

Jolly olde England in the time of Edmo(u)nd Rice

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No big wars while Edmund Rice lived in England but great changes were happening nonetheless

- Edmund Rice's 1st decade was the last decade of Queen Elizabeth's reign
- James I (simultaneously James VI of Scotland) ascended to the throne in 1603
- Puritans gained social and political power
- The last years when non-noble "yeomen" farmers interacted (and intermarried) with titled gentry
- Landed gentry in region where Edmund lived (southeast England) becoming wealthier, acquiring more land, conspicuously displaying wealth—annoying frugal Puritans
- "Fee title" land ownership becoming the "new fad" in region where Edmund lived, where successful yeomen farmers could buy land and pass title to offspring
- Counter-reformation by new Archbishop of Canterbury causing major social tensions
- Royal anti-Puritan view encouraged emigration of religious dissenters to America
- Charles I came to the throne in 1625; social, religious, political tensions rose....

English farm and village life was similar to that going back to Anglo-Saxon days

Before the 1066 Norman conquest

- London was the only big town
- Fewer than 5% of English were townsmen
- A king ruled over 6 earldoms, the archbishop was powerful, and most land was held by thanes (sort of knights) and the archbishop
- Land (re-)allocation occurred every year in local meetings
- All could present grievances and requests in a local court
- Thanes and earls were summoned to higher courts and meetings (they could be voted out, too)
- Everybody paid the next-higher-up in days of service and in grain (cash from thanes to next-up in addition to months of service)
- The countryside and villages were DARK (no lights)
- Forests, woods, rivers, marshes separated villages with little interaction between them
- A lot of untilled land (forests, woods, rivers, and marsh) where people could hunt, graze animals and fish
- A lot of untilled land

Life under the 1st Stuarts (1603-1649)

- London and Norwich (in Norfolk) were the only 2 big towns
- Around 10% of English were townsmen
- A king ruled over baronets, earls, & dukes, the archbishop was powerful, and most land was held by baronets, earls, & dukes, along with numerous landed gentry (Sir... or Esquire)
- Land (re-)allocation every year in local meetings
- All could present grievances and requests in a local court
- Nobles could be called upon to raise militia, furnish soldiers or ships, and serve in armies
- Yeomen and landed gentry served as jurors and gentry called to higher courts and meetings
- Villagers paid the next-higher in grain; yeomen, titled gentry and above paid cash to next-up the hierarchy
- The countryside and villages were DARK (no lights)
- Forests, woods, rivers, and marsh separated villages with little interaction between them
- A lot of untilled land

English hierarchy was similar to that in Anglo-Saxon days

Before the 1066 Norman conquest

- Cottagers (cottars), the lowest
- Villeins next lowest, most numerous—farmed ~ 50 acres
- Thanes
- Earls
- King

Life under the 1st Stuarts (1603-1649)

- Cottars & husbandmen
- Villeins
- Yeomen
- Squires
- Nobles
- King

Working & owning the land (1)

- A village might be 100 to 200 people inhabiting 200 to 300 cleared acres in with ~ 15 families + “extras”
- Manors were larger
- Before the Conquest, the thane would be at the top; in the 1600s that would be a squire, or lord of the manor on larger estates
- Before the Conquest, a village might have 6 – 10 plows each pulled by 8 oxen (a “half-plow” if only four)
- Land farmed as one open field, worked in strips as allotted at the moot (annual village meeting)—a furlong (220 yards) in length (200 yard-long strips with 20 yards turning radius to accommodate turning a team of 8 oxen); 22 yards wide
- Cottars included smiths, foresters, beekeepers, and simple laborers
- Villeins (from Latin *villanus*—villager) owned land (20 – 50 acres), with a sewn strip, oxen, sheep, some tools & furniture furnished by the thane—returned to the thane when he died but usually given back to offspring
- Cottars were provided cottages only
- **This system still prevailed in the time Edmund Rice lived in England**

Working & owning the land (2)

