

# INTRODUCTION

This new edition of *This is Who We Were: Colonial America, 1492-1775* is the 13th volume in the *This is Who We Were* series. It includes 25 profiles—spanning more than 250 years—of men, women, and children living and working in the Colonial Era in the country that would become the United States of America. Like the other works in this series, this volume observes the lives of working Americans, in this case, pilgrims, colonists, settlers, slaves and Native Americans—those who helped shape the history of the country—decade by decade. It covers all ages, a wide range of geographical and social backgrounds, and a variety of professions, some of which focus on fortune, some on fame, and some on survival. All profiles are supported by dozens of images, and demonstrate the various roles that colonial Americans—Natives, European immigrants, and African slaves—played in laying the groundwork for the establishment of the American project.

Following this Introduction are the **Personal Profiles**. Each of 25 profile chapters starts with a brief introduction of the subject, and moves to three bulleted sections: Life at Home; Life at Work; Life in the Community. The first details what life was like in the homes of the individuals profiled, with a particular focus on the early, foundational period of their lives. It might include what their childhood village or settlement was like, how they interacted with friends and family, what their daily routine was, and what dreams and ambitions they held. Life at Work details typical workday activities, focusing especially on the subjects' efforts to stake out their territory in a historical setting that offered both great opportunities and great difficulties. Life in the Community offers insight into the individual's community, or neighborhood, as well as information about the settlement or colony in which they lived.

Although the profiles of the 25 individuals in *Colonial America* are generally fictional, they are deeply informed by original research—personal diaries, historical documents, family histories—and include governmental and demographic statistics and other data that help paint a full portrait of the time period and geographical location where the individuals worked and lived. The text is presented in easy-to-read bulleted format, and supported by hundreds of graphics, from personal photographs to period maps and charts.

Next, a detailed **Historical Snapshot** offers a chronology of key economic, social, and political events, plus inventions and innovations, from 1600 to 1774.

Following the Historical Snapshot, the back matter of *Colonial America* includes the following valuable sections:

**Original 13 Colonies** is more than 100 pages that detail conditions in each of the 13 colonies. Each colony section includes three distinct sections—Timeline, Colonists, and Natives—and lots of maps and images. This unique section offers the opportunity to understand the challenges of the New World, and how they were navigated.

**Economy of the Times** is comprised of five major categories:

- *Selected Incomes*—a selection of jobs compiled from a variety of sources, including government records, diaries, newspapers, and payroll accounts. During the years covered in this work, many workers were farmers whose income came via crops, barter and exchanges.
- *Services and Fees*—includes the costs of managing a household budget, including tolls charged by Indian tribes for passage through their territory, and fines for falling asleep in church.

- *Slave Trades*—a year by year accounting of the average price paid for British American and West African slaves.
- *Commodities*—a yearly report of the cost of 18 food and agricultural items, from beef to wine, traded in Philadelphia.
- *Selected Prices*—the cost of hundreds of items, organized in dozens of categories, from apparel to entertainment to real estate.

**All Around Us** includes reprints of 12 thoughtfully culled primary and secondary sources from the Colonial Era. Gathered from newspapers, diaries, letters, speeches and legal documents, these offer fascinating insights into the lifestyle, culture and emotion of the period.

