtered into Plymouth through Edward Winslow who had received his news from the friendly Wampanoag sachem, Massasoit.²⁷ This startling news combined with the apprehensions surrounding the colony at Wessagusset, gave a degree of credence to the conspiracy.

In the beginning of March of 1623, during the time of Winslow's visit to Massasoit, Standish traveled to Manomet with the shallop to trade for corn. Two Massachusetts Indians also arrived at Manomet. Both warriors entered Chief

Canacum's house and interrupted Standish's visit. Wituwamut, one of the natives, bragged about the blood of English and Frenchmen he had spilled and "derided their weakness, especially because," as Winslow wrote, "they died crying, making sour faces, more like children than men." He then gave Canacum a dagger, one he had received from Weston's men. The presentation consisted of a long speech "in an audacious manner." Wituwamut gave the speech in such a manner that Standish, "though he be the best linguist amongst us," could not understand the full import of the oration. Later, Standish learned the nature of the conversation. Wituwamut asked for Canacum's assistance in overthrowing the party at Wessagusset and the colony at Plymouth. The Indians feared that Plymouth "would never leave the death . . . unrevenged;" therefore, their own safety dictated the extermination of both settlements.²⁸

Evidently impressed by Wituwamut's speech, Canacum neglected Standish and treated his Indian guest with marked distinction. Out of their conversation a plot formed for the assassination of Standish and the boat's crew. The Indians stood in deadly fear of the English muskets and did not dare approach Standish's shallop with hostile intent. Put off by the quick reversal of interest shown by Canacum toward himself, and already wary because of Wituwamut's lengthy and excited oration, Standish prevented armed Indians from coming near the shallop. The Indians tried to lure them to the shore, saying that it was too cold for Standish's men to sleep in the shallop. If the crew slept in the huts, the Indians hoped to fall upon them. The natives feigned friendship, gave presents to Standish, and with alacrity hoped to carry corn to the shallop. The Captain would not let them board the boat. Staying up all night, Standish "either walked, or turned himself to and froe at the fire." By losing sleep, Standish saved his life. The next morning, with the wind to their backs, Standish and his crew returned to Plymouth.²⁹ The memory of this incident between Wituwamut and Standish added fuel to the conspiratorial fires at the colony. To a person like Standish, who required a military demeanor both to prevent as well as initiate violence, the loss of face in front of Canacum boded ill for Wituwamut. The next meeting between him and Standish at Wessagusset resulted in the death of the Massachusetts warrior, considered one of the "principals" in the conspiracy.

A war council composed of Standish, Bradford, Isaac Allerton, and Winslow met in order to consider the means available to stop the conspiracy before it spread. The war council decided that since it was such an important action all of the people should be involved. But when the colonists gathered to voice their opinion no consensus could be reached. "We came to this public conclusion," Winslow wrote, "that because it was a matter of such weight as of every man was not of sufficiency to judge," Standish, Allerton, and Bradford would determine the strategy. Winslow reported that the joint wisdom of the council encouraged Standish, along with as many men as he thought necessary to be successful in battle against the Indians in the Massachusetts Bay area, to "take them in such traps as they lay for others." Standish was to "pretend trade, as at other times," while informing the leaders at Wessagusset about the plan to ambush the plotting Indians "and make sure of Wituwamut . . . whose head he had order to bring with him." Wituwamut sealed his fate at Wessagusset when he repeated the oration he had made earlier in the presence of Standish and Canacum. Boasting

that he had killed both English and Frenchmen with his knife, Wituwamut continued to taunt the Englishmen. Spurred by the warrior's bombastic speech, Pecksuot, another Indian brave who accompanied Wituwamut, continued the derision before Standish by making fun of the short Captain's stature, both figuratively and literally. Pecksuot asserted that the height of Standish inadequately qualified him as a sachem among the English. Pecksuot claimed that he himself had courage and repute despite non-chief status. The next day when Wituwamut, along with Pecksuot and two other braves, came into the stockade at Wessagusset and entered the blockhouse, Standish along with four or five of his own company ambushed them, taking the head of Wituwamut as a trophy back to Plymouth. Mounted on a pole at the top of the palisade, the gory emblem reminded any visitor that ill-will toward Plymouth or Standish would not be tolerated.³⁰

