An Investigation of Indigenous Presence

in the

Kittatuck (Blackstone River) Valley

An Ethnographic Overview and Assessment
of the
Blackstone River Valley
National Historical Park
and
Kittatuck Valley

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Abbreviations and/or Acronyms

Massachusetts Archives Collection [MAC]
Massachusetts Acts and Resolves [MAR]
Massachusetts Historical Commission [MHC]
National Park Service [NPS]

Preface

This Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA) provides an introduction and overview of a complex and deep history focused mainly on the Nipmuc, Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples connected to the Blackstone River Valley (mainly referred to as the Kittatuck Valley throughout the report), focusing on the post-contact centuries (1600 to the present). Relying primarily on research of archival documents, augmented by secondary sources and information from the authors about Indigenous families and peoples connected to this large, 46-mile cultural landscape, this report offers specific examples of individuals and family lines from mainly Nipmuc and Narragansett tribal communities (the heart of the report, Chapter VI). Following chapters that provide overviews of the towns connected to the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park during the pre-contact and post-contact periods, a chapter focuses on the historical and political factors, as well as academic factors, that have influenced how Indigenous presence has been considered (or, more accurately, hidden) over the centuries. Then Chapter VI outlines documented examples of the types of labor that Indigenous people–often intermarried with Black as well as white people–engaged in. Several key themes are present throughout this report (see Introduction), as is the point that Indigenous people maintained both a presence and strong connections to the waterway and Kittatuck Valley through continued practices of movement and mobility defined by kinship ties and economic opportunities.

Based on the findings in this overview and recognition of additional research and actions that could be undertaken by the park, key recommendations for the National Park Service include:

- Use this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment report as a baseline opportunity to continue and extend engagement with tribal peoples from the region and gather additional feedback and input;
- Expand the information about specific locations, individuals and families included in this report through this engagement and through additional research;
- Develop pathways for this research through a dedicated position or an internship program to facilitate and expand outreach;
- Begin outreach to, engagement with and incorporation of Indigenous peoples' knowledge through a one or two-day retreat or workshop gathering that would bring people into conversation with each other and with NPS staff about the Blackstone River/Kittatuck Valley;
- Use this gathering and the developing relationships to help further define (or "undefine") the boundaries of this park;
- Provide public acknowledgement of the Blackstone River and the valley as the Kittatuck Valley, honoring its origins, connections to and location within the Indigenous homelands of the Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples;

- Conceptualize this landscape in future research, projects, interpretations and discussions as one with many nodes linked by a web of human and natural interactions, focusing on the network of waterways connecting this large cultural landscape and its occupants over time (with the Kittatuck at the center);
- Consider a layered "remapping" of the Blackstone River/Kittatuck Valley that spans 400 years, beginning with the natural landscape and then layered with Indigenous knowledges and place names (then adding settler colonial/immigrant locations);
- Include in this remapping concentric circles representing both tribal homelands (as defined through input from tribal representatives) and the interconnectedness of the nodes dotting this large and complex landscape and demonstrating how both tribal homelands and specific places and areas within those homelands overlap;
- Develop a digital space connected to the park's current website (prominently featured, rather than hard to locate) for these layered histories of the Blackstone's/Kittatuck's landscape, as well as physical versions at park locations along the river; and
- Undertake additional research focused on the city of Worcester at the northern end of the river valley.

These recommendations are discussed further in the final chapter (VII), Conclusions and Recommendations. Beyond this list, the Blackstone River National Historical Park may also generate ideas from this report for how to continue the research through projects, programming, and other opportunities for engagement with tribal communities and individuals connected to the Kittatuck Valley.

Chapter I

Introduction to
An Investigation of Indigenous Presence
in the
Kittatuck (Blackstone River) Valley

This report, defined as an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA), provides an introduction to a complex and deep history, one where almost every story, location and individual folded into these chapters could have a number of layers beyond what is shared here. In an effort to keep this to an overview, this report focuses mainly on the Nipmuc, Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples connected to the Blackstone River Valley (mainly referred to as the Kittatuck Valley throughout the report) for millennia and up to the present. It also dives deeper into the more well-documented periods of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing assessments of known historical and more recent ethnographic contexts for Indigenous peoples that have been associated with the non-contiguous Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and the region surrounding it. A primary goal and outcome of this report is to provide new information that can guide future interpretations and programming provided by the National Park Service (NPS) and its partners, and to provide suggestions for future projects and treatments that would expand upon (and respond to) this overview as NPS develops and expands its knowledge of–and relationships to–tribal communities and individuals in southern New England.

Established in 2014 (1), this park will benefit from the baseline research provided in this report by being able to: assess the multiple levels of documentary evidence connected to the region's contemporary tribes (mainly Nipmuc and Narragansett); better understand their ancestral, historical and more contemporary connections to this area; and develop deeper understandings of the complex social, historical, political and cultural influences that shape research about Indigenous peoples. A useful starting point for all of these interpretations and assessments will be to consider rivers not as "natural resources," as is so common in today's world, but rather to think of them more as connecting systems and beings, connecting places, people and purposes, and other beings of water, as well.

Throughout this report certain terms are used interchangeably: Indigenous, Native, Native American and (where used in the original source) Indian. Also interchanged are Blackstone River/Blackstone River Valley with the Kittatuck (vs. Kittatuck River) and Kittatuck Valley. Consistent use of "Kittatuck," and/or similar Indigenous names for this river, is critical for expanding the National Park Service's (and other readers') lens for viewing this river valley and the histories of the mills, towns and cities surrounding it. While several spellings of the Algonquian word for this river exist, throughout this report Kittatuck is used; consistent use of this in the future–following the lead from this report–for what has been called the Blackstone

River (and Blackstone River Valley) by NPS will help to expand the Park Service's and the public's knowledge and understanding of this landscape (a primary goal of this report). Adding "Kittatuck" to the park name, in fact, would be a beginning place for future expansion and interpretive work needing to take place across the park (a recommendation outlined in Chapter VII). Other Indigenous names for this river include Mishkittakookse'pe (Narragansett), with Kittacuck (a variant spelling of Kittatuck) likely a shortened version of this word.

Also, thinking of this landscape in a baseline way to begin with–*without* the physical developments that occurred during the colonial, industrial and more modern periods–allows for a more layered view of the land, much like the complex social and cultural interactions that are also layered over time. Expansive and detailed analyses of specific neighborhoods and their populations are not provided in this report, but could also be completed through additional research. (2)

This report provides an overall discussion of the entire Kittatuck Valley and the movement between and within specific nodes, or locations, where information is available. Neighborhoods with Indigenous populations that existed in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, are the foci of numerous other publications and could be explored in future National Park Service reports, if desired, as these two cities would provide enough data for independent reports. Also, specific sites and resources within all current boundaries of the non-contiguous National Historical Park used by Indigenous peoples today were not identified through the research conducted for this report. Additional research, or an expansion of the park's boundaries, may aid in identification of these in the future, though; additional input from tribal communities and members from the region will provide new layers of material to help guide future interpretations and educational programming for NPS and its partners, including toward any revisions of the general management plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. (3)

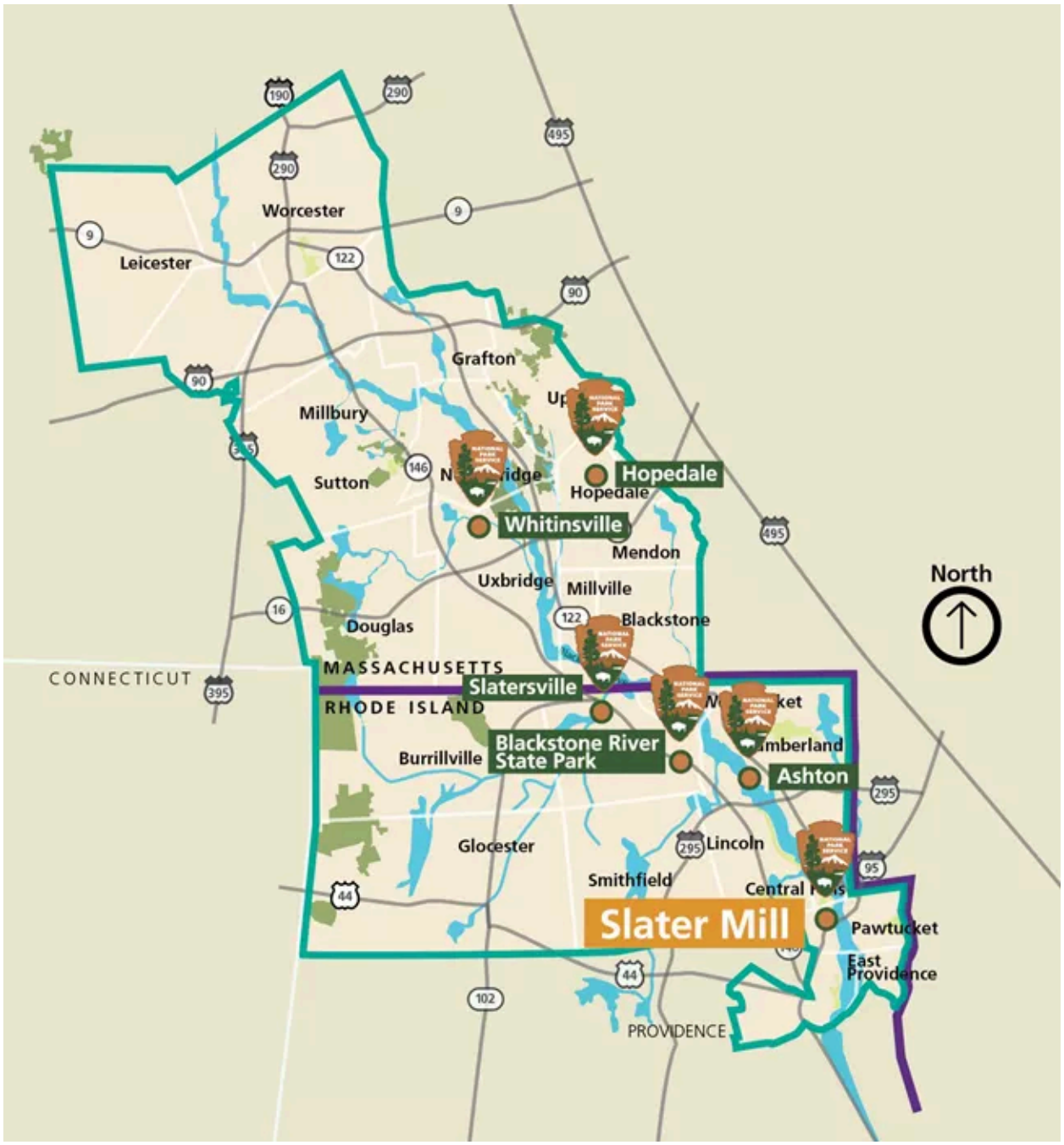
As Map 1 demonstrates, while the river's valley may be more bounded and confined, and specific villages, town and cities were focused on for this report (see below), the actual watershed connected to the Kittatuck Valley expands well beyond this park's boundaries and deep into Nipmuc homelands, as well as into Narragansett homelands.



Map 1: The Blackstone River (or Kittatuck) watershed area, expanding well beyond the scope of this report but worthy to note due to the connections that Indigenous peoples (and others) have had to this system of waterways, especially Nipmuc people whose homelands are in central Massachusetts, northeast Connecticut and northwest Rhode Island. (https://www.thebrwa.org/map.htm)

For the purposes of this report, specific towns (and villages within those towns) and cities along the Kittatuck were researched. These included (south to north) present-day: Pawtucket, Central Falls, Smithfield, Lincoln, Cumberland and Woonsocket in Rhode Island, and Millville, Uxbridge, Whitinsville (in Northbridge), Hopedale and Mendon in Massachusetts. Confining the

research conducted for this report to the boundaries of the National Historical Park sites was not feasible, since information about Indigenous peoples connected to those areas would not yield much (or, in some cases, any) information. The map below (from the National Park Service website for the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park) provides perhaps the best visual of the river and its corridor running alongside modern-day Route 146 that connects present-day Rhode Island and Massachusetts from Providence to Worcester.



Map 2: Map of the Kittatuck (Blackstone River) Valley and the six non-contiguous parks that make up the BRNHP. (https://www.nps.gov/blrv/planyourvisit/passport.htm)

The southern boundary of the Kittatuck is at Pawtucket, Rhode Island, where it flows into the Seekonk River just above the city of Providence and near Pawtucket Falls. Heading north from this point, the river flows through the modern-day Rhode Island towns of Central Falls, Cumberland and Woonsocket, then through the Massachusetts towns of Blackstone and Millville, Uxbridge, Northbridge and Millbury, with an origin in Worcester from its northerly tributaries. The river has a 450-feet change in sea level measurement over its 46-mile path from Worcester to Pawtucket, dropping an average of ten feet per mile as it meanders past more urban areas, mill villages with rich histories, open farmlands and wooded forests. Segments of the Blackstone Canal and over 18 dams also exist along the length of the river, which has been documented over time primarily due to its industrial history. Although outside the scope of this report, exploring the ethnographic history of Worcester through a separate study (as noted above) may be worthwhile, given the rich history of Nipmuc presence and the complex and layered development of this urban area. Likewise, the Indigenous presence in Providence over time is also lengthy and complex, as already explored in detail in at least one source (Rubertone 2020).

This report adds to a collection of works illustrating how Native people were part of the daily fabric of life throughout the region. They lived and worked in cities and more urbanized areas, in rural towns and in mill towns, and along the networks of roads, rivers and thoroughfares that have permeated the Blackstone River Valley and surrounding areas over the past 400 years. They were moving around the landscape and interacting with (sometimes marrying) people with other ancestry (African, African American and immigrant), as well as other Native people (see, for example, Gould et al. 2020). The thought of Native people as a "marginalized" population is one concept that needs to be rethought and recontextualized, if not abandoned entirely. As Chapter VI demonstrates, Indigenous people were just as integrated into the development of southern New England over the past four centuries as all other ethnic groups were. In this chapter, just some of the "Sites of Significance to Indigenous Peoples of the Kittatuck Region" are discussed; many others could be included in future research projects developed that focus on this area.

This report supports a growing body of research demonstrating that Indigenous peoples were (and are) not an insignificant part of the area's history. This park could benefit greatly from a realignment of the predominant thinking about the Blackstone River Valley, including fundamental concepts about the river (e.g., including references to "the Kittatuck" wherever possible, including in renaming web pages and interpretative materials, as the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument did in the early 1990s). Considering the Kittatuck as a connecting system and being—connecting places, people and purposes—is one concept that could be further explored through additional engagement with Indigenous peoples from the region (as suggested above).

A larger goal of this report and its outcomes is to underscore how colonization was primarily about making certain groups of people eligible for mistreatment through forms of ongoing structural violence and being relegated as peripheral to society (ie., "marginalized"). The still frequent use of "marginalized populations" for Native and other people of color, for example, demonstrates the continued prevalence of this thinking in the twenty-first century. This violence is inherent to the settler colonialism foundation of New England (and the country), the dispossession of Indigenous land that made space for the "establishment" of immigrant towns, villages and cities, and, indeed, the industrial development that came to define life along the Kittatuck in the post-contact centuries. And acknowledging that the founders of colonial settlements were central to this violence is required for any type of real engagement with the histories and stories shared in the report, as well as for future research, projects and engagement centered around Indigenous people from the area. This history cannot be engaged without this baseline concept at the fore (the focus of Chapter V).

Close studies of census records (which are fallible, we know) and other documents have repeatedly demonstrated that people with power (mostly settler colonial descendants) made frequent and calculated moves to dispossess people of color from land and employment opportunities, confining them to certain employment opportunities and limiting many Kittatuck Valley residents' abilities to participate in civic government. (4) The hiring practices of many early industrialists were deliberate and discriminatory, with some populations not central to certain processes of industrialization as it has historically been defined. Using this report's baseline information, future research and interpretations of the Kittatuck Valley could help to reveal a history of the region that regards Indigenous people and their experiences as integral to every story of industrialization, while also taking seriously the history of segregation and discrimination that existed throughout this area.

A number of themes, or threads, are presented in this report. Most central to this report is the land dispossession that enabled development of the Kittatuck Valley over the past 400 years. The initial (and then ongoing) dispossession of Indigenous homelands allowed settler colonists and their descendants to embrace the idea that New England was *terra nullius*, empty or "nobody's" land, since the Indigenous inhabitants were not Christian. The attempted containment of Native people following the arrival of settler colonial immigrants is also a central story of Indigenous-settler relations in southern New England in the post-contact centuries. The violent actions against Indigenous inhabitants (during King Philip's War, for example) were an active version of Indigenous removal, a tactic used frequently in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries to erase Indigenous peoples from their homelands and thus rendering these spaces "empty" for settlement in a real and physical way that aligned with the concept of *terra nullius*.

Closely connected to land dispossession–and in support of that strategy–were ideas of Indigenous people as enemies, friends, and/or strangers, who also required salvation through religious interventions that directly influenced political and legal decisions, often resulting in loss of life as well as loss of land. The centrality of violent events such as King Philip's War, a conflict tied to the battle to dispossess Indigenous people of their homelands in southern New England, cannot be overstated enough; this foundation event needs to be further incorporated into the story of the Kittatuck Valley by the National Park Service. This seminal conflict is much more than about battlefield sites (such as Nipsachuck) and permeated the entire valley (and region), influencing the future of this central waterway and the lands surrounding it. Through this report and the conversations that will result following review and consultation with regional tribal representatives, discussions can develop about the power dynamics that defined Indigenous presence in the Kittatuck Valley (and beyond) in the post-contact centuries following occupation of their homelands by settler colonists beginning in the early seventeenth century. Through this lens, places like Slater Mill have a deeper history that is also clearly tied to dispossession and displacement, and not just the founding of the Industrial Revolution.

Also closely connected to the dispossession of the entire Kittatuck Valley from its Indigenous stewards, another theme in this report is the diasporas of Indigenous people into, out of, and across the Kittatuck Valley. These diasporas were both forced (such as the captivity of Native people after the Pequot and King Philip's wars) and unforced (such as the movement of Native people across pre-existing networks of kinship, trade, and diplomacy). This theme, like others throughout this report, underscores the diverse motivations, power imbalances, and experiences that compose the multi-layered histories of this landscape and contributes to complicating the notion of insulated Indigenous territories bounded by linear borders.

Another central theme to this report is the concept of mobility and movement of Indigenous people up and down the Kittatuck corridor. These are cultural patterns traditionally tied to resources, kinship networks and seasonal changes, but that also defined post-contact practices connected more closely to industry and economic opportunity across a changed landscape, in addition to continued and ongoing kinship, land and tribal connections for and between Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples.

Future research resulting from expansion of the themes in this report will also note that the majority of the archival materials connected to the Kittatuck Valley are the material embodiments of emerging colonial hierarchies. These documents not only tell a certain version of history, but also represent a certain version of Indigeneity that fits within the categorical framework of the American nation that emerged during and following the Colonial Period and the celebrated Industrial Period that partially defines this park. Archival documents can work to actively conceal the continued presence of Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley in attempts to justify its continued settler occupation, and also to reveal only certain kinds of Indigenous occupation and persistence (especially that which is considered deviant from, or dependent upon,

the state). The written record often reflects more the concerns and priorities of the record keepers (i.e., settler colonists and their descendants), rather than offering a holistic understanding of how things actually were over time. These concepts are discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

As the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park strives to revise and offer a respectful corrective to this narrative, we emphasize what National Park historians and anthropologists likely already know: that this persistent industrial and modernizing narrative–and the extant heritage places that reinforce it, such as Slater Mill–makes Indigenous heritage of this area even more vulnerable to settler appropriation. Following the model of this report, future work by the NPS and its partners could contribute to methodologies that have been modeled by scholarship, community-engagement, and praxis within the growing field of Native American and Indigenous studies, which is the hope of the authors.

A more specific theme presented in this report outlines the lines of work that Indigenous people in the Kittatuck Valley engaged in, enabled by connections to the industrialized valley through kinship networks and movements to, within and through the valley that were the result of long-standing ties to people, places and resources. These connections were, to a degree, redefined by settler colonial occupation and then industrialization of the landscape, and morphed into various occupations such as stonework, quarrying, boot and shoe making, straw work, basketmaking, and becoming barbers, chefs, and teamsters, for example. Just as important, understanding the overlapping ancestries and kinship networks is critical for engagement with the material presented in this report, and for any future projects and research resulting from it. Many, if not most, of the families discussed in this report were documented as Nipmuc, Narragansett, Wampanoag and/or have multiple tribal ancestries (as the Jaha family discussed in this report does).

Following this introduction, Chapter II provides an overview of the methodology used to research and write this report. Using a cultural landscape approach, the report examines the presence of Indigenous people throughout the Blackstone River (or Kittatuck) Valley over time and their interactions with other populations present in the valley, mainly through specific examples of places and people that they interacted with for various purposes over the last 400 years. The research goals and methods used, and types of data collected, for this report are outlined in this chapter. Primarily, documentary and archival research provided the basis for the information in this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA). While some input from tribal members from the region is included in the material collected for the report, more could certainly be added to future projects and be a catalyst for increased engagement by the NPS with Indigenous peoples of the region. A list of the primary and secondary sources that contributed to this report is included in this chapter.

The third chapter provides a brief overview of the pre-contact period in the Kittatuck Valley, and general information on the pre-contact millennia. Since this report is focused primarily on the post-contact presence of Indigenous peoples and their interactions with the immigrants who settled in this area since the early 1600s and their descendants, data related to the pre-Contact Period (prior to c. 1600) is only summarized. A focus on the many archaeological sites surrounding the Kittatuck would provide enough material for a separate report on just the pre-Contact Period. The long presence of Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples in the area that is today the state of Rhode Island–and of Nipmuc people in the area of Massachusetts north of Rhode Island–has been well documented. Wampanaog homelands border Nipmuc and Narragansett homelands on the eastern side of the state, and some areas are considered borderlands, or overlapping areas, where all three of the tribes would have interacted and accessed resources.

Chapter IV is an "Overview of Contact, Colonial and Industrial Periods" of the Kittatuck Valley, primarily focusing on the towns discussed through this report between (and including) Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and Millbury, Massachusetts. As part of the effort to summarize the interactions of the Indigenous peoples connected to the park's locations and surrounding towns with non-Indigenous populations, this overview discusses the non-Indigenous settlements and developments of these towns by settler colonists/immigrants who occupied the region following 1620, along with Indigenous peoples and other people of color. The transformation of the Kittatuck into the Blackstone River and the influence of industrialization on this waterway and nearby transportation paths and roads is also discussed.

Chapter V offers the theoretical background, as well as the cultural and historical context, of how and why Indigenous presence in the Kittatuck Valley is defined simultaneously by practices of mobility and erasure; Indigenous peoples were not isolated to specific towns or solely within present-day park boundaries. To better understand the presence of Indigenous peoples of the Kittauck Valley, existing obstacles must first be identified and acknowledged, including the purposeful "erasure" of Native peoples in this area through dispossession of their homelands and a growing discourse of erasure, especially during the nineteenth century.

The post-industrial periods are discussed in detail in Chapters V and VI of this report, which focus more specifically on Indigenous people's presence over time in the Kittatuck Valley and their interactions with African, African American and the non-Indigenous immigrants who dominated the landscape of southern New England by that time. Chapter VI offers specific examples documenting the presence of Native peoples throughout the valley through an exploration of "Sites of Significance to Indigenous Peoples of the Kittatuck Region." Most importantly, the continued presence of Indigenous peoples and those they interacted with and intermarried, including through extensive kinship networks that spanned from Providence to Worcester and beyond, is interwoven through the vignettes offered throughout Chapter VI.

Stories of passages, connections, living and working are shared throughout this chapter, as Indigenous peoples and other people of color engaged in professions such as caregivers, boot and shoemakers, teamsters, hat makers, quarrymen, barbers, chefs and other labors in taverns, as well as homes of the elite, on farms, in quarries, and (of course) in the mills up and down the Kittatuck Valley. Central to these stories is how all of these unfolded through lives defined by mobility and movement enabled by networks of kinship, waterways and thoroughfares that connected back into pre-contact times and still exist today.

The final chapter (VII) of this report provides conclusions and recommendations for future research, tribal engagement, and specific projects that can expand on what is presented in this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment. The hope is that this report provides a baseline, as intended to do, with specific threads that could be expanded upon for even better understandings of Indigenous peoples' presence in the Kittatuck Valley and beyond, and perhaps even more specifically for the bounded park areas or to help further define this park's boundaries.

Chapter II

Report Goals and Methodology

This chapter outlines the research goals, methods used, and types of data collected for the report. Documentary and archival research provided the basis for the information in this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA), supplemented by information from tribal members from the region and secondary sources. While not comprehensive and meant to be built upon by National Park Service staff and future researchers, this report provides baseline information and details on specific locations that will greatly aid in future outreach, research projects and interpretations related to the Indigenous peoples of the Kittatuck Valley region. This EOA was originally envisioned as focusing on the post-Contact presence (the past 400 years) of Indigenous peoples in the valley, with little focus on the pre-Contact periods, since that could comprise a separate, detailed report. Therefore, a summary of pre-Contact presence of Indigenous peoples in the valley is included in Chapter III (that could be built upon).

This report focuses primarily on the stories of Indigenous peoples–with millennia of connections to this valley–whose lives were permanently altered by the transformative event of contact and settler colonialism, followed by industrialization and urbanization. Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples are at the heart of these stories, as are their Black and other Indigenous kin of the southern New England region.

Non-Native immigrants (1) are also part of this complex network of interactions defined by navigations of the valley by individuals connected to touchstone locations over the past 400 years. These immigrants were largely responsible for settling in, farming, developing mill towns throughout the valley, and creating larger industrial centers (such as Slater Mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island), as well as the urban centers of Providence and Worcester.

An original goal of this report was to begin with–and base a majority of the research on–contemporary knowledge of Indigenous peoples still connected to the Kittatuck Valley area, with a focus on specific locations within the valley and the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park sites, in particular. While focusing on the presence of Indigenous populations, their connections to and interactions with non-Indigenous populations over the centuries are also included in this report. The goal of helping to define the park's boundaries relative to Native American presence throughout the valley was always at the fore, as well.

Collecting information over the past few years from local tribal members (mainly Nipmuc and Narragansett) about their connections to the Kittatuck Valley proved difficult due to several reasons. This project began during the COVID-19 pandemic and information was shared about the project via Zoom meetings with Nipmuc tribal members initially. This online group setting was likely not conducive to sharing information and these discussions focused mainly on the goals of the report and scheduling future gatherings to facilitate sharing information related to the area. Post-pandemic outreach continued via discussions at tribal meetings and via email and

social media, also with limited success. However, people expressed interest in reviewing the report draft and providing input at that phase of the project. We anticipate that future interest and engagement by specific tribal members will exist and should be sought by NPS staff, using this final draft of the report and recommendations in the last chapter as a guide.

This EOA contributes to ongoing efforts to "decolonize" the National Park Service and public understandings of the Kittatuck Valley. In this context, the concept "decolonizing" refers to removing and/or recontextualizing colonial boundaries, both physically and ideologically, and reconceiving the landscape of this valley from an Indigenous understanding. For example, understanding that overlapping boundaries existed between and among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples over the last 400 years in this region is foundational, and central to the methodology used for this report. These preconceived boundaries often support the belief that places throughout the valley have been *either* Indigenous or non-Indigenous (e.g., created by colonists or during the well-known American Industrial Period born in this area *or* culturally important places for Indigenous peoples, or following the long-held assumption that "Native American" equates to pre-Contact, as archaeologists have done). In reality these are not mutually exclusive since Native people have had a continuous presence in this region, in and out of all spaces and places up and down the river stretching from deep pre-Contact times to the present. The Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park boundaries are just one element of the landscape to consider in this way and are, like other boundaries, arbitrary in relation to the movement and presence of Indigenous peoples through and across them. (2)

Other important goals of this project include contributing to the ongoing management, interpretation and defining of the park (and its connections to the surrounding valley), while also providing information useful for public programs and future engagements with current tribes and tribal members from this region of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. This report will help the park to move beyond a focus on Roger Williams, Samuel Slater and the Industrial Period, demonstrating that connections exist between the river and the history and heritage of other populations, as well. For example, how does this report influence the park's General Management Plan and Foundation Documents? Does the park intend to move away from a general focus on industry, or perhaps have a more balanced approach to its focus? And how might other stakeholders, who were also asked to contribute to the General Management Plan, view this shift? Indigenous history is clearly of importance to the future of this park, so how will NPS staff translate these interests and ideas into action without tangible connections on the landscape of what the park owns and has a stake in (i.e., locations discussed in this report that are outside of the official park boundaries)? The last chapter of this report offers some concrete suggestions that provide guidance on initial actions to consider undertaking.

As part of this effort, and to help the NPS reconceptualize its understandings of the Blackstone River Valley, throughout this report specific locations and towns noted along this corridor will alternately be referred to as being in the BRV and the Kittatuck (also seen as "Kittacuck") Valley, meaning "great river" in the local dialect of Algonquian.

With a primary goal of this project to assess the known historical and contemporary ethnographic contexts for populations associated with the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, and to supplement the information with new research, the project team knew that data would likely be drawn primarily from documentary and archival sources, including both primary and secondary sources, providing a baseline for an assessment focused on Indigenous presence in the valley over time. Additional input from tribal members will provide material to help guide future interpretations and educational programming for NPS and its partners.

The objectives of this project and report were to: collect and assess the known evidence of historical and contemporary Native connections to the Kittatuck Valley; consult with tribal and other affiliated communities to collect additional observations and evidence; and to deliver a report (and supplemental materials associated with the report) that identifies tribal and affiliated peoples' connections to the valley and National Park's boundaries, in particular. These objectives will contribute to recommendations for the National Park Service's treatment of the Blackstone River Valley and the park.

To achieve these goals and provide the baseline research to assess the levels of documentary evidence related to local tribes (and their ancestral and contemporary connections to the park and surrounding areas within the valley), an overview of documentary evidence was conducted, including photographs, newspaper accounts, local histories and similar publications, research reports, and primary sources in various archives. Specifically, the resources reviewed for this report included:

- Documents in the archives of: American Antiquarian Society, American Philosophical Society, Newbury Library, Beinecke Library, Rhode Island State Archives, Rhode Island Historical Society, Worcester Historical Society, and the Massachusetts State Archives
- Digital Commonwealth and Digital Archives of the Providence Public Library, especially for images
- Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports of various towns in the Kittatuck Valley held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission
- Historical survey and statewide historic preservation reports of various towns held by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
- Town histories for the towns included along the Kittatuck Valley
- Federal and state census records, Massachusetts US Vital Records (1640-1849), Massachusetts US Wills and Probate (1635-1991), Massachusetts US Death Records (1841-1915), Massachusetts Town Death Records (1620-1850), Rhode Island US Wills and Probate (1682-1932), US Published Quaker Family Histories, 1774 Rhode Island Census, Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the American Revolution, US Black and Indigenous Soldiers and Sailors in the American Revolution, US Navy and Marine Corps Registries (1814-1992),US Civil War Pension Records, Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, US Civil War Prisoner of War Records, US Returns Regular Army Infantry Regiments (1863-65),
- The Report of the Commissioners on the State of the Indians in Massachusetts (1849) (the Bird Report)

- Report to the Governor and Council, Concerning the Indians of the Commonwealth, Under the Act of April 6, 1859 (the Earle Report)
- Report on the Pollution of the Blackstone River by Worcester, 1882

Interviews, oral histories and information from local tribal members were also sought if applicable and possible. To help guide future interpretations and programming for the NPS, this report includes recommendations on further research (such as a cultural affiliation study, cultural resources base map, and/or additional historic resource studies beyond this one) in the final chapter. Deepening the knowledge of this nationally significant resource, this report—combined with future research and programming—will help to enhance and expand public awareness and understandings of the Kittatuck Valley and Indigenous peoples' connections to it.

Another important outcome of the recommendations included in this report will be to support partner collaborations between the park and local tribes, strengthening relationships with tribes in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and possibly in Connecticut. Future interpretations of the valley will be enhanced by engagement with these Indigenous communities and tribal individuals, with additional contributions from Indigenous knowledge and voices.

The Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park boundaries include six areas in the towns and villages of Whitinsville (in Northbridge) and Hopedale in Massachusetts, and Slatersville (North Smithfield), Lincoln, Cumberland and Pawtucket in Rhode Island. Extending the research presented in this report beyond the park boundaries is required to tell the story of Indigenous peoples' presence in the valley, who moved up and down this corridor consistently for millennia. With mobility of people and families as a central theme of this story, focusing on the present-day towns along the Kittatuck Valley from Pawtucket, R.I., to Millbury, Mass., this report includes data from those endpoints as well as any relative information collected from the towns of (south to north) Central Falls, Smithfield, Lincoln, Cumberland (including the village of Ashton) and Woonsocket in Rhode Island, and Millville, Uxbridge, Whitinsville (in Northbridge) and Hopedale in Massachusetts.

Using a cultural landscape approach, the report examines the presence of Indigenous people throughout the Kittatuck Valley over time and their interactions with other populations present in the valley, mainly through specific examples of places and people that they interacted with for various purposes. The National Park Service has defined a cultural landscape as "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values" (National Park Service, "Understand Cultural Landscapes"). The Cultural Landscape Foundation has also noted that "cultural landscapes provide a sense of place and identity; they map our relationship with the land over time; and they are part of our national heritage and each of our lives" (Cultural Landscape Foundation n.d.). This is perhaps the most useful way to consider the discussion of the Kittatuck Valley as a cultural landscape in this report. As discussed here, the valley can be viewed as one of the "narratives of culture, and expressions of regional

identity" and as an example of an ethnographic landscape, focused on a number of historic sites as well as designed landscapes (such as mill towns and the mill complexes associated with them), and vernacular landscapes (the four types of cultural landscapes identified by the Cultural Landscape Foundation and in the field of cultural landscape studies, in general) (Cultural Landscape Foundation n.d.).

In addition to documenting the presence of Indigenous peoples within the National Park boundaries and surrounding towns, the centrality of Indigenous peoples' mobility is the focus of this report (as noted elsewhere), as it seeks to answer questions such as:

How, when and why did Indigenous peoples interact with and use this large cultural landscape–the river and the valley corridor–over time?

What were the roots of Indigenous mobility that provided the foundation for Native people's presence throughout the valley? and

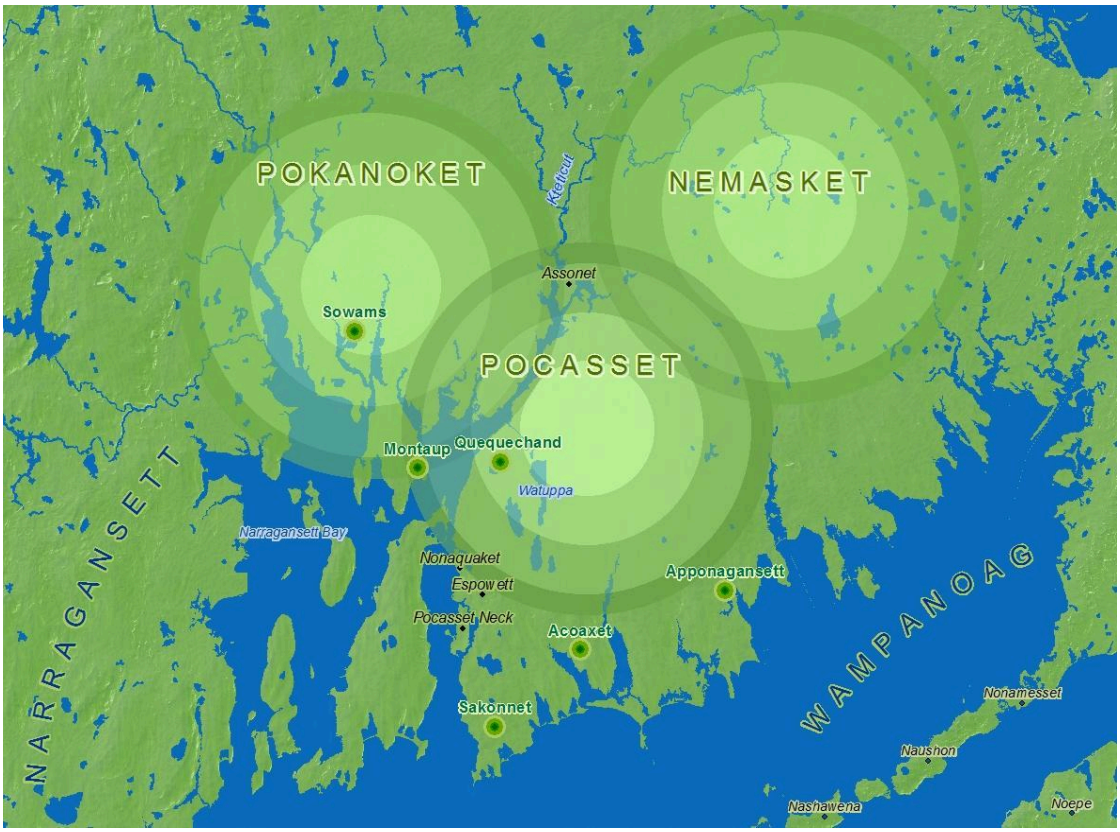
What were (and have been) the Indigenous perspectives and understandings of this area, as part of larger Indigenous homelands they were connected to for generations?