**General Index** ends the volume with a quick, helpful way to find the content you are looking for.

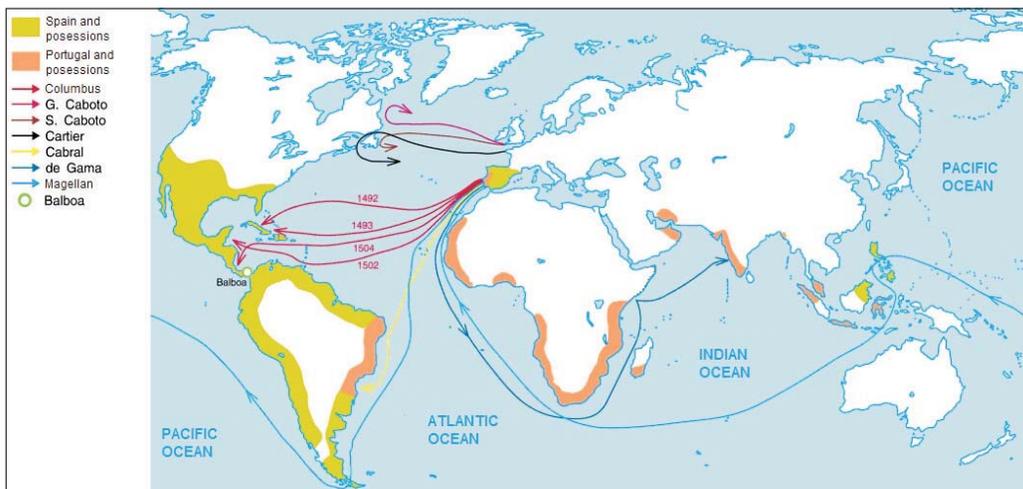
This volume celebrates the contributions of a wide swath of Americans in shaping the future nation's development and direction, deepening the understanding of how their actions influenced the world in which we live today. In a detailed fashion, this content helps the reader reflect on the role that colonial actors, both large and small, played in shaping the future of our country, reinforcing the fact that all of us continue to be capable of effecting change in our own community, building a new future for the ongoing American experiment.

## 1494: Portuguese Explorer Sails to the New World

Matias Ponce was a Portuguese explorer who sailed from Portugal to the New World, making landfall after about two months at sea off the Atlantic coast in the Chesapeake Bay area of present-day Maryland and Virginia. He was one of the earliest Europeans to explore those shores.

### Life at Home

- Matias Ponce was born on May 12, 1464 in Lisbon in the Kingdom of Portugal.
- His father, Sebastian, was an advisor to the King, Afonso V. Because Afonso was so young—he was just six when he ascended to the throne in 1438—many people used this uncertain situation to try and influence the direction of the country under the regent, Peter.
- Sebastian had been critical of Peter's governance as a young noble and when Afonso came of age and rejected all of Peter's edicts, he took on Sebastian as a valued confidante and promoted him to his inner circle.
- Sebastian's wife and Matias' mother, Maria, was a favorite in the royal court and charmed everyone at balls and other social gatherings.
- Matias and his younger brother Ferdinand enjoyed growing up in the court. They especially liked putting on the fancy clothing they needed to wear when they made official appearances.
- Matias was educated with a special tutor alongside his brother. He hated having to study and was often reprimanded by his tutor, a middle-aged man named Jacques. Jacques would also occasionally paddle Matias when he did not behave.
- After his lessons, Matias would go run around in the courtyard of their house until he had exhausted himself. He wanted to run around the streets of Lisbon, but his parents would not let him leave the property unattended.



Matias Ponce sailed from Portugal to the New World during the Age of Discovery, whose main routes are shown here.

- One day, when he was ten, Matias snuck out and went exploring in the city. Although he had seen the immediate area around his house before with his parents, seeing it alone made everything seem new and exciting. When he returned home, his father paddled him and locked him in his room for two days straight. “I don’t care,” Matias told himself. “It was worth it.”
- The only part of his schooling that Matias enjoyed was when Jacques told him about King Afonso’s recent conquests in Morocco. Matias found these stories thrilling and would ask Jacques to tell him more. He longed for the excitement of invading foreign lands.
- When Matias was 13, Afonso retired to a monastery and his son John took over as acting king, earning that title on a full-time basis four years later when Afonso died. When he became king, as John II, he began curtailing the power of many nobles, but still decided to keep on Sebastian as an advisor.
- John took a special liking to Matias, and when he was 18, Matias was made a junior advisor to the king, which at first simply involved him following along with his father and listening.
- One day, when in court, John asked Sebastian what he thought about turning his attention to a major series of expeditions in Africa. Sebastian hesitated in his response, but Matias couldn’t contain his enthusiasm. “I think you should do it!” he practically shouted.
- After that, John, who had already made up his mind to lead voyages to Africa, began to lean more heavily on Matias for advice as Sebastian began to fall out of his favor.
- John began replacing many of the old aristocracy in the court with the most intelligent and accomplished men he could find in his kingdom, eventually forming a Council of Scholars to advise him. After he did this, Sebastian lost his position, but Matias continued on.
- Sebastian became bitter and resentful of his son and holed himself up at his estate. Likewise, Maria’s