The military action at Wessagusset signaled a hiatus for the Plymouth colony. The Massachusetts Indians who supported the conspiracy suffered grave consequences for their participation. "It so terrified and amazed them that they forsook their houses, running to and fro like men distracted, living in swamps and other desert places, and so brought manifold diseases amongst themselves, whereof very many are dead." Weston's men left their settlement area with some of them going to Plymouth and others leaving to go "eastward, where haply they might hear of Mr. Weston or some supply from him." Standish regained his lost prestige among the Indians, but it lacked the kind of honor he had in mind. "The Salvages [sic] of the Massachusetts that could not imagine, from whence these men should come, or to what end, seeing them performe such unexpected actions, neither could tell by what name properly to distinguish them, did from that time afterwards," recorded Thomas Morton, the vicar of Merry-Mount, "call the English Planters Wotawquenange, which in their language signifieth stabbers or Cutthroates." Standish, a non-conciliatory man, possessed a quick temper and the boldness to back it up with action. This is why the observant pastor at Leyden, Holland, John Robinson, warned the Pilgrim settlement that in Standish "there is cause to fear that by occasion, especially provocation, there may be wanting that tenderness of the life of man (made after God's image) which is meet."³¹ Standish, by his performance at Wessagusset, verified that pastor's insight.

An ethnohistorian recently wrote: "Plymouth intervened in order to reassert and expand its control of the surrounding territory and its inhabitants, English as well as Indian."³² Yet Plymouth was ill-equipped to intervene or dominate anyone as it tried to meet the basic, simple challenge of survival. Standish and the Pilgrims intervened at Wessagusset in order to preserve their settlement, not extend it. Plymouth struggled for its existence both in an economic sense by trading for subsistence grain with the Indians, and in a military way by defending itself against possible extermination through a conspiracy. Standish wished to maintain his military image and revenge the slight he suffered at Manomet before Canacum. He intended, by making an example of Wituwamut, to regain his honor both in the eyes of his men and the Indians with whom he traded.

One writer described the ambush at Wessagusset as a "demonstration in microcosm of much that was to follow."³³ In this line of argument the white,

European settler brutally asserted his dominance over a native population. At closer scrutiny, however, this incident has the distinguishing features of a personal vendetta, not the extension of racial or economic hegemony. The Pilgrims sought immediate reprisal after learning of the plot by the Massachusetts tribe to overthrow the plantation.³⁴ Standish implemented this preventive defense policy while simultaneously restoring his lost prestige. Reverend Robinson, the Pilgrim pastor at Leyden, Holland, wrote to Governor Bradford after hearing of the episode: "Punishment to a few and the fear to many."³⁵ Standish had essentially followed this strategy.

At least two conclusions can be drawn concerning Standish. First, as military commander his leadership increased the chances of survival for Plymouth. By choosing appropriate weapons, keeping civil order, building a defense system, and implementing a policy toward the Indians and outsiders, Standish provided the inexperienced colonists the wherewithal for a limited amount of security and stability. Second, Standish's position as military leader during the formative years of 1620 to 1623 gave him great influence in making significant decisions concerning trade and military expeditions. His early career gives striking evidence that despite the economic opportunities believed to exist in seventeenth century America motivating English colonization, and the religious impulse of the Separatists to establish their plantation in peace, the frontier modified these desires. Plymouth earned its survival by aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour and sustained itself by a military system in which Standish played the major role. With martial air Standish attained and maintained military leadership as Plymouth's commander.

NOTES

1. There has not been a biography of Standish written since 1920. The list which follows is inclusive: Thomas C. Porteus, *Captain Myles Standish: His Lost Lands and Lancashire Connections* (London, 1920), which deals with his genealogy, Tudor Jenks, *Captain Myles Standish* (New York, 1905), it is written for the younger reader, and John S. C. Abbott, *Miles Standish, Captain of the Pilgrims* (New York, 1872).
2. Philip L. Barbour, *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith* (Boston, 1964), pp. 343-344.
3. William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Samuel E. Morison, ed. (New York, 1967), pp. 25-27.
4. John W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London, 1935), pp. 5, 12, 16, 134 and 140. For a more general discussion of the condition and organization of the English army see C. G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army* (Oxford, 1966).

5. Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Amsterdam, 1637), microfilm reprint, p. 141. Morton, in giving his personal account of the episode at Merry-Mount calls "Captaine Shrimpe," alias Captain Standish, "a quondam Drummer." in Latin "quondam" means "in the past," "previously." This important reference, heretofore not recognized by historians, explains the existence of a drum at Plymouth and its importance in military pomp. See Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 80; Letter from Isaack de Rasiers to Samuel Blommaert, printed in *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth*, ed. by Sydney V. James (Plymouth, 1963), p. 76. The drummer was a messenger between enemies. Besides being a highly dangerous job, it required a knowledge of different languages. This training served Standish well in his contact with the natives in America. See Francis Grose, *Military Antiquities* (London, 1801), Vol. 1, pp. 40, 262, 361, Vol. 2, pp. 42, 48, 49.
6. For a description of Bariffe's *Discipline* see Annie Arnoux Haxtun, *Signers of the Mayflower Compact* (Baltimore, 1968) p. 23. Also, T. C. Porteus, *Captain Myles Standish: His Lost Lands and Lancashire Connections* (London, 1920) p. 92.
7. George B. Cheever, ed., *Mourt's Relation* (New York, 1849), pp. 32, 46.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43. Also see Edward Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence* (London, 1654), for an account favorable to Standish's part played in the Eastham episode.
9. For more recent chronicles that make no mention of the "First Encounter" see Robert M. Bartlett, *The Faith of the Pilgrims* (New York, 1978) p. 186. George D. Langdon, *Pilgrim Colony: A History of New Plymouth 1620-1691* (New Haven, 1966) does not give a single sentence to the important incident. Alden Vaughan, *New England Frontier* (New York, 1979) p. 67 describes the event but does not mention Standish. George F. Willison, *Saints and Strangers* (London, 1966 [1945]), p. 79, gives a more detailed description of the encounter while recognizing the key role Standish exercised in turning back the Nauset Indian ambush.
10. In 1609, Stephen Hopkins was involved in the shipwreck off the coast of Bermuda with other Nonconformists. The six months spent on the island of Bermuda were invaluable for his life with the Pilgrims giving him the survival experience needed in the formative years at Plymouth. See Annie A. Haxtun, *Signers of the Mayflower Compact*, p. 36.
11. Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 77.
12. *Mourt's Relation*, p. 56. See Douglas E. Leach, "The Military System of Plymouth Colony," *New England Quarterly*, XXIV (September, 1951) p. 347.
13. *Mourt's Relation*, p. 57. The artillery included a minion, whose bore was about three and one fourth inches in diameter, a saker of even a larger bore, two bases having a bore of about one and one fourth inches in diameter, and another piece of unidentified type. See Young's *Chronicles*, p. 181, fn. 4.
14. Letter from John Pory to the Earl of Southampton, January 13, 1622/1623, and later. Found in James, ed., *Three Visitors*, p. 11.

15. For the contents of the actual letter of John Huddleston's see Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 110.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9; Francis Dillon, *The Pilgrims*, p. 167; and Young, *Chronicles*, pp. 282-284.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 284-85.
18. *Mourt's Relation*, p. 199, the copy found in Young, *Chronicles*.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 134, 156, 171, 179-81, 192, 220, 281, 284, 308-9, 338-43.
20. Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 88. Hobomak himself had been captured and managed to escape, see *Mourt's Relation*, Young, ed., *Chronicles*, pp. 219-220, 223.
21. Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England 1500-1643*, (Oxford, 1982), stresses Plymouth's intentions as being a hegemony over the Indians, p. 139. I see the Pilgrims more gradually becoming profit and "control" minded. By 1625, when security as a plantation was less an issue, food more plentiful, and trade for profit rather than subsistence was being initiated with the Indians, Plymouth created its own hegemonic enterprise, but not in the formative years from 1620 to 1623.
22. See, for example, Bradford, *Plymouth*, pp. 187, 193-4, 200, 215, 228-9.
23. Mr. John Pierce wrote respecting them: "But as for Weston's company, I think them so base in condition for the most part, as in all appearance not fit for an honest man's company; I wish they prove otherwise," Bradford, pp. 108-109.
24. Christopher Levett, *A Voyage into New England. . . 1623. . . 1624* (London, 1628) reprinted in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Series 3, VIII, p. 182. Young, *Chronicles*, p. 297, also see p. 78, note number one, for a description of Thomas Weston and his importance to Plymouth.
25. Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 113, Young *Chronicles*, pp. 299, 309. This incident was duplicated at Nauset earlier. See *The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, ed. by Edward Arber, (London, 1897) p. 539.
26. See Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, pp. 125-135; Francis Jennings, *Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, 1975), pp. 186-187; and Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, pp. 183-187. An older reference which does give credence to the importance of Standish's personality is Charles Francis Adams, *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History* (New York, 1965 [1892]) pp. 84-104.
27. Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 117.
28. Young, *Chronicles*, p. 310.
29. The entire episode is told in Winslow's *Relation*. See Young, *Chronicles*, pp. 309-312.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 331-32, 338, 342; and Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 118. For a discussion of scalping and beheading as rituals of warfare among Europeans and Indians see the enlightening article by James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant, "The Unkindest Cut of All; or, Who Invented Scalping?" *William and Mary Quarterly*, Series 3, 37, (1980), p. 464 has a reference to this incident. Also see James, ed., *Three Visitors*, p. 31.
31. Young *Chronicles*, pp. 342, 345; Bradford, *Plymouth*, pp. 118, 375, and Thomas Morton, *New English Cannan* (Amsterdam, 1637) p. 112.
32. Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, p. 132.
33. Jennings, *Invasion of America*, p. 186.
34. For a valid interpretation of the size of the conspiracy see Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, pp. 131-32. Salisbury believes the plot was instigated by a few warriors within the Massachuset tribe—it was not of a large magnitude.
35. Bradford, *Plymouth*, p. 375.