The forty-plus mile span of the meandering Blackstone River that flows between present-day Worcester, Massachusetts, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, is a large landscape itself with a deep history that Indigenous people have been connected to for millennia. From this perspective, considering a "remapping" of the Kittatuck Valley based on Indigenous knowledges and presences is foundational to any interpretations of this area. Previous models of these remapping methodologies include works by Lisa Brooks that accompany her books *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* and *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Brooks 2018b; Brooks 2008b).

In particular, the model of a concentric circles map could be used to tell a fuller story of the Kittatuck Valley, demonstrating how both tribal homelands and specific places and areas within those homelands overlap. Given the more mobile lifeways of Indigenous peoples that intersected with people and places, navigations of the valley through touchstone locations, or nodes–connected by complex webs of waterways and pathways, kinship and travel networks, and Indigenous and colonial experiences–that existed both as independent locations and as part of these larger concentric circles is the focus this report, as noted above. Since the data related to Indigenous presence in the specific bounded park areas is limited, extending beyond those park areas and considering the landscape between Pawtucket and Worcester as a region of overlapping circles with concentric rings around nodes where people had connections could provide a more appropriate way to consider the Indigenous landscape along the valley and the overlapping connections that exist between places. As well, rather than seeing this landscape as one

demarcated with hard, geopolitical boundaries that Euroamericans impressed upon the area (based on concepts of individual and private ownership of land and water), understanding that the resources, land and homelands were shared by collective groups of people who understood that their rights to these were usufruct would be a new way to approach interpretation of the Kittatuck Valley.

And rather than thinking about people and places as static locations of mill towns defined by brick, stone and wooden buildings overlaid with a human presence, interpreting this landscape through more undefined boundaries allows for the integration of Indigenous understandings of the valley. Similar to the waterways that permeate the Kittatuck Valley, and *through* these waterways at times, the valley is part of larger homelands connected to–and that connected–Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples. Furthermore, considering the river itself as an independent entity, deserving of its own rights and as a partner in future engagements whose health and wellbeing should be considered, would be a step toward true integration of Indigenous conceptions of this landscape defined by a major waterway.



Map 3: An example of how Indigenous homelands in southern New England could be mapped, using overlapping concentric circles around homelands and nodes linked by webs of connections, as well as Indigenous place names (Brooks 2018b, "Concentric Circles Map" at https://ourbelovedkin.com/awikhigan/media-gallery).

Another model to consider that would integrate Indigenous perspectives includes the concept of an *awikhigan* (in digital form): "an Abenaki word that originally referred to birchbark maps and scrolls, but came to encompass letters, petitions, maps, books and works of art" (Brooks 2018b, "About"). Through mapping, writing and sharing a collective story by integrating Indigenous words, knowledges, places (or nodes) and place names, interpretations of the Kittatuck Valley could be much more comprehensive and inclusive. This report provides a baseline for thinking about next steps toward this goal and some specific locations that could be used as a foundation for creating digital interpretive sites for the park in collaboration with Indigenous partners. For example, the use of ArcGIS StoryMaps (or the open source QGIS) could be a powerful tool for deeper interpretations of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.

With the goals of this project focused on locating, mapping and tracing specific locations along the Kittatuck Valley connected to Indigenous peoples to better understand their presence, movements, and activities up and down the valley, documentary and archival research included:

- Review of town histories and reports connected to towns in the valley;
- Archival research to locate documents that may provide information on the presence of Indigenous peoples in the area;
- Review and integration of academic materials focused on this region (including previous research by Principal Investigator Heather Law Pezzarossi);
- Compiling and reviewing a collection of maps of towns in Kittatuck Valley;
- Sharing information collected on the valley with tribal members; and
- Seeking additional input from tribal members connected to the region, such as knowledge of family or ancestral ties or about specific places in the valley.

Since the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park is focused on the middle and lower portion of the Kittatuck, research for this report focused on the area south of Worcester, Massachusetts, and to Pawtucket, Rhode Island, as noted elsewhere. While the cities of Providence and Worcester are noted as important nodes marking the southern and northern ends of the valley, these cities could have reports of their own given the long and complex presence of Indigenous peoples in both locations. For example, Patricia Rubertone's *Native Providence: Memory, Community, and Survivance in the Northeast* (reviewed for this report) is an example of an entire text devoted to the continuous presence of Native people in that city (Rubertone 2020).

Another primary goal of this report is to assist the National Park Service with defining boundaries relative to Native American presence throughout the Kittatuck Valley, if possible. Since engagement with Native peoples from the region had not been part of the park's operations until relatively recently, this report was originally envisioned as providing information regarding the Indigenous presence that could be used as a foundation to build relationships with tribes from the region, in addition to expanding knowledge of Indigenous people's presence throughout the valley over time. Several years ago, a Tribal Round Table was formed by the park, composed of Nipmuc, Narragansett and Wampanoag members, with the goal of advising one another,

educating park staff and facilitating collaboration with local tribes, as well as supporting formal consultations between the park and regional tribes. The EOA team met with the Tribal Round Table in August 2023 to provide an overview of this project and encourage additional input from both members of this group and from any other tribal members they could liaison with.

The key questions that guided the research for this report include:

- What are some of the nodes in the Kittatuck Valley connected to Indigenous presence over the past 400 years?
- What does the documentary record offer regarding these places?
- What does Indigenous knowledge offer regarding these places?
- How are these places connected?
- How are these places part of a larger Indigenous landscape of southern New England?
- What are some of the resources of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and their connections to the Indigenous peoples of the area?
- What are some key pieces of information that can inform this park's future educational and interpretive programs?
- How can this report help to develop specific recommendations for programs and projects *in collaboration* with local tribes and tribal individuals (as paid consultants)?

As well, this report seeks to:

- Critique colonial understandings and interpretations of "Indian" places, and of the myth of disappearance and extinction so prevalent in many of the sources reviewed for this research;
- Connect ancestral places to the dynamic knowledge about this landscape that has continued to the present;
- Expand knowledge of Indigenous relationships—to each other, to non-Indigenous neighbors in the Kittatuck, and to places and resources in the valley;
- Provide an opportunity to think beyond borders and boundaries that have so prevalently defined Western-conceived built environments over the past 400 years;
- Provide an opportunity to conceive of Indigenous urban spaces (what Patricia Rubertone has called "urban homelands") defined by the ongoing presence of Native people in these spaces over time;
- Provide a similar opportunity to conceive of Indigenous industrial landscapes, since Native people were part of the fabric of industrial places, too;
- Push back against the narrative of Indigenous peoples as marginalized and not part of the fabric of everyday life in southern New England and in the Kittatuck Valley, specifically; and
- Reassess concepts and tropes of Indigenous peoples as needing to adhere to static traditions to be authentic "Indians," as one with (and tied to) the wilderness, and as the "ecological Indian" (Krech 1999).

Identifying and exploring the concept of an "Indigenous industrial landscape" is a key contribution of this report. While introduced here, this concept is worthy of further expansion. For example, Native people in the valley (and beyond it) were engaged in activities such as basket weaving, chair caning and hat-making, utilizing and adapting weaving and textile

knowledges that had existed for generations. As Indigenous people transitioned with the introduction of the Industrial Period, agrarian networks also transitioned to become more focused on millwork and other, more urban trades (such as shoemaking), and tribal members often relocated to urban or village centers through opportunities that developed through kinship networks. These transitions demonstrate the flexibility of Indigenous knowledges (about materials, places, landscapes) and the sense of stewardship that continued to exist within tribal homelands.

Connected to the concept of an Indigenous industrial landscape–and part of reinstating an Indigenous landscape that encompasses mainly Nipmuc and Narragansett experiences over the last 400 years–is considering use of specific routes and the mobility enabled by them (a central theme in this report). To address this, this report seeks to:

- Identify the Shawomet Path (which became the Great Road) as a well-established route and thoroughfare linking Nipmuc and Narragansett homelands;
- Identify places of refuge sought by Native people between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries;
- Understand Indigenous mobility facilitated by community stewards;
- Provide examples of specific economic activities across the valley that Indigenous people were engaged in, such as basket making/selling and chair caning;
- Identify travel routes (some established annual routes) that were based on customers for these (and other) activities and for harvesting materials;
- Understand the networks of families and friends that connected the nodes and people across this landscape;
- Discuss how, overall, Indigenous peoples from this region were vulnerable to settler violence over the past 400 years; and
- Outline how Indigenous people in the Kittatuck Valley continue to occupy their ancestral lands.

Through the various resources used to document the ongoing presence, activities, movements and engagements of Indigenous people in the Kittatuck Valley over the past 400 years, this report provides a foundation for additional research, reports and projects that will hopefully be undertaken with the input and knowledge of tribal members from the region.

Chapter III

A Brief Overview of the Pre-Contact Period in the Kittatuck Valley

Since this report is focused primarily on the post-contact presence of Indigenous peoples–and their interactions with colonial settlers, their descendants and immigrant populations–data related to the pre-Contact Period (prior to c. 1600) was collected only at a high level. A focus on the many archaeological sites around the Blackstone River would provide enough material for a separate report on just the pre-Contact Period. Across the state of Rhode Island, for example, over 2,800 known archaeological sites exist; to protect these sites, information on these is generally not available to the public or online (State of Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission 2024).

As a baseline for understanding the continued presence of Indigenous peoples in this region, this overview of some sites documented in the towns discussed in this report is provided. The presence of Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples in modern-day Rhode Island, and of Nipmuc people in the area of Massachusetts north of Rhode Island, has been well documented. The eastern edge of Rhode Island also overlapped with Wampanaog homelands, and Wampanoag peoples traveled into various parts of present-day central Massachusetts, especially in the seventeenth century and during King Philip's War (1675-1677/8). Some have referred to the northeastern corner of Rhode Island as a "crossroads" where Nipmuc, Wampanoag, and Narragansett homelands overlapped in the seventeenth century, as their worlds were quickly changing due to colonial occupation of their homelands (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998, 5).

The ice sheets of the last glacial period (the Wisconsin glacier) extended as far south as present-day Long Island, New York. After the last glaciers melted and retreated beginning as early as 17,500 years ago, what is called the Paleoindian Period began around 12,000 years ago. Human and animal life returned to southern New England during a time of environmental transformations (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1985, 15). Following the ice melt, the rivers of southern New England, including the Kittatuck, began to alter the landscape as they cut through landforms and sediments to take the forms they have today. The annual flooding and retreating that occurs with larger rivers, in particular, created alluvial deposits, or floodplains, along their banks that provide flat, fertile land well suited to agriculture (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1985, 17) and, thus, human occupation.

Following the glacial retreat, the area that is now southern New England was not very inviting: a rough, tundra-like environment. Between around 12,000 and 9000 years ago, spruce trees dominated the region, slowly replaced by pine and oak as temperatures warmed (Massachusetts

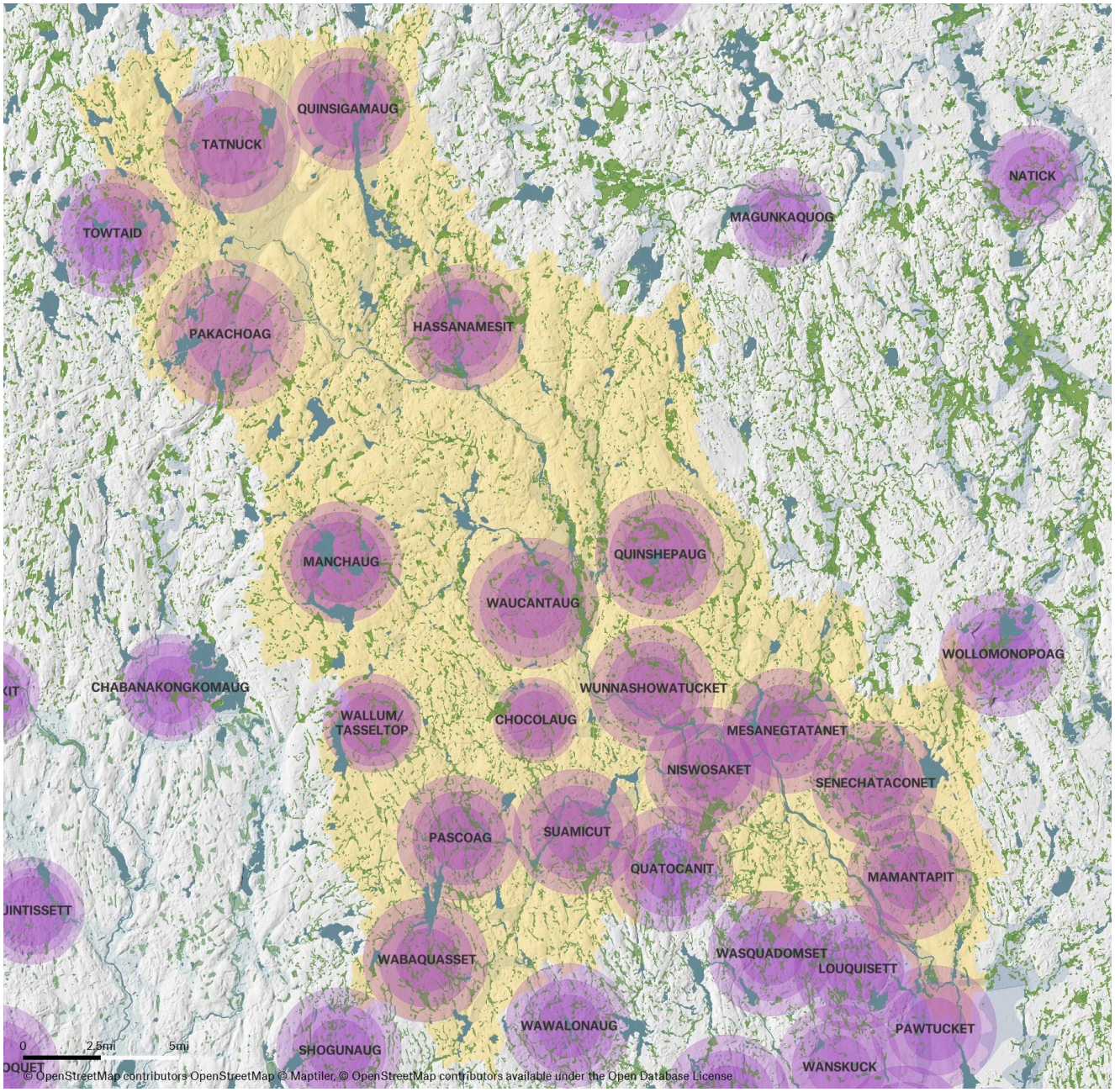
Historical Commission 1985, 26). Also during the post-glacial warming, sea level rose (up to 50 feet), Narragansett Bay was created, and even warmer temperatures resulted in more deciduous trees replacing the spruce and pine forests. Large game animals (such as mastodon, caribou, and moose) provided food for the relatively sparse human population of the region. As the coastal plain that provided access to salt water resources became submerged, so too did the markers of human presence there. Many archaeological sites documenting Paleoindian coastal activity are now submerged on the continental shelf, and the same is true for fresh water activity from this time period. Mastodon remains have been located in the submerged coastal plain of New England, for example, and giant beavers were also part of this region's ecosystem at one time (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998; Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982).

Over the next 10,000 years during the millenia following the Paleoindian Period, Native peoples of this region both transformed with the environment and transformed the environment as they transitioned to mobility within prescribed homelands still recognized by Anglo and European explorers and colonists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Subsistence strategies relying on hunting, fishing and gathering wild plants slowly transitioned to an economy more focused on the cultivation of both local and imported domestic crops such as chenopodium (goosefoot), corn, beans and squash (well documented by early explorers and settlers), in addition to continued reliance on wild plants and animals (see, for example, the ecological history of southern New England's Contact Period outlined in Cronon 1983).

Paleoindian sites in southern New England are relatively rare and only a handful have been recorded for Massachusetts and Rhode Island, including one in Lincoln, Rhode Island, on the Wenscott Reservoir at the Twin Rivers Site. The relatively low population density of this post-glacial period, characterized by small groups of 25 to 50 people moving around the landscape, would not leave much of an archaeological signature. And the relatively early settlement and subsequent intense development of southern New England has contributed to a loss of early sites that may have provided more insight into the earliest post-glacial occupation by Native peoples (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982).

One significant Paleoindian site in the Blackstone River Valley (dated to c. 11,000 years before present) is the Sands of the Blackstone site in southern Massachusetts. Although a large number of the 1200 artifacts recovered from this site were lithic chipping debris (from manufacturing stone tools), also discovered were hammerstones, scrapers, projectile points, a burnishing stone, calcined bone pieces and charcoal (Leveillee 2016; Brooks 2019). Combined, the number and variety of artifacts from this site indicate that people were clearly occupying this region, knew the resources of the area, and were beginning to thrive.



Key:



Indigenous Villages

Blackstone Basin

Open Water

Wetlands

Map 4: This map of the Kittatuck (or Blackstone River) valley, stretching from Worcester to Providence, shows the locations of Indigenous settlements that existed when immigration of settler colonists began in the seventeenth century. The modern-day town of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, is located where the village of Waentuck was, a central point of the river valley and also at the confluence of three rivers (Kittatuck, West and Mumford). (Map by author Heather Law Pezzarossi)

Around 8,000 to 9,000 years ago, southern New England transitioned to what is referred to as the Archaic Period (c. 9/8,000 to c. 3,000 years ago), when more intense occupation of the region occurred as Indigenous populations increased following stabilization–and steady warming–of the environment and the resources it provided also expanded. During the Middle Archaic period (c. 8000-c. 6500 years ago) climatic and biotic changes continued; by 8,000 years ago, the mixed deciduous forests of southern New England familiar today were becoming more well established, although changes in forest compositions continued throughout the pre-Contact millenia (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1985, 31). Archaeological sites dating to the Archaic Period suggest that small camps supporting specialized activities, such as targeted fishing and hunting, were common, as were transitioning settlement adaptations. Nipmuc people (the "fresh water people") became well adapted to the inland rivers, streams and other wetlands of the Kittatuck's drainage area as they took advantage of the many seasonal floral and faunal resources available. As well, other resources, such as lithic materials drawn from the region's geological formations and quarry sites, were widely available during this more settled period of occupation (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998).

Following the Archaic Period, the Woodland Period (c. 3000 years ago to Contact) saw even more increased sedentism as tribal groups formed in distinct areas (what we now refer to as "homelands"), distinct dialects of southern Algonquian language developed among these groups, while kinship and trade networks also developed between and among the more clearly formed tribes and bands that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century explorers and settlers encountered. During the few thousand years prior to contact, southern New England experienced a cooling climate, resulting in the expansion of hickory and chestnut trees. These provided another food source that contributed to the abundant nut crops developing during this period in the region. Later in the Woodland Period, a warming trend increased the growing season slightly, providing a favorable climate for corn (or maize, discussed below) and other plants that previously only flourished in warmer regions. The stable climate and food sources further enabled more sedentary settlement patterns and developed tribal homelands (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 4-5). Connections to places and important resources within those homelands, like rivers and food sources, were well defined by this period prior to European contact.

An important development to note during the Woodland Period is the adoption of horticulture in the northeast, which occurred as the domesticated maize plant migrated northeast from its origins

in present-day Central America and more local plants (such as chenopodium) were increasingly relied upon to support expanding and more sedentary populations. Pottery also became a mainstay in Indigenous households and lifeways, replacing heavier stone and soapstone (or steatite) pots and containers, also a development tied to expanding and more sedentary tribal groups. An area along Furnace Brook in present-day Cranston, Rhode Island (just south of the area focused on in this report) was a known quarry for this raw material (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 4-5). Another important natural resource from the Cranston area was granite, part of what is known as the Milford granite area that extended from Westborough, Massachusetts, down to Cranston. Granite from this area was used into the post-Contact period for the construction of mills and housing in the Blackstone River Valley (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1985, 13). The increased sedentism, accompanied by seasonal mobility and the adoption of horticulture, during the Woodland Period resulted in the management and clearing of land in southern New England (rather than a virgin, untouched forest often portrayed in romanticized visions of pre-Contact life in New England), which made colonial settlement much easier, especially following the epidemics of the early seventeenth century that decimated Indigenous populations. Some population studies of this period estimate that up to ninety percent of the Native population was lost due to the diseases brought to the "New World" by European explorers and colonists, which the people inhabiting this land did not have any exposure or immunity to (also discussed further below). Some estimates of the pre-Contact population indicate that between 60,000 and 80,000 people inhabited the northeast area of the present-day United States (see, for example, Cook 1976).

While mobility continued to define pre-Contact lifeways (as it did post-Contact life as well), generally more sedentary base camp sites–accompanied by seasonal movements to take advantage of the most abundant resources available during various times of the year–left more of an archaeological signature than the more ephemeral sites from thousands of years prior did. For example, in the early 1600s Roger Williams noted that the Narragansett people he encountered stayed close to the coast during the warmer months, then moved more inland during fall and winter (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998, 4-5). As well, when English colonists settled in the northern Rhode Island area they found much of the best land had already been cleared by Indian "farmers." The world that these colonists "discovered" was clearly one with settled territories (or homelands) well-known and well-traveled by its existing occupants.

A major upheaval in the lives of Indigenous peoples of the east (and then throughout the hemisphere) in the early Contact Period was caused by epidemic diseases that decimated Native populations, by some accounts resulting in up to 90% population loss. The first recorded epidemics that ravaged through New England's Indigenous populations were pre-1620, in fact, occurring from 1616 to 1619, as European explorers and traders exposed Native people to diseases (such as smallpox, yellow fever, chickenpox and trichinosis) they had no immunity to (Marr and Cathey 2010). Another epidemic wave occurred in New England in the 1630s,

resulting in even more drastic changes to Indigenous populations, cultural practices and lifeways as the transition from pre-Contact life to life with colonial settlers unfolded (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998, 4-5).

Information on pre-Contact Native presence in the towns researched for this report is shared below. As noted above, while this is not a comprehensive review of all archaeological sites along the Blackstone River Valley between Pawtucket and Mendon, it does provide insight into the documentation of pre-Contact presence in this area and of some well-known sites that would have been central to Native life prior to settler colonial occupation. A more comprehensive review of all archaeological sites in the Blackstone River Valley would include a review of regional and town-wide archaeological surveys conducted over the past few decades. For example, a survey of the Route 146 corridor conducted by Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL) in 1978 identified a number of small, special purpose sites in the uplands of the drainage area of the Kittatuck (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1985, 25). Similar reports from PAL and other cultural resource management surveys would reveal more specific information on the pre-Contact Period than this overview.

In the town of **Pawtucket** (the most southern town included in this report) Pawtucket Falls was a documented focal point of pre-Contact Native American activity, where the river could be crossed in shallow areas both above and below the falls and where salmon, shad and alewives seasonally ran upriver (well into the eighteenth century). This location was also part of an Indigenous trail system, where the Pawtucket Trail that connected Narragansett homelands with more northern and eastern points crossed the Kittatuck. The non-linear flow of the town's Main Street still follows the same route that this trail did. Although not many archaeological sites are documented from this town, the Indigenous name of the town itself–perhaps translating to "fall of water"–also recalls a Native presence here before contact. The lack of documented archaeological sites is likely due to the early and intense occupation of colonial settlers, similar to other towns where archaeological investigations weren't performed before land was disturbed. In the area of Pawtucket (and the southern area of the Blackstone River Valley), it also believed that the river served as a political boundary between the Narragansetts and their eastern Wampanoag neighbors prior to contact (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1978, 4).

North of Pawtucket, the town of **Smithfield** also does not have many pre-Contact archaeological sites recorded in local histories. One is the early Crookfall Brook site (RI-1991) in nearby North Smithfield, dated to the Archaic Period (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 4-5). A significant site that would have been accessed in pre-Contact times as it was in the seventeenth century is Nipsachuck Swamp, a spruce swamp located along the present-day Smithfield-North Smithfield town line. While the pre-Contact resources here would have been known and used by the Native people of the area, this site is well documented for two significant

battles in King Philip's War that occurred here (see, for example, McBride et.al., 2013). While some archeological investigations of the town suggest that the area was used only intermittently and was not the site of "permanent villages," these interpretations likely reflect an earlier misunderstanding of pre-Contact settlement patterns and the search for "village sites" like those depicted in drawings by early colonial settlers (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1992, 3). Even if larger settlements had existed, their imprint may not have been as marked as historians and earlier archaeologists thought they would (or *should*) be, given the ephemeral nature of many materials Indigenous people used in daily life before the arrival of Europeans.

Similar to other towns in this area, **Lincoln** underwent climatic changes in the millenia before contact, as noted earlier in this chapter: milder temperatures throughout the Archaic Period, sea level rise that pushed populations more inland, and forests transitioning from mainly conifer to include deciduous trees that supported more diverse and abundant animal and plant populations, while human populations also increased. Several Archaic sites near freshwater streams have been documented in Lincoln, with the Twin Rivers site (excavated by the Massachusetts Archeological Society in the 1950s) perhaps the most well documented. The material from this site includes a large collection of artifacts connected to hunting activities, and the remains of hearths indicate the specific locations of fires, likely where food was cooked or raw materials processed.

When colonists created the earliest records for Lincoln, the "planting fields" of the area's Native inhabitants were referenced (likely in the northwestern part of the present-day town) as were inhabitants who continued to live on the Moshassuck River, just north of what became Saylesville in Lincoln (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 19). Indigenous locals were recognized by Euroamerican settlers, remaining in the area until the late seventeenth century, when King Philip's War erupted, and then again into the eighteenth century after the war. In 1748, twenty Native Americans lived in Smithfield (which included the area now the town of Lincoln at that time). As with other towns in the region, beyond the archaeological sites, Indigenous place names are perhaps the best reminders of the long-standing presence of Native people here: Quinsnicket (a section of the Great Road near the Eleazer Arnold House), Louisquisset (also known as Loquasqussuck or Louisquis, originally the northern section of Lincoln), and Wesquadomset Brook (dividing Lincoln and North Smithfield and now called Crookfall Brook) (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 4-5).

Northeast of Lincoln, **Cumberland** is documented to have had numerous rock outcrops that supplied raw materials for lithic tools. One such location is the Late Archaic Sassafras Site (RI-55), listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Other documented sites in the town include camp sites along Abbott Run and rock shelters near Nate Whipple Highway in the hilly, northern part of Cumberland. Like Lincoln (and other towns), a number of Indigenous

place names dot the town, reminding occupants over the centuries of the town's previous inhabitants. Pre-Contact presence of Native inhabitants is also documented by two reported "village" sites in town: one at Senechteconet (near Ash Swamp and East Sneech Brook) and the other near Diamond Hill in town (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998, 3).

Just northwest of Cumberland and bordering present-day Massachusetts, in **Woonsocket** archaeological evidence (mainly in the form of lithic artifacts) of Late Archaic occupation was located at sites in Globe Park and at Sylvester Pond (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976, 4). The Kittatuck enters Woonsocket from Massachusetts in the town's northwest corner, flowing like a serpentine curve through the town and southerly into Cumberland below. Also notable in this town is one of the largest falls of the Kittatuck, Woonsocket Falls, which would have been a valuable resource throughout the pre-Contact Period and then into the Contact and Industrial periods for colonial settlers.

In present-day **Uxbridge, Massachusetts,** the Nipmuc settlement known as Waentuck was noted by colonial settlers, likely near where the Kittatuck and Mumford rivers intersect. Waentuck was considered to be one of the base camps (or larger sedentary settlements) that developed in the period prior to colonial occupation of the region. Other sites in this town providing evidence of pre-Contact occupation existed around Lackey Pond and Cedar Swamp (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984, 2-3). And a site "on a small pond near the floodplain of the Blackstone River in Uxbridge" dating to the Middle Archaic has also been noted (possibly also the Lackey Pond site) (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984b, 32).

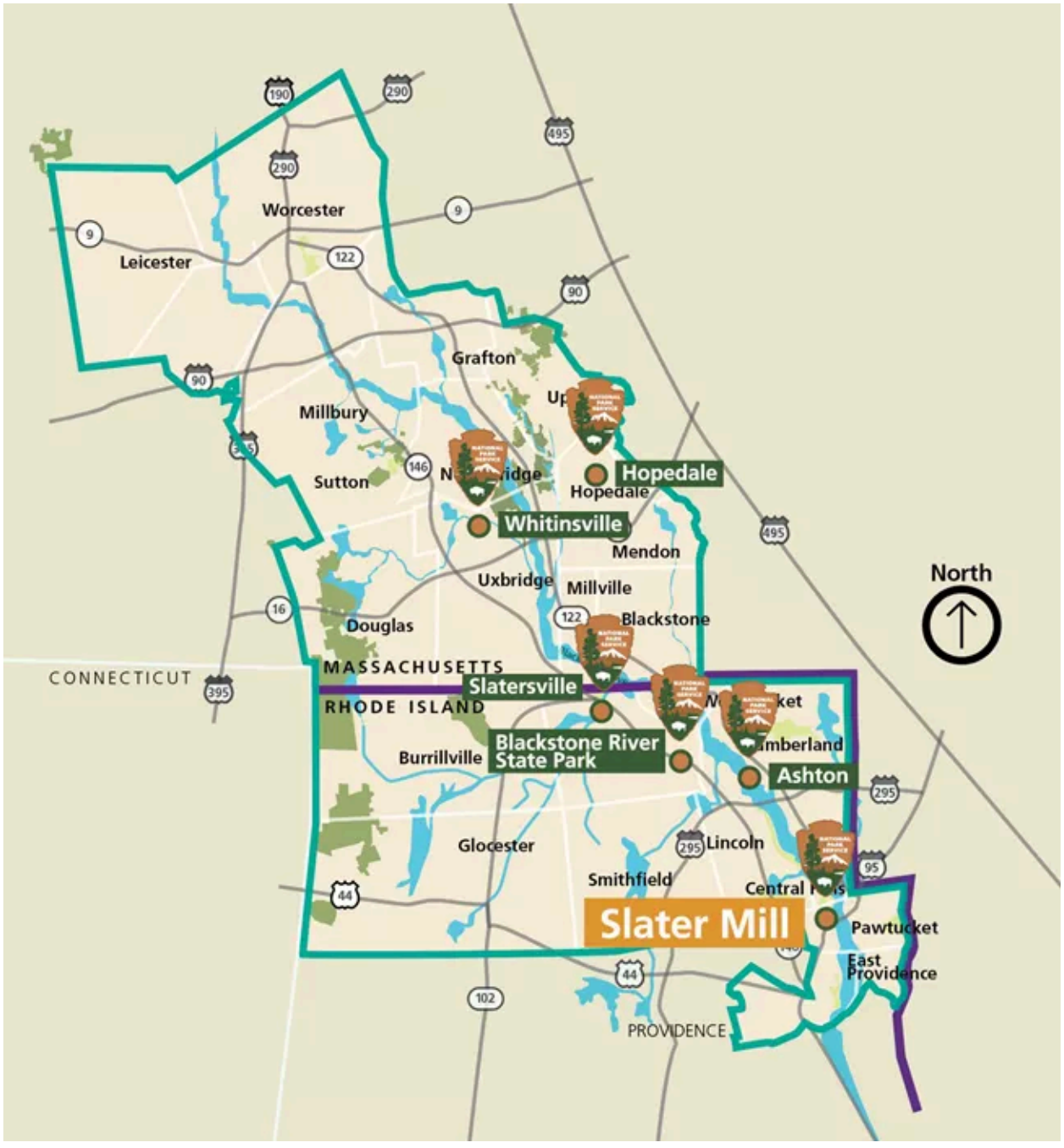
Just west of Uxbridge in present-day **Mendon,** seasonal hunting and gathering occurred; these activities left a less permanent archaeological signature than the larger base camp sites did. One site documenting these activities is the Mill River site (in Hopedale near the headwaters of the Mill River), between today's Providence and Thayer streets in this town. This site provided rare evidence of occupation as early as the Paleoindian Period (a single fluted projectile point) and also during the Early Archaic period from an excavation in 1959 (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1985, 24, 28). The site included two sections offering evidence of occupation or use during different time periods (what is called a multi-component site). One component, a lower zone, was occupied during the Paleoindian or early Archaic Period (a rare find); the other component, an upper zone, dated to the late Archaic Period. Archaeological material from this site included many stone hearths and fire pits, plus refuse pits (Brooks 2019). Other areas occupied by Indigenous peoples in Mendon include Nipmuck Pond and "Wigwam Hill" in the southwest part of the town (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984a, 2).

This brief overview, noting specific examples of pre-contact sites in the Blackstone River Valley, provides a sense of what the occupation by Indigenous peoples in the towns researched for this report would have been like. While other examples could be included, the focus of this report is

on the Indigenous presence in the valley over the past 400 years, and Native interactions with non-Native populations and places during those centuries.

Chapter IV

An Overview of the Contact, Colonial and Industrial Periods



Map 5: Map of the Blackstone River (Kittatuck) Valley and the six non-contiguous parks of this National Historical Park, underscoring how Slater Mill is so central. This report outlines how the park could be reconsidered to better highlight the waterways, Indigenous homelands, kinship networks, mobility and movement, and more, using information provided in this report. (Courtesy of https://www.nps.gov/blrv/planyourvisit/passport.htm)

This chapter provides an overview of the same towns focused on throughout this report, between (and including) Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and Mendon, Massachusetts, in the centuries following contact. As part of the effort to summarize the interactions of the Indigenous peoples connected to the park's locations and surrounding towns with non-Indigenous populations, this overview discusses the arrival, settlement and development of these towns by settler colonists/immigrants who occupied the region along with Indigenous peoples following 1620 (broadly considered the beginning of the Colonial Period in New England). The time periods focused on in this chapter include:

- Contact Period (Indigenous populations present while colonial settlers arrived)
- Colonial Period, often divided into 1620 to 1675 (the beginning of King Philip's War, or Metacom's Rebellion) and 1675 to 1775
- Industrial Period (circa 1750 to 1850 or so, with the 1790s Slater's Mill in Pawtucket, a landmark development of this era)

The post-industrial periods are discussed in detail in Chapters V and VI of this report, which focus more specifically on Indigenous people's presence over time in the Kittatuck Valley and their interactions with African, African American and the non-Indigenous immigrants who dominated the landscape of southern New England by that time.

The Kittatuck Valley, and Pawtucket, in particular, are often referred to as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. This origin began when Quaker abolitionist and industrialist Moses Brown (1738-1836) invited Samuel Slater to Pawtucket in 1789 to begin a joint venture that became Slater Mill in 1793. Slater is perhaps the name most commonly associated with this foundational development of the American Industrial Era–and the country's history–since the building named after him still exists as a site (Old Slater Mill) within the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park system. Here at the southern end of the Kittatuck began the first successful cotton spinning mill, powered by the powerful river near Pawtucket Falls (National Park Service, "Slater Mill").

Well before this origin of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the water source that fueled it–the Kittatuck–was an important and powerful resource accessed for millenia by the region's inhabitants. It was used as a floating highway, providing a transportation corridor of people and goods from the northern end (present-day Worcester, Massachusetts) to the southern end (what is now Providence, Rhode Island). Construction of the Blackstone Canal (completed

in 1828) that ran along, and sometimes within, the river enabled more construction of mills that spread throughout the valley as well as efficient movement of the products manufactured at them. By the middle of the nineteenth century, these mills required an expanded labor force to maintain their production levels, leading to the development and growth of the ubiquitous mill towns that dot the landscape of southern New England. One such example is Georgiaville (part of present-day Smithfield, Rhode Island). Here Zachariah Allen established a successful mill in 1853 that became the center of life in that community and development of the commonplace "company town," where everyday life centered around the industry that supported the lives of its workers. Many southern New Englanders today instantly understand the meaning of the term "mill town" and can picture the rows of tenement houses along straight streets, with large brick buildings at the end or center of the streets (many of which have been revitalized as condominiums, breweries, shops, office space and restaurants if still extant) (National Park Service, "American Latino Heritage").

While the Native people of the region (primarily Nipmuc and Narragansett) who had occupied southern New England millenia before the arrival of settler colonists and their descendants continued to flow up and down the valley and interact with the mills, mill towns and their inhabitants, the industrial boom in this region required immigrant labor, as well. One result of this is a rich mix of immigrant-based populations in this area that have continued to exist up to today, often intermarrying with Indigenous people of the region. Following the initial immigration of English, French and Dutch people to New England in the 1600s, expanding labor needs of this area as the centuries unfolded also brought French-Canadian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Swedish, Polish and Portuguese immigrants to the Kittatuck Valley. Much like the initial colonists, the settlers who arrived over the centuries following contact in the early seventeenth century sought to improve their lives and expand opportunities not available in their countries of origin. They looked to the newly formed "America" to provide those opportunities, and what was named "New England," in particular.