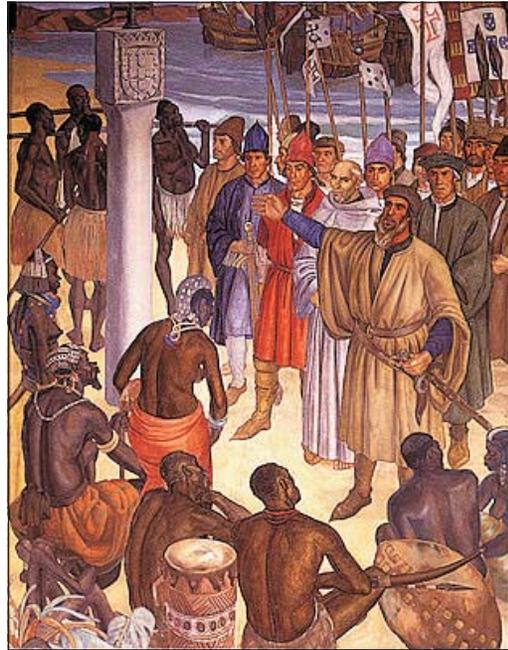
*Matias' father was an advisor to Afonso V of Portugal.*



*Matias was an advisor to King John II of Portugal, seen here reviewing plans for the construction of a new mercantile vessel.*

- position suffered and she became withdrawn.
- Matias was unperturbed by these developments and began pressing John include him in some of these expeditions. “You’re too valuable to me here,” John told him, but after Matias begged enough, John agreed to let him go.
- In 1484, Portugal’s top explorer, Diogo Cão, was to set off on a second voyage to Africa. His first had been highly successful, as he had discovered the Congo River and now he planned to push further inland.

- John assigned Matias to the voyage, but warned him that he would be expected to perform lots of grunt work on the trip. Matias didn't care; he was thrilled to be going.
- The trip was filled with hardships, and Matias was not used to eating so badly, nor to performing the manual tasks on board the ship. Halfway through the voyage out to Africa, he began to doubt his decision, but once they arrived in Africa, the excitement returned and he knew he had made the right choice.
- The voyage lasted two and a half years, as the team pushed their way through present day Angola into the present day Democratic Republic of Congo. They encountered many natives along the way, gaining information from them but also treating them rather brutally; in some cases, forcing them to accompany them as slaves.
- Matias did not mind this as he viewed the mission he was on a noble one and viewed Portugal as a superior civilization.
- By the time they had pushed on to the Yellala Falls and Cão erected a stone to mark their presence, Matias had so impressed the explorer with his enthusiasm and aptitude that Cão allowed him to inscribe the stone.
- When he returned to the court after the trip, Matias took up his old position again under John II. Once again, he longed to get out of the court and take up a new voyage.
- In 1490, Matias married Isabella, the daughter of another of the king's advisors. She gave birth to a son, John, shortly after.
- In 1493, Christopher Columbus returned from his famous voyage to the New World and stopped at Lisbon. He proclaimed the new lands for Spain in front of John II, who replied that under a previous treaty, these lands were under Portugal's sphere of influence.
- John II sent a threatening letter to Spain and the two countries agreed to negotiate. The result was the Treaty of Tordesillas which gave most of the New World to Spain.
- Nonetheless, the king did not want to lose his influence entirely in that part of the world and, at the insistence of Matias, agreed to send his advisor to make landfall in present day North America. He placed Matias in charge of the voyage and sent him and his small fleet on their way.



*Matias journeyed with famed Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão, and even inscribed the stone Cão left to mark the Europeans' presence.*

### **Life at Work**

- Matias was given a fleet of three ships and a crew of 200 and set sail on November 11, 1493, with their goal of reaching the Atlantic coast of North America.
- Although Matias had never led an expedition before, his men respected him for his role in the Congo voyage and were fully prepared to pledge their allegiance to his leadership.
- One week into the trip, they hit a major storm and Matias's ship sprung a leak. He personally went down into the hold and helped his men plug it and the ship was quickly made seaworthy once again.
- When they were about one week from landfall, Matias realized that they were running through their provisions too quickly. He decreased the rations that each man received. The men were very unhappy about this and they sent a representative to speak with him.