- Cottars owed favors in kind, perhaps getting a few pence for labor or crafts
- Villeins owed 2 days work a week on the thane's land, (3 days during sowing and reaping), plowing all the thane's arable land, seed corn for 3 acres, and gifts at different feasts (a pig, a lamb, hens)
- Villeins had rights to keep herds and hunt in forests during Saxon times but fences, lords and wardens were taking those rights away when Edmund Rice lived in England
- Extra wool and wovens, animals, and extra bounties from crops and orchards could be sold for cash or in-kind barter at market days and festivals.
- Thanes, later yeomen and husbandmen, worked the land so that the thane/squire could attend to other matters (collect rents, serve in the hundred court* or above that, shire court)
- From 1000 to 1700 (and still...), English were committeemen...if problems couldn't be worked out at the village moot, then the matter moved up to the hundred moot (held once a month); where representatives of many villages appeared
- Intractable problems moved up to the shire court—not much different in 1620 (except that there were lawyers and solicitors by then).
- Cash was only needed to buy either salt or iron; everything else was raised or made at the village level—pretty much the same in 1630 in either Olde or New England

*A "hundred" was for 100 "hides". A hide was the land supposedly needed to support one family—from roughly 20 to 200 acres (depends on the land). One of the settlements just outside Jamestown was Martin's Hundred (1610).

A new king (and royal house) in town

- In Elizabeth's reign, roving bands of landless poor terrorized the defenseless countryside (called "sturdy beggars"), leading her to generate the Poor Laws
- The Poor Laws required each shire to provide food for its poor and provide its own jails—with government reps inspecting to ensure compliance and issuing fines to the non-compliant (the practice maintained under James I)
- By the time the Stuarts arrived, the sturdy beggar threat had vanished; ditto *re* threat of foreign invasions and military ventures
- Exploration to the New World were mostly fishing ventures initially, then charters granted to certain groups (hoping dissenters would sail away...)
- Norwich (Norfolk)—near Edmund Rice's home turf—grew large and wealthy through the wool trade
- English nobles lost access and influence at court to Scots, eventually leading to many who did not support the king at crunch-time
- Not just French, but Spanish became welcome to court—and favored

What changed during Edmund's last decade in England (1628-1638)?

- Ecclesiastical courts acquired wide powers, reaching out into towns & villages
- Archbishop Charles Laud (with King Charles' blessing) zealously pushed to rigidize church services, suppressing churchgoers' speech (Puritan services allow the members to speak)
- King and Archbishop push a new "Book of Common Prayer" in 1629 on every church
- Non-Puritans were seeking a return to traditional church rituals, festivals
- Clueless king, surrounded by hundreds of courtiers in Whitehall Palace, allows wars to develop in Ireland & Scotland that needed money to support
- French-born Catholic Queen Henrietta (sister of Louis XIV) dominating, encouraging tacit return of Catholics to favor
- In 1629, Parliament refuses to authorize money for wars without concessions
- Charles I refuses to call for new parliament, forces "Ship Money" taxes upon everyone from yeomen to top nobles, and for some nobles to build ships and furnish soldiers
- Absolute rule: censorship, large numbers arrested; no parliament from 1629 to 1640

Edmund Rice must have been a yeoman

- No records yet found of his time in England other than his wedding to Elizabeth Frost in Bury St. Edmond (Suffolk) + baptisms of children by her in Berkhamsted (Hertsfordshire)
- Yeomen served as jurors, sent to grammar schools and (with money or sponsor) could attend college, serve as aldermen, justice of the peace, and other civil roles
- “Yeoman” meant you own land and make at least 40 shilling a year
- **Edmund wasn’t a squire**, which required that you lived solely off rents (*e.g.* you didn’t work the land or in a trade)...he farmed and made money
- He must have had connections at Whitehall, because he and another gent got a 50-pound patent there (which could only happen working through resident courtiers)
- Edmund Rice was elected alderman or seniorman, and freeman in 2 different towns in Massachusetts colony—within 2 years of his arrival
- With 12 others, Edmund petitioned the Massachusetts Bay Company to charter a new town (Marlboro/Marlborough) in 1659—so he was known to “top management” and “already knew what to do” as an alderman in America

Yeoman, freeman, franklin, squire....

- A well-to-do yeoman might have more money than a titled squire, thus a titled person might marry off a daughter to him (no class barrier in 1630's)
- A freeman (= franklin) is not tied to a particular property, lord or town; may move about on his own and choose an overlord (Edmund Rice became a freeman in 1640 in Sudbury)
- Unlike on the Continent, these ranks allowed one to enter commerce
- All of these ranks were allowed to attend college, so titled and country boys mixed there (rich ones might make *de facto* servants of the poor ones if the poor needed sustenance)
- All of these ranks could theoretically become justices of the peace, lawyers and solicitors, judges, masters (professors), and many did
- **Inheritance might bring one enough money to buy properties that earn rent—making one a squire or “(landed) gentleman”**

Faith, religious practice, & witchcraft

- Laws were issued in 1542, prescribing penalties for various witchcraft rituals and practices
- Belief in witchcraft was strong, with trials of “witches” peaking about 1640 (just as widespread and deeply believed on the Continent, too)...also in “cunning men”—recognized “experts” in the occult
- The “Established Church” meant the Church of England, but was “very similar” to the “Old Church”
- Under Charles I, Archbishop Charles Laud forced elevated platforms be built in all churches for clergy only so that they could look down upon parishioners and not be reachable or mingle with them
- Under Laud, bishops were restricted strictly to prepared sermons, which meant lecturing Puritans—who believed that they could express themselves/argue back in church
- Scots were angered by Laud’s aggressive moves, as their church (the Kirk”) was led by presbyters (elders) who were strongly opposed to Canterbury, London, and Roman domination
- Protestants broke up into factions, even among Puritans, mostly based upon details of church services
- Much of the laity in the 1630’s was drifting toward a preference for services “as in the old days” but the factional leaders were hard-driving and strongly led—and rejected the older celebrations

Four options as a young teen

- As a girl, you most likely will be married through a deal worked out by your parents (“reasonable” chance that you would have veto power and perhaps even some input—but free choice *very* unlikely)
- Unlike in Italy or German principalities, you would be able to mix with men and socialize—unless belonging to a strict religious sect
- As a boy...if eldest son, you would inherit the land and house eventually but be forced out when you marry (“go build your own...”)
- If “down the list” and family has some money, you would go to school (not trade); if poor you would be apprenticed
- With perceptible intelligence, you could go to college—either on family money or sponsorship of a lord or rich squire
- **BUT if you don’t get a paying job (tutor, court employee, a place in the Inns of Court, clergyman), you may starve because you can’t farm, can’t enter a guild, or do any other useful thing**
- A rich lord may take you under his wing and find a place for you— or make you a servant
- Otherwise best if you join one of the numerous military formations fighting in European wars

Movers behind moving to the New World

- Fishing expeditions 1600-1623 were ventures without royal patronage, with Sudbury MA settled in 1616
- Several groups were recruiting settlers for New England in the 1620s
Petitions for recognizing settlements began with Plymouth Colony, then Dorchester (1623)
- The Massachusetts Bay Company took business seriously, forming itself through the Cambridge Declaration (1629), signed in (surprise...) Cambridge
- John Winthrop, a latecomer to the organizers, was made leader

What does any of the foregoing haveth to do with Edmund Rice?

- He needed money to move about, buy passage and supplies for his (and his family's) voyage to New England, buy livestock, purchase transport and pay rent until he could build a home
- He needed his freedom to move about
- He needed to be able to read as well as farm (and hunt on his land)
- He needed to “know the system” and cultivate contacts
- Puritan faith and (almost certainly) energetic participation in church services and community activities helped make him the leader that he became
- He needed to know how to be chosen as a civic leader *and* what to do when he got the role
- He needed—and must have gotten—access to information about New England and to correspond with people there (through people involved in shipping and supporting settlers)

**Edmund Rice was a force in
2 worlds**