More recently, immigrants from Central and South America, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world have added to the ethnic mixture of the region surrounding the Kittatuck. One example of immigration from South America began in the 1970s, when some factories based in the river's valley recruited master weavers from Colombia who had learned their craft on Draper looms, similar to those used in the mills of the Kittatuck Valley. Others who joined this migration wave included laborers from the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Guatemala, as well as other Latin American countries. In some neighborhoods, such as Dexter Street in Central Falls, Spanish signs on storefronts have replaced the earlier ones that were evidence of the French or Polish populations dominating that town at one time. Central Falls, along with Pawtucket, now has the second highest Latine population in Rhode Island (National Park Service, "American Latino Heritage"). The strength of several popular restaurants featuring Latine food in this neighborhood is a testament to the ongoing and permanent presence of the populations from

Latin American countries that landed in the Kittatuck Valley during the late twentieth century, now well-established 50 years later.

This most southern area of the Kittatuck Valley was part of the Providence Plantation where Puritan minister Roger Williams settled in Narragansett homelands in 1636 after being exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but not until the late 1660s and early 1670s (just before King Philip's War or Metacom's Rebellion) did colonial settlers migrate to what we now call the Blackstone River Valley surrounding the Kittatuck. The early settlements and farms these colonists established were supported by grist and saw mills on the rivers that flowed through the area; these settlements were reconfigured and renamed multiple times as populations expanded and town boundaries moved accordingly. For example, one central transition occurred in 1731, when the area now encompassing Burrillville, Glocester, Lincoln, North Smithfield and Smithfield separated from the town of Providence to become the towns of Smithfield and Gloucester (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 2010, 2).

Common across southern New England (and perhaps beyond the region) is the presence of villages within larger town structures, which can still be seen today after several centuries of village, mill town, and then larger town and city borders morphing, moving and settling into the present bounded structures existing across the landscape today. One example is the original mill village of Whitinsville (still existing), which is today an "incorporated" village within the boundaries of the town of Northbridge, Massachusetts. Sometimes these smaller villages have separate post offices and feel quasi-independent, while other times they meld more fluidly into the fabric of the larger towns in which they exist.

Beginning with Slater Mill, water power at the early mill sites was a primary factor in the shift from an agrarian economy to one focused on textile mills and more intensified agriculture throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The expanded textile industry contributed to the development of a more robust agricultural economy to sustain the growing populations of expanding mill villages. Transportation patterns also changed over time; a number of major routes were constructed over previous trails that had been traveled by Native peoples for generations, eventually becoming the first turnpikes of the region. And construction of the Blackstone Canal (1824 to 1828) along the Kittatuck created another mode of transportation that enabled the growth and expansion of mills and villages in the valley.

Also during the nineteenth century, the present-day village centers connected to what became known as the Blackstone River Valley were formed. Many are places where Nipmuc people, in particular, were born, married, worked and died, while these industrial-centered communities developed their infrastructure and constructed the schools, granges, churches and burial grounds tribal members are also connected to (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 2010, 2). With the eventual decline of industrial activity in the Northeast and

reduced need for many of the large mill structures, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have found reuse for old mills as businesses, apartments or condominiums, as noted above.

As with other sections of this report, in this chapter Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and communities are discussed as they overlapped and coexisted across the landscape—beginning with the arrival of Anglo settler colonists—rather than as discrete and disconnected populations. Wherever possible, specific information is included on the ethnic communities connected to Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park sites or their towns, in addition to the presence of Native American peoples. Much of the information in this chapter is based on town histories compiled in several sources, including Massachusetts town reconnaissance surveys and Rhode Island statewide historic preservation reports, as well as information on the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor website and existing information on the National Park Service's site for the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. Information from town websites was also referenced for this report. This overview of the towns focused on in this report is organized geographically, south to north beginning with Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and north to Mendon, Massachusetts, including the towns between of Central Falls, Smithfield, Lincoln, Cumberland and Woonsocket in Rhode Island, then Millville, Uxbridge, Whitinsville (in Northbridge), and Hopedale, Massachusetts.

While the sources used for this overview of the post-Contact centuries often included some information about Native Americans, references were often limited to their pre-contact and early contact presence (a common practice). As such, this chapter primarily discusses Euroamerican presence (what the sources focused on), while the following chapters provide more specific insight into locations, or nodes, of Indigenous connections to the Kittatuck Valley over time. Some of the challenges related to locating accurate information on the Indigenous presence in New England are well known to scholars and Indigenous people of this region. For example, O'Brien (2010) has discussed at length how Native peoples of this region have been virtually erased in texts such as the town histories that contributed to this research, public accounts (such as newspapers) and other records (such as legal, census and vital records). Indigenous people are also often described in these sources in terms of being "the last of" their "race" or being re-racialed as Black or Mulatto. Meanwhile, settler colonial occupants documented their arrivals, presences and continued survival through noting the "firstings" they were responsible for, "establishing," "founding" or "incorporating" towns in New England in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Native Americans had quietly disappeared or assimilated into American culture. As has been well documented, this myth of extinction has prevented a more complete understanding of the continued presence of Indigenous peoples across the region, and along the Kittatuck Valley, as well. Although not comprehensive, this report (including suggested outcomes and recommendations outlined in the final chapter) will help to rectify that void for the National Park Service and for this specific park and the surrounding area.

This report will also help readers reconceive this valley and the discrete, non-contiguous park sites as part of the broader Indigenous homelands of which they have been embedded for thousands of years (i.e., from an Indigenous perspective), namely Nipmuc and Narragansett. Beyond thinking of the deep connections that Indigenous peoples have had with this landscape in terms of their "traditional" cultural practices (e.g., subsistence, harvesting, fishing and hunting practices), as the landscape changed over time as a result of settler colonial presences and practices, so too did Native practices. One example outlined in Chapter VI is how Native people from the region used their knowledge of natural materials to produce post-contact items such as baskets and straw hats, clearly in response to–and as part of–life in a changing world. As well, Natives peoples in the centuries following contact in southern New England have found themselves intertwined with the fabric of larger American society, while also maintaining distinct communities and cultural practices. They interacted with, married, and became closely connected with non-Native individuals, families and society following initial contact in the early decades of the 1600s; sometimes these interactions and relationships developed out of necessity or were forced, while other times they developed out of choice. In some places Native occupants redefined their homelands as "urban homelands," as Patricia Rubertone has noted (2020), especially in Providence and Worcester. Although both are outside the primary focus of this report, these urban sites are worth noting because similar results occurred in smaller cities and industrial mill towns as they also became more urbanized and modern, and as their occupants (including Indigenous peoples) centered their lives around these places over the centuries.

Perhaps most importantly, understanding the continued presence of Native people in the Kittatuck Valley in the Contact, Colonial and Industrial periods requires embracing the concept of mobility and the patterns that defined the landscape–and connections to it–for these occupants, rather than focusing solely on the boundaries defining specific locales such as towns, states and park sites. This is a central theme noted throughout this report and detailed specifically in Chapters V and VI. Movement across the southern New England landscape, within and between Indigenous homelands, for Native people was both voluntary and involuntary at the same time, depending on the conditions. Migrations to urban and other locations across homelands happened as colonial and industrial pressures encouraged or forced them, and as Native people recognized opportunities defined by economics, kinship ties, or both. With an important redefining moment of this region in the late seventeenth century–King Philip's War (1675-77/8), or Metacom's Rebellion—another type of mobility was forced upon Native people of southern New England. The forced servitude of Indigenous peoples that became commonplace following this conflict was a contributing factor to the mobility and intersections with non-Indigenous populations that partially defined Native lives as they unfolded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and thereafter. Prior to that war (and following it), continued and intensive settler colonial presence–the major cause of this war–dispossessed Native peoples of their homes and homelands. The many factors contributing to this dispossession are discussed in detail, for example, in *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts,*

1650-1790 by Jean O'Brien (1997). These are all factors to keep in mind while reviewing the brief overviews of the towns along the Kittatuck Valley below, following an example of one Nipmuc family that has maintained a constant presence in the valley.

The Curliss/Jaha Family: One Example of Indigenous Presence in the Kittatuck Valley

One Nipmuc family that has remained in the Blackstone River Valley, around the Kittatuck, for generations is the Curliss/Jaha line, one of the main lines that has remained connected to and in present-day northwestern Rhode Island for generations. Like a number of other Nipmuc families, this family is both Nipmuc and Narragansett, with documented ties to Narragansett from men who traveled north into Nipmuc homelands and married into that tribe. This family provides an example of how tribal homelands overlapped, rather than being defined by hard boundaries introduced by Euroamerican culture, also underscoring how individual mobility, kinship ties and travel throughout the region remained a defining element of Indigenous life from pre-Contact times through the post-Contact Period centuries. While maintaining a strong presence in the Kittatuck Valley over generations, this family also maintained ties to other centers, or nodes, within Nipmuc homelands, such as the Webster/Dudley community (the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuc), one of several bands across Nipmuc homelands (in present-day central Massachusetts, northeast Connecticut and northwest Rhode Island) that remained connected through kinship, social, political and cultural ties.

Carol Jean Curliss (married name Palavra), a knowledge keeper and central figure of the modern-day Curliss-Jaha family, was born March 15, 1943 in North Smithfield, R.I. and died Sept. 9, 2009 in Warwick, R.I. (in a hospital).

Carol's parents were **Arthur Lewis Curliss** (born April 16, 1910 in Slatersville, R.I., died July 5, 1993 in Providence, R.I.) and Dorothy Louise Cossingham (from Norwich, Vermont). Although Dorothy was from Vermont (where her father, Richard Cossingham was from), her mother, **Mabel Maria Blackstone** (born Sept. 2, 1877 in Union Village, North Smithfield, R.I., died Jan. 2, 1971 in Esmond, R.I.) married Richard in Providence in 1907. It is likely that Dorothy also had strong ties to the Kittatuck Valley and maintained connections with family members there on her mother's side.

Arthur's parents both had the Curliss/ess surname (with spelling variations). His father was **George Maynard Curliss** (born February 1862 in Thompson, CT, died c. March 1948 in Slatersville, R.I.), who married on January 5 1897 (in Slatersville, R.I.) **Amy Barker Curless** (born December 1876 in Slatersville, R.I., died c. 1960 in North Smithfield, R.I.). And Mabel's parents were Augustus Charles Blackstone (from Montreal, Canada) and **Lydia Dyer Willard** (born June 9, 1846 in Uxbridge, MA, and from the "Dudley Tribe," died May 25, 1932 in Union Village, North Smithfield, R.I.). They married around 1877.

George's parents were **George Lewis (W.) Curliss** (born c. 1828 in Smithfield, R.I.) and Harriet Clara Dailey (born Nov. 6, 1839 in Apanoug, R.I.), who married around 1857. Amy's parents were **Amos Christopher Curliss** (born c. December 1829 in Rhode Island) and **Caroline Sophia Curless** (born Dec. 23, 1848 in Providence, R.I., died Sept. 27, 1884 in North Smithfield, R.I.), who married around 1870.

The older generations of this family provide even more documentation of long-standing and continued ties to the Kittatuck Valley for this one example:

George Lewis (W.) Curliss's parents:

George Curliss: born c. 1795 in Smithfield, RI; died 1852 in Slatersville, RI.

Sarah Sally Anthony: born c. 1801 in Slatersville, RI; died April 16,1865 in Slatersville, RI.

Caroline Sophia Curless's parents:

Christopher Curless: born c. 1810 in RI; married Dec. 23, 1840 in Mendon, MA; died Nov. 24 1855 in Providence, RI.

Amelia Coffee: born c. 1818 in MA.

Lydia Willard's parents:

Bezaleel Paine Willard: born c. Nov 1812 in Uxbridge, MA; married Apr. 5, 1841 in Mendon, MA; died March 6, 1899 in Uxbridge, MA.

Rebekah Jaha: born c. 1817 in Sutton, MA; died Sept. 2, 1850 in Uxbridge, MA.

Tracing this back one more generation provides documentation of direct ties to the Hassanamisco Nipmuc (in present-day Grafton, Massachusetts): Sarah Sally Anthony was the child of **William Johnason Anthony** (born c. 1735) who married on Nov. 14, 1752 (in Grafton designated as "*Indian"*) **Abigail Mercy Abraham**.

As this example demonstrates, both strong intergenerational connections to and movement within the Kittatuck Valley, as well as in and out of the larger Nipmuc homelands, were maintained by this family for generations. Documentation also exists that members of the Curliss family worked for the Slaters in Slatersville; the 1870 U.S. census records this family name as "night watchman"). Additional examples of these types of ties to and movement across the valley are discussed in Chapters IV and V.

<u>Historical Overview of Towns in the Kittatuck Valley</u>

The remainder of this chapter offers an overview and summary, town by town from south to north, of locations along the valley of the Kittatuck (Blackstone River). While some of these towns include sections of the Blackstone River National Historical Park, others are just as important for this report because of the presence of Indigenous peoples in them over time. As well, the present-day boundaries that demarcate these towns have changed over time, so the histories of these places are often intertwined, as are the histories and lives of Indigenous peoples and those they interacted with over the past 400 years (discussed further in Chapters V and VI).



Figure 1: The Slater Mill, Pawtucket, Rhode Island (courtesy of Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, https://www.nps.gov/blrv/learn/historyculture/ slatermill.htm)

Pawtucket, Rhode Island–just north of the state's capital city of Providence–is well known for its association with the Industrial Revolution and is in many ways defined by its relationship to the Kittatuck. The river flows into the city from the north towards its convergence with the Seekonk and then Providence rivers as it meanders towards Narragansett Bay. A large part of the city's geography is defined by the river, which divides it into eastern and western sides, and the river's geography is also defined by Pawtucket Falls, where it drops at least twenty feet into the tidal Seekonk River. The power generated by these falls was central to Pawtucket's development during the Industrial period, as were the landings on the Seekonk River that facilitated

shipbuilding and heavy freighting from the 1700s and into the 1900s (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1978, 3).

The Contact Period for this city, as for Providence, is defined by the presence of Roger Williams and his 1636 purchase of land from Narragansett leaders Canonicus and Miantonomi to “found” Providence and the colony of Rhode Island, extending west from "the river and fields of Pawtucket" (an Indigenous place name). In 1641, land east of the Kittatuck in this area transferred through Wampanoag sachem Massasoit to Edward Winslow and John Brown of Plymouth Colony, leading to the formation of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, in 1644. These transactions underscore the close connections and intersecting lives of Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples in the area today surrounding Providence (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. 1978, 4).

The political boundary formed by the river between the Anglo settlers occupying the Rhode Island and Plymouth colonies–echoed by earlier boundaries the river provided between Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples–complicated Pawtucket’s development as a distinct political entity. Until 1862 the Kittatuck provided a separation between two villages that were both called "Pawtucket Village,” one in Rhode Island and one in Massachusetts, that were separate settlements in different states for almost two hundred years. The western settlement remained part of the city of Providence until 1765 (when it became part of a new town, North Providence) and the more eastern settlement remained part of Rehoboth until 1812 (when the town of Seekonk, Massachusetts, was established). Sixteen years later, in 1828, Seekonk was subdivided and the eastern village on Pawtucket Falls became the nucleus of Pawtucket, Massachusetts. In 1862 both sections became part of Rhode Island and, finally, part of the same township in 1874 when part of North Providence was combined with the Town of Pawtucket (incorporated as a city in 1885) (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1978, 4). This formation of Pawtucket over the years provides just one example of the shifting boundaries that existed throughout southern New England in the post-Contact centuries, as villages, towns, cities, colonies and then states formed, combined, and reformed as populations and industries expanded over time.

So much of Pawtucket’s post-Contact history is known through the presence of Slater Mill and its founder Samuel Slater. One of the defined sites in this National Historical Park, Slater Mill is well noted for contributions to the Industrial Revolution (as noted above) and, specifically, the cotton mill built on the Kittatuck at the beginning of this transitional moment in American history. While no specific connections of Indigenous peoples to the mill were located for this report, the continued presence in Providence and the immediate area has been noted in *Native Providence* (Rubertone 2020), in other primary and secondary sources, as well as in contemporary personal accounts from tribal members to the authors of this report.

Indigenous peoples in the area would have lived alongside a number of immigrant communities drawn to the exploding industrial scene of Pawtucket and its need for labor. Beginning in 1825, Irish immigrants were the labor force behind the construction of the 46-mile Blackstone Canal that connected Providence, Rhode Island, and Worcester, Massachusetts. Significant labor was needed for this endeavor, which required 48 stone locks to accommodate the 450-foot change in elevation as the river flowed south. This new "transportation highway" reduced the time of moving materials between the two cities to two days (National Park Service n.d., "Blackstone Canal"). Other work opportunities in the area during these centuries resulted in additional immigrant populations creating permanent communities, including from Quebec in the mid 1800s, and then from Sweden, Portugal, Italy, Poland and Ukraine around the turn of the twentieth century. And more recent immigrant populations of this area include people originally from Central and South America and Southeast Asia, as noted elsewhere (National Park Service n.d., "Immigration").

Although **Central Falls, Rhode Island**, (just north of Pawtucket and bounded on the east by the Kittatuck) was incorporated in 1730, it remained part of the larger towns surrounding it until the late nineteenth century. It was part of Smithfield until that town split into three parts in 1871 (Smithfield, North Smithfield and Lincoln, noted elsewhere in this report), then was part of Lincoln until 1895. For this reason, overview information of Central Falls is included in sections on the other towns it was part of throughout the period discussed in this chapter.

North of Pawtucket lies the quieter town of **Lincoln, Rhode Island,** heavily influenced by nineteenth-century industrialization but never as urbanized as other towns along the Kittatuck, such as Pawtucket. The river flows along the eastern border of the town, where the earliest activity and industrial activities occurred and links to Providence in the south were enabled (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 3-4).

The earliest settlers of what became Lincoln relied on the "Great Road"—little more than a cart path in the earlier days of immigrant occupation—created in 1683 on an existing path well used by Native inhabitants from the area (and known as the Shawomet Path). As the town developed, additional transportation routes were created, including the Louisquisset Turnpike, opened in 1806 and connecting Lincoln with Providence. This was one of many turnpikes across the country constructed in the early nineteenth century that were designed to accommodate the wagon traffic and daily coach transportation of that time period (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1982, 22).

Although present-day Lincoln was part of Providence Plantation in 1636, colonial settlers did not venture to this area until around 1661, when several families arrived, including the Whipples and Whitmans. These early non-Indigenous settlers came from Providence and were joined by Quakers from Massachusetts (many of whom were avoiding persecution). One of these families

was the Arnolds, a family that later donated land for a meetinghouse constructed in 1704 on the Great Road (now Smithfield Avenue). Lincoln was originally set off as part of Smithfield (in 1731) and then became a separate town in 1871, with the final boundaries established in 1895 (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 2010a, 4).

Like many other towns in this area, agriculture was a focus of Lincoln's eighteenth-century economy, with construction of saw and grist mills central to supporting daily life for the earliest settler colonists. In addition to iron works established during the earliest settlement of the town, in the 1660s lime mining began at what became known as the Lime Rock quarries, which evolved into a substantial and unique industry for the town by the late 1700s. The expanding transportation networks of the region made the area well-prepared for the Industrial Revolution that bourgeoned here. Accompanying industrialization were several mill villages that developed to support labor needed for the textile mills along Lincoln's waterways. In particular, French-Canadians immigrated to the town in the mid 1800s to supply part of this labor, settling mainly in Manville and Albion. Transportation to and from the town was aided by the short-lived Blackstone Canal, which passed through Lincoln and included three locks in that town (and eventually seven locks). By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Providence-Worcester Railroad (constructed between 1844 and 1847) became the primary mode of transportation through Lincoln (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 2010a, 4), running alongside the original transportation route, the Kittatuck.

Just west of Lincoln is the town of **Smithfield, Rhode Island.** Originally part of the 1731 division of Providence County into three large towns of Smithfield, Glocester, and Scituate (in addition to Providence), the present-day town of Smithfield originally included a large area west of the Kittatuck that today includes the towns of Lincoln, Central Falls, North Smithfield, and Woonsocket. While the records of Smithfield's early history are not as complete as some of the area's other towns, colonial settlers are documented to have ventured into the area by the 1660s. One such settler, William Hawkins was "granted" land in "Wayunkeake" in 1663 along both sides of Reaper's Brook, today located near the Smithfield-Johnston town boundary. The area is also the site of two well-known battles that were part of King Philip's War at Nipsachuck Swamp. The site is located along the Smithfield-North Smithfield town line and one of many battles between Native Americans of the area trying to defend their homelands and colonists who vied for possession and ownership of southern New England in the late seventeenth century (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1992, 3).

Much like the colonial settlement of Lincoln, colonists from Providence accompanied by Quakers from Massachusetts also settled in Smithfield. Some of the original immigrant family names recorded for this town were the Angells, Steeres, Smiths, Applebys, and Farnums, who shaped the early colonial community of this area. By the early eighteenth century Smithfield was clearly becoming more developed and was set off from Providence in 1731 as part of a collection

of settlements west of the Kittatuck that also included present-day North Smithfield, Lincoln, Central Falls, and Woonsocket. When the towns surrounding it were established in 1871, Smithfield was formed with its current borders. Despite the rocky soil of this area, agriculture dominated the landscape in the eighteenth century (as it did with many other towns across the region) and early water-powered saw and grist mills, accompanied by iron manufacturing, became the center of the developing manufacturing villages of the town.

With industrialization in Smithfield came nine textile mills by the mid 1800s, located in the mill villages of Esmond, Georgiaville, Greenville, Spragueville, Stillwater and West Greenville. During this period–and despite the less than ideal landscape–agriculture continued in the area, focused on fruits, market gardening and dairy farming. During this time of both industrial expansion and continued reliance on an agricultural base, the number of immigrants in Smithfield (many Roman Catholics from Ireland and Canada) increased to almost 40 percent of the town's population (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 2010b, 4).

To the east of Lincoln and Smithfield, set in the far northeast corner of the state, lies **Cumberland, Rhode Island,** where colonial settlement was partly defined by William Blackstone, known as a scholar of his time and an Anglican clergyman. Along with Roger Williams, Blackstone was one of the earliest settler colonists in the Blackstone River Valley (renamed after him). After contributing to the colonial settlement and establishment of Boston, in 1635 he traveled west to settle near present-day Cumberland. On the eastern side of the Kittatuck, the river's steep banks and broad channel in this area define the western boundary of this town, which borders Massachusetts on its eastern and northern edges. Similar to other towns in the area, early settlement by colonists, nineteenth-century industrial development, and transportation routes were influenced by–and the result of–the presence of the river. Along with the Kittatuck as a primary source of movement, early transportation in this town was enabled by a north-south road created in 1650 running along the eastern side of the river from the Mendon line down to Valley Falls at the southern tip of Cumberland. As noted elsewhere in this report, like other colonial transportation developments, this road was likely an expansion of a previously existing Native American trail (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998, 2, 6).

Cumberland was set apart from neighboring Woonsocket in 1867, creating the boundary of the present-day town. And, like other towns along the north-south route of the Kittatuck, Cumberland is also partially defined by the Providence & Worcester Railroad constructed in the mid nineteenth century that still runs along the river and facilitated travel, economic development and connection to, within and for this small New England town (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1998, 1)

With the Kittatuck flowing down its center, the town of **Woonsocket, Rhode Island,** still bears its Indigenous place name. Immediately west of Cumberland, this town is also bounded by Massachusetts on its northern edge. As with other settlements throughout the area, following King Philip's War, the Native population decreased substantially; the U.S. census report of 1730, for example, noted that only 81 "Indians" were still present in northern Rhode Island at that time. By 1782 that number was reportedly much reduced (to 12), according to a history of Providence County written by Richard Bayles; the "last of the Indians" in the region (Isaac Nish Norman and Reuben Purchase) both died around 1820 (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976, 4-5). While clearly contributing to it, this all-too-familiar rhetoric and narrative of disappearance does not acknowledge the prevailing myth of extinction that dominated public and academic discourses in the nineteenth century (and beyond), as discussed elsewhere in this report. And while many historical sources, such as Bayles, are useful for general reference and overviews of how a town or city developed, they were also consciously perpetuating these false narratives, which prevailed well into the twentieth century and continue to exist today.

"Woonsocket," clearly an Indigenous place name, was noted in a 1660 letter written by Roger Williams, who noted that "Nisowosaket" might provide "a new and comfortable plantation." It is believed that this reference was to Woonsocket Hill (in present-day North Smithfield); by the 1730s the name became attached to Woonsocket Falls, the largest drop on the Kittatuck at over 30 feet. A few years prior, in the 1650s, Roger Williams and "the Providence Proprietors" negotiated with Narragansett Indians to obtain land that is now Woonsocket west and south of the Kittatuck. Also during this period, in 1667 the Massachusetts Bay Colony established the town of Mendon, leading to boundary disputes between the two colonies by the early 1680s. Additional purchases–including from Wampanoag leaders of the "Rehoboth North Purchase" in 1694 that came to be Attleboro, Massachusetts–also contributed to boundary disputes between the colonies. These were finally resolved in 1731 when boundaries for the town of Smithfield were established (which Woonsocket was part of still) (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976, 4-5).

By the 1830's several villages had been established around the area of the falls in this area; originally part of two separate towns, this area became known collectively as Woonsocket. Finally, in 1871 the present boundaries of Woonsocket were established and in 1888 the town was incorporated as the City of Woonsocket (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976, 4-5). The original settlement of this town naturally formed around Woonsocket Falls, with some of the earliest settlers utilizing paths that had been used by Native peoples for generations, now providing thoroughfares that transitioned to roads as the area further developed. The "Great Road" and Mendon Road on either side of the Kittatuck are two examples of paths that transformed over time following the presence of immigrant carts and wagons powered by beasts of burden and then by motors. Quaker influence was also felt in Woonsocket, as in other towns of the area, as John Arnold erected a Quaker Meeting House in 1719, one of a number of Quaker

meeting houses constructed along the Great Road in this region (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976, 8).

Moving north across the modern-day border that divides Rhode Island and Massachusetts, **Hopedale, Massachusetts,** has been considered a suburban industrial town in the Mill River Valley. The Mill River begins in Hopkinton, flows through Worcester County between Upton and Milford, south through Hopedale, Mendon and Blackstone and into Rhode Island (via Woonsocket) and into the Kittatuck. As with other settlements of the region, the river was a central draw for colonial occupants and central to the establishment of this town. Settler colonists began initial occupation of what became Hopedale around 1664, erecting a corn mill on the Mill River. The original settlement was abandoned in 1675, though, due to "Native hostility" (King Philip's War), and reoccupation began in the late seventeenth century, with initial resettlement in the southwestern section of the town. Throughout the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries, dispersed agricultural settlement defined the area as it remained an outpost of neighboring Milford to the east (first settled in 1662 and incorporated in 1780) (Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation 2007, 2-3).

Originally conceived of as a Utopian village (prior to development of the Draper Corporation), Hopedale provides another good example of a quintessential New England mill town, where industrious mill owners shaped the town and its history. Here, the Draper Corporation constructed houses and institutional buildings with a vision in mind that supported the Draper Mill Complex (demolished in 2022). This was one of the most successful textile enterprises in the world, which began in the small Little Red Shop and came to dominate the country's loom-making business by the end of the nineteenth century (National Park Service. n.d., "Draper Mill Complex").

The Draper company thought that providing workers with good homes and other amenities would result in more productive and attractive employees. The philosophy seems to have been successful, as immigrants came from far and wide to Hopedale to work, including England, Scotland, Canada, Ireland, and Italy. Some lived in the community alongside the non-immigrant workers, but the majority of immigrants lived in nearby Milford, rather than in the housing provided by the Draper company (Sacks 2013).These dynamics demonstrate that not all mill towns represented the "melting pot" philosophy that defines how we think about the American population and immigration today. By 1916 around 1,700 workers kept the Draper factories humming; this number peaked at around 4000 in the mid-twentieth century, then declined until the largest factory building closed in 1978. The Little Red Shop site in Hopedale (one of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park sites) maintains the history of the Drapers and this mill town for future generations (National Park Service, n.d., "American Latino Heritage" n.d., "Draper Mill Complex").

West of Hopedale and just over the Massachusetts border, the town of **Uxbridge, Massachusetts,** developed as an industrial, residential, agricultural community in the corridor of the Kittatuck. The settlement was established enough to be officially "incorporated" as a town by settler occupants in the early eighteenth century (1727), following initial colonization in the 1660s. Uxbridge has been a place of population concentration with significant Indigenous histories since well before (and after) colonial settlement. The central point of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (with present-day Route 146 serving as the primary access), Uxbridge was originally part of Mendon and carved out of the western portion of the 1659 eight-mile grant that established Mendon. The town's history also includes a "Christian Indian settlement" that likely existed well into pre-Contact times, as other early documented Native settlements did (and were not colonial establishments, as the "praying towns" of the seventeenth century are often portrayed) (see, for example, Gookin 1792, 1831). Although the Indigenous settlement that existed here at contact, Waentuck, is not documented by settlers to have continued after King Philip's War, Native people of the area clearly had long-standing connections to this place that continued well after the war.

Chockalog Pond is also a noted location of a Native-occupied site in Uxbridge that existing trails would have led to. In the period between 1620 and 1675 and throughout the Colonial Period, existing trails that Indigenous people and the earliest settlers used transitioned to more established transportation routes, as happened throughout the area. One example was the development of what became Highland Street in the Meadow Brook and Wigwam Brook area, as settlement from Mendon (to the east) expanded over time (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984b, 2-3).

Also significant is the location of Uxbridge: at the confluence of the Mumford, Kittatuck and West rivers, 16 miles south south-east of Worcester, and 20 miles north-northwest of Providence. This central and key location made it a welcoming point for both settlement and traveling through in the centuries before and after contact. Often one of the first buildings erected in a colonial settlement, a meetinghouse was established in town west of the Mumford River in 1728. Like other towns discussed in this report, the early eighteenth-century history of Uxbridge was also defined by the presence of a Quaker population that migrated to this area from southern Rhode Island, and a Quaker meetinghouse established in 1770 still exists in the town. During the early nineteenth century, textile manufacturing defined the town, further stimulated by its proximity to both the Blackstone River Canal and then the Providence & Worcester Railroad corridor (Town of Uxbridge, Massachusetts n.d.; Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984b, 2-3).

As was common in so many southern New England mill towns, during the Industrial Period a number of small villages developed throughout the town, including the Rogerson Village complex on the Mumford River in the 1820s. Over the nineteenth century, the center of Uxbridge

continued to expand its focus on institutional and commercial growth and the textile industry remained active into the twenty-first century. During the Industrial Period the town became known as a center focused on textiles, power looms for woolens, cashmere woolens and manufacturing of clothing and military uniforms (Town of Uxbridge, Massachusetts n.d.). Today several partially intact nineteenth-century mill complexes still stand, as well as some intact worker housing clusters, visible reminders of the active and profitable Industrial Period history of the town. As well, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century vernacular and high style farm houses continue to dot the landscape of this rural town, including in the Castle Hill area, for example (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984b, 2).

Similar to other towns discussed in this report, the village of **Whitinsville** and the town of **Northbridge, Massachusetts** (which Whitinsville is part of), north of Uxbridge, have a history of being a combination of industrial, residential, and agricultural communities connected to the Kittatuck as a central catalyst for settlement and subsequent development. During the decades spanning 1620 to 1675, a reduction in the presence of Native peoples occurred with the influx of colonial settlement in Mendon to the east, and more centralized Native communities developed, similar to the village of Waentuck (Uxbridge) to the south (recognized as a major Indigenous settlement in the sources reviewed for this report). While Indigenous people continued to use the area for hunting and gathering, fishing and agriculture along the rich Kittatuck shores also remained central to their subsistence patterns into the early Contact Period. These patterns were disturbed as immigrants began to expand westward and farmed outlying fields of the Mendon settlement. In the early 1690s a "grant" known as the North Purchase (three square miles) included the area that currently incorporates Northbridge (and Whitinsville) (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984c, 2-3).

The earliest colonial settlement is documented as occurring in the southeastern part of the town around 1707 and, similar to Uxbridge, was connected peripherally to the earlier settled Mendon. A mill and forge were established at the site of Mumford Falls by 1727, followed by development throughout the eighteenth century of dispersed agricultural settlement. In 1774 a meetinghouse center was constructed south of the more densely settled uplands in the northwestern part of the developing town (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984c, 1).

Some of the first permanent colonial settlers in the early decades of the 1700s were Jacob Aldrich in 1707 and Seth Terry (who established a mill) in 1726. By 1736 the settlement was established enough to warrant a constable, then a tax collector in 1753, and establishment of a district (separate from Uxbridge) occurred in 1771, followed by the town of Northbridge in 1786. As with other towns noted in this report, a Quaker meetinghouse was part of the community's fabric from early on, as was a textile mill (constructed at Mumford Falls in Whitinsville in 1809) (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984c, 1 and 3).

Whitinsville is named after the Whitin family, responsible for the industrial development of the village centered around Whitin Machine Works, which became the world's largest textile machine shop and employed around 5,600 people at its peak. The company constructed around 1000 housing units for workers in the century between the 1820s and 1920 to accommodate the labor needs for this successful industry (National Park Service n.d. "Whitinsville Self Guided Tour"; National Park Service n.d., "Whitinsville").

Mendon, Massachusetts, just east of Uxbridge, has been described as an agricultural hill town, set in the highlands between the Kittatuck, Mill, and Charles rivers. Home to an 85-acre body of water called "Nipmuck Pond" (also known as Lake Nipmuc), this location's connection to the long-standing Nipmuc presence in this area is confirmed. Like many other towns of the region, original colonial settlement began in the mid seventeenth century (ca. 1660s), was abandoned during King Philip's War and then resettled in the decades or century following the late seventeenth century (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984a, 1-2; Town of Mendon, Massachusetts. n.d.).

Originally known as Squinshepauge (or Quinshepaug) and the Netmocke Plantation, Mendon was incorporated as a town by its colonial occupants in 1667, following the migration and settlement of 15 families in 1664 from Braintree and Weymouth. The establishment of the colonial town was made possible through the transfer of a land tract from Nipmuc Indians that includes the area covering present-day towns of Bellingham, Upton, Uxbridge, Northbridge, Blackstone and Millville. The first meetinghouse, measuring 22 feet by 22 feet, was erected in 1668 in the area that is today Founder's Park; it was replaced in 1680 with a structure measuring 26 x 24 feet following destruction during King Philip's War (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984a, 4-5; Town of Mendon, Massachusetts n.d.).

Without major waterways moving through the town, Mendon did not transform into an industrially-focused mill town like some surrounding towns and villages did. Rather, economic development remained focused on agriculture and cottage industries, such as boot and shoe shops and other small businesses. The nearby Blackstone Canal provided a channel by which farmers and these small businesses could easily sell goods and expand their markets to residents of nearby towns. In the late 1860s, a tourist industry also developed in the town, as Nipmuc Pond became a popular summer vacation spot for wealthy out-of-town visitors, who could enjoy canoe, sailboat and steamboat rides on the lake. The lake is still a popular destination for locals and visitors, also attracted to Mendon by the nearby Southwick Zoo (established in 1963) (Town of Mendon, Massachusetts n.d.).

While this overview of the villages, towns and cities connected to the Kittatuck offers some context for their settler colonial establishments and subsequent developments and expansions, Chapters V and VI provide deeper context and specific examples of how and why Indigenous

peoples were both present and often seemingly absent from the recorded histories of these places. The stories of the Indigenous individuals, families and communities that maintained a presence to their homelands between Providence and Worcester offer a beginning to what is a much more complex and engaged story still to be told by the National Park Service.

Chapter V

Indigenous Presence in the Kittatuck Valley

This chapter provides the theoretical background, as well as the cultural and historical context, of how and why Indigenous presence in the Kittatuck River Valley is defined by practices of mobility and erasure, at the same time, partly because Indigenous peoples were not isolated to specific towns or solely park boundaries. This is also a story about dispossession and a growing discourse of erasure, especially during the nineteenth century.

One goal of this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment is to stress that any Indigenous history of the Kittatuck Valley is necessarily partial, exclusionary, and most importantly, unavoidably limited in a couple of ways. First, it is limited by the colonial categories that shaped discourse, policies, and the content of the archival record. The majority of the archival materials consulted to convey the story of the Kittatuck Valley are the material embodiments of emerging colonial hierarchies. These documents not only tell a certain version of history, but also represent a certain version of Indigeneity that fits within the categorical framework of the emerging American nation. At times, the archival record works to actively conceal the continued presence of Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley, in an effort to justify its continued settler occupation. At other times, it reveals only certain kinds of Indigenous occupation and persistence, especially that which is considered deviant from, or dependent upon, the state.