- Matias invited the representative into his cabin and spoke with him for a long time. He patiently explained the situation and the representative went away satisfied. The men did not complain any more.
- On February 2, 1494, Matias was awakened in the early morning by a loud cry. Running up to the deck, he realized that the man on watch was crying out, “Land ho!” Matias looked up and saw a thin sliver of green and yelled out his own cheers.
- The fleet docked later that day and Matias looked around. There was a large empty expanse of green, marked with some flecks of white snow.
- As the expedition pushed inland, they encountered a group of Native Americans, belonging to the Piscataway tribe. They were surprised to see that the Piscataways had developed a sophisticated farming system. “That is very impressive,” Matias said, nodding in approval.
- Although no one on the voyage spoke a common language with the Piscataways, the two groups were able to communicate with gestures and by reading tones of voices.
- Matias led these efforts at communication and soon won the confidence of the tribe’s leader, Chief Redwing.
- Matias, though, was thinking about how he could take over this land for Portugal, even though it did not belong to their sphere of influence.



*Matias and his crew made landfall in the Chesapeake Bay area of present-day Maryland and Virginia.*



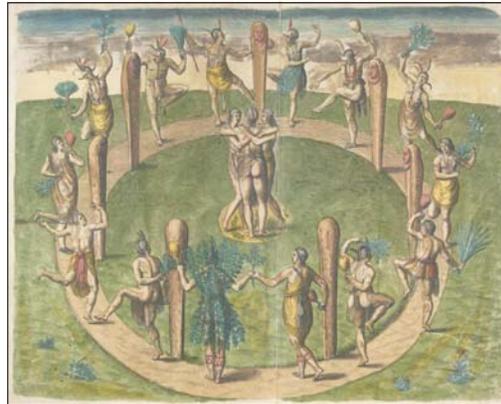
*Matias traveled in a Portuguese carrack like the one shown above.*

- Chief Redwing put up Matias and his men in their longhouses, with many Piscataways agreeing to live with their neighbors to open up space.
- On the third night, the men woke up to a heavy snow. They were not expecting this weather and they all felt chilled to the bone. The Piscataways laughed at the Europeans’ reactions.
- It continued to snow the rest of the week and the men started to complain. Matias thought to himself, “What should I do?” He really wanted to make his mark on the New World, but the weather could be a problem. In addition, he didn’t know what the repercussions of contravening the Treaty of Tordesillas would be.
- Matias also noticed a certain rising tension in his interactions with the Piscataways. They were very friendly at first but soon became wary about what Matias and his men might do to them. Matias decided that it probably wasn’t worth it to try and establish a settlement here and told his men that they were heading back.
- Before they left, he allowed the men to steal the treasures from the Piscataways’ trophy vault

which they did in the middle of the night. The Piscataways discovered the plunder as the men were leaving, but were too late in chasing them down. The ships had already sailed.

### Life in the Community

- Matias and his men landed in present day Indian Head, Maryland
- At the time of his arrival, the area was inhabited by the Piscataway people
- The Piscataways had previously occupied more northern territory, but in the last century, a “little ice age” had forced them to move south to slightly warmer territory
- Because of their skills in farming, the Piscataways were far more sedentary than many of the neighboring tribes
- They farmed maize, beans, melons, pumpkins, and squash, along with some tobacco.
- When they developed their farming techniques about a century before Matias landed, it allowed them to diversify their means of subsistence. They had previously been strictly a hunter-gatherer society. Their numbers began to grow
- They continued to hunt and gather wild plants, though. The men hunted elk, bears, deer, beaver, and wolves.
- The Piscataway people lived in a series of longhouses, which were about 20 feet long and had a hearth in the middle. This is where Matias and his men stayed during their time in the New World.
- They spoke Algonquian Piscataway, a language that is currently extinct.