At yet other times the Indigenous heritage of the Kittatuck Valley can be vulnerable to appropriation by scholars and educators as evidence of a rich and cultured landscape in the past in ways that inadvertently support the continuation of settler occupation. For example, historical narratives can reproduce and forward a version of Indigeneity that serves as a foil for the articulation of American modernity. They might also describe Indigenous Kittatuck history as a rich source of Indigenous heritage upon which a hearty American national identity has been built (see Deloria 1998). Both approaches are problematic and must be acknowledged carefully in order to avoid them, especially in the context of a national park. The Kittatuck Valley, specifically, has been celebrated for its hardscrabble settler morality and frugality that gave rise to an innovative and progressive society through the development of a uniquely American Industrialism. As the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park strives to revise and offer a respectful corrective to this narrative, we emphasize what National Park historians and anthropologists likely already know: that this persistent industrial and modernizing narrative–and the extant heritage places that reinforce it–makes Indigenous heritage of this area even more vulnerable to settler appropriation. This chapter further addresses this topic.

The narrative offered in this report is also necessarily partial in other ways. While we may want to understand everything about Indigenous society in this region (and have good intentions for doing so) there are Indigenous knowledges, teachings, stories, and technologies that are not available to everyone. Understanding the limits to what information the National Park can share, and what stories a public is entitled to, is a necessary and important step in correcting the extractive attitude that capitalism and colonialism have encouraged within settler society. Modeling consultation and collaboration and empowering the authorship of community-led Indigenous heritages are good ways to subvert some of this learned entitlement. This report aims to contribute to these methodologies, which have also been modeled by scholarship, community-engagement, and praxis within the growing field of Native American and Indigenous studies.

The timeline of human habitation in the Kittatuck Valley is almost entirely Indigenous. The earliest archaeological sites recorded in the valley are merely brief encounters with the past, not the scope of it. The truth is, the known archaeological sites in the Kittatuck Valley says more about patterns of human habitation in the last 200 years than it says about anything else. We find sites when we dig; we dig when we build. The same is true for the written record, which often reflects more about the concerns and priorities of the record keepers than a holistic understanding of how things actually were over time.

And so, in order to better understand the presence of Indigenous peoples of the Kittatuck Valley, existing obstacles must first be identified and acknowledged. The erasure of Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley is not an accident. It is not an oversight. It is part of an active effort, since the inception of English settler colonialism (or immigration), to justify the continued occupation of this place known as the "Blackstone River Valley" via a combination of moral, political, scientific, and economic beliefs that necessarily begin from the foundational logic that *settlers belong here, that they are entitled to this place*. This justification shifts tone and contradicts itself often, depending on the specificities of the historical moment, but it always rests upon the fundamental assumption that settlers are justified in supplanting the Indigenous peoples that have called this place home for millenia because they are somehow better. Justifications for this logic have emerged from years of settler colonial discourse; i.e., settlers know how to make the land more productive, how to create more powerful nations, are biologically more capable, or have a moral monopoly on what is "good" and "right." The scientific racism supported by the study of craniometry (see Thomas 2001) that developed in the nineteenth century is just one example of how "science" further supported these beliefs.

Emptiness and Property

Before colonists even left Britain, they needed a justification for targeting New England as their destination. They created an idea of New England as a place of freedom, newness, and bounty in

order to gain political support for their new colony and relied upon an old Roman geopolitical logic: *terra nullius*. Terra nullius, or "nobody's land," was an idea that fundamentally coupled human habitation–specifically long-term habitation in one place–with ownership, government, and the right to control territory. Terra Nullius claimed that if no-one "ruled" a place, a state could claim to own it.

In order for this justification to work in the Americas, which was clearly not empty *or* ruled by "no-one," a dimension of religious logic was needed, found in the *Doctrine of Discovery*: a set of fifteenth-century Papal Bulls written to justify European colonialism in the Americas with the authority of the church (see Charles and Rah 2019). The doctrine (born from a European theocratic approach to governing in contrast to the cultures of the Indigenous peoples of "America") stated that if a land was not ruled by a *Christian* ruler, then the pope—and by extension, God himself—authorized, even obligated, *Christian* governments to claim dominion. This logic allowed for the concession that the Americas were indeed *not* empty of people or polities, but that without the backing of the church, their rule was not morally just, and would in fact not be acknowledged. Similarly, it placed the utmost value and virtue in the right of those who worked the land to claim exclusive rights thereon. In so doing, the Doctrine of Discovery drew a sharp distinction between the rights of Indigenous peoples who had stewarded their homelands for millenia and those settlers who sought to intensively work a plot of land until it was *productive*. It described Indigenous peoples as mere *occupants*, not only because they did not fence and farm the land, but because they moved seasonally within their territories (or homelands). According to the church, this availed Indigenous peoples to the "rights of occupancy" alone, which acknowledged only their rights to live upon the land, like animals had the right to "occupy" a forest. But if and when they no longer occupied them, or wished to relinquish their lands, the lands could be converted into property by the "discovering" Christian state and those who would work the land and claim sole rights to its fruits based on their investment of labor (see Miller et al. 2010).

While the original Doctrine of Discovery was not the basis of the Puritans' goals, it not only provided authoritative permission for the claiming of others' land, but also framed that act as a duty to God. Emboldened by this declaration, all Christian nations who participated in colonization, including the British Crown, and specifically the colonies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, continuously insisted that they had rights of first "refusal" of Indigenous lands in the Kittatuck Valley and beyond, before anyone else could purchase them (Massachusetts Archives Collection [hereafter "MAC"] 1685 30:299; MAC 1685 30:289; MAC 1701 30:474). (1) In the records of the Colony of Rhode Island, an Order passed by the Commissioners of Warwicke and Providence on the 4th of November, 1651 reads, "*No purchase shall be made of any Land of the natives for a plantation without the consent of this State, except it bee for the clearinge of the Indians from some particular plantations already sett down upon; and if any shall so purchase, they shall forfeit the Land so purchased to the Collonie*" (Bartlett 1856, 236).

Massachusetts had similar statutes; for example, an order passed in Boston in 1633 reads, "*It is ordered, that noe pson whatsoever shall buy any land of any Indean without leave from the Court*" (Shurtleff 1854:1, 112). Centuries later, the Doctrine of Discovery was codified into United States legal doctrine via a series of Supreme Court Decisions opined by Justice John Marshall, called the "Marshall Trilogy" (see specifically Johnson & Graham's Lessee v. McIntosh, 21 U.S. 543, 1823). Since Marshall wrote these opinions in the first half of the nineteenth century, the precedent has been continuously forwarded in cases regarding Indigenous sovereignty. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg cited Marshall and the Doctrine of Discovery as recently as 2005 (City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York, 544 U.S. 197, 2005).

This circular logic virtually guarantees the nature of the archival record encountered today that consists of the accumulation of "Indian deeds" and maps with dotted lines estimating the long obscured boundaries of early land tract purchases, which were followed by scores of nineteenth and twentieth century historians arguing over the exactitudes of those lines. While information in these archival resources is useful, they should equally be seen as an effective mechanism of colonial rule. They are the documentary arm of a slow but consistent and, most importantly, materially "legitimate" transfer of Indigenous homelands into settler hands via the oversight of a government that assumed territorial control by *force*. Thumbing through thousands of documents that detail the contracts by which the provinces of Massachusetts and Rhode Island slowly converted almost all of the Kittatuck Valley into sellable and privatized property, one acre and one signature at a time, we have tried not to lose sight of the fundamental injustice of this painstaking exchange. It did not matter that many of those signatories could not speak, read, or write in English; that they may or may not have ever had the authority to sell tribal lands away from their people; or were or were not under threat of imprisonment, enslavement, or violence when they placed their mark on the line. The illusion of consent was all that was required, and all that has ever been required in the legitimization of the dispossession of the entirety of the Kittatuck Valley from its Indigenous stewards.



These agreements are proudly displayed in town halls and encased in glass to illustrate the legitimacy and antiquity of Kittatuck settler establishments. The seal of the town of Blackstone, Massachusetts, proudly acknowledges that it was "Nepmug Country until 1667" (Blackstone, Massachusetts n.d.) (Image courtesy of https://www.townofblackstone.org/) **Figure 2**

Another well-documented example of early land transfers in this region was by John Wampas, alias "White," who was highly contested among his Indigenous contemporaries. His land transfers totalled almost 20,000 acres by our calculations, in present day Worcester, Sutton, Mendon, and Northbridge (to name a

few) with land speculators, friends, and acquaintances in London and were widely critiqued by his peers as fraudulent, which they communicated quite clearly to the Massachusetts General Court in the waning years of the seventeenth century (Pulsipher 2018). While the court eventually acknowledged the injustice, they did not return tribal lands in the Kittatuck Valley; rather, they paid a monetary remuneration to the complainants and considered the matter settled.

Millbury, Massachusetts, is one example of a town born from one of Wampus's land transactions. This area was originally part of a 1704 land purchase from Wampus centered in Sutton and included part of modern-day Auburn. In 1742, Millbury was established as Sutton's North Parish, which grew as colonists were attracted to its waterways and agricultural land and settled on dispersed farmsteads. As more land was cleared for cultivation and pasture, farming areas became concentrated into small villages at Old Common, Grass Hill and West Millbury. The farms specialized in grains, potatoes and sheep, before dairying became popular during the mid-nineteenth century. Saw, grist, triphammer, paper and fulling mills spread along the river and more-easily dammed brooks. An iron foundry was established on the Kittatuck in the mid-eighteenth century, which evolved into an armory during the Revolutionary War, when Asa and Elijah Waters won a government contract for the manufacture of guns (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1984d, 5).

This single example provides a glimpse into how the concepts and logics of *terra nullius* and the Doctrine of Discovery provided rationales for dispossession of land all along the Kittatuck, land that became the English-style towns explored for this report. Each town along the river between Providence, Rhode Island, and Worcester, Massachusetts, has a similar story, each based on the belief that Indigenous presence equated to emptiness and a lack of "development" that needed to occur to signal permanence.

Enemies, Friends, and Strangers

The geopolitical and religious logic that enabled the dispossession of Indigenous lands enabled a justification not only for the claiming of territory, but for the claiming of Indigenous people themselves. At various times in Kittatuck history, this meant the claiming of Indigenous bodies, Indigenous body parts, Indigenous souls, Indigenous labor, and Indigenous children.

Laws in Massachusetts and Plymouth colonies passed in 1636 prohibited paying wages to Indigenous people, but at the time of the Pequot War (1636-7) no regulations defined the conditions of enslavement that resulted from that conflict (Newell 2015, 43). The debate about the legality of the enslavement of Indigenous captives was negotiated amidst the violence and rhetoric of the Pequot War. Wartime anxieties spurred the first round of legislative and judicial doctrine aimed to justify and legitimize the conversion of Indigenous prisoners of war to private

property in New England, setting the ground for its further continuation thereafter and subsequent blurring with African slavery (Newell 2015, 18, 44).

The English actively rejected Pequot attempts to settle the terms of war to spare non-combatants prior to the Pequot massacre in present-day Mystic, Connecticut, on May 26, 1637, which resulted in the death of hundreds of Pequot women, children and elderly. Those who did not perish were hunted down throughout New England; the men were often killed on the spot while women and children were taken captive (Newell 2015, 28). Many scholars note that the popular demonization of Indigenous enemies and the economic need for labor in southern New England at the time worked in tandem to justify the distribution of Pequot prisoners of war throughout central New England as punishment for their role in the conflict (Hardesty 2019; Newell 2015, 29). And indeed, the rhetorical representation of Pequot people as "rebels" and "murderers" went a long way to reframe their resistance not as the defensive strategies of a sovereign nation, but as criminal acts that deserved punishment (Newell 2015, 30).(2) But public sentiment and labor shortages weren't the only factors fueling this forced diaspora and enslavement of Pequot people. The commodification of Indigenous women and children was one of the only ways that the Massachusetts Colony paid their soldiers (Newell 2015, 35). Most of the Massachusetts regiments were composed entirely of volunteers who had no pay except the promise of war spoils, often termed "plunder." Encouraging this "plunder" incentivized the taking of captives and drove soldiers to sell Pequot women and children into slavery throughout southern New England by the hundreds, mostly through slave markets in Boston, Hartford, and Plymouth (Newell 2015, 35).(3)

After the war the "dividence" of captives amongst the allied colonies furthered an already substantial forced diaspora of Pequot people in Nipmuc, Narragansett, Wampanoag, and Mohegan homelands and settler homes throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, including in the Kittatuck Valley, with many more exiled to the Caribbean, where they were traded for African slaves. Many of the enslaved were distributed to prominent citizens and leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; John Eliot's first Indigenous language instructors and assistants for his initial missionizing efforts were Pequot captives, whom he met in the household of Roxbury, Massachusetts, minister Thomas Weld (Newell 2015, 64). Included in this long list of prominent citizens who received enslaved Pequots is the famed recluse Reverend William Blackstone, for whom settlers eventually renamed the Kittatuck Valley "The Blackstone River Valley" (Newell 2015, 64). At that time, Blackstone had already fled Boston to make his home in Wawepoonseag (which he called "Study Hill") on an eastern bank of the Kittatuck River in present-day Cumberland, Rhode Island. The home, which would later be burned during King Philip's War, stood "on the west side of the stage road from Providence to Worcester; three miles above Pawtucket, 1.5 miles above Valley Falls" on a "hillock rising from the meadow like a pyramid of 50 or 70 feet on the brink of the river" (Bliss 1836, 7). While this location has long been celebrated as a place of settler heritage, we encourage its specific and detailed emplacement

here as Indigenous. Blackstone's home on Study Hill was not only located within extended Wampanoag and Nipmuc homelands, but was also made to be a specifically Pequot place due to the Pequot diaspora–not by choice, but by force.

This is the first example of a central theme in this and the following chapter: the diasporas of Indigenous people into, out of, and within the Kittatuck Valley. These diasporas were both forced, such as the captivity of Native people after the Pequot and King Philip's wars, and unforced, such as the movement of Native people across pre-existing networks of kinship, trade, and diplomacy. While it is more difficult to speak to the pre-colonial interactions between and movement of Indigenous peoples in the area, there are records of fishing falls—like Pawtucket Falls—as sites of intertribal gathering, exchange, diplomacy, and peace since time immemorial (DeLucia 2018, 204; Brooks 2018a, 17, 303-306). This theme, which this report traces in many different ways through the settler colonial era, complicates the notion of insulated Indigenous territories bounded by linear borders. The area encompassed by the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park has always been porous. It has national/tribal significance for many Indigenous peoples, some of which overlap, and some that do not. The following sections trace this theme through the example of early colonial human trafficking, which underscores the diverse motivations, power imbalances, and experiences that compose the multi-layered histories of this place.

The first definitive slave law in New England, the *1641 Massachusetts Slave Law*, emerged in the immediate aftermath of the forced Pequot "dividence." The law stated that slaves could be captives in "just warres," or "strangers" who would willingly sell themselves or were sold, as well as those judged into bondage by punishment (Hardesty 2020, 13). Interestingly, this doctrine was not really racially oriented, at least on its face. It hinged on the privilege of the state to define the concepts of "just" and "strangers," motivated by the assumption that those who remained enslavable were in that position because they deserved it. The law was a statement about the moral authority of the state more than about race, with its authors taking their power from biblical justifications of slavery and retaining de facto authority to decide what would or would be considered "just," who was or wasn't a "stranger." It foregrounded emergent attitudes of *laissez faire* capitalism that enabled the rapidly growing Atlantic Slave Trade at the time, and muted coercion by creating a caveat for those who would "sell themselves" into slavery. This law, a legacy of the Pequot War, was explicitly renewed by Massachusetts legislators in the years leading up to King Philip's War (1675-1676) (Whitmore 1887, 91). In fact, this early slave law set the tone for slave policy in New England for the next 150 years and beyond, providing a foundation for the settler colonial art of victim blaming central to oppressive policies long after emancipation.

In Rhode Island, the racial dimensions of slavery and the province's regulations regarding the bounds of its legality were also initially laid out in the turmoil of the seventeenth century. The

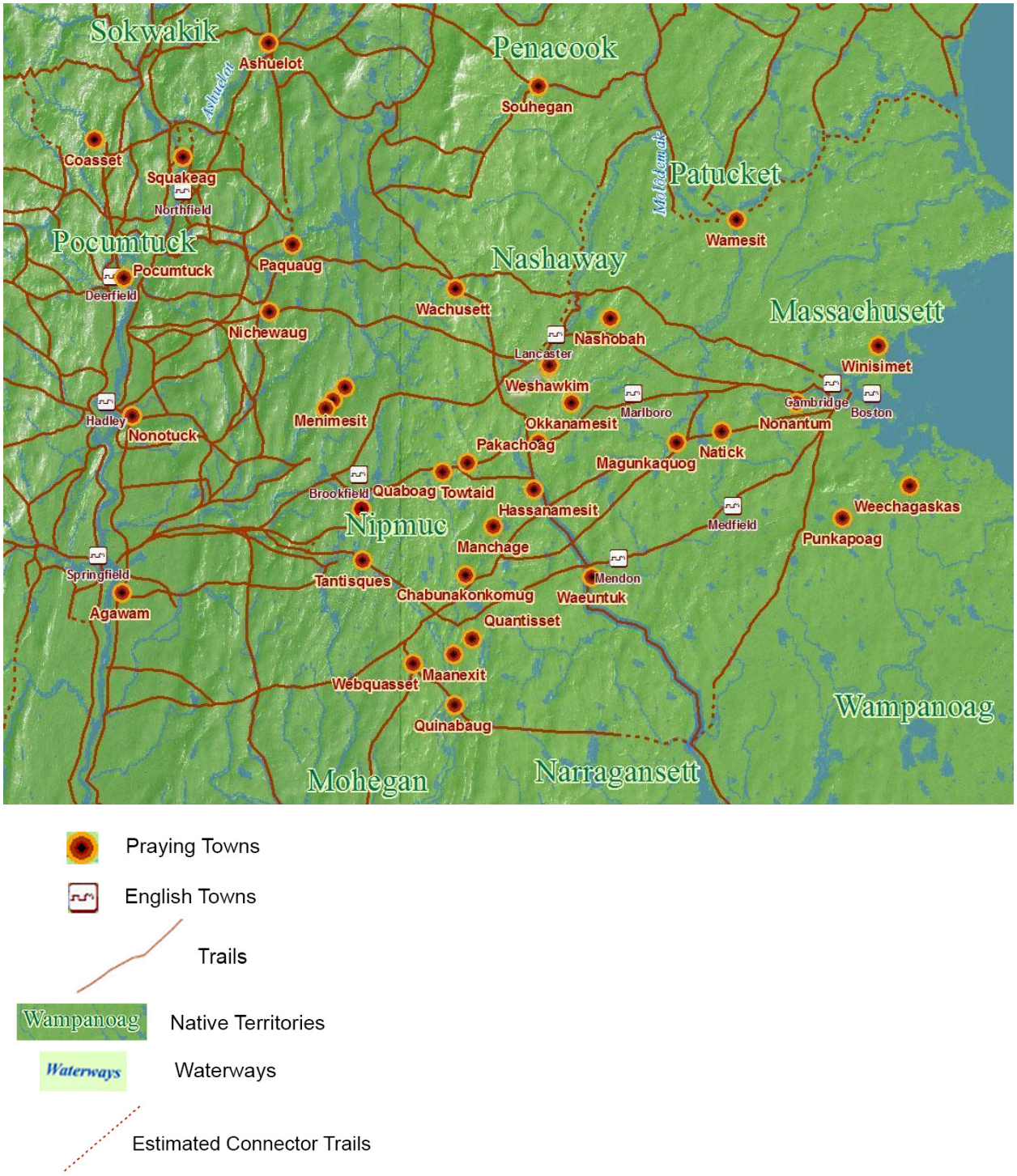
first Rhode Island Slave Law in 1652 limited the terms of servitude for specifically African and African descended people by fining enslavements beyond 10 years: *"Whereas there is a common course practised amongst English men to buy negers, to that end they may have them for service or slaves forever; for the preventinge of such practices among us, let it be ordered, that no blacke mankind or white being forced by covenant bond, or otherwise, to serve any man or his assighnes longer than ten years, or until they come to bee twentie four years of age, if they bee taken in under fourteen, from the time of their coming within the liberties of this Collonie. And at the end or term of ten years to sett them free, as the manner is with the English servants. And taht man that will not let them goe free, or shall sell them away elsewhere, to that end that they may bee enslaved to others for a long time, he or they shall forfeit to the Collonie forty pounds"* (Bartlett 1856, 243). In comparison to Massachusetts, Rhode Island was more openly racially oriented, but made little overt reference to morality. Instead, Rhode Island took the economic route, enforcing the law with a fine. Twentieth-century historian Winthrop Jordan noted that this law was openly ignored and violated from the outset, and never supported by the southern towns of Newport and Portsmouth (Jordan 1961; Hardesty 2019, 15). He called it, "not only the first, but the most widely violated piece of antislavery legislation in America" (Winthrop 1961, 245-6). To the extent that this law was ever enforced or observed in colonial Rhode Island, the penalty of payment ensures that the wealthier the offender, the easier it was to ignore it.

These examples of morally-based justness mixed with economic privilege that developed during colonial-era rule and defined Indigenous (and other) people of color as enemy, friend, or "stranger" are foundational to understanding the historical context of Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley in the post-contact centuries.

Salvation

Following the clear statement made by the aftermath of the Pequot War of the 1630s, settler-Indigenous relationships in Massachusetts took the form of offering "salvation" to the heathen Natives, delivered at the hands of Christian missionaries such as John Eliot. These efforts were linked to British geopolitical goals in New England in important ways, as Christian converts were considered better political allies who could be enveloped into the state and its system of private property, thereby extinguishing aboriginal rights to land.

The seventeenth-century categories of "Enemies and Friends" that appear within the writings of early English settlers illustrate these colonial strategies; "friends" were allies to whom the English extended varying degrees of humanity and colonial "protection," often through confinement in English-style settlements (such as "praying towns"). At the highest political level, "enemies" and "friends" were made through allegiances, either to the British Crown or to the Indigenous leaders who challenged it.



Map 6: The network of Indigenous "Praying Towns" as of 1674 in central and southern New England just before the outbreak of King Philip's War, or Metacom's Rebellion (Brooks 2018b, "Praying Towns Map" at https://ourbelovedkin.com/awikhigan/media-gallery).

"Enemies," however, were those resistant to colonial control and represented an immediate threat to self and nation that justified aggressive and violent behavior as "defense." How could an

invading and occupying force justify their violence as "defense"? In the same way that they justified the theft of land by calling it "empty": by relying on the presumed authority of God and the superiority of the Christian faith to create hierarchies of humanity that ignored the rights of Indigenous peoples to their homelands.

In this context, Indigenous "friendship" was demonstrated by consenting to colonial authority: either by accepting the teachings of the Gospel according to John Eliot (and other missionaries) and/or complying with English policies to confine Indigenous people to "plantations," tracts of land within English claimed territory where the colony established borders and sets of internal rules that both isolated Indigenous people from English settlers and allowed for surveillance and paternal authority of Indigenous inhabitants. In 1658, Massachusetts Secretary Edward Rawson sent an order to Major Atherton to appoint "*Indian Commissioners in their several Plantations, to hear and determine all such matters that do arise among themselves…having the power of a county court*" (MAC 1658 30:74). Rawson clarified that Atherton should retain the power to call the court to session and consent to the determination or judgement, and all other matters "*beyond their cognizance*" shall be determined by the Court of Assistants." He noted to Atherton, "*It is ordered that Maj. Atherton does take care that all such* (laws established by the Plantations) *do suit according to our laws as far as they are capable*" (MAC 1658 30:74). With this began the Indian guardianship system in Massachusetts that further contributed to land dispossession and loss of funds through mismanagement by guardians (see, for example, Earle 1861; Gould 2010).

With the help of John Eliot, who represented the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Massachusetts Colony targeted several "plantations" for intensive missionization with the intent to "convert" Indigenous people to English rule via their conversion to Christianity. Tactically, this was an attempt to win geopolitical control by convincing Indigenous communities of the moral superiority of the Christian faith, which was thought to be more effective than political allyship alone. This was more than diplomacy; it was a psychological tactic intent on saturating Indigenous lives with European logic, which then prescribed and structured not only the appropriateness of gender roles, styles of dress, daily habits, forms of leisure, family structure, sexual relationships, relationships to the land, sickness, death, property, and just about everything else, as well as the inherent morality of it (see Tinker 2003). Notably, Eliot took advantage of Indigenous anxieties surrounding ongoing epidemics, claiming that the Christian faith and its prescribed behaviors would provide salvation for the Indigenous people of New England. From this asserted moral high ground, Eliot claimed that the sicknesses that had plagued communities were punishments Indigenous people had invited because of their lack of morality. He offered a reprieve from this suffering through his version of moral reform, which, as we will see, marks another persistent theme in the history of colonial interaction in the Kittatuck Valley (Tinker 2003).

As a nascent form of the nineteenth-century "reservations" of America, these plantation spaces worked to create many social and geopolitical boundaries, not to mention a palpable paternalism, within which Indigenous communities first glimpsed the token Western version of Indigenous political "sovereignty," specifically tweaked to accommodate the logistics of settler colonialism. Indigenous communities, spatially isolated from English settlements, were promised their own leadership with protection from military aggression in exchange for missionization and allyship. Rawson's orders attempted to both confine and control Indigenous communities, while retaining a facade of respect for the autonomy of Indigenous governance and nationhood. This arrangement illustrates the same kind of political paradox debated and codified into U.S. law almost two hundred years later in another landmark Marshall Trilogy Supreme Court case, Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. 1, 1831). In it, Justice John Marshall offered the concept of the "domestic dependent nation" as an alternative to the sovereign status of a foreign nation. Of course, this label was paradoxical from the outset. English colonial diplomats extended those nation-to-nation relations, at least on paper, to Indigenous leaders in the seventeenth century and continued to do so into the late nineteenth century in both their war waging and treaty negotiations. But Marshall put strict qualifiers on this relationship, aligning his version of Indigenous "nationhood" with the Doctrine of Discovery (discussed above) and the praying town model. He opined, "*they may, more correctly, perhaps, be denominated domestic dependent nations. They occupy a territory to which we assert a title independent of their will, which must take effect in point of possession when their right of possession ceases. Meanwhile they are in a state of pupilage. Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian.*"

The effects of Marshall's words would be difficult to quantify, as they continue to impact U.S./Indigenous policy today. Both then, now and in the seventeenth century, his notion of limited "sovereignty" (which was obviously more spatial confinement than self-determination) threatened Indigenous nationhood by imposing the provincial (later U.S.) legal system and disrupting the quotidian livelihoods of Indigenous people that revolved around movements attuned to the seasons: the movement and habits of game animals, the timing of different bird migrations, the freezing and thawing cycles of rivers and ponds, the flow of sap from the trees, the spawning cycles of salmon and alewives, the availability of fruits, berries, and nuts for harvesting, as well as countless other environmental and cultural considerations that kept Indigenous peoples moving around their homelands with regularity.

Consent and Content

The principles of religious freedom that prompted the foundation of the Rhode Island colony limited the degree to which colonists interfered in Indigenous spiritual life or made moves toward conversion. Yet the entanglement of Indigenous people of the Kittatuck in Eliot's conversion campaigns, on both sides of the present (or any former) Massachusetts/Rhode Island

colony border, are important. Here, we trace the erasure of Indigenous presence in what is today northern Rhode Island to the terms of the land transfers between Indigenous leaders and settlers, which set the terms by which Indigenous inhabitants would either be removed from the land or folded into an English style of land tenure.

In 1646 Roger Williams and Gregory Dexter met Ousamequin (chief of the Paukanawket) at Wapewasick ("over against Portsmouth") to negotiate a price for the transfer of all his rights and interest in a tract of land "which lies between Pawtuckqut and Loqusquscit." While the English understood this land to already have been transferred to the colony by Conanicus and Miantonomi in 1636, for the sum of 30 pounds in a larger purchase that included lands between the Pawtuxet and Pawtucket Rivers, the "lands and meadows upon the two fresh rivers called Mooshausick and Wanasqutucket" had since come under at least partial control of the Paukanawket, who were beholden to the Narragansett in 1636 but not in 1646. Roger Williams, understanding that this meant the land rights must be renegotiated, was compelled to approach Ousamequin with a deal. The text of the agreement, which had been written by Williams and Dexter beforehand, states that Ousamequin would allow the English to graze cattle and cut meadow, but "*not put up houzes without further agreement.*" It also stipulates that the current Indigenous inhabitants, "*who hath an Indian field within the bounds aforesaid, shall either depart or secure his field from the English cattle"* (by which is implied fencing it) (Bartlett 1856, 31-32). But Ousamequin never signed the agreement.

In an account written by Dexter and Williams after returning to Providence, they claimed that Ousamequin accepted wampum and gifts from the English delegation, but when he asked for four coats, Williams and Dexter refused, claiming, "*we were not willing to wrong our country in granting his desire for foure coats, and so unreasonably to raise the price of such parcels of land in this barbarous wilderness*." Instead, they declared the land rightfully theirs for the price they had already paid, and left (Bartlett 1856, 33-4).

Instead of further treating with Ousamequin, Williams declared Ousamequin's claim to the land between Pawtuckqut and an "Indian Plantation northwest from thence called Loquasquscit" to be false (Barlett 1856, 33). He asserted the colony's rights to the lands via the 1636 Nanhigganset purchase, and reconfirmed his old land deal with the Narragansett via the successors of Miantanomi and Canonicus, who affirmed the terms, including unlimited use of the lands surrounding the two rivers for the grazing of cattle and ownership of land twenty miles upriver from Fox Hill (above Fox Point) for any use whatsoever. They made only one provisional limit on this transfer: that "*it shall not be lawful for the men abovesaid to remove the Indians, that are up the country from their fields, without the Indians' consent and content*"; that is, the English could not force the inhabitants to leave. Neither could the Indigenous inhabitants, "*sell any of the lands abovesaid to any,*" but the inhabitants had the right to take of the English "*satisfaction for removing*" (Bartlett 1856, 35-38). There is an important distinction here between selling the land,

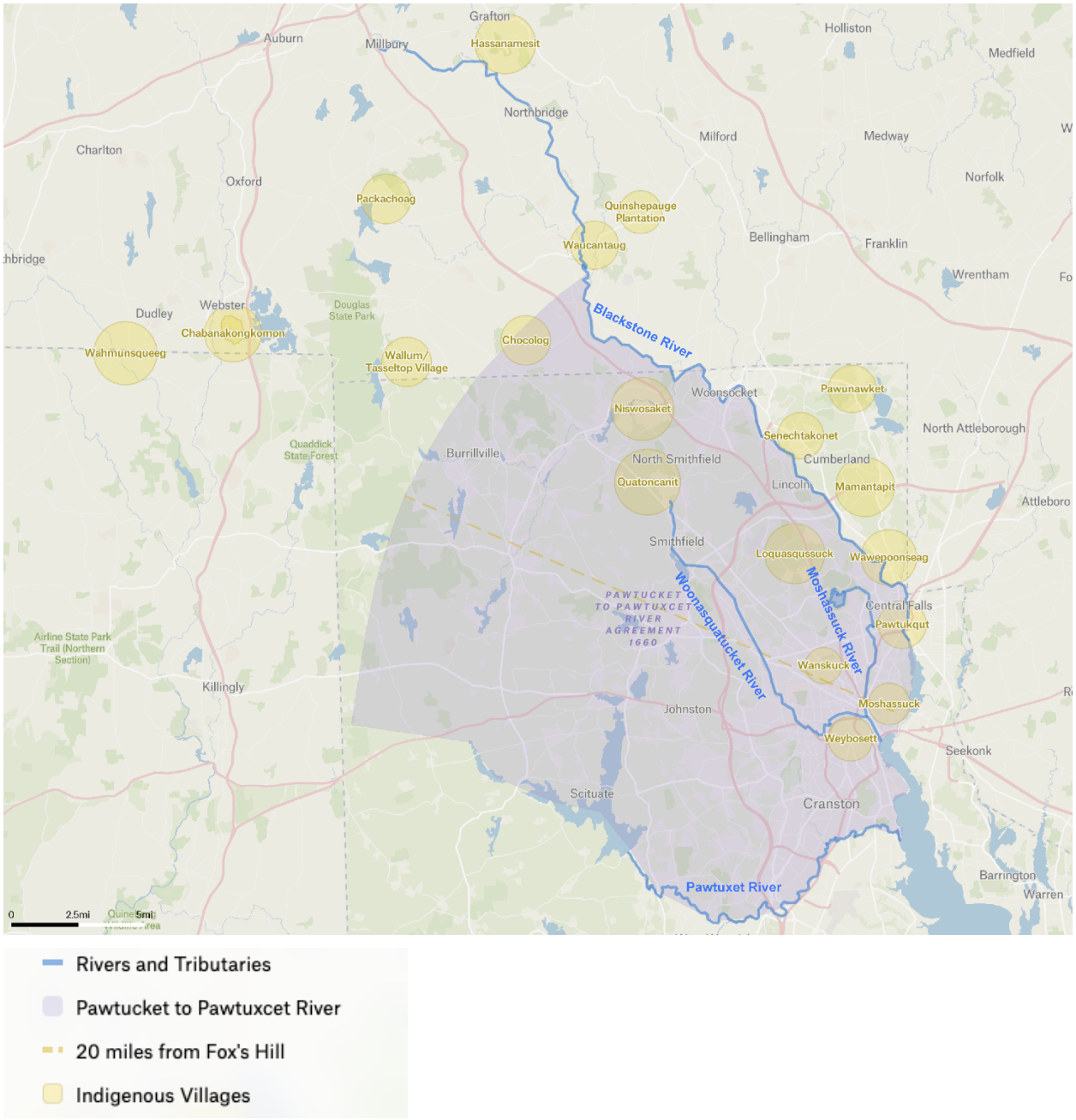
and inhabitants taking "satisfaction" for leaving. The land had already been sold, yet for both Ousamequin and Scuttape and Quequaganewet (the local leaders in the territory), that was not the same as emptying the land. The choice to leave or stay rested with each community and person.

In the following months, Roger Williams asked the General Assembly for the funds to satisfy inhabitants of this territory to leave. He tried to convince his government of the need for this extra expense, explaining that, "*the inhabitants of these parts with most of the Cowesetts and Nipmucs have long since forsaken the Narragansett Sachems and subjected themselves to the Massachusetts; and yet they are free to sell their landes to any whom the Massachusetts shall not protest against. To this end, (observing their often flights, and to stop their running to the Massachusetts), I have parlied with them, and find that about thirty pounds will cause them to leave those partes, and yield peaceable possession* (Bartlett 1856, 40). Here, Williams laid forward the problem, making an agreement with the Narragansett for territory that the Narragansett no longer had any claim over. Yet rather than continue to deal with other Indigenous leaders of the Nipmuc and Cowesett, he proposed to maneuver around them by dealing with individuals. He proposed to collect 30 shillings from each party interested in founding a town in the Loquasquscit area to be paid to the town, and offered his, "*time and paines*" to satisfy the Indigenous inhabitants to leave (Bartlett 1856, 40). (4)

But the settlers and the General Assembly did not understand this logic. They complained to Roger Williams that the land, upon Moshassuck and Wanasquatucket were "*ours already.*" They fretted that if they, "*lett goe [their] true hold already attained, we shall, if not ourselves, yet our posterity, smart for it.*" The town asserted, "*we doe truely understand what yourself doth not… we have not wronged them any further than satisfaction, that we know of, nor shall not*." And then they wrote something that can be read a couple of ways: "*What their wrongs to us are, we have hitherto rather smothered, than complained; yet we must tell you, that we shall not be averse to any fair gratuity, either to take them off the fields or otherwise; always having respect unto the act of the sachems, whom you have formerly so much respected*." So, is this a protest on principle and yet a yielding to Roger Williams' plan? Or is this a veiled threat? After claiming no wrong-doing and saying that they've "*smothered*" the wrongs done to them, what is their notion of a "*fair gratuity,*" and how might we read that phrase, "*either to take them off the fields or otherwise*"? (Bartlett 1856, 40-41).

A thorough investigation into the means by which the Indigenous inhabitants of the lands between Moshassuck and Pawtucket (or all the lands extending 20 miles west from Fox Hill to the west/Northwest between the Pawtuxet River to the south, and the Pawtucket River to the east for that matter) were removed or incorporated into new English settlements is beyond the scope of this report. However, the following section of this chapter discusses several of the Indigenous villages, including Chocolaug, Quinsehpaug, and Wacantaug, that lie just beyond the bounds of

the above described territory and along the Kittatuck that were targeted by Eliot for Christian conversion within the decade immediately following Roger William's 1660 proposal (see Map 7).



Map 7: The lands extending 20 miles west from Fox Hill to the west/Northwest between the Pawtuxet River to the south, and the Pawtucket River to the east, as described in Williams' 1660 land agreement with Narragansett leaders. This land encompassed multiple Indigenous villages. (Map by author Heather Law Pezzarossi)

Worth pointing out is the damage done by the dichotomy (forwarded by Rhode Island and the concept of private property more broadly) between leaving and staying. For Indigenous inhabitants of the Kittatuck region, leaving permanently and staying permanently appear to be different options and an extension of choice and acknowledgement of agency on behalf of the colony toward Indigenous residents—an act of diplomacy, even. However, in practice either choice would result in a negation of Indigenous ways of life that relied upon mobility and seasonal movement to provide sustenance, structure the passage of time, determine harvesting practices, signal the start of festivals, and much much more. The choice to stay or go would suppress the modes of fishing, hunting, gathering, and farming that Indigenous peoples engaged in within these vast homelands. Fishing falls like Pawtucket Falls were located within these networks, in which Indigenous leaders sustained diplomacy, relationality, and peace-making. Planting fields along rivers and on other fertile land were sites managed by Indigenous women, who carefully grew and distributed resources across the Northeast, following a redistributive system.

As Lisa Brooks (2018a) notes of Caskoak (a location between the planting communities of the south at places like the Kittatuck Valley and the northern communities that relied on hunting, fishing, and gathering), "A breakdown in the redistributive system could yield conflict, particularly in times of scarcity. Therefore, effective leaders facilitated the renewal of relationships and amelioration of disputes through diplomatic councils and ceremonies at places like Caskoak, where people of all ages participated in symbolic and material exchange, celebrating intercommunity marriages, relaying deep-time stories, sharing artistic and practical knowledge, and negotiating rights and responsibilities among contiguous communities, thus enabling social and ecological sustainability" (Brooks 2018a, 19). Caskoak was located on the coast in Wabanaki territory in what is today Casco Bay, Maine. The Indigenous people in the Kittatuck Valley were diplomatically and politically tied to these northern communities while also managing their own planting fields, fishing runs, and intercommunity relationships in the south.

King Philip's War

John Eliot attempted to concentrate his conversion efforts in the Kittatuck Valley at three “Praying Towns”: Hassanamesit, Manchaug, and Waucantaug (present-day Grafton, Sutton and Uxbridge/Mendon, Massachusetts, respectively). According to Daniel Gookin, these Nipmuc settlements were villages that existed prior to Eliot’s missionizing efforts (Gookin 1831), and may well have been the destination of some of the inhabitants removed as a result of the above discussed Pawtucket to Pawtuxet Agreement of 1660. These villages were part of an extensive and overly ambitious network of localities where Eliot claimed influence, including Magunkaquog and Natick to the east, and Chabunagunkomaug, Manexit, Quantisset, and

Wabaquasset to the west. By overly ambitious, we mean that he did not have the control or influence over the villages that he purported to have.

In the Kittatuck Valley, Nipmuc, Narragansett, and Wampanoag people were deeply embroiled in the multi-factional conflict of King Philip's War (Metacom's Rebellion). John Eliot had only visited Manchaug and Wacantaug a few times before Metacom's Rebellion disrupted his efforts (Gookin 1792). While some of Eliot's disciples led converts to aggregate in Chabunagunkamaug (modern-day Dudley) and Hassanamesit, no estimates exist as to how many villagers stayed behind or went elsewhere. In the escalating conflict, political alliances were fluid and unstable and Indigenous people and their communities relied upon their mobility as a mode of safety and a key tool for navigating shifting geopolitical alliances. Each of the colonial governments struggled to contain the mobility of Indigenous friends and enemies alike in an effort to hinder communications, the transfer of intelligence, and political repositioning, which was clearly a strength of Philip (Metacom), Weetamoo, and their allies within their ancestral territories as well as other tribal nations who initially attempted to avoid the conflict. For example, after the erruption of war in July 1675, Massachusetts military forces traveled into Narragansett homelands in Rhode Island to attempt to meet with the Narragansetts at Pettaquamscut (located south of the Kittatuck) to convince them to pledge neutrality and send scouts to capture Metacom. The Narragansett sachems did not show up to this planned council, depending on their knowledge of these homelands to evade the United Colonies, which represented an alliance between Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Connecticut but excluded Rhode Island. Just one month earlier, emissaries from Rhode Island and Massachusetts had also failed to convince the Narragansetts to commit their allegiance to the colonies (Brooks 2018a, 144-145, 156-158).

In response to complaints by the English settlements surrounding Ponkapoag (the present-day Canton, Massachusetts, area), the colonial government of Massachusetts took steps to tactically confine Indigenous inhabitants to a few praying town settlements, evacuating the rest (MAC 1675, 30, 185). They justified the aggregation of Indigenous settlements as a means of protecting Indigenous communities from conflicts and exploitation at the hands of unruly settlers. This action also severely restricted their movement beyond the bounds of the established reserves they were confined to and served to reveal the ephemerality of "friend" and "enemy" status. Even more severe restrictions were experienced by Indigenous peoples of Massachusetts (mainly Nipmuc) due to forced relocation–internment, really–to Deer Island in Boston Harbor.

By isolating "Friend Indians" outside of the Kittatuck Valley, colonial forces effectively declared the Kittatuck Valley empty of Indigenous "friends." The law rendered those who remained as "enemies" by virtue of their non-compliance and continued presence in the valley. "Enemies" found outside of state-sanctioned Indigenous settlements without a permit were subject to severe penalties, including capture, enslavement, and death (MAC 1676, 30, 233). Even at Hassanamesit, tensions were high, as the inhabitants found themselves pulled between the

English and their allies and Metacom's cause. Several times, leaders at Hassanamesit attempted to walk that knife's edge between enemy and friend. For example, James Printer, a Nipmuc scholar from Hassanamesit, wielded his translation and literacy skills for both Puritan settlers and Nipmuc sachems in the 1670s. Through a series of complex interactions, Printer quickly turned from "friend" to "enemy" when the English falsely accused him of being part of the raid on Lancaster in 1675. He only returned to the category–albeit tenuous–of "friend" when he could prove an alibi for his location during the raid (at church). His location was not only an alibi, but also bolstered his position as a "friend" by demonstrating his devotion to Christianity and presence in the "praying town" of Hassanamesit at the northern end of the Kittatuck (Gookin 1831).

As trust of the "friend Indians" waned, the anxiety of the war propelled the development of more exploitative practices and policies that would continue to serve the province, and then the state, in the extraction of Indigenous land and labor for over a century. In the fall of 1675, the General Court issued a series of orders to have the inhabitants of the remaining praying towns evacuated and confined to Deer Island. Upon their arrival, Indigenous prisoners found no shelter or food stores, nor any viable way to hunt and fish in the weeks leading up to winter 1675/76 on the small, barren island (MAC 1676, 30:200). As a result of this internment, many died of starvation and exposure. Archival records include correspondences between the governor and his officers, ordering boats or blankets for the mission, and guards assigned to watch the prisoners also requested additional security to keep captives on and others off Deer Island (Newell 2015).

Newell (2015) reports that the capture and enslavement of Indigenous people was a central preoccupation of many English participants during King Philip's War. The fundamentals of this tactic rested not only on wartime justifications for violence and the treatment of political enemies and prisoners of war, but also extended that treatment of Indigenous inhabitants into times of relative peace. Where the Pequot soldiers were murderers and criminals, Philip's troops were "insurgents" and treasonous enemies of the state, which again (albeit in a slightly different register) influenced how settlers of the region thought of Kittatuck people even after the official end of the conflict. One estimate offers that at least 1000 Indigenous people from southern New England were captured and traded for African slaves in the Caribbean during the conflict Hardesty (2019, 12); another estimates that another 1500 Indigenous captives were enslaved and indentured locally (Newell 2015, 158).

The isolation to Hassanamesit, and then to Deer Island, was not a narrative that unfolded exclusively within the Kittatuck Valley, but the influence of these actions cannot be over emphasized in the broader story of erasure of Indigenous presence in this region. The attempted containment of Native people was a central story of Indigenous-settler relations in southern New England in the post-contact centuries. The actions during King Philip's War were a version of Indigenous removal, a tactic used frequently in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries

to erase Indigenous peoples from their homelands, rendering these spaces "empty" for settlement. This type of dispossession was similar to the nineteenth century "Trail of Tears" of Native peoples from the southeast or the Diné's "Long Walk." The Aleutian Internment during World War II is a similar comparison. This land was never empty, but the settler government did attempt to have it emptied, both physically and discursively, in New England and then beyond this region. The actual success of these attempts to erase Indigenous presence is obviously partial, but to an extent that will always be obfuscated by the archive. While some Indigenous families remained in the Kittatuck Valley and surrounding region continuously, their presence during King Philip's War and the tensions that accompanied the closing decades of the seventeenth century relied upon their evading detection by the settler government, setting the practice of being hidden yet here all along for the next 300 years (Baron et al. 1996).

Captives or Scalps

As the conflicts of King Philip's War (Metacom's Rebellion) merged northward into those of King William and Queen Anne (1688 through 1713), the Province of Massachusetts continued to reward settlers' (both soldiers and civilians) violence against all Indigenous people with bounty payments. For example, *The Act for Encouraging the Prosecution of Indian Enemies and Rebels, and Preserving that Which are Friends* of 1694 claimed to be for the purposes of "better securing of the Indians of the several Plantations … and for preventing of mischief that might happen to befall any of them by the English" (Massachusetts Acts and Resolves (MAR) Province Laws 1694-5, 10:2). But it achieved this by confining "friend Indians" to isolated "plantations" in which Indigenous inhabitants from all over the province were assigned communal lands and isolated from the settler population in the name of their "protection." The province enforced this isolation by introducing substantial risks for Indigenous movement between settlements. Being caught outside of plantation boundaries (or even being seen within a half mile of them) rendered suspects to be "deemed and accounted as enemies; and it shall and may be lawful for any of their majesties' subjects to treat and prosecute them as such" (MAR Province Laws 1694-5, 10:2). To be "deemed an enemy and treated as such" in 1694 meant that an Indigenous occupant in their own homelands could be hunted for bounty and scalped, enslaved, or traded on the open slave market.

In an early version of this law, soldiers received ten pounds for each Indigenous "enemy" they killed or captured for the colony in what was then known as the "Eastern Front," including what we now recognize as the Wabanaki Confederacy (encompassing the territory commonly known as the state of Maine). The profit increased to fifty pounds for independent bounty hunters, which led to the massacre of entire Indigenous villages by bounty hunters and soldiers far to the northeast of the Kittatuck Valley (MAC 28, 240-243a). But it also continued to endanger local Narragansett, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag peoples within the Kittatuck Valley by incentivizing violence against any Indigenous person with little to no recourse. In fact, in the years after King

Philip's War, the Massachusetts colony struggled to find an appropriate method and punishment for the increasing regularity of "scalp fraud" and the raiding of local Indigenous villages for captives bound for the slave trade (MAR Province Laws 1694-5, 10:6; see also Newell 2015, 192).

By the 1720s, the value of a capable Indigenous captive sold into the African slave trade eclipsed the price of a potential bounty payout for Indigenous scalps. The perception of the American frontier as a vast, "empty" space ripe for economic exploitation became intertwined with the European sense of entitlement to enslave Black and Brown people as sources of exploitable labor. The shifting methods for colonial dispossession of both Indigenous lands and bodies significantly influenced provincial legislation that impacted Indigenous peoples of the Kittatuck Valley in the eighteenth century.

While provincial governments tinkered with the value of Indigenous and African lives in Massachusetts, they did not overwrite the 1641 Slave Law for 150 years. They repeatedly balanced the bounty rates for enemy scalps and the price of enemy captives (compared with the price of the enslaved Africans who were traded to replace them). They adjusted taxes levied on chattel, or raised manumission fees to discourage freeing the enslaved (Hardesty 2019, 67). Other laws limited the rights of Indigenous inhabitants, prohibiting the sale of firearms and spirits, for example, as well as regulating all trade through licensed truck houses. All of this was a delicate dance meant to skirt the racial dimensions of slavery, while affirming otherness and difference through laws concerning taxes, property rights, inheritance, criminality, and treatment of the poor, sick, and elderly.

Enslaved or Indentured?

In Rhode Island, the enslavement and indenture of Indigenous people continued after King Philip's War. In 1704, the earliest runaway ad featuring an enslaved Indigenous person appeared in *The Boston News-Letter*: "Ran away from Capt. John Aldin of Boston, on Monday the 12th Currant, a tall lusty Indian Man call'd Harry, about 19 Years of Age, with a black Hat, brown Ozenbridge Breeches and Jacket: Whoever will take up said Indian, and bring or convey him safe either to John Campbell Post master of Boston, or to Mr. Nathaniel Niles of Kingstown in Naraganset, Master to said Indian, shall have a sufficient Reward" (Reissman 2023). Indigenous children were also routinely indentured or enslaved in Rhode Island. In 1708, Sarah Beer's children were documented as indentured in North Kingstown, Rhode Island (Indenture of Sarah Beer's Children 1708). These instances represented the ongoing unfreedom of many Indigenous people throughout the colony.

The enslavement of Indigenous people within Massachusetts Bay Colony was abolished in theory after the conclusion of King Philip's War in 1677, but the Colony reserved the right to

continue to assign sentences of servitude and enslavement as punishment for both war-time resistance, and criminal behavior. One such crime was poverty; poor laws of the early eighteenth century both established failure to repay debts as a crime and reserved the right to indenture or enslave people of color as punishment. The criminalization of debt led first to overburdened debtor's prisons, then to a rise in both punitive indentures and punitive enslavement, difficult to distinguish from one another–both in theory and practice–for people of color in the Kittatuck Valley (see Newell 2015 and Hardesty 2019). A punitive indenture was an order to sell one's labor for a predetermined time in order to repay creditors. While punitive indenture theoretically had a finite term of service, those terms were subjectively enforced along racial lines (Hardesty 2019). Once indentured, Indigenous identities were vulnerable to administrative reclassification as "Black" with proof of Native ancestry often required to prevent permanent enslavement (Hardesty 2019, 233).

To make matters worse, tax legislation that followed the poor laws of 1694 effectively classified both servants and slaves as chattel (taxable property), further blurring the lines between the two (MAC Province Laws 1692-3, 28:7). For a woman, this was an especially dangerous situation, as common law dictated that the children of slaves inherited the condition of their mothers (*partus sequitur ventrem*). Essentially, an indentured or enslaved woman would be bound to her creditor for her lifetime and pass the same status down to any children she had (voluntarily or involuntarily) while serving her sentence in captivity.

Land Dispossession

Dispossession of Indigenous lands and Indigenous enslavement are integrally connected, and central to understanding Indigenous persistence in the Kittatuck Valley. Through the eighteenth century, more Indigenous plantations and communities either opted for, or were pushed into, dividing their land into household plots. This, like indenturement, also disrupted Indigenous kinships and made individual households extremely vulnerable to land loss due to debt (see O'Brien 1997). Overtime, this switch to land ownership "in severalty" rather than "in common" broke up larger blocks of territory that could not be dispossessed without the consent of the entire community and created a patchwork of Indigenous landholdings divided by settler ones. The individualization of Indigenous lands occurred at different times for different communities. Some communities never had, or had already lost, plantation status during King Philip's War. This was the case with both the villages of Manchaug and Wacantaug, so there is no record of any Indigenous land ownership either in common or in severalty in those places. At Hassanamesit, individual plots were assigned to prominent families when settlers moved to establish the town of Grafton in 1727/28.

Like the other tactics of dispossession described above, this method of breaking up Indigenous land to make it vulnerable to debt was employed on a national scale in the late nineteenth century under the Dawes Act, also known as the "Allotment Act." Perhaps Dawes, a senator from Massachusetts, took some lessons from local history in the drafting of this legislation over 100 years after the divisioning of Indigenous lands began in Massachusetts. Once operationalized, Teddy Rosevelt lauded it unapologetically as the "great pulverising engine" of Indian Territory (Roosevelt 1901). (5)

Once individualized, Indigenous land holdings were targets for their settler neighbors, who often used coercive means to indebt Indigenous neighbors in the hopes of claiming their property. This was so prevalent, in fact, that the Massachusetts legislature continually tried to place restrictions on the leveling of debt on Indigenous proprietors. They assigned guardians to track Indigenous wealth and oversee their transactions of property, as well as track descendants who were entitled to the dividends of land deals between 1694 and 1748 (MAC 30, 357). Even this measure continually failed to safeguard Indigenous communities from predatory debt. Often the assigned guardians and overseers were the very neighbors that wanted Indigenous lands, and rather than stop the exploitation, they kept most of it out of the legislature's purview. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Indigenous communities throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island continuously petitioned provincial and state legislatures to do something about abuse from their guardians, their neglect, their financial exploitation, their poaching of the land, and many other issues. (6)

Poverty also led to Indigenous indenture and unfreedom in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts (O'Toole 2016, 49-50; Herndon and Sekatu 1997; Silverman 2001). Loss of land forced many Indigenous people into economic precarity, leaving them with few resources to settle debts. One result was Indigenous families frequently were pressured to indenture their children to alleviate household expenses or pay creditors without having to sell land (Herndon and Sekatu 1997, 440). In other cases, town selectmen had the power to unilaterally remove children from their homes and indenture them to the lowest bidder under the doctrine of the poor laws (MAR Province Laws 1692-3, 28:7), often in exchange for a promise of a decent education and/or a good set of clothes on their eighteenth birthday. For many of New England's poor, this seemed like a responsible choice, given that the alternative might land their children at the poorhouse or workhouse, even as children. But indentured Indigenous children, who were expected to earn their keep, were just as vulnerable to abuse in wealthy white households as their descendants were in reform schools and Indian boarding schools. They were similarly separated from their families with the dual intention of exploiting and assimilating them.



Figure 3. By the mid-nineteenth century, every town in the Kittatuck Valley had a poor farm and/or an almshouse. The Worcester Home Farm and Almshouse (above) was located just north of Lake Quinsigamond at the terminus of Plantation Street where it intersects with the Old Boston Post Road. The House of Corrections and the State Lunatic Asylum were constructed in this same region. This is one example of the type of poor farm Indigenous people and other people of color would have found themselves at following dispossession of their land and forced debt leading to poverty. (Image courtesy of Museum of Worcester)

Of importance here is the idea that servitude, enslavement, indenture, and later, institutionalization, are all settler colonial structures that put pressure particularly on the kinship networks of Black and Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley. Not only did these structures enforce a Western hetero-normative family model as the only "legitimate" kind of kinship, but they also strained connections between generations of laborers pressured to indenture their children, send them to the mills, or relinquish them to institutions so they could learn the skills needed to survive in an increasingly capitalist Euroamerican world. These "skills" often focused on personal care work, hard labor, and migratory jobs. For the National Park Service, with its focus on labor reform, this is an important history to keep at the fore when developing interpretations or future projects; telling these stories will be critical, whichever time period is the focus of these projects.

Black, White, and "Other"

Settler rationale, however seemingly benevolent, is based on notions of cultural or biological purity, assuming the inevitability of either cultural "assimilation" or biological "dilution" to render Indigenousness obsolete in the Kittatuck Valley and beyond. Beginning with the first federal census of 1790, categories of enumeration aided in the erasure of Indigenous people and blurring them into the emergent choices of "colored," "mulatto" and "black." For example, the 1790 census collected different levels of detail, depending on the statuses of inhabitants. White males who owned property were named, while other white inhabitants were categorized by age and sex. Everyone else was categorized only by a number, regardless of age or sex, into two columns: "All other free persons" and "slaves."

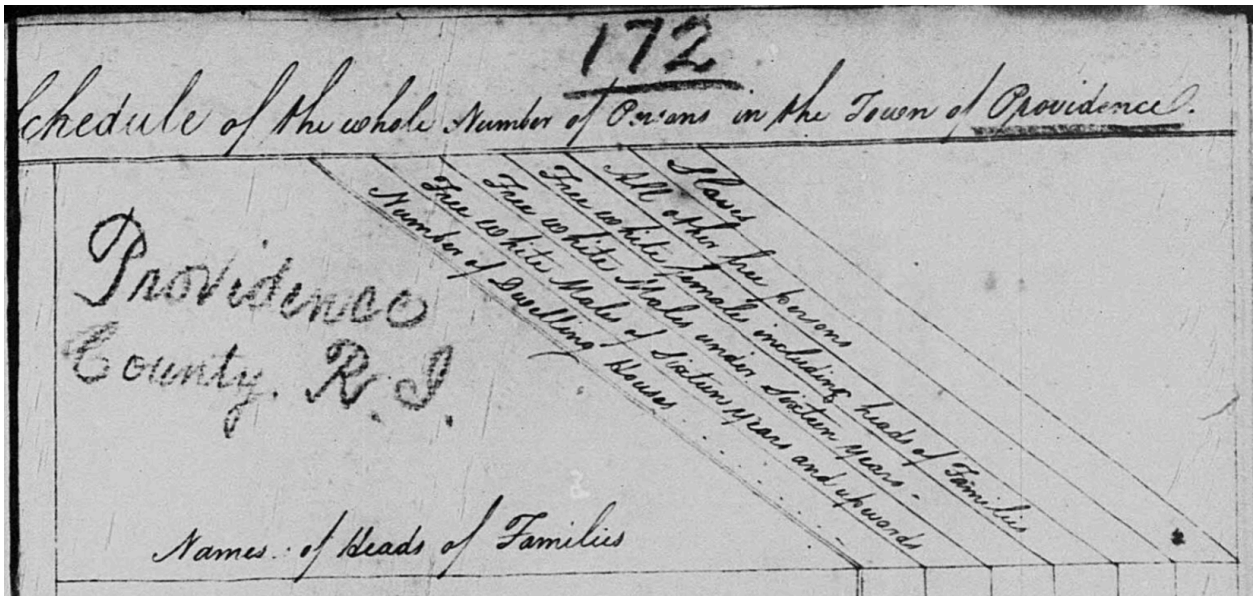
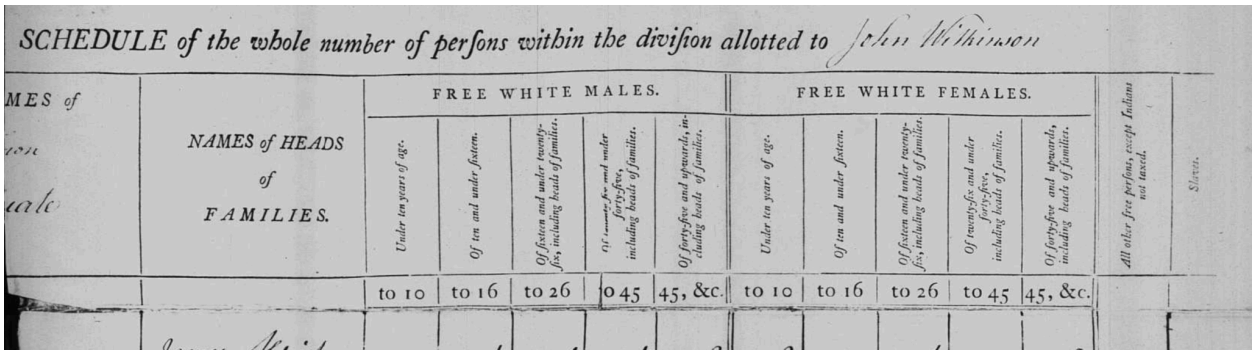


Figure 4: An excerpt of the 1790 Census from Providence, Rhode Island.

The 1800 federal census named only "heads of house" and enumerated white males and white females into five age groups each. Everyone else was included in two columns: "All other free persons, except for Indians not taxed" and "Slaves." So in 1800, at least, census takers were specifically instructed not to collect information on Indigenous inhabitants.

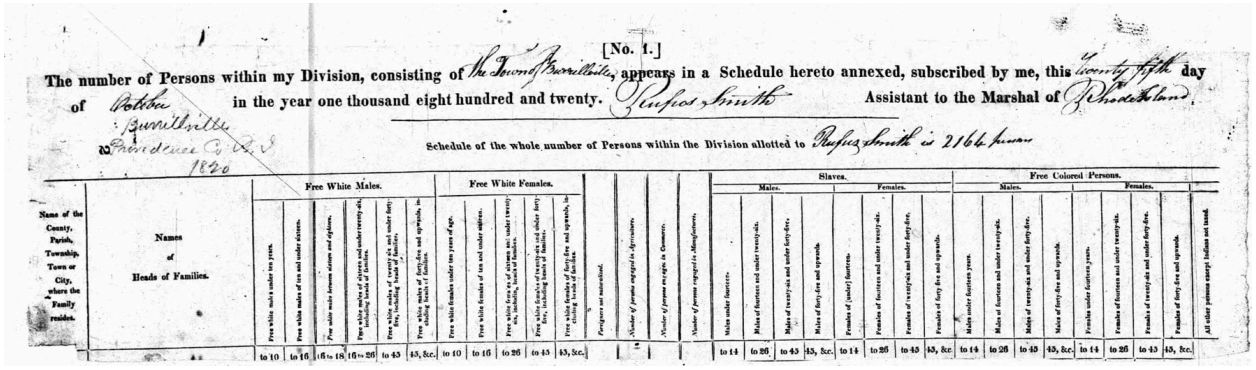


SCHEDULE of the whole number of persons within the division allotted to John Wilkinson

MES of	NAMES of HEADS of FAMILIES.	FREE WHITE MALES.					FREE WHITE FEMALES.					All other free persons, except Indians not taxed.	Slaves.
		Under ten years of age.	Of ten and under fifteen.	Of fifteen and under twenty-six, including heads of families.	Of twenty-six and under forty-five, including heads of families.	Of forty-five and upwards, including heads of families.	Under ten years of age.	Of ten and under fifteen.	Of fifteen and under twenty-six, including heads of families.	Of twenty-six and under forty-five, including heads of families.	Of forty-five and upwards, including heads of families.		
		to 10	to 16	to 26	to 45	45, &c.	to 10	to 16	to 26	to 45	45, &c.		

Figure 5: An excerpt from the 1800 U.S. census.

In 1820, along with some occupational categories in "agriculture," "manufacture" or "commerce," census takers divided "free colored" and "slaves" into categories of male and female, and further divided them into age groups, albeit broader age groups than white inhabitants.



[No. 1.]

The number of Persons within my Division, consisting of the Town of Burrillville, appears in a Schedule hereto annexed, subscribed by me, this twenty fifth day of October in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty. Rufus Smith Assistant to the Marshal of Rhode Island.

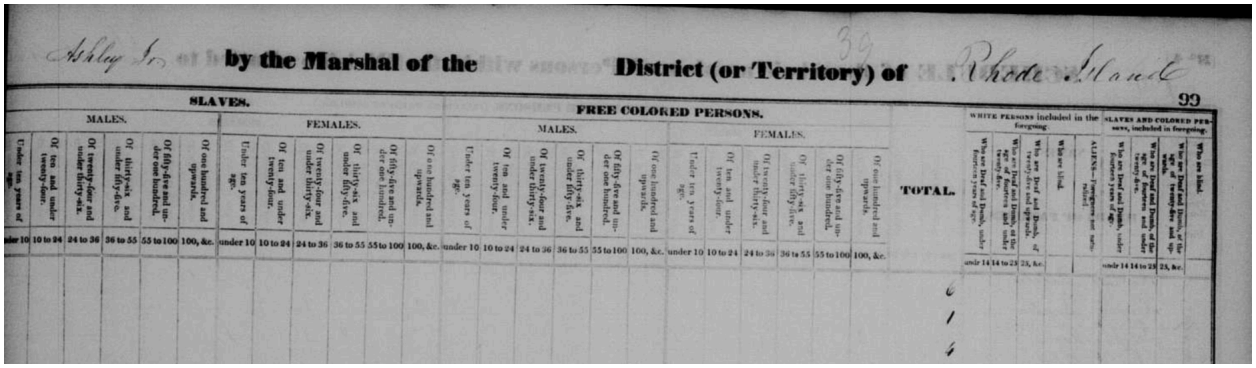
Burrillville Providence Co. R. I. 1820

Schedule of the whole number of Persons within the Division allotted to Rufus Smith is 2166 persons

Name of the County, Parish, Township, Town or City, where the Family resides.	Names of Heads of Families.	Free White Males.						Free White Females.						Foreigners not naturalized.	Number of persons engaged in Agriculture.	Number of persons engaged in Commerce.	Number of persons engaged in Manufactures.	Slaves. Males.			Slaves. Females.			Free Colored Persons. Males.			Free Colored Persons. Females.			All other persons except Indians not taxed.
		Free white males under ten years.	Free white males of ten and under sixteen.	Free white males of sixteen and under eighteen.	Free white males of sixteen and under twenty-six, including heads of families.	Free white males of twenty-six and under forty-five, including heads of families.	Free white males of forty-five and upwards, including heads of families.	Free white females under ten years of age.	Free white females of ten and under sixteen.	Free white females of sixteen and under twenty-six, including heads of families.	Free white females of twenty-six and under forty-five, including heads of families.	Free white females of forty-five and upwards, including heads of families.						Under fourteen.	Of fourteen and under twenty-six.	Of twenty-six and under forty-five.	Of forty-five and upwards.	Under fourteen.	Of fourteen and under twenty-six.	Of twenty-six and under forty-five.	Of forty-five and upwards.	Under fourteen years.	Of fourteen and under twenty-six.	Of twenty-six and under forty-five.	Of forty-five and upwards.	Under fourteen.	Of fourteen and under twenty-six.	Of twenty-six and under forty-five.	Of forty-five and upwards.	
		to 10	to 16	16 to 18	16 to 26	to 45	45, &c.	to 10	to 16	to 26	to 45	45, &c.						to 14	to 26	to 45	45, &c.	to 14	to 26	to 45	45, &c.	to 14	to 26	to 45	45, &c.	to 14	to 26	to 45	45, &c.	

Figure 6: An excerpt from the 1820 U.S. census, Burillville, Rhode Island.

And in 1830 (below), the census further refined white age groups and those of "free colored persons" and "slaves," but the latter group is still more general. They also began to count "Aliens- foreigners not naturalized" and gather disability data for those considered "deaf," "dumb," or "blind," by race and still broader age groups.


by the Marshal of the District (or Territory) of Rhode Island

99

SLAVES. FREE COLORED PERSONS. WHITE PERSONS included in the foregoing. SLAVES AND COLORED PERSONS included in foregoing.

MALES. FEMALES. MALES. FEMALES. TOTAL.

Under ten years of age. | Of ten and under twenty-four. | Of twenty-four and under thirty-six. | Of thirty-six and under fifty-five. | Of fifty-five and upwards one hundred. | Of one hundred and upwards. | Under ten years of age. | Of ten and under twenty-four. | Of twenty-four and under thirty-six. | Of thirty-six and under fifty-five. | Of fifty-five and upwards one hundred. | Of one hundred and upwards. | Under ten years of age. | Of ten and under twenty-four. | Of twenty-four and under thirty-six. | Of thirty-six and under fifty-five. | Of fifty-five and upwards one hundred. | Of one hundred and upwards.

Under 10 | 10 to 24 | 24 to 36 | 36 to 55 | 55 to 100 | 100, &c. | under 10 | 10 to 24 | 24 to 36 | 36 to 55 | 55 to 100 | 100, &c. | under 10 | 10 to 24 | 24 to 36 | 36 to 55 | 55 to 100 | 100, &c.

Who are deaf and dumb, under the age of fourteen years. | Who are deaf and dumb, of the age of fourteen and under twenty-five. | Who are blind. | ALIENS—naturalized. | ALIENS—unnaturalized.

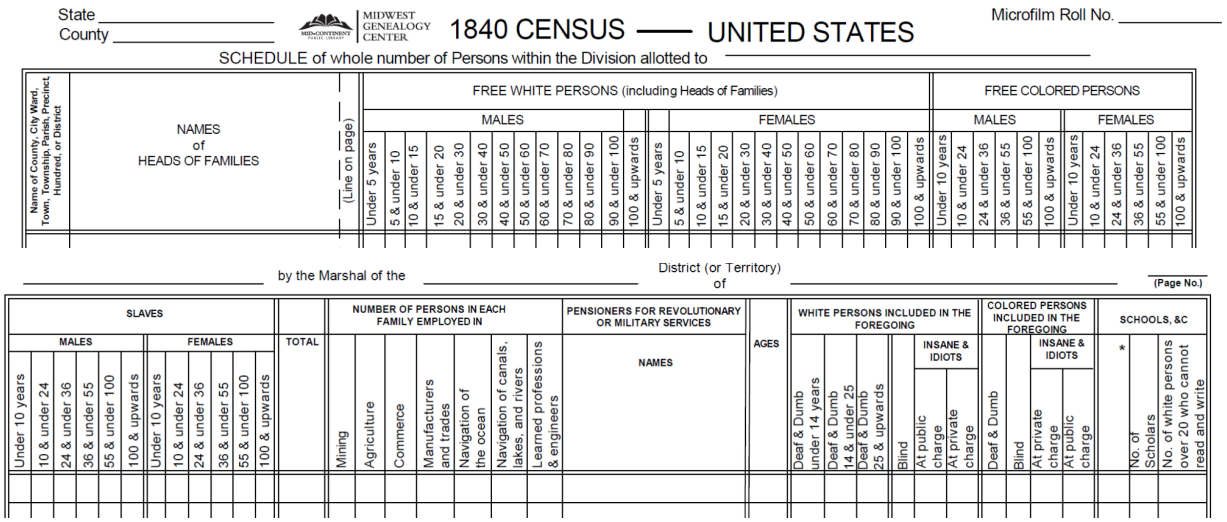
Who are deaf and dumb, under fourteen years of age. | Who are deaf and dumb, of the age of fourteen and under twenty-five. | Who are blind.

under 14 | 14 to 25 | 25, &c. | under 14 | 14 to 25 | 25, &c.

Figure 7: An excerpt from the 1830 U.S. census.

More detailed than previous census records, the 1840 census reported the number of persons in each household who engaged in mining; agriculture; commerce; manufactures and trades; navigation of the ocean; navigation of canals, lakes, and rivers; and learned professions and engineers. Land and tax records kept by county officials would provide deeper levels of detail for these households, especially when the household was engaged in agricultural pursuits. Combined, these records demonstrate that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the specialized labor that has come to define America was clearly well established.

The fluidity and vulnerability of racial categories was most apparent in the late nineteenth century, when census takers were asked to place inhabitants into categories of "white," "mulatto" and "Black." For the next 100 years, these categories were used haphazardly according to some combination of the census taker's judgment and self-identification of those enumerated or interviewed. It is difficult to know how these categories were determined, however, given that the same individuals and families were variably identified as mulatto, Black, and/or Indian in different years, at least some judgmental categorization existed on the part of census takers. Inhabitants may also have been shifting their own identifications within these categories to adjust to the dynamic landscape of racial politics, especially in the late nineteenth century. Oftentimes, the census record shows one category scratched out and replaced with another, as with the case of William Perry (see Fig. 10), assigned the racial category of "Indian" while his wife was "Mu" (for mulatto). The confusion arose from the census taker attempting to extrapolate the racial identities of the three Perry children; "Mu" is crossed out and replaced with "In." The census taker may have chosen the mulatto category for the children based on his or her own ideas about race, only to be corrected by the Perrys, or their supervisors. It is very common to see "Black" or "Mulatto" scratched out or written over with "In" or "Ind" (for "Indian"), and vice versa, from 1850-1950.



State _____
County _____

MIDWEST GENEALOGY CENTER

1840 CENSUS —— UNITED STATES

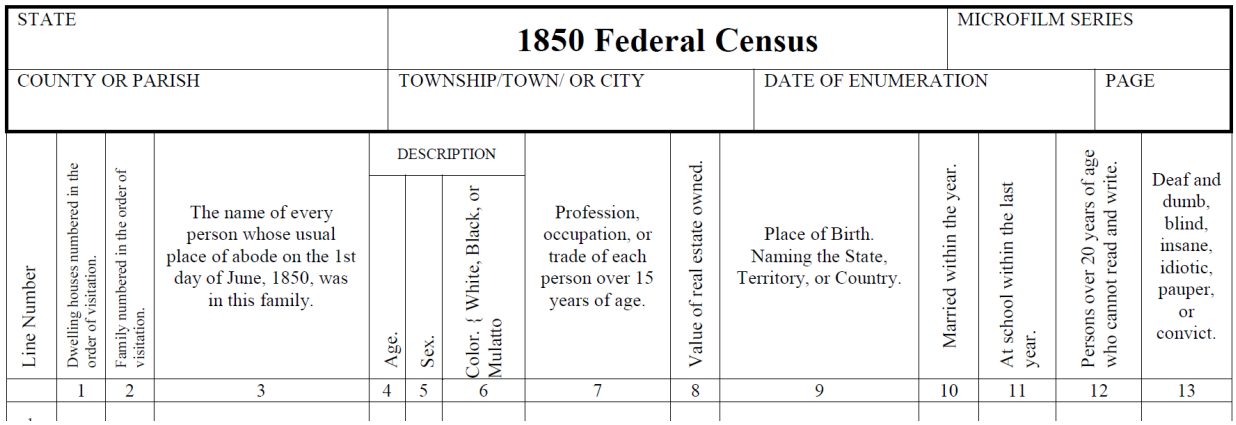
Microfilm Roll No. _____

SCHEDULE of whole number of Persons within the Division allotted to _____

Name of County, City Ward, Town, Township, Parish, Precinct, Hundred, or District	NAMES of HEADS OF FAMILIES	(Line on page)	FREE WHITE PERSONS (including Heads of Families)																		FREE COLORED PERSONS							
			MALES										FEMALES								MALES				FEMALES			
			Under 5 years	5 & under 10	10 & under 15	15 & under 20	20 & under 30	30 & under 40	40 & under 50	50 & under 60	60 & under 70	70 & under 80	80 & under 90	90 & under 100	100 & upwards	Under 5 years	5 & under 10	10 & under 15	15 & under 20	20 & under 30	30 & under 40	40 & under 50	50 & under 60	60 & under 70	70 & under 80	80 & under 90	90 & under 100	100 & upwards	Under 10 years	10 & under 24	24 & under 36	36 & under 55	55 & under 100	100 & upwards	Under 10 years	10 & under 24	24 & under 36	36 & under 55	55 & under 100	100 & upwards

_____ by the Marshal of the _____ District (or Territory) of _____ (Page No.)

SLAVES											TOTAL	NUMBER OF PERSONS IN EACH FAMILY EMPLOYED IN							PENSIONERS FOR REVOLUTIONARY OR MILITARY SERVICES		WHITE PERSONS INCLUDED IN THE FOREGOING						COLORED PERSONS INCLUDED IN THE FOREGOING				SCHOOLS, &C		
MALES						FEMALES																	INSANE & IDIOTS					INSANE & IDIOTS					
Under 10 years	10 & under 24	24 & under 36	36 & under 55	55 & under 100	100 & upwards	Under 10 years	10 & under 24	24 & under 36	36 & under 55	55 & under 100	100 & upwards		Mining	Agriculture	Commerce	Manufacturers and trades	Navigation of the ocean	Navigation of canals, lakes, and rivers	Learned professions & engineers	NAMES	AGES	Deaf & Dumb under 14 years	Deaf & Dumb 14 & under 25	Deaf & Dumb 25 & upwards	Blind	At public charge	At private charge	Deaf & Dumb	Blind	At private charge	At public charge	*	No. of Scholars	No. of white persons over 20 who cannot read and write



STATE	1850 Federal Census	MICROFILM SERIES
COUNTY OR PARISH	TOWNSHIP/TOWN/ OR CITY	DATE OF ENUMERATION / PAGE

Line Number	Dwelling houses numbered in the order of visitation.	Family numbered in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the 1st day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION: Age.	DESCRIPTION: Sex.	DESCRIPTION: Color. { White, Black, or Mulatto	Profession, occupation, or trade of each person over 15 years of age.	Value of real estate owned.	Place of Birth. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	At school within the last year.	Persons over 20 years of age who cannot read and write.	Deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

Figures 8 and 9: Excerpts from the 1840 (top) and 1850 U.S. census records.

Both occurrences illustrate the ways that policies like the established "One Drop Rule" (that "Black" identity could be assigned with any evidence of Black ancestry and meant to maximize enslavable labor) were contradicted and pitted against emerging methods to determine Indigenous blood quantum, which both racialized Indigenous identity and insisted on Indigenous genealogical isolation for the legitimate inheritance of Indigenous identity (and by extension treaty rights). The two rules are logically conflicted, and weighted to both decrease those who count as "Indigenous" and maximize those who count as Black in each successive generation. A survey of any census between 1850 and 1950 in the Kittatuck Valley also provides evidence of

widespread confusion, at least among census takers, in how these racial logics could be translated and coexist in practice.

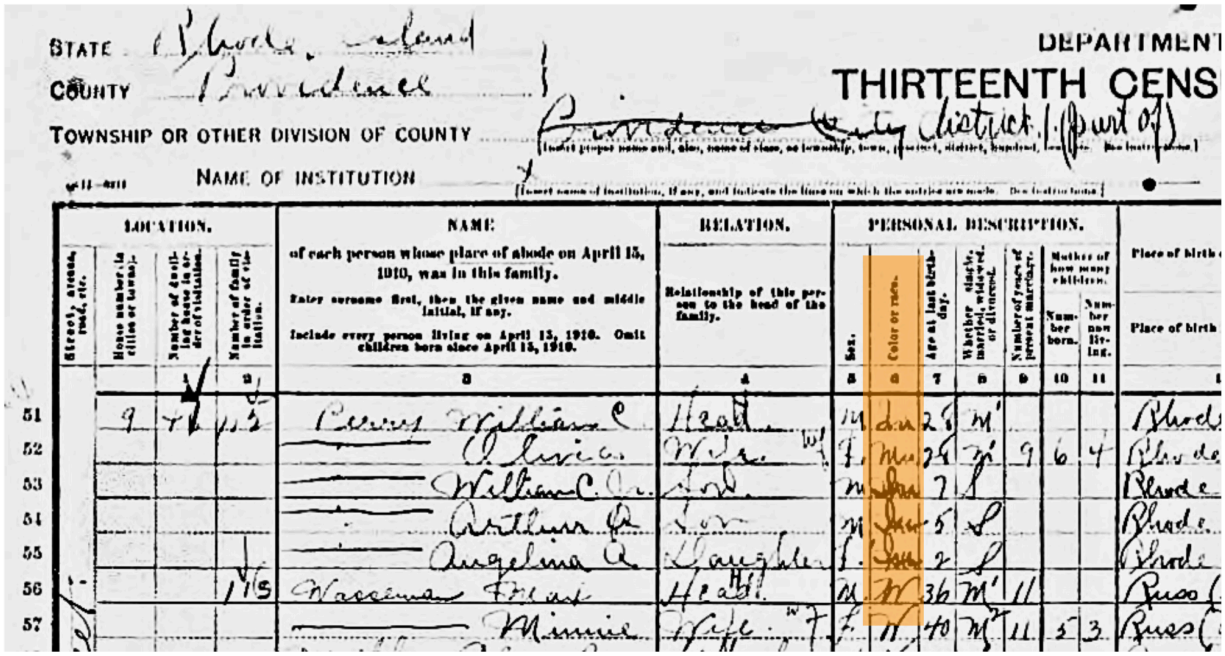


Figure 10: 1910 Federal Census excerpt, Providence, Rhode Island. Note the highlighted column in which the census-taker overwrote "Mu" with "In" for William Perry's family.

Similar ideology about Indian identity and purity in the nineteenth century (and then into the twentieth) surely influenced census takers, just as it did John Milton Earle's enumeration of Indigenous people for his 1861 report. Regarding the Indians he identified, Earle noted that, "Of all these, it is safe to assume that there is not one person of unmixed Indian blood. There are a few who claim it, but their claim does not seem to have any satisfactory basis. When it is considered that the intermixture, both with the whites and the blacks, commenced more than two hundred years ago, and that, in the course of ten or twelve generations, there has been an opportunity, from intermarriages among themselves, for the foreign blood early introduced to permeate the whole mass, and when it is considered, that the intermixture has been constantly kept up, from the outside, also, down to the present time, it would be a marvel indeed, if any Indian of the pure native race remained" (Earle 1861, 9-10).

In 1880, the Rhode Island State Assembly passed “An Act to Abolish the Tribal Authority and Tribal Relations of the Narragansett Tribe of Indians.” As described a century later, when the United States Department of the Interior reversed this decision and granted the Narragansett Indian Tribe federal recognition in 1983, this 1880 act “purported to abolish tribal authority and tribal relations, declared tribal members citizens, ended the state's relationship with the tribe, and…authorized the sale of all land held in common" (United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Recommendation and Summary of Evidence for Proposed Finding for Federal Acknowledgement of the Narragansett Indian Tribe of Rhode Island).* Another precursor to the Dawes (or Allotment) Act, detribalization in Rhode Island likewise depended on the narrative that "there is not a person of pure Indian blood in the tribe,” with colors ranging from “Caucasian to the Black race" (State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations 1880, 6). Rhode Island's detribalization policy was influenced by Reconstruction-era policies in Massachusetts passed between 1849 and 1879 that aimed to enfranchise Indigenous peoples as citizens alongside people of color and sell all tribal land, converting it to private property (Plane and Button 1993, 588). While Massachusetts and Rhode Island wrote and enacted separate policies, their methods of racializing Native people as no longer Native in order to transform them into citizens and destroy their land base were deeply related. These parallels complicate the common notion that Rhode Island acted more benevolently to the Narragansett Indian Tribe during and after the colonial period, while also emphasizing the interconnectedness of the policies felt by intertribal networks in the Kittatuck Valley throughout the nineteenth century.

Such was the categorization, understanding, and misunderstandings of Indigenous peoples of the region as the Industrial Era emerged in southern New England, with its new system of industrial mill villages to support it. For one, this development represented a new mode of engagement with the landscape for the people of the Kittatuck Valley. Once characterized by large farms and agrarian livelihoods, the industrial inhabitance of the valley occupied that space in a different way. For one, it concentrated activity near the river, where the force of the Kittatuck powered the mills, rather than back into the uplands where farms were more spread out. This close proximity to water was not only paramount to industrial productivity, but likely contoured the sights and sounds of industrial centers as waterscapes as much as they were landscapes.

New Landscapes

Industrialization also represented a substantial shift in aggregation. Whereas settler farmers necessarily had to spread out through the countryside to work enough land to survive, industrial workers lived in close quarters, close to the mills and to one another. These tight spaces—defined by both smaller living spaces assigned to each family and by proximity to other families in similarly cramped quarters—must have been an adjustment from familiar farm life. Increasing demand for personal space in an ever more crowded place must have reconfigured how people socialized, interacted, and carved out space for themselves.

Mill villages also reshaped what it meant to belong to a place. Farmers relied upon familial connections to place and a claim to ancestral property to establish an inheritance and a continued livelihood for future generations, but mill workers came from near and far to claim factory jobs. They did not necessarily have established connections to the land and associated towns that farmers needed, but they claimed their belonging through their participation in the institution of the mill. As long as the mill operated in the village, the mill workers had the right to claim belonging there. In this way, urban centers grew and rural villages found a role in the industrial future of the nation. What did this do to the system of "belonging" that tied early forms of responsibility for the poor to land holders? Having no land was no longer synonymous with "belonging nowhere," as mill workers belonged to the mill and its village. Employment in the mills also meant that mill owners controlled the lives of individual workers and of their families, as with the Rhode Island System of Manufacture pioneered by Samuel Slater. This system originated in the late 1700s and involved establishing villages centered around the mills that entire families worked at, thereby connecting family subsistence to the work place.

The mill restructured what social landscapes and landscapes of labor looked like in the Kittatuck Valley in the nineteenth century. For industrialists, the shifting shape of the Kittatuck and its intense manufacturing presence served as evidence of the progressive direction of an emergent nation built on idealism, progress, and a commitment to productivity that could alter the course of rivers and harness the power of water to compete on a world stage. In this narrative, hero industrialists and enterprising inventors brought technology and innovation to the valley, signaling "progress" and transforming it almost overnight from a sleepy farming community to a whirling and churning industrial machine, pumping out goods that satisfied not just local needs, but also global desires in a rapidly globalizing world (National Park Service n.d., "Mill Life").

But in other ways, this narrative of the industrial history of the Kittatuck Valley is a continuation of much older stories. One could focus on the ways that wealth continued to be maintained in some of the most privileged families in southern New England, from land speculation that led to the first vast farmsteads and plantations, to those same families' engagements in the shipping industry that first fueled the fur trade, and then the slave trade. Their establishment of mills and factories in the Kittatuck Valley served to further concentrate and empower the wealth and privilege that already existed, adjusting slightly the methods for exploitation of the lands and bodies of immigrant, Black and Indigenous people developed centuries earlier. (7) The establishment and maintenance of settler colonial power in the seventeenth century was not all that different from its continuance in the nineteenth century. The colonial and provincial logic that justified the extraction of land and labor before the American Revolution continued to underlie local and state Indigenous policies in New England. While entitlement to Indigenous homelands and to exploitable labor may have been renegotiated through a new constitution and

re-oriented toward a new government, it stretched seamlessly over that revolutionary gap in many quotidian ways.

Local Histories, Mascots, Brand Names, and Legends

The other narrative of these developments is the romanticization of a bucolic New England, accomplished alongside this industrial newness. Local historical societies cropped up in each township, eager to preserve memories of a lifestyle in colonial New England that wrapped the romanticism of a new American nation with ideals of hardscrabble practicality, moral righteousness, and political exceptionalism that served as the origin story for industrialization and justified the massive accumulation of wealth (for some) that followed. The American moral tone shifted to connect this foundation with this outcome. During this time, stories of places of legend and lore developed; local antiquarians and town commissions erected historical markers across the southern New England landscape and locations such as Quinsnicket and the Upton beehive achieved new significance.

During the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, local historians conducted research on Indigenous place names and meanings and wrote tomes about this landscape, including a proliferation of town histories. Created from years of poring through pages of primary documents to confirm their understandings of Indigenous peoples past, these local histories presented Indigenous peoples in romanticized visions of noble savages from a bygone era, no longer extant in the modern, industrialized world (O'Brien 2010). In reality, Indigenous peoples of the Kittatuck Valley and surrounding area also adapted to the new landscapes, new opportunities, and modern lifestyles, just as their neighbors did. Following many of the same patterns of mobility that brought them up and down this valley for thousands of years prior to industrialization, they also adapted to industrialization and capitalism through multiple strategies and practices.

While real people with real kin and complicated histories were being classified as no longer "real" Indians—either via the "one drop" rule's power to trump Indian blood quantum parameters or through the assimilative capacities of American whiteness—the concept of "Indianness" in the Kittatuck Valley lived on. It became a historic, legendary, mythical, essentialist, and imaginary "Indianness" used to promote high school sports teams and sell everything from motorcycles to fabric to potato chips. It lured tourists and weekenders to "Nipmuc Lake" and promised wholesome outdoor fun at the "Indian Ranch" in Webster, Massachusetts. In grammar schools, children learned of the fateful story of Hobomoc and the legend of Indian Leap.

These reminders of “Indian” presence in the Kittatuck Valley, much like the extensive local histories from this time period, failed to note the continued presence of Indigenous peoples across the region who lived, worked and traveled continuously alongside their non-Native neighbors. The places they interacted with and the stories documenting their continued presence are the focus of the following chapter, Sites of Significance to Indigenous Peoples of the Kittatuck Region.



Figure 11: Taft’s Pond in Mendon, Massachusetts, was renamed Nipmuc Lake around 1850. It is near “Wigwam Hill” and, consequently, the town’s nineteenth century “Poor Farm.”
(This 1929 image is in the Public Domain:
https://www.cardcow.com/461243/mendon-massachusetts-nipmuc-park-from-waterfront/?srsltid=AfmBOopV_nr1QbJ_XjcFe-P424qDHfTRatUFiU2lt-XMLW2Q-OIiFzuk)

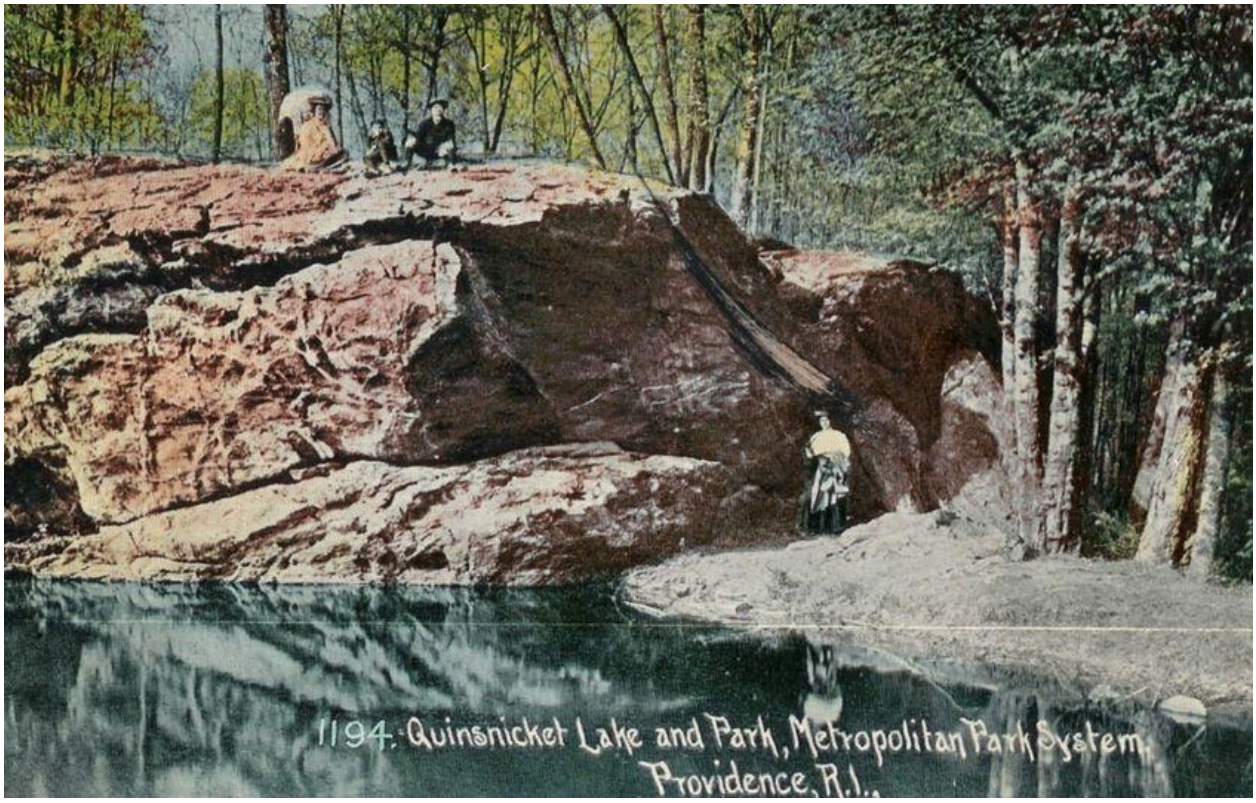


Figure 12: In Providence, Rhode Island, reminders of an Indigenous past persisted through places such as Quinsnicket Lake and Park (now Lincoln Woods State Park in Lincoln, Rhode Island). (Image in the Public Domain: https://www.valleybreeze.com/news/recognizing-lincoln-woods-rhode-islands-first-state-park/article_60692cf8-f07f-11ef-ac75-ebfeb2fe9625.html)

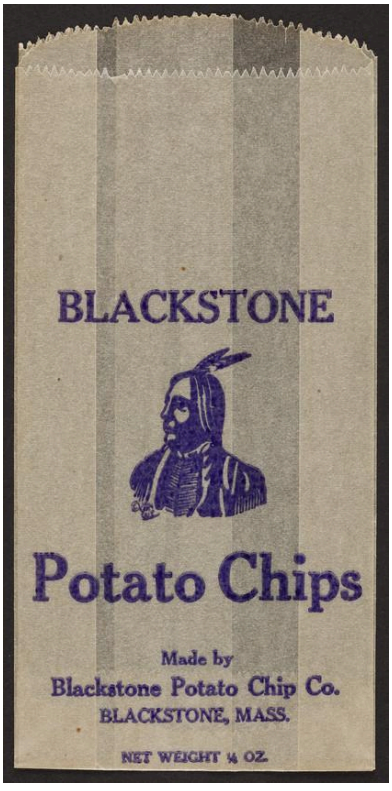


Figure 13: Through the use of a classic "Indian Head" figure, Blackstone Potato Chips provided another everyday reminder that Indigenous peoples were once the original inhabitants of the Kittatuck Valley area.

"Bag for Blackstone Potato Chips, Blackstone Potato Chip Co., Blackstone, Mass., undated." Ephemera.
Courtesy of Historic New England, https://gusn.us/247086 (accessed March 10, 2025).



Figure 13: “Indian Head” cloth was produced in many places, but one of the primary manufacturers was Waucantaug Mills in Wheelockville (Uxbridge, Massachusetts), so named for its proximity to the seventeenth century Nipmuc Village.

(Image by Marjory C. Woodbury [1918] for the Armory, Browne & Co., Boston, Mass., public domain)

Chapter VI

Sites of Significance to Indigenous Peoples of the Kittatuck Region

Given what is known about the racial dimensions of being Indigenous in New England, it is important to celebrate the history of the Indigenous-African American community as a central feature of the larger Indigenous landscape. African American and Indigenous communities faced many challenges together, especially as families were racially mixed and racial essentialisms and phenotypical appearances enabled and constrained access to human rights, jobs, social networks, justice, and geographical places for much of the last 400 years. Noting the places where bonds between the African/African American and Indigenous communities in the Kittatuck Valley were forged is central to this report, as they were forged very early in the colonial experience.

In the Homes of the Elite

Those who worked in homes of the elite as servants and enslaved laborers, as discussed in the previous chapter, were enmeshed in the lifestyles and politics of the most powerful people in New England. Not only does this make their places of residence easier to find, but it signals a landscape of potential, where Indigenous and African/African American people alike worked alongside one another in the largest, richest, and most influential households in the Kittatuck Valley. (1) They had knowledge of—and access to—the workings, trappings, needs, networks, and personalities of elite politicians, merchants, lawyers, industrialists, judges, and doctors, among others. This savvy could help them succeed at their jobs, aiding their employers and enslavers; but they could also employ this knowledge for themselves. Below are some vignettes, of many that could be told, of those who knew the Kittatuck Valley as their homeland in these contexts. These connections date back to the earliest contact between European settlers and Indigenous and African/African American populations. King Philip's War marked a major transition for these connections in the southern New England area (as noted elsewhere in this report) and within the Kittatuck Valley, as well.

<u>Kittatuck Valley 1676: Sarah Robins and the End of King Philip's War</u>

In 1675 Sarah Robins was just a child, maybe six or ten. The outbreak of war in Nipmuc homelands upended her childhood and forever altered the course of her life, as it did for many of her peers. Her story, which is intentionally centered on the experiences of a young Indigenous child in New England's bloodiest war, provides a relatable and empathetic perspective for NPS educators to engage visitors and for future interpretative or research projects.

Sarah Robins likely spent her early childhood in Hassanamesit (present-day Grafton, Massachusetts), which was one of missionary John Eliot's most active "praying villages" at the

time. The village was targeted by the English and Eliot for conversion efforts in 1654, but its leader was Sarah's grandfather, Petavit, alias "Robin." Petavit's sons Sampson and Joseph were raised, at least in part, at Hassanamesit, and their religious education under Eliot's supervision made them influential people in the other Nipmuc communities where Eliot sought influence. Joseph, Sarah's father, was stationed at Chabunagonkamaug (present-day Dudley, Massachusetts) as a teacher before the war. And Samson (her uncle) was a teacher at Wabbaquasett (present-day Woodstock, Connecticut) during that time (Gookin 1792, 49-50; Gookin 1831, 447).

While much suspicion spread of their allegiances in the war, evidence suggests that at least at the beginning of the conflict many Indigenous folks within Eliot's "praying villages" were supportive of the English. This did not mean that they did not accept their kin who were unsupportive, nor that they would continue to support the English as the war dragged on.

At the start of the conflict, Sarah likely went with her mother and others from Hassanamesit and Chabunagongkamaug to Okamakkamsit (modern Marlborough), where they were joined by men, women, and children from the villages of Magunaquog (Hopkinton) and Manchaug (Oxford). There they built a small fort and encampment near the English church and meetinghouse in the center of Marlborough for protection, while enduring increased discrimination and abuse from colonial settlers throughout the summer of 1675 (Gookin 1831, 18).

Sarah's father, Joseph, and her uncle Sampson spent the early months of the war traveling back and forth between Nipmuc camps in the Kittatuck Valley acting as translators and guides, while also working diplomatically between the English and Philip's allies. At the end of July 1675, Joseph and Sampson, along with fellow Hassanamesit resident George Momecho, were enlisted to accompany Captain Wheeler and Captain Hutchinson on an expedition to Brookfield (Gookin 1831, 24). En route, they encountered Philip's troops in a swamp in Quabaug, where seven English men were killed and others wounded. George was taken prisoner and Joseph brought Captain Wheeler, who was wounded, to the garrison in Brookfield, which Joseph helped to defend when it was sieged by Philip's forces that same night. By Gookin's account, Joseph was instrumental in this effort, yet he too felt the pressure of increasing hatred and animosity from a vast majority of settlers who directed their anger at any and all Nipmuc (all "Indians" actually) that summer. He was accused of duplicitous motives and sentenced to be sold into slavery out of the country.

By the end of August that same summer, the public was calling for the disbanding of the praying towns and the internment of all Indians, whom they increasingly mistrusted and judged based not on their allegiances or nationalities, but on their appearance as "Indians" (Gookin 1831). The general court passed the following order August 30th, 1675:

At Council held in Boston:

"The Council judging it of absolute necessity for the security of the English and Indians in amity with us…All those Indians that are desirous to approve themselves faithful to the English be confined to the several places underwritten, until the council shall take further order, and that they so order:

- *the sitting of their wigwams that they may stand compact in one place, of their plantations, respecting where it may be best for their own provision and defense;*
- *and that none of them do presume to travel above one mile from the center of such of their dwellings unless in company of some English or in their service, excepting for the gathering in their corn with one Englishman in company, on peril of being taken as our enemies, or their abettors (in most of the villages, these posts were never assigned, making even corn harvesting dangerous).*
- *And in case any of them be taken without the limits aforesaid except as above said, and do lose their lives or be otherwise damnified by English or Indians, the council do hereby declare that they shall account themselves wholly innocent, and their blood, or other damage by them sustained, will be upon their own heads.*
- *It shall not be lawful for any Indians that are now in amity with us to entertain any strange Indians, or to receive any of our enemies' plunder. Lest shall from time to time make discovery thereof to some English that shall be appointed for that end to sojourn with then on penalty of being accounted our enemies, and to proceed against as such.*

Also whereas it is the manner of the heathen that are now in hostility with us, contrary to the practice of civil nations, to execute their bloody indolences by stealth, and skulking in small parties declining all open decision of the controversy, either by treaty or by the sword, the Council do therefore order that after the publication of the provisions aforesaid:

- *It shall be lawful for any person, whether English or Indian, that shall find any Indian travelling in any of our towns or woods, contrary to the limits abovenamed, to command them under their guard and examination, or to kill and destroy them as they best may or can. The council hereby declares that it will be most acceptable to them, that none be killed or wounded, that are willing to surrender themselves into our custody.*
- *The places of the Indians' residence are Natick, Punkapoag, Nashobah, Wamesit, and Hassanamesit. And if there are any that belong to other places they are to repair to some one of these.*

By the Council
Edward Rawson, Secretary
(Gookin 1831, 27)

That same day (August 30) before this order could possibly have been followed or even read at Okamakamsit, Captain Mosely and his troops marched into the camp where Sarah, her mother, and many other Nipmuc men, women, and children were staying (Gookin 1831:39). They chained 15 men by the neck and marched them to Boston on suspicion of murdering seven English men in Lancaster the week before. They spent at least a month in jail in Boston, the

subject of much public animosity and prejudice, before they were acquitted of that crime and sent to Noddles' Island nonetheless. At this time, Sarah may have been relocated to one of the other praying towns in accordance with the court order, but we don't have records to confirm exactly where they went.

By October 26th, Captain Thomas Prentice was ordered to fetch the "Praying Indians" at Natick and take them to Samuel Shrimpton's land on Deer Island in Boston Harbor. He brought 200 people from Natick to a place called "The Pines" along the Charles River, loaded them into boats, and delivered them to the island (Gookin 1831:57). Over the late fall and early winter of 1675, populist animosity and discrimination against Indigenous people swelled. Through a series of council and court orders, the Kittatuck Valley and all of eastern Massachusetts were under order to clear all "friend Indians" and remand them to Deer Island (Whitmore 1890, 238). Shrimpton, a prominent slave trader, had offered the council to host the internment of some of the captives on his land, no doubt because of the potential to eventually sell the captives into slavery abroad. He stipulated that no trees were to be felled, and none of the sheep, which he grazed there, were to be harmed (Gookin 1831, 57). Joseph, his wife, and his children were likely reunited on Deer Island that winter, where they passed a miserable season of starvation and disease. When Gookin visited that February, his report was thus: "they lived chiefly upon clams and shellfish that they digged out of the sand at low water; the island was bleak and cold, their wigwams poor and mean, their clothes few and thin" (Gookin 1831, 74). The island was always guarded to ensure that no one could leave without permission, but guards increased when it became clear that settlers were shooting at the internees from boats and kidnapping them off the island to sell them into slavery.

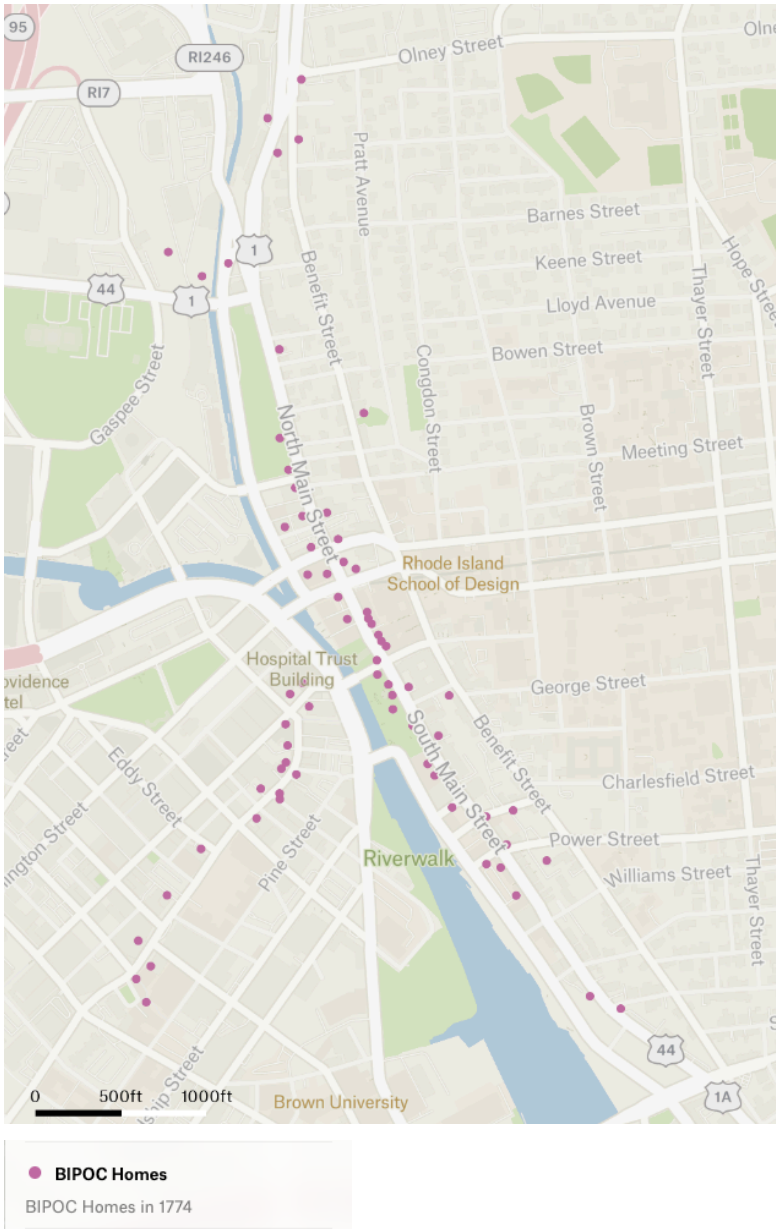
In March, Sarah, her parents and her sibling were all sold into slavery and loaded on ships for Caribbean plantations (Gookin 1831, 26). The voyage had already begun when John Eliot called the ship back to port to redeem Joseph, who was sentenced to perpetual servitude on the mainland. His children and wife, however, continued on to Jamaica and were only later returned to Massachusetts, where they were sent to Concord for Sarah's mother to teach school to Indigenous children held captive there.

This is just one example of the many violent moments that defined the pivotal King Philip's War (also discussed in the context of the Kittatuck Valley in Chapter V) that also resulted in continued violence against Indigenous peoples across the region in the centuries to follow. After the war, Sarah's mother brought her out of hiding and traveled with other Nipmuc families to Providence, Rhode Island, where the sentencing for Indigenous prisoners of war was more lenient (Bodge 1891, 24). She turned herself and her children over to the English, who divided prisoners of war among landholders in the town to be indentured captives, just as they had done during the Pequot War of the 1630s.

For many scholars, King Philip's War marked a point of no return for the Indigenous peoples of southern New England, where Native communities lost most of the political power they possessed earlier in the seventeenth century. And indeed, the surrender of a once powerful family (Petavit's) marked a terrible loss for the Nipmuc community, but Sarah's family surrendered themselves into indentured servitude because they had little choice. If they had been caught, or had surrendered in Massachusetts, they faced slavery in the Caribbean or even North Africa; given these options, they made the choice that best secured their future in these difficult circumstances.

Sarah Robins' servitude was granted to Captain John Whipple, essentially as a spoil of war. Whipple's house and tavern stood on North Main Street in Providence, adjacent to the city's commercial wharf. Sarah, like many other young Nipmuc captives in post-King Philip's War southern New England, likely grew up washing dishes, cleaning, laundering, and working in Whipple's tavern. She served councilmen and selectmen, aldermen, and merchants in one of the oldest establishments in Providence. While male-centered colonial histories tend to ignore the role that non-elite people (especially women of color) played in the histories of these places, Sarah's presence here was an important part of a broader and more inclusive Indigenous history and an important place in the study of historic Nipmuc landscapes. This is a place of Nipmuc heritage, and just as important as the land at Hassanamesit to which Sarah Robins eventually returned (at 60) to occupy her own land allotted by the colony by right of her grandfather. In fact, even when Sarah returned to occupy her birthplace, she continued to maintain ties to Providence, where she not only labored, but helped to build a community for indentured Indigenous captives such as herself. She met her husband and had a daughter there, also named Sarah.

Over the next 100 years, African American and Indigenous people of color (or BIPOC) continued to have a presence in Providence and the Kittatuck Valley in general. While many examples exist, this report includes only some, given the restrictions of length. Of the many households located on North Main Street in Providence (see Map 8), one household provides an example.



Map 8: Map of 1774 Black/Indigenous Providence. Each dot on the map represents the homeplace of at least one African/African American or Indigenous person. These individuals were claimed for tax purposes in the Rhode Island State Census of 1774, which distinguished between "White," "Indian" and "Black" inhabitants of each household. A small number of households were led by Indigenous or Black individuals (listed below), but most people were only enumerated and remain unnamed, for now. (Map by author Heather Law Pezzarossi)

North Main Street, Providence: 1774

One hundred years after Providence was almost entirely burned in King Philip's War, it had been rebuilt and was humming with urban energy. Sarah Robins and her daughter Sarah Muckamaug had long since returned to Hassanamesit, but some of Sarah Muckamaug's descendants remained in service in Providence. Her daughters Rhoda and Abigail lived and worked in Richard Brown's home alongside other African and Indigenous servants. The Whipples (discussed above) and many other prominent families (including the Browns, Olneys, Allens, Powers and Tillinghasts) made fortunes as Atlantic merchants in the eighteenth century importing goods and enslaved Africans into Providence for sale throughout New England. Most of their stately houses in the center of the city were not only the homes of prominent politicians, land speculators, budding industrialists, merchant traders, and heroes of the American Revolution, but were also the homeplaces of many Indigenous servants and/or enslaved Africans, whose exploited labor allowed these prominent members of Providence continued success and the accumulation of wealth.

The 1774 Rhode Island census, cross-referenced with a 1770 property and occupancy map, reveals the contours of late eighteenth century African and Indigenous Providence as it overlapped with these elite households. Unlike later censuses that often discouraged counting "Indians" altogether (as noted in Chapter V), the 1774 Rhode Island census enumerated both "Indians" and "Blacks" within each property owner's household. Of course, these data do not provide a very accurate count or description of coerced and enslaved laborers for a few reasons. First, property holders paid taxes for each servant and enslaved person counted in their household, making an undercount highly likely. Second, by 1774 Africans and Indigenous people had co-existed in Providence for over 100 years. Generations of Afro-Indigenous families occupied the city before the start of American nationhood, making the 1774 census' simple division between "Negro" and "Indian" a false screen that conceals an already integrated urban community of African, Nipmuc, Narragansett, and Wampanoag kin. These data can be used, however, to approximate a social landscape that was likely even more populated than the records reveal.

Unnamed Indigenous servants and laborers, either enslaved or indentured, resided on the properties and in the homes of John Brown (son of Elijah), Richard Olney, William Smith, Zachariah Allen, William Thurber, William Livingston, Caleb Green, Jacob Whitman, Elijah Bacon, and Christopher Olney, to name a few. The list of the elite members of Providence society reveals a strong connection to the names of African American and Indigenous families that have persisted in the Kittatuck Valley and beyond: Brown, Allen, Mawny, Smith, Arnold, Jackson, Hopkins, Whipple, Coates, and Corliss (aka Curliss or Curless), among others. Richard Olney owned "The Crown" Tavern, where one unnamed Indigenous person was listed as residing. The tavern sat in the center of the wharf, surrounded by the households of the Browns, Whipples and other high-powered families who had African American and Indigenous servants in residence as well. As well, the tavern served as an occasional meeting place for the town

council of Providence and put African American and Indigenous servants and enslaved people–albeit under oppressive conditions–at the very center of the lives of Atlantic merchants,

BIPOC-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS, PROVIDENCE 1774			
Surname	Given Name	Unnamed Members of the Household	Assigned racial category *(please note that we replaced "Negro" with "BIPOC" given the oversimplification the Black/Indian dichotomy enables)*
ALLEN	PATIENCE	6	IN
BARTON	PERO	4	IN
BETTIS	JOHN	4	IN
BROWN	ADAM	4	BIPOC
CARR	ABIGAIL	2	BIPOC
CAESAR	ANNE	4	BIPOC
CAESAR	WILLIAM	3	IN
CUSHING	PRINCE	2	BIPOC
GARDENER	MARGARET	1	BIPOC
HACKER	ANDREW	3	IN
HARRIS	JACOB	2	BIPOC
KINNICUT	ANTHONY	5	BIPOC
MITCHELL	PATIENCE	1	BIPOC
NAVY	GREENWICH	6	BIPOC
PETER	BLUE	6	BIPOC
RHODES	PETER	4	IN
SHOEMAKER		6	BIPOC
SISCO	EBENEZER	1	BIPOC
SOLOMON	RACHEL	4	IN
WALMSLEY		4	IN

YOUNG	GIDEON	0	IN

TABLE 1: In 1774 at least 20 individuals were identified as Indian and/or Black (some with several other family members residing in the same household) across Providence. A number of these surnames are still connected to families in the twenty-first century, most notably Brown, Harris, Mitchell, Sisco (aka Cisco/e), Solomon, and Young. (Table by author Heather Law Pezzarossi).

influential politicians, titans of industry, and other extractive capitalists who controlled the region by controlling its resources, namely the land and water, as well as labor and goods that could be extracted from it.

The African American and Indigenous peoples who worked for these powerful families were both knowledgeable of, and also intimately part of, family politics, dynamics, and businesses.

Care Work and Kinship

While recognizing the centrality of African American and Indigenous lives in the already celebrated history of powerful white families along the Kittatuck, it is also important to stress the toll that lifestyles of enslavement, indenture, service, and "working out" caused on Indigenous families and Indigenous kinship. As discussed in Chapter V, families who needed money were often separated by necessity, with children working and growing up in other households or even institutions while parents were indentured in other homes at the discretion of town selectmen. Even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African American and Indigenous women had little choice but to take jobs that required time and care of other people's children and elders for very little pay, and they were especially vulnerable to abuse in white households. Yet white heteronormative models of "family" were unforgiving on unwed mothers, who were blamed for their lack of discretion and promiscuity and their children called "illegitimate." These conditions took their toll on Indigenous kinships, impacting Kittatuck families for generations (Hartman 2019).

<u>The Mendon/Uxbridge Border 1850-1880</u>

One such story is that of Maria Wilbur and her family. Maria lived in Mendon most of her life. Her mother Martha Vickers Wilbur brought her there in the 1840s from Canterbury, Connecticut, after her father (Jonathan Wilbur) died. In 1850 at age 13, Maria lived with her mother and younger brothers James and David and shared their house with the Leshures: Samuel and Martha, and their young children, Martha (4), George (2), and Charles (infant). The census taker identified all of them as "Mulatto" in 1850. In 1855 Maria was 17, still living with her mother

and siblings, Charles, George, Martha, James, Jane and David on the Road to Uxbridge, on the west side of town near the WH Comstock Boot Factory. Now recorded as “Indian,” they shared their home with nine-year-old Martha L. Leshure, Rufus Hazard (Maria’s brother-in-law), Louisa Wilbur (her sister), and Philetas and baby Jane N. Wilbur. This was a complicated and blended household, one that the 1855 census was not equipped to accurately describe. Yet cramped living quarters and overstuffed factory housing was the norm for working class families in the valley. Both the dynamic composition of this household and its broad genealogical reach reveal some potential here to engage the public in a discussion of inclusive kinship structures that first, challenged single nuclear family heteronormative household ideals espoused by reformers like local Valley Falls, Rhode Island, resident Elizabeth Buffum Chace, and second, provided mill families with unique experiences of family and community that both shaped and were shaped by industrial conditions and established Indigenous kinship practices.



Figure 15: Dr. George Metcalf, who employed Maria Wilbur in his home to nurse his wife, dying of cancer. He wrote The Annals of Mendon in 1887.

(Image courtesy of Mendon Historical Society)

By 1865, Maria (now 27) still lived in her mother’s household with her brothers, David and James, and 10-year-old Jane Wilbur, but now her occupation was listed as “Domestic.” She became a “housekeeper” on Moses Aldrich's farm, where she later relocated with 16-year-old

Jennie (Jane?) Wilbur, who worked at the local straw hat factory. By 1880 Maria was a live-in nurse with physician Dr. Metcalf, caring for his wife Abigail, who had cancer, while he penned "The Annals of Mendon." Jennie was married in 1875 to bootmaker George P. Tucker, yet their marriage record does not state who Jennie's parents are. While she always lived with Maria throughout her childhood (even while a housekeeper at Moses Aldrich's), her parentage was either not recognized or intentionally concealed. Maria never married. When she died an informant listed only as "Daughter" gave the undertaker the specifics of Maria's life as a nurse. Was this informant Jennie? Was Jennie the same person as one-year-old Jane, born when Maria was 16? The census does not answer any of these questions, but it leaves us wondering about the pressures of being an unmarried Indigenous woman doing "care work" for white men in an era when the sexualities of BIPOC women were pathologized.

Mobility and Transportation

In addition to the many stories of place and Indigenous presence across the Kittatuck Valley, life along the river was often defined by consistent movement and mobility by Indigenous peoples since before settler colonialism to the present. Nipmuc, Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples of southern New England traveled well-known routes over the centuries to visit kin, practice seasonal harvesting and hunting, and for economic/occupational reasons. Below are a few brief vignettes that highlight people and places facilitating Indigenous mobility in the Kittatuck. They illustrate that practices of mobility continued to shape the occupation of Kittatuck homelands and the unique ways that Kittatuck people persisted in this practice despite the pressures brought by the imposition of private property and the intentional dispossession of Indigenous lands.

<u>Louisquisset, Loquassuck</u>

In Lincoln somewhere between the villages of Albion and Manville, the place associated with these Indigenous words can be translated as "place of meeting," in this case a place where the Kittatuck flows and where Nipmuc and Narragansett homelands and peoples have met over time, northwest of lands controlled by Wampanoag sachem Massasoit (or Ousamequin).This place was mapped on the Rider (1904) map and the name was adopted—then adapted—by settlers when the transportation of lime and limestone from Limerock to Providence became lucrative and integral to the booming construction in the city. This motivation prompted the beginnings of what is now the Louisquisset Turnpike (Fitzsimons 2009).

<u>Eleazor Arnold Tavern</u>

Eleazor Arnold's Tavern was located on the Great Road. In his will, dated to 1722/3, he noted a cot and a small back room where Indians would spend the night, providing additional support that the Great Road was an important route at that time, connecting Indigenous peoples and settlers alike. Beyond that, this notation in an important legal document of a prominent white

man (another rare occurrence) signifies the connections that existed between Native people and these important locations (and their owners) along their well-traveled routes. Trust would have been crucial between Eleazor Arnold and his family and the Indigenous peoples who lodged here while en route, just as it was between Sarah Muckamaug and the Wilkinson family (see below). This example also points to new research that might be carried out to explore solidarities between tavern keepers and those who needed to move safely through the valley.

Israel Wilkinson Farmstead, Lincoln, Rhode Island (then Smithfield), 1740

The Great Road followed the Shawomet Path, an important Indigenous thoroughfare used for countless generations that traced the banks of the Kittatuck and linked the Nipmuc, Narragansett, and other Indigenous communities long before it served European settlers. Mary and Israel Wilkinson lived on the River Road, off of the Great Road, and harbored Sarah Muckamaug in the 1740s. Mary was a relative of Oziel Wilkinson, who established the Wilkinson Mill in 1810 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, noted for being the first mill in Rhode Island with a backup steam power source (a steam engine built by David Wilkinson). The Wilkinson Mill is now part of the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark and serves as the administrative headquarters of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.

Sarah Muckamaug, a Nipmuc from Hassanamesit (and noted earlier in this report), grew up in Providence in the Whipple household, just as her mother had. Like her parents and grandparents before her, she traveled the Great Road from Providence to Hassanamesit and back again, moving between her life in service to the urban Providence elite and her life as a Hassanamisco Nipmuc woman with family responsibilities and ancestral land to care for at Hassanamesit. In 1740 she embarked on one of her journeys home from Providence to Hassanamesit with her infant son Joseph at her back. On this occasion, her mom's failing health had called her north towards home, where her mother was waiting for help and the family land required attention. With little choice, she indentured her two older children to Richard Brown on the "Grotto Farm" and carried her baby Joseph with her on her journey north, tracing the contours of the Kittatuck.

Thanks to a detailed investigation into the legitimacy of Sarah Muckamaug's marriage to Aaron Whipple some 25 years later, colonial records contain several in-depth accounts of Sarah Muckamaug's actions during this time. About a day into her journey she stopped at the home of Mary Wilkinson, who later testified that Sarah had asked to build a "hut" where she resided "for some time" on the Wilkinson farm. Little is known about what this "hut" may have looked like, yet its existence is crucial to a discussion of historic Indigenous landscapes. It points to the continuation of an important tradition of mobility within the Nipmuc community of the mid-eighteenth century, a kind of semi-permanent practice of dwelling that—on land owned by a third party—would rarely have resulted in any official documentation and likely left little trace. The documentation surrounding this case is rare and suggests that many other undocumented examples exist of this type of movement throughout the valley, as well.

As for the temporary home that Sarah built, these are the kinds of places—whether called homes, shelters, or just stopping-over places—that made the continued practice of the Nipmuc and Narragansett landscapes possible in the colonial period. They refuse the settler landscape of private property and enable continued practices of dwelling that do not assume permanence or sedentism. The temporal orientations of sites such as these could be thought of as facilitating safe passages from one place to another; they are a testament to the road already taken, but just as much an affirmation of a journey yet to come.

Coverdale Stand, Mendon (present day Blackstone, Massachusetts)

When Joseph Aaron's mother died (see the story of Sarah Muckamaug) he was only 11. The year following her death, Joseph's stepfather (Fortune Burnee) sent Joseph to serve as an apprentice at David Daniels' farm in Mendon, Massachusetts. Life on the Daniels farm was not an isolated rural existence. Joseph was likely involved in Daniels' enterprise as a caretaker of stagecoach horses associated with an important tavern and stopover point on the Mendon Road called "Coverdale Stand." The stand was located not far from the Daniels farm and stood at the halfway point between Providence and Worcester (see Figure 16). Archival records indicate that during his time at the Daniels farm, Joseph Aaron maintained active social ties in Grafton and in Providence, just as his ancestors had. For example, his presence is recorded in Grafton in 1763 at the age of about 22, when Timothy Paine paid him and his sister six shillings through the Grafton General Store. Yet in 1768, the midwife who delivered Joseph in Providence in 1740 remembered him having spent much of his life in Providence. Given his recorded activity in both locations, Joseph likely used his association with the Coverdale Stand to travel relatively freely throughout the Kittatuck Valley when he could, maintaining connections with both his father and siblings in Providence and his sister and step-father in Grafton.



Figure 16: "Old Coverdale Stand" c. 1905-1915. Theodore Clemens Wohlbruck, photographer. (Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society, accessed on June 30, 2025 at https://gigi.mwa.org/imagearchive/fileName/489839_0005a.tif)

The Toney Farm in Upton, Massachusetts, 1750-1799

Caesar Toney was a free African man who purchased land from John Hazelton (one of the colonial "founders" of Upton) in 1745 (Toney Holley 2021). Caesar's farm was located on North Street, just on the other side of George Hill from Hassanamesit. In the late 1700s one of Caesar's sons, Abraham, married Narragansett Mary Harry and their daughter Susannah Toney was born on the family farm. This farm of over 100 acres must have been well known in the BIPOC community at the time, as it likely provided a needed place of refuge, especially for Indigenous families who were experiencing rapid land dispossession in the second half of the eighteenth century. (2)

The Toney farm is a physical example of the persistence that Indigenous and other people of color had to remain in their homelands along the Kittatuck, despite this dispossession and forced relocation to increasingly urbanized and/or industrialized locations. Nipmuc and Narragansett people, for example, made bold statements by holding on to land at places like Hassanamesit and Upton, and further south in Rhode Island, while also maintaining a continuous presence in developing urban centers such as Providence, Worcester and mill towns in between. In addition to providing a place of refuge for people of color traversing the Kittatuck Valley, the Toney farm also stood as a permanent reminder that African American and Indigenous neighbors were more than servants and caretakers; they, too, helped to shape the landscape, cultures, and composition of the neighborhoods, mill towns and cities of southern New England.

Teamsters in the Kittatuck

Many Indigenous men of the region also took jobs as teamsters hauling lime, coal, wood, stone, brick and other extracted resources from local mines to industrial centers, which was dangerous and taxing work that often required a somewhat migratory existence. African American and Indigenous teamsters hauled crucial products up and down the Kittatuck Valley in the nineteenth century, making their home base Providence or Worcester but likely spending a majority of their days traveling the turnpikes and roads up and down the valley. Men with surnames of Congdon, Corliss, Thomas, and Hazzard (among others)—intermittently identified in federal and state censuses as African American, Mulatto or Indian at different times—were teamsters out of Providence as early as the census bothered to trace African American and Indigenous occupations (in 1850). But they were likely well acquainted with this profession by that time; eighteenth-century records indicate that taverns and stagecoach stops were important locations for people on the road and were frequented by Indigenous teamsters and travelers of all sorts who needed a bite to eat or a place to stay.

Teaming, like most other mobile professions, required not only a thorough knowledge of the roads crisscrossing the valley, but also required many acquaintances who provided food and

shelter, as well as services, along the way. A sense of the networks of friends, stable hands, tavern keepers, waiters, porters, wheelwrights, and harness makers that surrounded teamsters and supported their work can be developed from this context.



Figure 17: Drayman on a Horse-drawn Wagon, about 1910, from *Rediscovering an American Community of Color: The Photographs of William Bullard, 1897 – 1917.*

(Burns and Greenwood)

Closely connected to teamster work were professions such as horse tack makers. For example, the Brickards were well situated as harness makers and located on the Rhode Island/Massachusetts border town of Blackstone. The family was listed as mulatto in the 1855 Massachusetts state census, which (as noted elsewhere) is a term that very often indicated Indigenous and African/African American ancestry. Originally from Maryland, this family was linked to the extensive family of Mary Curliss Vickers through Eliana Brickard's marriage to Mary's son Chandler Vickers. The Vickers family connects Nipmuc and Narragansett people of today, with a large number of present-day Nipmuc tribal members descended from this line.

Specialty skills

Just as Indigenous movement through the valley remained of utmost importance, so did Indigenous knowledges, passed from generation to generation. Many Indigenous people in the Kittatuck region made their living using specialty skills acquired from ancestral knowledges (both ancient and more recent). Sometimes these skills were passed down with little changes, and other times new generations interpreted these techniques for a new era. Modern domestic work that many Native women engaged in was a new kind of labor, while other work (such as stonework) was more an adaptation of older forms of specialized labor known for millenia.



Figure 18: Portrait of James J. and Jennie Bradley Johnson Family (1900). James J. Johnson (Nipmuc, Narragansett, and African American descent), and Jennie Bradley Johnson, a migrant from Charleston, South Carolina, pose with their daughters Jennie and May. James worked as a coachman and belonged to the King David Masonic Lodge. He died soon after this portrait was taken and Jennie later worked as a laundress. From *Rediscovering an American Community of Color: The Photographs of William Bullard, 1897 – 1917* (Burns and Greenwood)

Stoneworkers and Movers

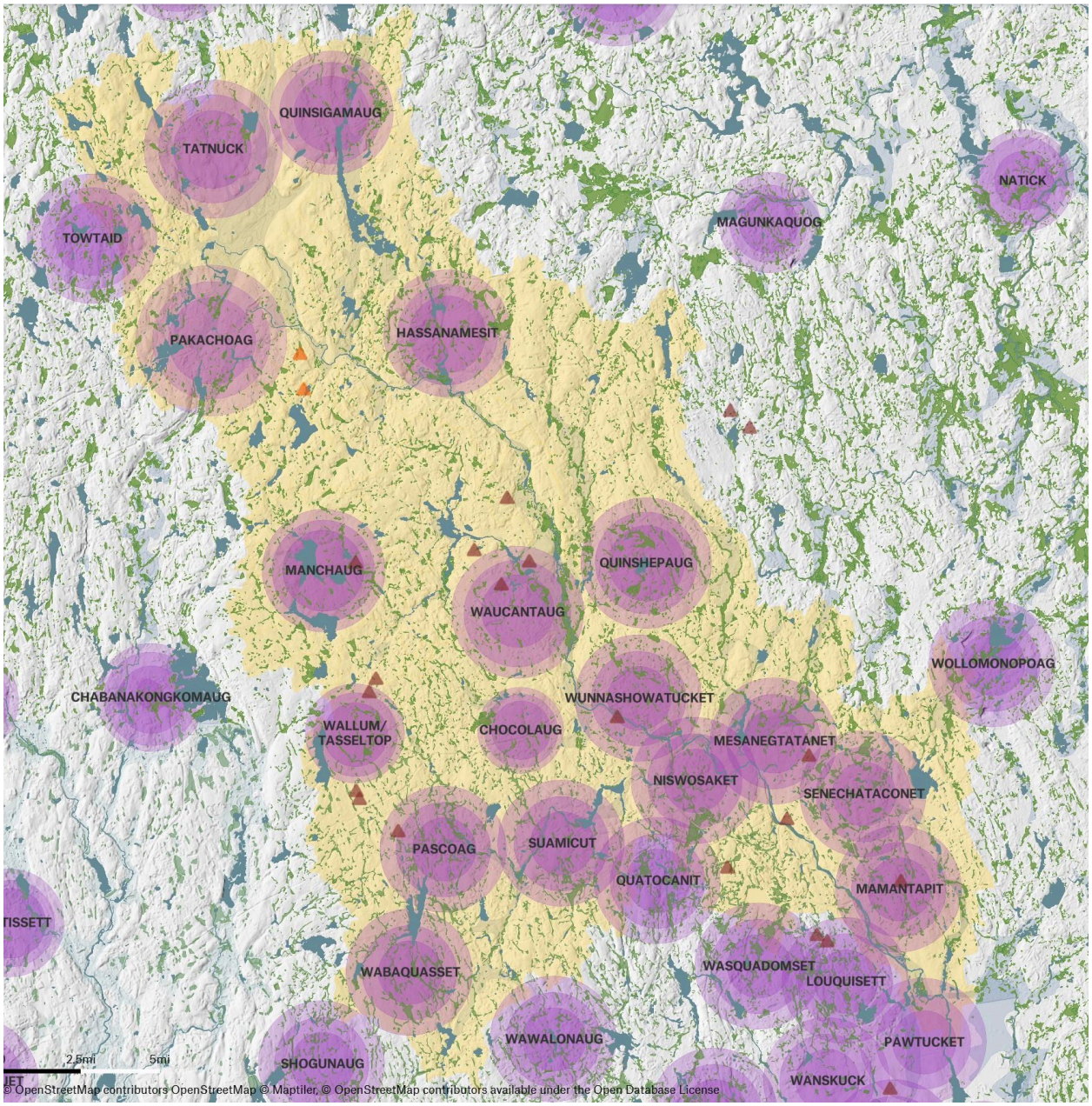
Archaeological evidence points to Indigenous quarry sites throughout the Kittatuck Valley dating back millenia. Quarry sites in the valley include a soapstone quarry on Horn Hill in Millbury excavated by Frederic Ward Putnam in 1895 (Bullen 1940), as well as quarries in Cumberland overlooking the lands the Wampanoag call Sneechtaconnet. These knowledges were keenly adapted during the settler colonial era, even as their associated livelihoods changed a great deal.

The history of Indigenous knowledge and labor is marked in the settler colonial period by substantial efforts to transform the landscape for capitalist gain, in tandem with the exploitation of BIPOC labor. Early settlers noted the mineral wealth embedded in the valley, extracting limestone from Lincoln, coal from Cumberland, and lead from Tantiusque (Sturbridge, Massachusetts). They harnessed the hydro-power of the Kittatuck itself and exploited the cheap and stolen labor of African American, Indigenous, and immigrant peoples to build infrastructure that supported the growing settler colonial population. BIPOC and immigrant laborers transported these materials from the countryside to the urban centers of Providence and Worcester, where they were in high demand. In fact, Indigenous workers often did hard labor, even into the present, including road and dam construction, canal excavation, clearing forests, and laying track for the railroad, as well as substantial landscape manipulation to create and safeguard reservoirs for clean water as the water from the river became increasingly polluted by the industrial boom.

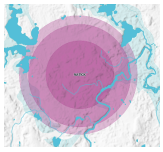
Quarrymen at Lime Rock, 1855

BIPOC stone workers in North Providence and Smithfield in the mid-nineteenth century likely centered their work around Limerock, in present-day Lincoln, Rhode Island. One of the first roads along the Kittatuck was constructed largely to transport the lime coming from the Jenkes and Harris quarries and kilns in Louisquisset. Lime remains an important resource for the construction of settlements into the twenty-first century, in fact.

Census records listed a community of stone workers residing on “The Old Road” and “The Old Hamlet Road” in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The Old Hamlet Road went from Limerock to Hamlet Village, south of present-day Woonsocket Falls. This group consisted of the Lippett, Hall, Ceasar and Coffee families, all of whom had stone cutters, quarrymen, masons, and blacksmiths and ties to Nipmuc and Narragansett communities. In 1875 basketmakers Simon Robinson, Jr., and Jacob Bent were neighbors, as well (both common Narragansett last names in 1880). The stoneworkers may also have been associated with the granite quarry on Sayles Hill (in present-day North Smithfield, Rhode Island) or one further south on the Louisquisset Pike near Branch Avenue in North Providence, both in operation in the mid-nineteenth century. And an earlier generation of stone workers was located in Ward 4 in the heart of Providence. Samuel Rodman (an “Indian Doctor” in the 1850 census) and his possible brother Joshua (a stone cutter) both lived in this neighborhood in the 1850s with their families. Other nineteenth-century stone worker communities were centered around granite quarries in Milford and Uxbridge, Massachusetts. The map below demonstrates how many quarry sites existed across the Kittatuck Valley area.



Key:



Indigenous Villages

Nineteenth Century Quarries

Pre-Colonial Quarries

Blackstone Basin

Wetlands

Open Water

Map 9: Nineteenth-century quarry sites in the Kittatuck Valley. (Map by Heather Law Pezzarossi)



Figure 19: Wright Quarry in Lincoln, Rhode Island. A large limestone formation reflects onto the water.

(Image courtesy of the James N. Arnold Collection. Providence Public Libraries Special Collections, under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License).



Figure 20: Stone masonry was a common profession for Kittatuck Valley men. Many had been employed in the quarries and mines outside of Providence in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Others contributed to the substantial network of stone walls that crisscross the valley.
Original box label read "Dia. Hill-99," believed to be Diamond Hill, Cumberland, Rhode Island.

(Image courtesy of the James N. Arnold Collection. Providence Public Libraries Special Collections, under a Creative

Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License).

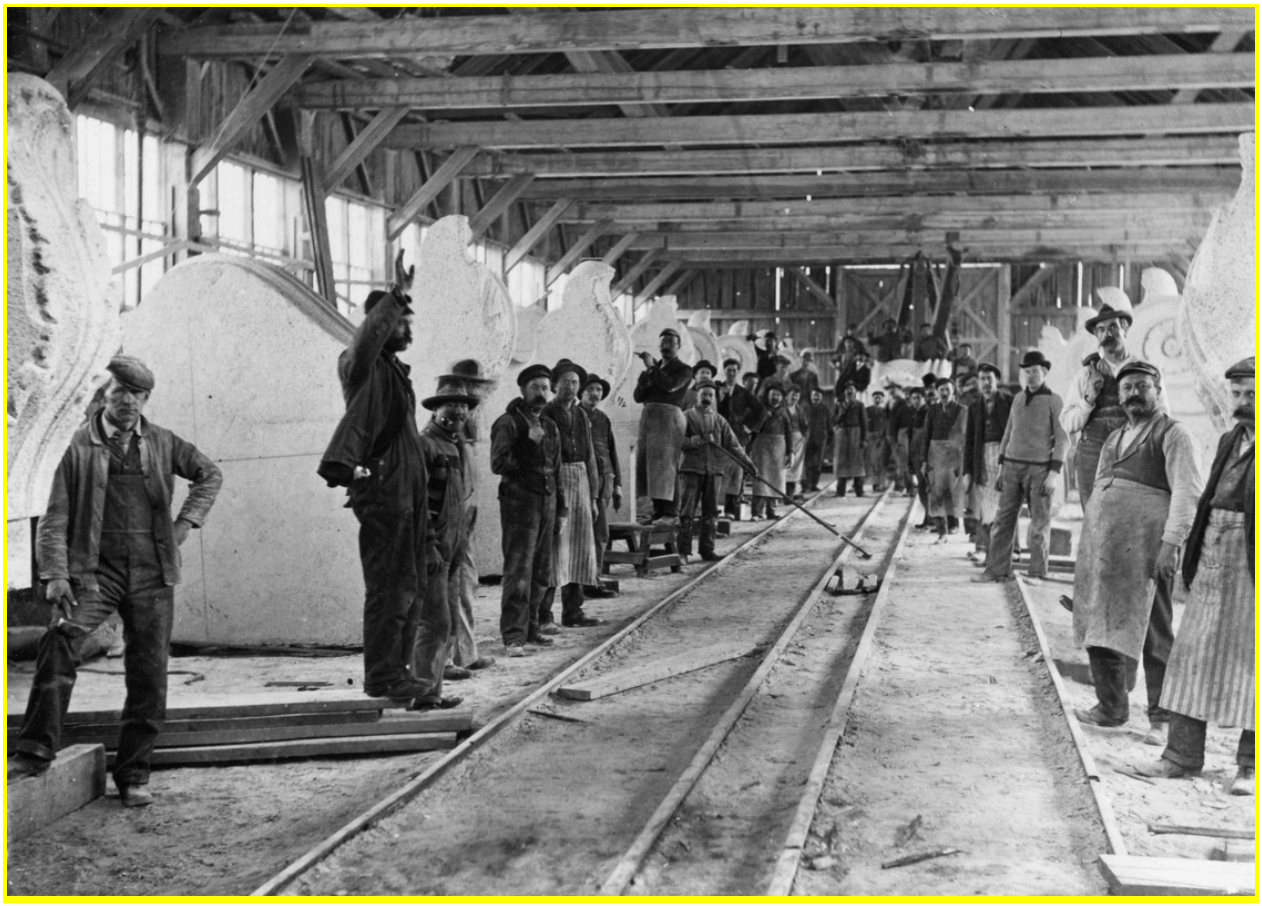


Figure 21: Indigenous stoneworkers were informed by their ancestral knowledge of stone work and quarry landscapes and challenged to translate these knowledges into different professions depending on contemporary conditions.

Curran, Paul E. "Milford granite eagles carving." Photograph. 1905. *Digital Commonwealth*, https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/bg259872n (accessed July 20, 2024).

Basketmakers, Barbers, and Chefs

In addition to the more strenuous labor of stone work, other professions that Indigenous people engaged in were also informed by ancestral knowledges and contemporary Kittatuck society. A few examples are listed below.

One of these skills was basketmaking. While many examples of Indigenous basketmakers exist, only a few can be shared within the confines of this report. In December of 1789, the company of

Almy and Brown (known as one of the first textile manufactories on the Kittatuck) contracted Sylvester "Daby" (very likely Daly, aka Daley) "for baskets." In the 1800 federal census Sylvester Daley resided in Cumberland, Rhode Island, as the head of a household of nine "mustees." Although not identified as Indian in this particular census, Daly/Daley is a well-known surname connected to generations of Indigenous families in the Kittatuck Valley region, including the Curliss family outlined in Chapter IV. Sylvester Dailey married Julia Jaha, of Dudley, who was related to the Jaha ancestors from Dudley of the modern-day Curliss family.

Other basketmakers, also likely Indigenous, were also recruited from Nova Scotia, Maine, and New Brunswick for the straw hat industry at its peak between 1860 and 1910. For example, in downtown Westborough, Massachusetts, the National Straw Works invited seasonal laborers down from regions further north to assist with the busy summer hat season. Valued for their expertise in basketmaking, broom making, and chair caning, Indigenous weavers were recruited to work at the Straw Works and stayed with the other seasonal workers in the National Hotel adjacent to the hat factory. Among this group were the Pictons from New Brunswick, listed in the 1880 census as "Indians." The 1870 Census in Providence also lists a family of basketmakers from Maine, the Lawleys, who lived in Ward 7 (U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2018). More research on these families could be explored in future projects by the NPS.

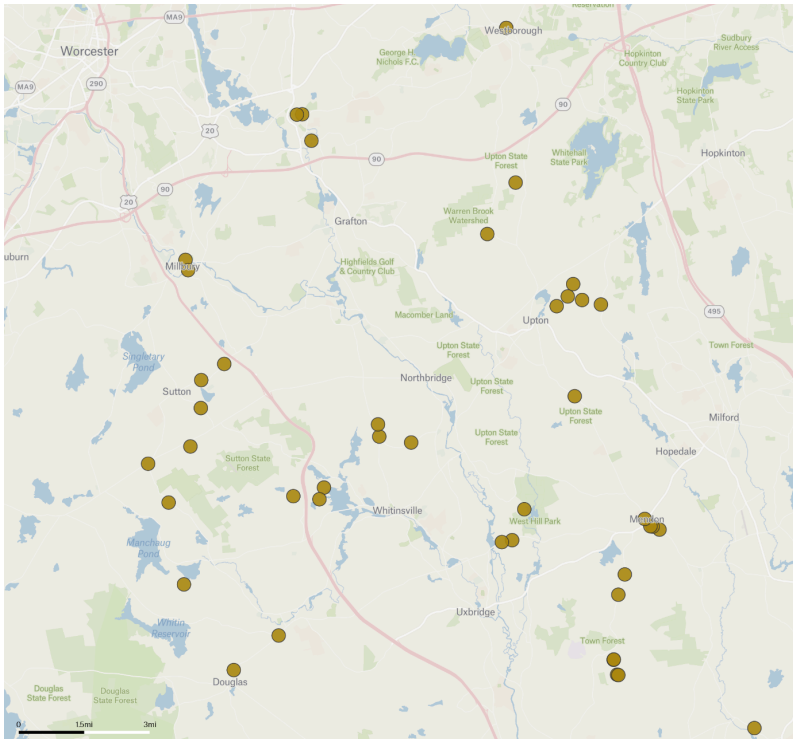
In addition to the basketmakers who lived in or traveled through the valley, some Nipmuc women were well-known for their baking skills. Hepsibah and Hannah Hemenway's wedding cakes were sought after by the Worcester elite and their cake shop (operated from their home on Mechanic Street in that city) was just a few blocks from the town green and less than one block from the railroad tracks, allowing for easy transportation south into the Kittatuck Valley, where connections with Indigenous relatives continued over the generations. Hepsibah's son Ebenezer Hemenway lived with John Hector on Union Street, and with Sarah and Gilbert Walker; Hector had relocated to Worcester in the 1850s from the northern edge of the Kittatuck Valley, after selling his share of Printer land in Grafton (Hassanamesit). All of these interconnected families were members of the Hassanamisco community and often had connections to both Worcester—a vibrant place for young Nipmuc people in the 1850s—and Providence, as did the generations that followed (see Gould 2010; Gould et. Al. 2020). Both cities were places of opportunity, activism and jobs and were connected by strong kinship ties between Nipmuc and Narragansett people that continue today and have long followed the path of the Kittatuck Valley.

In the Mills: Shoemakers and Straw Sewists

<u>Bootmakers</u>

More specific to mill industries were the crafts of shoemaking and straw sewing, which were also closely connected to African American and Indigenous peoples of the region and towns within the Kittatuck Valley. Willis A. R. Ownsley (Wampanoag) was born in Burrillville, Rhode

Island, around 1814. His wife, Harriet Newell (born in Griswold, Connecticut, c. 1824), was the daughter of Stephen and Henrietta (née Warmsley) Congdon and thought to be Mohegan on her father's side and Narragansett on her mother's. Both parents' surnames are well known within Indigenous communities across the region even today. Willis and Harriet lived in Milford, Massachusetts, with their three daughters in 1850. Five years later they remained in Milford and were recorded as being part of an extended household that included a fourth daughter plus Harriet's brother Moses C. Congdon (a bootmaker) and her sister Hannah Congdon.



Map 10: Locations of shoe shops and manufactories in the Kittatuck Valley region. (Map by author Heather Law Pezzarossi)

In 1860 Harriet was still in Milford, apparently without Willis, though (who had relocated to Providence by 1870), but with her four children and working as a washerwoman. The movement of family members to, between, and within these towns along the Kittatuck demonstrates the opportunities that existed for Indigenous people; Harriet's siblings likely came to live with her because of the many jobs in the mill towns of that area in the nineteenth century, in addition to

the strong bonds of kinship that would have connected them. Other Indigenous peoples were closely connected because of the factories in the Kittatuck Valley, whose stories could be expanded through additional projects and research. (3)



Figure 22: An old Milford Shoe factory. Curran, Paul E. "Bickford Shoes' Sam Ricci." Photograph. August 1975. Digital Commonwealth, https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/bg2597669 (accessed July 20, 2024)

By 1850 (the first year that African and Indigenous occupations were recorded in the census), a substantial shoemakers' community existed across the Mendon and Uxbridge border, in the immediate vicinity of the seventeenth-century locations of the Waucantaug village and Quinshepaug settlement. The connections to this place in the Kittatuck Valley remained for many Indigenous families, as the Lashure, Coffee, Morse, Vickers, Hazard and Coombs men all worked together, likely in the W.H. Comstock Boot Company, one of the first in the area and located at 1 Hastings St. By 1855, that community had bloomed further and included the Peters, Wilson, Morse, Coffee, Mann, Arkless, Walker and Gunn families. The 1860 federal census noted other boot and shoemakers in this same area: George and John Wilbur, Almon Vickers and Oliver Tucker were all listed as boot bottomers at that time. All of these families had connections

to Nipmuc, Narragansett, and Wampanoag communities, or a combination of ancestries (as many tribal people from the region still do today).



Figure 23: A straw braiding exhibit from 1918 demonstrating the process of splitting and braiding straw to make straw hats. Notice that the preparation of the straw has similarities to the preparation of splints in basketmaking. Text in exhibit: "To BRAID STRAW - split the straw, scrape flat, cut / with machine and soak in warm water some minutes. / Take seven pieces, three on right side dull side / up, and four on left bright side up. / Begin by placing one straw [etc.]" (typed)

Courtesy of Historic New England. Gift of Mrs. Eva R. Greeley, 1918.933
Historic New England Digital Exhibit (access June 30, 2025)

Straw Sewists

In the 1870s, 80s and 90s the Vickers were joined by some members of the Wilbur family in Oxford, Massachusetts, while other Wilbur households stayed in Mendon, where several Kittatuck Valley women had long careers as straw hat makers. Straw sewing was one of the crafts used to create hats in the nineteenth century, an industry many Indigenous women were well suited to, given the historical and ongoing popularity of basketmaking among Nipmuc women. Indigenous women who took up this profession at these factories had long-time connections to the African American and Indigenous shoemaker families in Mendon and Uxbridge. Sarah Walker Mann seems to be central to this story, as both her brothers and her son were bootmakers, yet she influenced her granddaughters and their contemporaries to pursue work sewing hats. (4) There were several large straw hat manufactories in the area, notably the Knowlton Hat Factory in Upton, as well the National Straw Works in nearby Westborough just outside of the valley.

The community that coalesced in nineteenth-century Millford, Uxbridge, and Mendon around shared labor practices and job opportunities is one example of the ways in which the bonds between Nipmuc and Narragansett people are shaped, enriched, and renewed generation by generation. They share a deep and historical connection with the Kittatuck Valley, but come together in unique ways in this era defined by Indigenous land dispossession, industrial skills, and, as is demonstrated next, wartime solidarities.

Wartime Changes

Much like King Philip's War and the American Revolution, the Civil War seems to have marked a turning point for the large African/Indigenous community living in the Kittatuck Valley. Below are described some of those changes for the Uxbridge/Mendon shoemaker community discussed above.

Shortly after their arrival in Oxford, Massachusetts, many of the Vickers men enlisted as volunteers in the Union Army during the Civil War. Both Chandler Vickers, age 45, and James Vickers joined the Connecticut 11th Infantry Regiment, Company I, in the early winter of 1861. They were sent to join Burnside's Offensive at the Battle of New Bern, North Carolina, where they fought alongside several other Regiments from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island to capture the city of New Bern (which the Union occupied and used as a Regimental Headquarters for the remainder of the war). Christopher and Rufus Vickers mustered with the 2nd Massachusetts Regiment, Heavy Artillery, Company G in December of 1863. They went first to Plymouth, North Carolina, and were captured and sent to Libby Prison, where they died. The remainder of Company G were also headquartered at New Bern, North Carolina, for about a year, where they were exposed to an epidemic of yellow fever in the fall of 1864. While this is just one thread of the story of Indigenous Civil War soldiers from the Kittatuck Valley and region around it, it's important to note here that historians have recently acknowledged the connections

and lasting genealogical legacy of this prolonged encounter in North Carolina. African and Indigenous people from coastal Carolina towns developed significant and lasting connections with the occupying soldiers from southern New England and many Carolinians relocated to the Kittatuck Valley for a start fresh after the war (Thomas Greenwood 2009; Worcester Black History Project n.d.).



Map 11: Sneden, Robert Knox. Plan of the Battle of Newberne North Carolina: fought March 14th. Notice the positioning of the Ct 11th Infantry, of which Chandler and James Vickers were a part. (Image courtesy of Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/gvhs01.vhs00079/)

Other Inhabitants in the Kittatuck Valley

In addition to those who had connections to specific industries, crafts and factories, many other known Indigenous people and families resided in towns throughout the Kittatuck Valley whose lives need further exploring. For example, in 1850 a well-known Black and Indigenous family line resided in the same town as Almon Vickers and John Wilbur. Coffee (aka Cuffee) family members lived down the street from these shoemakers, with Rufus Coffee (61) and Lucina Coffee (63) listed as heads (or at least elders) of their households. While Rufus lived alone, Lucina lived with Joseph C. Morse and his wife Louisa, plus their children as well as her children Simeon Coffee IV (28), Tuissant Coffee (25), and Diantha (17).

Also in this year, Olney Philips and Rufus Hazzard lived in the next town over, Uxbridge, while Samuel Hazzard lived in nearby Douglas (the other side of Uxbridge). The extensive Hazzard

family is well-known among the Narragansett and Nipmuc tribes, and a major line connecting the two communities, much like the Vickers line (also originally a Narragansett surname).

When the 1855 Massachusetts state census was conducted, Rufus Hazzard was in the town of Mendon, as was Isaac Arkless, Tussaint Coffee, the Tuckers, the Wilburs, and others with familiar Black and Indigenous surnames, all documented as being shoemakers and close neighbors in that census.

Mendon, Massachusetts, was also recorded as home for a number of Indigenous people over the years. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century, as part of his data collection for his 1861 report, John Milton Earle corresponded with various people across Massachusetts to gain knowledge of the many "miscellaneous Indians" not residing on reserved tribal lands at that time. Mary Curliss Vickers and her family (noted above) were some of these Nipmuc Indians moving around the landscape that Earle had to track down via correspondences to town clerks and others. Another was Eliza Jackson, a Punkapoag Indian, reported by Lemuel Burr in 1859 as living in Mendon near the South Milford post office with her daughter, Sarah Elizabeth Jackson, age 17 (Earle 1652-1863, Box 2, Folder 1).

In nearby Uxbridge, Earle reported a family of "Dudley Indians" living in town in 1859: Rebecca and Bezale? Jaha, who married in April 1841 and whose family included children Paris (b. 1842), James (b. 1844), Lydia (b. 1846), Isaac Davis (b.1850) and Edward Foster (b. June 1850, d. Oct 1850). Lydia Jaha is the ancestor of the Curliss family that remains in the Kittatuck Valley area today (Earle 1652-1863, Box 2, Folder 5), as discussed in Chapter IV.

A final example of an individual with Native ancestry and documented ties to the Kittatuck Valley is Susan Holden, a widow identified as "Indian" in the 1910 U.S. census and living in Providence with her daughter, son-in-law, grandson, and son, but who had been born in Uxbridge, Massachusetts. Also in that 1910 household was Nettie Cooper (born in Connecticut), a last name that is known among Mohegan, Pequot and Narragansett genealogies (Rubertone 2020, 148). A census survey seems to show a concentration of Indigenous community on the Uxbridge/Mendon border.

Other Sites along the Kittatuck

In addition to the many sites of labor along the Kittatuck Valley, life along the river's corridor was often defined by consistent movement and mobility by Indigenous peoples since before settler colonialism to the present. Nipmuc, Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples of southern New England traveled well-known routes over the centuries to visit kin, remain connected to their homelands, and for economic reasons, especially as the Industrial Period unfolded. As slavery was introduced in America, African (then African American) peoples, as

well as white people descended from the settler colonists or immigrants, became enmeshed in the lives and stories of these people connected to the Kittatuck.

The remainder of this chapter provides specific examples of sites of significance, places along the river's valley connected to the histories of the interactions and with evidence of Indigenous presence over the past 400 years.

Pawtucket and Pawtucket Falls

At the southern end of the Kittatuck Valley, a major waterfall exists that could tell many, many stories of its continued use over millennia. The forces from this waterfall that were used to power the first successful water-powered cotton spinning mill in the country, Slater Mill (constructed in 1793), were also part of a well-known resource for the Indigenous peoples of the region (National Park Service, "Slater Mill"). Set along what was known as Pawtucket Trail, Pawtucket Falls was a favored fishing location for Indigenous people of the area that also served as a gathering place well into the 1700s. Likely due to the presence of the falls as a major resource, Pawtucket was known to be a crossroads where Indigenous people gathered seasonally and passed through via the Pawtucket Trail, part of a major overland route that connected Narragansett homelands with those of other tribes north and east. And while the growth that resulted from industrialization certainly transformed places like Pawtucket Falls, they remained places of significance for Indigenous peoples well into colonial times, if not into industrial times (DeLucia 2018, 22). The falls was known as "an ideal spot to catch salmon, shad and alewives, which seasonally ran up the river…[with] Indians gathered… in great numbers to fish, well into the eighteenth century" (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1978, 3).

The continued presence of Native people in Pawtucket over the centuries is also well documented, long after their connections to the falls as a resource for fishing. For example, Frederick D. Thomas—who had lived in Carolina, Rhode Island, and "left the reservation with his mother and siblings" by 1870 and then lived in Providence—married Emma Slocum (Seekonk Wampanoag) from Pawtucket on May 25, 1871. Harris Hawthorne Wilder (a forensic scientist from Smith College studying the effects of intermarriage with African Americans on Narragansett phenotypes) described Emma as having "Indian features and straight hair" (Rubertone 2020, 93-94).

Another Native family in town was the Henry family, also documented to have lived in Providence and part of the Narragansett and then Nipmuc tribal communities. James Henry married Olive Nichols in 1881, and in 1901 Olive filed an application for funds appropriated to Brothertown Indians and approved by an act of Congress in 1900 for Kansas lands set apart for "New York Indians" in the 1838 Treaty of Buffalo Creek. Her claim was based on descent from Narragansett and Brothertown Indians through her great-grandfather James Niles, one of the

Narragansett Indians who joined many other Native people from southern New England (with his wife Hannah) on the trek to Brothertown, New York, in 1796 to establish a new settlement west of colonial settlement. Olive's affidavit to claim funds provides much detail about her familial connections; she made repeated references to James Niles, who had two lots at Brothertown that were divided among his heirs in 1829. She also noted that her husband (of fifty-two years) had ties to the Brothertown and Narragansett communities and was from Pawtucket (Rubertone 2020, 137).

And Minnie Steele, a well-known Narragansett Indian who served as secretary of the Indian Council of New England in the 1920s (founded by Thomas Bicknell), was also from Pawtucket (Rubertone 2020, 124). These are just a few examples of many Indigenous people who lived or moved through Pawtucket following its industrialization period that began with Slater Mill.

Woonsocket

In nearby Woonsocket, the deep presence of Indigenous people can be felt by the town's name alone. At least two archaeological sites dating to the Late Archaic period have been noted, one at Globe Park and one at Sylvester Pond. Following contact and settlement by Europeans, deeds from the seventeenth century demonstrate that this was also likely a place of convergence and intersection of Indigenous people from southern New England.

As with other locations throughout southern New England, "title" to land purchased by colonial settlers was sometimes not clear cut. In Woonsocket, the original transfer of land was not clear, as conflicting transfers supported that the same parcels were granted to the Massachusetts colony by Wampanoags and to settlers in Providence by Narragansetts. These conflicts also support that at least some of the Kittatuck Valley was indeed an area of intersecting tribal homelands for Nipmuc, Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples, especially the area surrounding Providence and the place of Woonsocket, with its major waterfall (Woonsocket Falls) (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976). This was also a site of convergence for the major Indian trails that crossed the region; both the Great Road and Mendon Road in Woonsocket evolved from long-used Native trails and run up either side of the Kittatuck.

Also, as in many other places throughout the region, historical records and local histories often offered only passing mentions of Native people, often as remnants of a bygone period in American history. Common narratives focused on "the last of" the Indian population passing away in the nineteenth century based on specious census data. For example, a census report from 1730 listed only 81 Indians in all of what was northern Rhode Island at that time. And when Woonsocket was part of Smithfield and Cumberland in 1782 (according to Richard Bayles' *History of Providence County*) the number of "Indians" in both towns had dwindled to just 12

when Isaac Nish Norman and Reuben Purchase died around 1820 (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission 1976).

Quinsnicket

On the Great Road and close to the Eleazor Arnold Tavern noted above, present-day Lincoln, Rhode Island, was named Quinsnicket prior to settler renaming (another form of erasure of Indigenous presence and past). Translated in historical texts as "large place of rock houses" or simply "rock house," this area is likely named for a large stand of boulders on the crest of the hill above "Butterfly Factory." Stephen Smith II lived in this area in the nineteenth century and claimed that the remains of "many huts are in existence on his place," now part of Lincoln Woods State Park. Smith recorded that he once sent a worker to get stones from the top of the hill, who inadvertently dismantled the final remaining "hut" or "wigwam" that Smith had intentionally left as a "memorial" to the Indian population that once roamed the area. An early twentieth-century local history recorded that Smith—known for planting foreign species of plants on his farm—planted a honey locust on the spot of the last hut, which was still "vigorous" in the early 1900s (Rider 1904; Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, 2010a).

Other Indigenous people throughout the region have lived in the towns up and down the Kittatuck, as noted throughout this report, and only a fraction can be documented for this report. Additional research would surely reveal a longer list of names and locations connected to Nipmuc, Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples of the area. As Rubertone notes in *Native Providence,* "There were certainly other Narragansetts in Upper South Providence as well as individuals and families from other tribal communities in southeastern New England" (Rubertone 2020, 143). One example provided is Willis A. R. Ownsley, a Wampanoag who was born in Burrillville, Rhode Island, around 1814. Willis's wife, Harriet Newell (born in Griswold, Connecticut c. 1824,) was the daughter of Stephen and Henrietta (née Warmsley) Congdon and thought to be Mohegan on her father's side and Narragansett on her mother's. Additional engagement with tribal communities and individuals, using this report as a baseline, will help to reveal the stories of these individuals and families and provide a wealth of material for the Blackstone River National Historical Park to develop additional projects, interpretative material and other resources in the future.

Chapter VII

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter offers concluding thoughts about the presence and activities of Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley and their interactions with other populations, including the settler colonial immigrants that began arriving in the early seventeenth century. Specific recommendations for how the information in this report could be used by National Park Service staff are also included, as well as recommendations for outreach to, engagement with, and incorporation of Indigenous peoples from the region in future efforts to enhance the park's work. Deepening the knowledge of this nationally significant resource, this report (combined with future research, engagement and programming) will hopefully help to enhance and expand public awareness and understandings of the valley in which the non-contiguous Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park sits.

To help guide future research, projects, interpretations, programming and opportunities for engagement by the National Park Service, specific recommendations and action items are provided that could be undertaken to expand on the data and information presented within this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment of the Kittatuck (or Blackstone River) Valley area. An important outcome of the recommendations included in this report will be to support partner collaborations between the park and local tribal communities and individuals that will also strengthen formal relationships with tribes in Rhode Island and Massachusetts (namely, Narragansett and Nipmuc), and possibly Connecticut. Future interpretations and more developed understandings of the Kittatuck Valley will be enhanced by on-going engagement with these Indigenous communities and the additional contributions of Indigenous knowledges and voices that result.

A first step for the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park is to acknowledge this river and the valley as the Kittatuck and Kittatuck Valley, recognizing and honoring its origins and location within Indigenous homelands. This should be done on web pages connected to the park, in printed and written materials, as well as in future reports, letterheads, and other communications. More public-facing interpretation activities should also incorporate an acknowledgement of Kittatuck as the original nomenclature of what is today called the Blackstone River and Blackstone River Valley.

As underscored throughout this report, Nipmuc, Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples have had a persistent presence in southern New England throughout the centuries covered in these chapters, and into the twenty-first century, as well as the millenia prior to contact. The examples and stories provided here are just the beginning of what could be multiple threads extended into future interpretative projects, augmented by the voices of contemporary people still connected to the Kittatuck.

The threads, or themes, noted in this report include a reevaluation of boundaries, both of the specific parks and how the Kittatuck Valley is perceived; dispossession of Indigenous homelands as a result of settler colonial immigrants and the concept of *terra nullius* (empty or "nobody's" land); the attempted containment of Native people, into both categories of study and physically at moments in time (such as during King Philip's War and later as indentured servants or laborers in homes of the elite); a resistance to the forms of containment through continued movement and mobility related to networks of kinship, labor and economic opportunities; and, perhaps most importantly, the forms of structural violence that are foundational to the story of Indigenous-non-Indigenous peoples and to the taking over of, reuse through industrialization, pollution and privatization of the Kittatuck, now no longer a resource for Indigenous (and other) peoples in this region.

A starting point for the National Park Service will be an acknowledgement of the dispossession of the entire Kittatuck Valley from its Indigenous stewards, a central theme in this report, and the resulting diasporas of Indigenous people into, out of, and within the Kittatuck Valley. These diasporas were both forced (such as the captivity of Native people after the seventeenth century wars to seize Indigenous lands) and unforced (in the movements of Native people across pre-existing networks of kinship, trade, and diplomacy they choose to maintain). We hope that, at the least, this report contributes to complicating the notion of insulated Indigenous territories bounded by linear borders. As well, acknowledging and underscoring the diverse motivations, power imbalances, and experiences that compose the multi-layered histories of this place will enrich ongoing work by the National Park Service related to this region.

As the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park strives to revise and offer corrections and expansions to the narratives that exist about the Kittatuck Valley, it will be useful to keep in mind that the persistent focus on the industrial and modernizing eras of this place—e.g., Slater Mill as a central place and story with a focus on the settler colonists who dominate that story—makes the Indigenous heritage of this area even more vulnerable to settler appropriation. Revising, retelling, correcting and expanding these narratives will be critical steps to realigning how the history of this area is understood in the future.

This report also contributes to the methodologies that have been modeled by scholarship, community-engagement, and praxis within the growing field of Native American and Indigenous studies. While extensive engagement with tribal peoples from the region was not as successful as would have been liked for this report, it provides a baseline from which additional feedback and input can now be offered. The specific names of Black and Indigenous ancestors noted in this report, particularly in Chapters V and VI, may trigger additional stories of ancestors who lived, worked or moved through the valley by Nipmuc, Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples. Committing to a gathering that would bring people together (beyond the tribal representatives

who have already reviewed this report) and provide opportunities for a larger conversation about this area would be beneficial, for example.

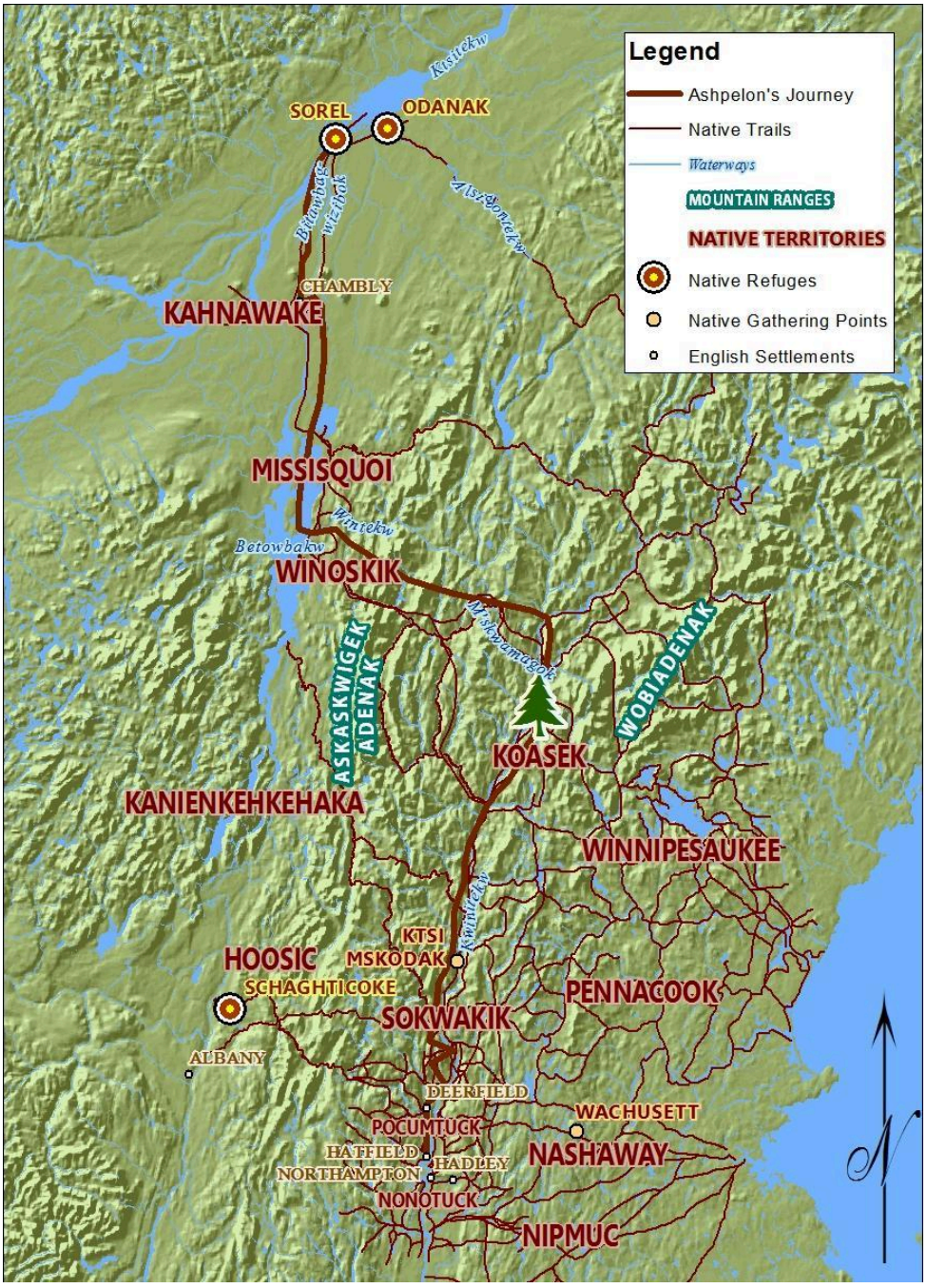
As noted in Chapter II, this EOA focuses on the entire Kittatuck Valley as a cultural landscape that has connected people and places from its northern and southern ends, and locations in between, over millennia. Conceptualizing this landscape as one with many nodes linked by a web of human and natural interactions is a starting place for how to think about this big landscape with a deep history defined by a network of waterways (with the Kittatuck at the center).

A first step for the National Park Service toward building a foundation for engagement with this landscape is to consider a layered "remapping" of the Blackstone River Valley that spans 400 years, beginning with the natural landscape and then layered with Indigenous knowledges and place names (then adding settler colonial/immigrant locations). Using models provided by Lisa Brooks (2008a, 2008b, 2018a, 2018b) focused on the Connecticut (or Kwinitekw) River, the NPS could develop a digital space (connected to the park's current website, for example) for the layered histories of the Blackstone's/Kittatuck's landscape that could also exist in a physical version at a park location (or at all park locations along the river). (1)

Map 12 provides an example of incorporating the concept of an *awikhigan* (in digital form): the mapping, writing and sharing of a collective story by integrating Indigenous words, knowledges, places (nodes) and place names to tell the story of a landscape. *Awikhigan* is "an Abenaki word that originally referred to birchbark maps and scrolls, but came to encompass letters, petitions, maps, books and works of art" (Brooks 2008a, 2008b).

Helping park visitors (whether in digital spaces or physical locations) think and visualize as much as possible from an Indigenous lens would expand what this park can offer. And helping them navigate the Blackstone River Valley (also referenced as the Kittatuck Valley moving forward) via touchstone places connected by complex webs of waterways, kinship, travel, Indigenous and immigrant experiences, and overlaid with concentric circles that define tribal homelands (see more below) would be a concrete way to expand the park's offerings.

As important, however, will be offering consistent reminders that any historical information presented connects to contemporary Indigenous individuals and communities (as noted in this report). Much opportunity exists for creative ways to conceive of and share the connections that exist between past and present throughout this landscape, such as using story maps (utilizing the ArcGIS system). A likely outcome of the gathering suggested above will be suggestions for these creative ways to reconceive these connections across this landscape.



Map 12: This example of a layered regional map provides a model for similar interpretations that could be developed for the Blackstone River/Kittatuck Valley. (Brooks 2018b, https://ourbelovedkin.com/awikhigan/media-gallery)

The model of a concentric circles map could also provide a key element for telling a fuller story of the Kittatuck Valley, demonstrating how both tribal homelands and specific places and areas within those homelands overlap. Given the more mobile lifeways of Indigenous peoples that

intersected with people and places over the centuries (as outlined in Chapter VI), a focus on navigations of the valley through touchstone locations—connected by the webs of waterways and pathways, kinship and travel networks, and Indigenous and immigrant experiences—that existed both as independent locations and as part of these larger concentric circles would also be a benefit to future interpretative work by the park.

Another primary goal of this report is to assist the National Park Service with defining the boundaries relative to Native American presence throughout the Blackstone River Valley, if possible. Rather than thinking about people and places as static locations of mill towns defined by brick, stone and wooden buildings overlaid with a human presence, interpreting this landscape by more *undefined* boundaries may be more appropriate, and allows for the integration of Indigenous understandings of the valley. Concentric circles laid over the landscape is one way to achieve this, as noted. Perhaps one outcome of this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment is acknowledging that defining specific boundaries for this park may not be a goal in the end. Rather than viewing this landscape as one demarcated alongside the hard, geopolitical boundaries that settler colonial immigrants impressed upon the area (based on concepts of colonial and state structures and individual, private ownership of land and resources), understanding that the resources, land and homelands were shared by collective groups of people who understood that their rights to these were usufruct would also be a novel way to approach interpretation of the valley. This idea of sharing resources continued well into the post-contact centuries, as well. As outlined in Chapter VI, Indigenous families moved throughout this valley, between Providence and Worcester and throughout the towns between these cities, and often worked with and lived close to kin or other Native families. The sharing of information about economic opportunities for those involved in the various industries discussed in Chapter VI was central to the movement of people through the valley over time, just as it was in the pre-contact period.

The remainder of this chapter outlines additional specific recommendations and actions that the National Park Service could undertake as extensions of this report that would contribute to both expanding staff knowledge, public-facing interpretations and programming, and engagement with local tribal individuals and communities. Other ideas may well emerge as engagement with tribal communities and individuals continues.

Short-term Outcomes and/or Recommendations

- Add sections to the current website (https://www.nps.gov/blrv/index.htm) of the Blackstone River National Historical Park that foreground the places, people and stories shared in this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment. As of 2025, the website's home page clearly focuses on the industrial mill town history that is still so central to the park's story, with a large quote by Samuel Slater prominent. Opportunities exist to immediately engage viewers with reminders that the industrial landscape so visible today is overlaid on a pre-existing, and

longstanding, Indigenous one.

- As noted above, including that this waterway and valley is also known as the Kittatuck Valley would be one important contribution, while acknowledging that "Blackstone" was a conscious renaming following forced dispossession of Indigenous lands and waterways after settler colonial occupation of southern New England (that also occurred across the country).
- Add maps to the website created from an Indigenous knowledge base, based on recommendations outlined in this report and this chapter, and from information shared throughout this report (and see below for more specific recommendations regarding maps).
- Develop programming or a speaker series (beginning with a pilot program in 2025 or 2026) in collaboration with Native knowledge keepers who can help to tell the stories presented in this report and also expand upon them with knowledge of on-going connections to the Kittatuck Valley. An initial gathering and discussion about the report, the families noted throughout, and industries they were engaged with, and the locations noted may be a useful starting point for gathering additional information from descendants or other tribal members with similar histories connected to the valley and industries that developed there.
- Develop a dedicated position or an internship program (or offer one or two internships with existing NPS funds) to further facilitate and expand outreach to local tribal members who can help to further define tools, information and products NPS staff could use for education and more comprehensive interpretations of the Kittatuck.

Beyond these concrete steps that will help the park further develop relationships with local tribes and tribal individuals, NPS can also use the information shared in this report to consider how to discuss different types of kinship structures (e.g., outside of the Western focus on the nuclear and extended families as they exist in census records and other documents). As the data shared in this report demonstrates, "kinship" for the Indigenous peoples of the Kittatuck Valley over the past 400 years (and before that) can be thought of on several levels: connections to the land and water, connections to specific places known for resources or refuge, connections to people both related by blood and marriage or as part of a broader network defined by more extended tribal connections, labor and economic opportunities, Indigenous ancestry, or simply movement and engagement. Indeed, on a global scale, how one thinks about "kinship" can vary from culture to culture; this is no different across the landscape of southern New England, where multiple cultures have intertwined and engaged for centuries.

One such example of a more capacious way to consider kinship is the family of Mary Curliss Vickers, noted in this report. This large family enumerated in the 1861 Earle Report as "Miscellaneous Indians" is connected to both Narragansett and Nipmuc communities through genealogical ties that extend beyond what vital or census records could possibly capture, or a

nineteenth-century local historian could comprehend. John Milton Earle, for example, struggled with how to correctly define this family, resulting in their erroneous classification as "Miscellaneous" in his report, even though the matriarch (Mary) clearly knew (and recounted) her ancestry *and* understood it as Indian but not necessarily solely connected to one Nipmuc band (Dudley/Webster or Chaubunagungamaug) or even one tribe (see Gould 2013).

The outline of the Curliss/Jaha family (discussed in Chapter IV) provides another example of the networks and interactions that existed between many Indigenous families, crossing tribal, state and town boundaries that are often the result of settler colonial immigrant concepts of property, ownership and heredity that didn't define Indigenous relationships to land, water and people. The Curliss/Vickers and Curliss/Jaha lines are just two examples of Nipmuc/Narragansett families whose presence in the Kittatuck Valley could be further expanded and shared as part of this landscape's complex and overlapping history with future NPS programming, and through engagement with specific tribal members connected to these lines.

Another topic deserving of further exploration (and not explored at all in this report) is the important story of the Kittatuck's pollution, which peaked around 1880. This is also a period when many Native people were more commonly identified as Black in various records, as notions of purity and of the popular "vanishing Indian" myth prevailed in the white society that wished to maintain social and economic boundaries between people of color and itself. Additional exploration and research could also focus on the city of Worcester at the northern end of the Kittatuck Valley, worthy of a separate study (as noted in this report). A report focused on that city could include relevant sites closely connected to water (such as shelter sites on Lake Quinsigamond) and neighborhoods well known to Nipmuc people that developed during the Industrial Period and continued into the twentieth century (until construction of the interstate system divided these neighborhoods and displaced its occupants in yet another round of dispossession and displacement).

As noted above, each of the threads outlined throughout this report could, and should, be explored in more detail to more fully tell the stories connected to this complex landscape surrounding the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. The notion of Indigenous peoples' connections equating to the use of "traditional" resources and activities (such as hunting, fishing and collecting natural resources) is not what this report has focused on, although some of that information may be available through additional engagement with tribal members from the region. That Indigenous and Black peoples were central, rather than at the margins, of the use and industrial development of the Kittatuck Valley is a key point of the narratives offered here. That they were intertwined with the fabric of the everyday lives of the elite; worked as laborers in mills, shops and taverns; and yet continued patterns of movement and mobility over routes traversed for millennia to maintain ties of kinship and connection to place, are central themes of this report. At the same time, in correcting and expanding the narrative about the continued presence of Indigenous people in the region, a responsibility also exists to recognize

an important history of exclusion, dispossession and violence (without relegating all BIPOC people as "marginalized"). More thoroughly explaining, and acknowledging, the predominant culture of whiteness and white supremacy that people maintained in many, if not all, mill villages and town along the Kittatuck will be an important step for this park as it continues discussions and investigations of the presence of Indigenous peoples in the Kittatuck Valley.

Summary of Key Recommendations

- Use this Ethnographic Overview and Assessment report as a baseline opportunity to extend engagement with tribal peoples from the region and gather additional feedback and input;
- Expand the information about specific locations, individuals and families included in this report through this engagement and through additional research;
- Develop pathways for this research through a dedicated position or an internship program to facilitate and expand outreach;
- Begin outreach to, engagement with and incorporation of Indigenous peoples' knowledge through a one or two-day retreat or workshop gathering that would bring people into conversation with each other and with NPS staff about the Blackstone River/Kittatuck Valley;
- Use this gathering and the developing relationships to help further define (or "undefine") the boundaries of this park;
- Provide public acknowledgement of the Blackstone River and the valley as the Kittatuck/ Kittatuck Valley, honoring its origins, connections to and location within the Indigenous homelands of the Nipmuc and Narragansett peoples;
- Conceptualize this landscape in future research, projects, interpretations and discussions as one with many nodes linked by a web of human and natural interactions, focusing on the network of waterways connecting this large cultural landscape and its occupants over time (with the Kittatuck at the center);
- Consider a layered "remapping" of the Blackstone River/Kittatuck Valley that spans 400 years, beginning with the natural landscape and then layered with Indigenous knowledges and place names (then adding settler colonial/immigrant locations);
- Include in this remapping concentric circles representing both tribal homelands (as defined through input from tribal representatives) and the interconnectedness of the nodes dotting this large and complex landscape and demonstrating how both tribal homelands and specific places and areas within those homelands overlap;
- Develop a digital space connected to the park's current website (and featured, rather than hard to locate) for these layered histories of the Blackstone's/Kittatuck's landscape, as well as physical versions at park locations along the river; and
- Undertake additional research focused on the city of Worcester at the northern end of the Blackstone River Valley if enough interest exists for that study.

Additional recommendations may be added following review of and input from National Park Service staff and tribal members from the region. Important to keep in mind for any future engagement is understanding the limits of which information the National Park Service can and should share, as well as what stories and information the public is entitled to. This is a necessary and important step in correcting the extractive practices that capitalism and colonialism have encouraged within settler society and can only be taken through careful conversations and close collaboration with tribal partners (both the roundtable that advises this park and other tribal members). As noted elsewhere in this report, modeling consultation and collaboration, and empowering the authorship of community-led Indigenous heritages, will be required, using this report as a starting point for continued conversations and engagement with local tribal communities and individuals.

Also, additional research on the individual family lines discussed in this report will offer opportunities for deeper engagement with tribal communities, both at the individual and collective levels. Telling the stories of the families connected to the factories and mills of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and their continued presence into the twenty-first century—would provide excellent material for an exhibit, publications, student internship projects and community gatherings to both gather the information (via oral interviews, for example), to compile and organize the data, and to discuss how best to incorporate this information into NPS interpretation processes, websites and additional publications.

Endnotes

Chapter I:

(1) A 2011 report recommended the region for National Park status, and in 2014 the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park was established.

(2) While information on the interactions between Indigenous peoples and other people of color, and with settler colonial immigrants, was easier to locate, a detailed understanding of how all emigrant and immigrant communities developed, settled, and moved through the region over time is not included in this report. Exploring this further may be a worthwhile focus of a separate report, though.

(3) See https://www.nps.gov/blrv/getinvolved/planning.htm and https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=106029

(4) The Indigenous settlement and town of Mashpee (Massachusetts) is one example of this local to southern New England. See Campisi 1993.

Chapter II:

(1) In the context of this report, "immigrants" includes non-Native settlers who willingly relocated to the Americas and have occupied tribal homelands in the region (settler colonists), including the English and European settlers of the early 1600s and later, often characterized as "founders" of the cities, towns and villages across the region. Others who have settled in this region also include African, African-American and refugees who came to New England not necessarily by choice.

(2) Throughout this report, Native, Native American and Indigenous are used interchangeably. While no term is ideal (or how the Indigenous peoples of this region referred to themselves or each other), these are favorable over "Indian," which is used sparingly and in specific contexts in this report.

Chapter V:

(1) This explains the many petitions to the colonial and provincial government, asking the court to confirm lands given, exchanged, or traded in private sales, such as The Act to Prevent and Make Void Clandestine and Illegal Purchases of Lands from the Indians (1702).

(2) The same strategy for framing Indigenous resistance as criminality, rather than sovereign defense was also used in King Philip's War era rhetoric, and can be traced throughout the history we present here. Depending on the era, Indigenous resistance was framed as deviance in different ways: deviant morals, deviant work ethic, deviant biological capacities, etc.

(3) Why is this important? Because the state has a history of blaming settler "behavior" or as they sometimes call it, "mischief" for the mistreatment of Indigenous people, while simultaneously encouraging it through policy.

(4) Note the historical significance of this one example of the logic of dispossession. This is the same logic that the State of New York uses to dispossess much of Haudenosaunee Territory in New York.

(5) "In my judgment the time has arrived when we should definitely make up our minds to recognize the Indian as an individual and not as a member of a tribe. The General Allotment Act is a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass. It acts directly upon the family and the individual. Under its provisions some sixty thousand Indians have already become citizens of the United States. We should now break up the tribal funds, doing for them what allotment does for the tribal lands; that is, they should be divided into individual holdings. There will be a transition period during which the funds will in many cases have to be held in trust. This is the case also with the lands. A stop should be put upon the indiscriminate permission to Indians to lease their allotments. The effort should be steadily to make the Indian work like any other man on his own ground. The marriage laws of the Indians should be made the same as those of the whites." -Theodore Roosevelt December 3, 1901. First Annual Message to the Senate and House of Representatives.

(6) See, for example, these documents: MAC (31:476, 343, 576); MAC (32: 452, 455 among others); MAC (33:28, 32, 86, 207, 360); just to name a few.

(7) This story was, in fact, the irony of Moses Brown, who became an abolitionist, helped found cotton spinning Slater Mill, which in turn supported chattel slavery in the South.

Chapter VI:

(1) A detailed discussion of the history of industrialist families local to this area with connections to Black and Indigenous community members (and in Providence, Rhode Island, in particular) is provided by Clark-pujara (2020).

(2) "John Hazelton proposed to take as an apprentice an Indian girl, daughter of Moses Printer, called Betty, alias Elizabeth, to provide for her good and sufficient meat, drink, apparrel, lodging,

washing and all the other necessaries, to teach her to read English and to learn her the chatechism and upon her arrival to the age of her eighteen years to dismiss her with two good suits of apparrel and for all parts of her body, the one for Sabbath days and the other for working days, and also to give unto one yearling calf, one sheep, one lamb, and one pig." (Papers Related to the Earle Report, Box 1 Folder 1). The trustees approved this proposal on 5/16/1729.

(3) The families included in this group, who were at one point neighbors and/or workmates, either at the straw hat factories, or the shoe factories, or both, were: Leshure, Coffee, Morse (Moorse), Vickers, Hazzard (Hazard), Coombs, Peters, Wilson, Mann, Arkless, Walker, Gunn, Wilbur, Tucker, Bates. We do not know for sure who is considered Nipmuc, Narragansett, Massachusett (Punkapoag), or Wampanoag in this context (or, more likely, a combination of tribal ancestries). Engagement with tribal experts could help to reveal these specific community histories and their connections to the Kittatuck Valley.

(4) Sarah Mann Walker joined her mother Lucina Coffee in Mendon with her daughter Emeline, when Emeline's husband (Francis Gunn) started working as a bootmaker, but she stayed when others went to Oxford, continuing her career at the hat factory and supporting the younger generations that had started to work there as well.

Chapter VII:

(1) See, for example, the map of "The Indigenous Northeast: a Network of Waterways" created for the website for The Common Pot.
https://lbrooks.people.amherst.edu/thecommonpot/map1.html

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