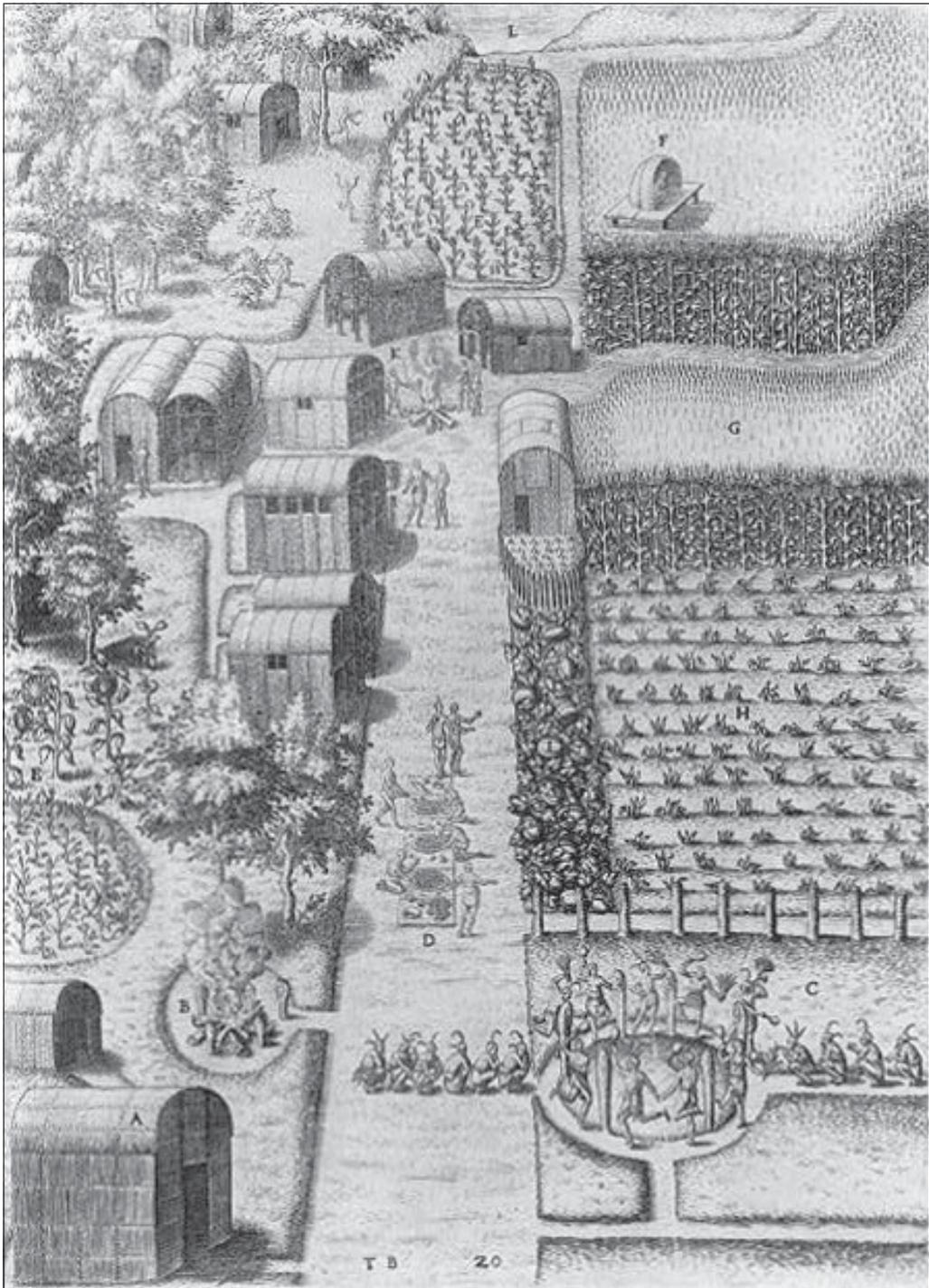


*One of the main goals of exploratory trips like Matias' was the documentation of Native culture and traditions, like this dance.*



*The Piscataways lived in long houses.*

- At the time that Matias and his men arrived, the Piscataway lived a relatively peaceful existence, although there was some conflict with fellow tribes over competing resources. This relative harmony would change in the coming centuries.
- In the late 16th century, several Iroquois tribes invaded, and destroyed most of the Piscataways' northern settlements. Eventually, the Piscataways would ally themselves with the English in hopes of keeping their tribe intact.
- By the 18th century, though, they began to be pushed off their land by the government of the Maryland Colony who wanted them gone and had to keep settling further afield, eventually moving as far north as present day Canada.



*Matias and his crew were impressed with the Piscataway's proficiency in farming.*

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Philadelphia</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Philadelphia</b>
	1764	6.67	1770	7.17
	1765	6.33	1771	6.33
	1766	6.67	1772	6.69
	1767	6.80	1773	6.51
	1768	6.19	1774	7.33
	1769	7.17		
Tea, per pound	1752	0.68	1764	0.90
	1753	0.72	1765	0.93
	1754	0.67	1766	0.83
	1755	0.70	1767	0.72
	1756	0.60	1768	0.58
	1757	0.87	1769	0.46
	1758	0.91	1770	1.00
	1759	1.00	1771	0.70
	1760	0.78	1772	0.53
	1761	0.73	1773	0.53
	1762	1.07	1774	0.73
	1763	0.84		
Tobacco, per hundredweight	1750	2.40	1762	2.83
	1751	2.53	1763	2.67
	1752	2.65	1764	2.33
	1753	2.56	1765	2.33
	1754	2.59	1766	2.67
	1755	2.00	1767	2.97
	1756	1.96	1768	3.00
	1757	2.33	1769	3.00
	1758	2.47	1770	4.16
	1759	2.83	1771	4.33
	1760	3.33	1772	4.33
	1761	2.33		
Wheat, per bushel	1750	0.54	1763	0.90
	1751	0.53	1764	0.57
	1752	0.57	1765	0.63
	1753	0.59	1766	0.83
	1754	0.61	1767	0.82
	1755	0.59	1768	0.95
	1756	0.64	1769	0.70
	1757	0.53	1770	0.76
	1758	0.53	1771	0.93
	1759	0.64	1772	1.05
	1760	0.64	1773	1.02
	1761	0.62	1774	1.03
	1762	0.70		

Values are expressed in Silver Dollars, the most common currency in the colony for trade

Commodity	Year	Philadelphia	Year	Philadelphia
Wine, per pipe	1750	80.00	1763	146.67
	1751	82.13	1764	106.67
	1752	82.13	1765	120.00
	1753	82.67	1766	133.33
	1754	82.67	1767	133.33
	1755	66.67	1768	133.33
	1756	82.67	1769	133.33
	1757	104.00	1770	133.33
	1758	106.67	1771	133.33
	1759	118.40	1772	133.33
	1760	128.80	1773	146.67
	1761	122.67	1774	166.67
	1762	133.33		

Values are expressed in Silver Dollars, the most common currency in the colony for trade



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# PUBLICK OCCURRENCES

Both *FORREIGN* and *DOMESTICK*\*

Boston, Thursday Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1690.

**I**t is designed, that the Country shall be furnished Once a month (or if any Glut of Occurrences happen, oftener,) with an Account of such considerable things as have arrived unto our Notice.

In order hereunto, the Publisher will take what pains he can to obtain a Faithful Relation of all such things; and will particularly make himself beholden to such Persons in Boston whom he knows to have been for their own use the diligent Observers of such matters.

That which is herein proposed, is, First, That Memorable Occurrences of Divine Providence may not be neglected or forgotten, as they too often are. Secondly, That people everywhere may better understand the Circumstances of Public Affairs, both abroad and at home; which may not only direct their Thoughts at all times, but at some times also to assist their Businesses and Negotiations.

Thirdly, That something may be done towards the Curing, or at least the Charming of that Spirit of Lying, which prevails amongst us, wherefore nothing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, repairing to the best fountains for our Information. And when there appears any material mistake in anything that is collected, it shall be corrected in the next [edition].

Moreover, the Publisher of these Occurrences is willing to engage, that whereas, there are many False Reports, maliciously made, and spread among us, if any well-minded person will be at the pains to trace any such false Report so far as to find out and Convict the First Raiser of it, he will in this Paper (unless just Advice be given to the contrary) expose the Name of such person as A malicious Raiser of a false Report. It is suppos'd that none will dislike this Proposal, but such as intend to be guilty of so villainous a Crime.

**T**he Christianized Indians in some parts of Plimouth, have newly appointed a day of

Thanksgiving to God for his Mercy in supplying their extreme and pinching Necessities under their late want of Corn, & for His giving them now a prospect of a very Comfortable Harvest. Their Example may be worth Mentioning.

Tis observed by the Husbandmen [farmers], that altho' the With-draw of so great a strength



National Humanities Center, 2006: [www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm](http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm). Images added, and some spelling and punctuation modernized for clarity. Digital images of *Publick Occurrences* from the Massachusetts Historical Society, beginning at [masshist.org/database/query3.cfm?queryID=219](http://masshist.org/database/query3.cfm?queryID=219). Digital image of the governor's order banning the newspaper's publication at [masshist.org/database/onview.cfm?queryID=218](http://masshist.org/database/onview.cfm?queryID=218). Permission pending. Complete image credits at [www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm](http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm).