COMMUNITIES OF WORKERS: FREE LABOR IN PROVINCIAL MASSACHUSETTS, 1690-1765

by

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ABSTRACT

The particular forms of work in provincial Massachusetts influenced and were reflected in the structure of that society to an extent previously ignored by social historians. While this study presents a description of individual practices and collective patterns of work, it addresses itself to the broader framework of provincial society. As the analysis proceeds, it tests the conclusions of a large number of recent historians who have found significant change in the social structure of Massachusetts in the decades prior to 1765.

There were two distinct settings for work in the province: the rural network of self-contained towns where subsistence farming and an informal system of labor and commodity exchange formed a socio-economic base for the great majority of the population; and the commercial economy of coastal Massachusetts, as exemplified by Boston, where contracted specialized crafts work and individual control of production were the most common features of labor. This analysis of work and workers reveals a marked difference in the respective forms of work in each of the settings, but it confirms a similar degree of communal influence upon the nature and objectives of work. Conversely, the chief features and arrangements of work helped to sustain the established forms of family, domicile and local society.

These conditions were upheld in a balance of individualism and communalism. In rural society the worker was self-sufficient only to the extent that his small farm would permit; beyond that he was dependent on the community for the means to apply his extra labor and as a source of the goods and services his farm could not provide. In Boston the artisan exercised independent control of his labor but could not control a significant share of the local market. He was mutually dependent on the individual services of other specialized artisans. In both cases, the worker's self-sufficiency was tempered by local social and economic conditions and standards that at once afforded him a measure of self-interest and placed restraints on its excesses.

In these circumstances there was no contradiction between the goals of individuals and the interdependency of community life. Rather, a durable relationship was formed between the individual and his community. Population growth was absorbed into a stable and accommodating social arrangement. The small, localized markets and individual control of economic functions were tied to social imperatives that resisted technical or organizational innovation in work practices. As the scale and function of work continued in established patterns, the broader social structure was maintained.

Therefore, recent theories of social change in pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts, drawn from concepts of crowding, stratification and conflict, must be reconsidered or modified in light of the stability and durability of communal society as revealed in the conditions and aims of provincial labor.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Acts and Resolves	Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, 1692-1787, 21 vols., (Boston: 1869-1922)
AAS	American Antiquarian Society
AHR	American Historical Review
AQ	American Quarterly
Baker	Baker Library Manuscripts and Archives Division, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston
BCR	Reports of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston (Colonial Town Meeting Records and Selectmen's Minutes) 39 vols, (Boston: 1876-1909)
Boston Town Papers	Unpublished Town Records, Manuscripts Division, Boston Public Library
Civil List	W.H. Whitmore, ed., Massachusetts Civil List for the Colonial and Provincial Periods, 1630-1774 (Albany, N.Y.: 1870)
Colonial Laws	W.H. Whitmore, Colonial Laws of Massachusetts: Reprinted from the Edition of 1672, with the Supplements to 1686 (Boston: 1889)
EHR	Economic History Review
EIHC	Essex Institute Historical Collections
Historical Data	Historical Data Relating to the Cities, Towns and Counties of Massachusetts (Secretary of State, Boston: 1975)
Historical Statistics	Historical Statistics, Colonial Times to the Present (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., 1960) Section Z

JEH	Journal of Economic History
JIH	Journal of Social History
M. Arch.	Massachusetts Public Archives, State House, Boston
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society
Mass. Bay Recs.	Records of the Governor and Company of The Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1626-1686, 5 vols (Boston: 1853-4)
NEHGR	New England Historical and Genealogical Register
NEQ	New England Quarterly
Public Officials	Robert F. Seybolt, ed., The Town Officials of Colonial Boston, 1620-1775 (Cambridge: 1939)
WMQ	William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Series

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CHAPTER I

PROVINCIAL SOCIETY, THE HISTORIAN AND LABOR

The purpose of this study is to examine and explain how work contributed to the status of the individual in colonial Massachusetts and how the distribution of labor defined the social and economic features of that society. The major thrust of the dissertation, then, is descriptive; it describes varieties of work, the ends to which they were directed and the relationships between types of work and between work and the other social arrangements of the community. Inevitably, the reconstructing of such a fundamental feature of colonial society leads beyond a narrow consideration of the various forms of work. When work is examined in the context of individual practice, family organization and community involvement, the broader features of Massachusetts society come into focus. From the perspective of a study of work, that society appears far less polarized — far less dysfunctional in its economic and social relationships — than recent historians have argued.

The so-called provincial period of Massachusetts history was more than a political epoch; it is expecially suitable for an analysis of work because it was also a period of relatively stable social and economic conditions. The granting of the 1691 Charter marked the end of the Puritan Commonwealth with its frequent cycles of institutional

experimentation and adjustment; the years following 1765 brought with them intensified social and economic dislocation along with political and constitutional conflict. The decades from 1690 to 1765 reveal a community in possession of its own special social and economic characteristics.[1] It was an age of relative political stability and tranquility during which the social concepts and experiences of the founding and early generations had evolved and were expressed in the principal features of provincial society. In broad terms, provincial Massachusetts was a society that was organized under Puritan principles and which was pre-industrial and agrarian, and ethnically homogeneous.[2]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the population of Massachusetts was mostly native born and most inhabitants lived within a few miles of their birthplaces.[3] Cultural and social institutions such as religion, education, domicile and family, economy and work were established, as were laws and the mechanisms for administering them. The form and function of local government were stable; the economic base of the society was well organized, as a stable underpinning for the social structure. Many of the earlier ideals had been modified to suit the realities of the material world and the religious, political and social expectations of the founders had been reconciled with the economic experience of successive generations. In large measure, the social and religious standards of the first generation had been maintained within the context of the economic life of early eighteenth century society.[4]

As the eighteenth century unfolded the various institutions of this society would have to accommodate the continuing dynamics of change. Periodic economic fluctuation and successive bouts of currency inflation, deflation and devaluation would afflict the province. The social, cultural and political causes and ramifications of the Great Awakening were other signs of flux and change within the society.[5] For the fundamental social, political and economic institutions and practices to endure through the provincial period, perhaps the greatest test of those institutions would be population growth and territorial expansion.

The population of Massachusetts increased from 49,000 in 1690 to 227,000 in 1760.[6] In the process of absorbing that four-fold increase, the society of the province was obliged to intensify and broaden its use of land to accommodate the simple pressure of numbers on existing facilities and at the same time transmit its institutional format to successive generations. Growth over time and the force of that growth on the existing order and its values constituted the most potent agent of change in provincial society. Serious questions concerning the social history of Massachusetts have arisen from the phenomenon of quantitative growth in population: could that society deflect or absorb the changes implicit in rapid growth and retain its special characteristics? Moreover, if the society did survive intact the effects of population expansion as well as economic fluctuation and socio-cultural innovation, how was that achieved?

Were the institutions and traditions of this society sufficiently strong, practical and flexible to envelop the processes of growth and potential change and remain intact? Or did they yield to these forces and undergo change themselves?

Social historians of pre-Revolutionary eighteenth century Massachusetts recently have dealt extensively and voluminously with those questions. In order to understand provincial society, historians have examined the forces of stability and change as they made contact with each other over time. They have done so by isolating the society's basic institutions, the repositories and agencies of the society's socio-cultural and economic traditions and arrangements. These basic institutions have been identified as the individual, the family, the church and the local community; together, these elements constituted the larger institution, Massachusetts. Historians have tested those institutions with various approaches, looking for stability and continuity or flux and change and finding conditions that range from consensual communalism to pluralism and extreme individualism, from economic equality to disparity, stratification and fragmentation, and from stable continuity to crowding, diminution of economic status, communal conflict and dissolution of the traditional order. For most of these analysts, land and population have been key elements in the question of continuity versus change. Others have concluded that religious decline permitted the individual to abandon his seventeenth century corporate communal ways to become the acquisitive self-directed materialist of the nineteenth century.[7]

From the conclusions of demographic and economic studies there has emerged disagreement on the nature, meaning, form and effects of change or changing factors. There is, however, some agreement on the fact that provincial Massachusetts began with a pattern of social institutions that had emerged from the seventeenth century experiences of Puritan society. Another shared feature of these studies is that they have each focused on some aspect of life and society that affected all or most members of the provincial community.[8]

One very common, but commonly overlooked feature of this society is work. Work not only affected all members of the Massachusetts community but it coincided with all the subsequent values, conduct and relations among and between the residents of the province. Everyone did or was expected to work. From the moment when a child reached a stage in its growth where it could safely and productively perform a task, until the time when old age or infirmity precluded physical endeavour, men and women worked. That such an obvious and fundamental fact of life has been largely overlooked by the social historians of provincial Massachusetts reflects acknowledgement of work's universal and basic characteristic, as much as it does the historian's biases. Social historians have been concerned with work as a tacitly acknowledged component of the other social factors they have examined. Work, as it was performed, by whom and in what circumstances, has been left out of most of the critical studies of provincial society. Livelihood, its means, conditions, aims and

results has been gauged in terms of demographic, economic and political conclusions and not in terms of work as a factor of livelihood.

Yet work was more than a simple means of livelihood. It was that single activity from which all subsequent social conditions flowed or to which all other social factors were directed. It was an economic necessity, to be sure, but its particular qualities often reflected the social position, opportunity and purposes of the individual. Its importance was cultural as well as social and economic; it was seen as part of the general education of the corporate citizen of early Massachusetts. Along with moral, social, religious and scholastic training, the acquisition of a vocational skill or function and its application were presumed to make the citizen more complete and more in harmony with society's aims and the community's welfare.[9] Work was something to be maintained and cultivated as one's contribution to individual and collective self-sufficiency. There was no leisured class in provincial society. Among the affluent overseas merchants, investors, managers and brokers, and the province's political and judicial custodians, that is, the members of the General Court and local Town Meetings, work was as regular and as purposeful as it was for a farm laborer.[10] Even with sufficient means to forego productive work for income, the proportionately few rich men in provincial Massachusetts spent long working hours at their desks, in their shops, offices and warehouses or in public service. Idleness, strictly speaking, was not permitted in the doctrine of Puritan social organiz-

ation. Indeed, idleness was unlawful as well as morally reprehensible. Idleness was a vice.[11]

The concept of idleness and the importance of its prevention were major indicators of this society's regard for work. "Idleness" meant both unemployment and social, moral or religious transgression or irresponsibility. The concepts were at once distinct and synonymous. To be unemployed was to violate the moral code of society. Certainly a person could be without employment and still maintain a close obedience to the society's moral and spiritual standards. But prolonged idleness of this sort would, it was believed, eventually lead to moral dissipation. Idleness, in legal and social concept and terminology also was given to mean a slackening or abandonment of proper social, moral and spiritual attitude and behaviour. To be idle, in that sense, did not immediately imply vocational sloth or insufficiency; but again, it was thought, moral idleness would encourage vocational idleness. So, by legal dictum and with administrative apparatus and social and ecclesiastical persuasion, either or both of these forms of idleness were to be avoided, prevented or corrected.[12]

If social and moral attitude and behavior were to be regulated to a stable conformity, work was an important means of applying the controls. But law and persuasion were more useful as correctives than as preventives. What operated best in minimizing idleness was a social and economic atmosphere that encouraged work — where work was both necessary for all inhabitants and personally

fulfilling and rewarding. To these ends the Puritan founders of Massachusetts exploited the physical properties of the colony. By combining the congregational purposes of settlement with economic necessity, they adapted the social and political aims they sought to pursue to the geographical landscape of Massachusetts. They established a pattern of social and economic organization that survived and persisted in the form of corporate communities — the "town" — which included widespread individual land holding. And the policy of legislating and organizing personal economic responsibility was accomplished by the practice of corporate land grants, so that the individual was simultaneously part of a community.[13] In this setting the individual was made absolutely responsible for his own and his family's support; at the same time he was compelled to be responsive to the collective social, moral and economic needs and demands of his community, which was in Massachusetts, normally the agricultural town. The basis for work was established in early Massachusetts as an activity that was highly personalized and served the direct, visible needs of the worker within the organizational framework of a local agricultural community. The individual farm served as the common means of subsistence. But if the subsistence farm encouraged a spirit and activity of work it could not provide for the complete material needs of the individual farmer. Only in the context of shared and exchanged work habits, skills and materials could the independent farmer survive and succeed. Only in the larger, local community could the individual find the

opportunity to supply himself and his family with the goods and services his farm could not provide. Only there could he find the outlets for his own goods and services and the means to complete his livelihood. The small subsistence farm served to bind the individual to a proprietary habit of work; its limitations obliged him to cooperate in a wider economic and labor sphere.[14]

The historical picture of provincial Massachusetts man as a small-scale, subsistence and non-commercial farmer is accurate to the extent that the majority of the population fitted into the pattern described above. What that picture has omitted is the fact that the subsistence farmer was not only a farmer but a social and economic participant in an extensive and multifaceted working environment, one that created work habits and opportunities that included but exceeded the subsistence farm.[15]

One implication of this generalization arises immediately: the circumstances of subsistence farming and its basic influence on work patterns will not apply to non-agricultural Boston. In that sense, this study will observe two distinct economies and perhaps two societies. By making the distinction between agricultural society and the commercial economy of Boston, and by comparing the respective patterns of work in those settings, conclusions can be drawn of the effects of location on work.

In the eighteenth century the word "labor" was used mostly as a verb, occasionally as a possessive noun and never as a collective

pronoun. There were, of course, "laboring men" and "laborers," but "labor," as defining a socio-economic or vocational plurality, was not a concept in use in provincial Massachusetts. The practice of referring to certain groups as "labor" to identify those groups as having certain shared socio-economic and political qualities as determined by occupational status did not occur in provincial Massachusetts. Social distinctions were observed by contemporaries as being derived from the economic and occupational status and activity of individuals, but to merchants, ministers and lawmakers, the term "workman," for example, referred more often only to a certain use of labor than to a social class. There were references to social status to be made with certain occupational titles and activities but generally, to contemporaries, the idea of distinguishing one segment of the population as "labor" was impracticable. This was so because of vocational and socio-economic mobility and because of the highly fluid and personalized nature of work.

In this study "labor" will be used as much as possible as it was used by contemporaries and not as a noun to refer to <u>all</u> those who worked. It will include professionals, large merchants, businessmen and churchmen only to the extent that these minorities influenced or were affected by the dominant work activities and economies of the majority. Similarly, this study will deal with slavery, servitude and apprenticeship <u>not</u> as separate labor modes, but as they too were involved in the dominant labor environment. The

principal focus of this examination will be on the individual and related collective means of economic exchange through the medium of labor.

Because of its special circumstances, most labor in provincial Massachusetts was "free"; that is, labor was disposed of and exchanged freely and independently by its possessor. The labor of individuals was not owned by others in any real sense or to any significant degree.[16] So far, free labor in provincial Massachusetts has been largely ignored by historians partly because it has been presumed not to represent a definable and useful socio-economic element.[17] When labor has been studied it has concentrated on apprenticeship, indentured servitude and slavery, as these represent definite social exceptions to the monolithic whole of provincial working life.[18] Otherwise, free labor has been considered in light of either an antiquarian novelty, to study a vanished social type such as the "craftsman" for example, or as a footnote to general socio-economic history, or more recently as an adjunct to poverty themes or as an organized component in Revolutionary activity.[19] But it was the very pervasive and universal qualities of free labor in provincial Massachusetts that make it an important means of examination of the social state of eighteenth century Massachusetts. Therefore, this study will observe how people worked and why they did so. The broader objective will be to fit those observations to the wider social conditions of life in provincial society. As work and society are examined in this study, something will be said about the effects

of growth on the structure of society and the society's responses to those other issues of change that have been raised by historians.

But the principal aim of this examination, in the choice of its subject, will be to introduce work as a social element in the historiography of pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts; and to describe those features of work which reveal certain other qualities of community life. Recently, a call was made to the historians of early America to "develop modest theories that aid them in their reconstruction of the internal structures of individual societies." Richard Beeman went on to criticize the indiscriminate use of social science methodology in the study of the "community" in early America:

> Much of the work on colonial social structure . . . is drawn from the stratification theories of modern urban sociology, models which tend to be based on complex, intensively capitalist societies and which may not be suited to the analysis of some of the traditionalist elements of seventeenth and eighteenth century American society. 20

This present study will heed Beeman's criteria and will approach the history of work in early Massachusetts on the theory that work was a traditional element of the internal structure of that pre-industrial society, and that the study of work will add a clearer understanding of the lives of the inhabitants of provincial communities.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]James Truslow Adams, Provincial Society, 1690-1763 (New York: 1927); Evarts B. Greene, Provincial America, 1690-1740 (New York: 1905).

[2]Jack P. Greene, "Autonomy and Stability: New England and the British Colonial Experience," J.S.H. (1974), pp. 171-194; Vernon L. Parrington, The Colonial Mind, Vol. 1 of Main Currents in American Thought (New York: 1927). Parrington called provincial Massachusetts "undistinguished . . . rude and drab in its insularity," p. 133.

[3]J. Potter, "The Growth of Population in America, 1700-1860" in Glass and Eversley, eds., Population in History (London: 1965), pp. 636ff.; Ethel S. Bolton, "Immigrants to New England, 1700-75," EIHC, Vols. 63-67 (1927-31); Clifford K. Shipton, "Immigration to New England, 1680-1740," Journal of Pol. Economy 44 (1936), pp. 225-39.

[4]Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge, Mass.: 1953), pp. 40-52, 395-480; for the laws governing local authority, poverty, crime, residence and voting requirements, education, family responsibility, public responsibility, etc., see the Indexes of Mass. Bay Recs., Vols. 1-5; Colonial Laws; Acts and Resolves, Vols. 1-5. A comparison between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveals very little original enactment on major laws and very little revision after 1692. See also Greene, "Autonomy and Stability."

[5]Edwin Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (New York: 1957), pp. 102-125.

[6]Appendix III, i.

[7]Richard Beeman, "The New Social History and the Search for 'Community' in Colonial America," American Quarterly 29 (1977), pp. 422-43; Richard Dunn, "The Social History of Early New England," AQ 24 (1972), pp. 661-679; Rhys Isaac, "Order and Growth, Authority and Meaning in Colonial New England," AHR 76 (1971), pp. 728-37; John Murrin, "Review Essay," History and Theory II (1972), pp. 226-75. Together, these critical review essays give a very comprehensive

summary of the recent social historiography of eighteenth century Massachusetts. The major works dealt with are those of Bushman, Demos, Greven, Lockridge, Henretta and Zuckerman. (See Bibliography at the end of this study).

[8] Ibid., for a criticism of the notion of maturity and stability in early provincial history see esp. Dunn, "The Social History"; for a criticism of the narrowness of all recent social historiography see Beeman, "The New Social History."

[9] Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of Early American Society (Chapel Hill: 1960), esp. pp. 53-99.

[10] J.R.T. Hughes, Social Control in the Colonial Economy (Charlottesville, Va.; 1976). For examples of the work habits of prominent men, see Francis G. Walett, The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman (Worcester, Ma.: 1974); MHS MSS "Robert Treat Paine Papers"; "Ezekial Price Papers"; "Hancock Papers"; "Belknap Papers." For attitudes, see J.E. Crowley, This Sheba Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth Century America (Baltimore: 1974).

[11] Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 378-81, Vol. II, pp. 47, 232, 385. For the seventeenth century anti-idleness laws see Colonial Laws, pp. 26, 94 and Mass Bay Recs. passim.

[12] Ibid., George L. Haskins, Law and Authority in Early Massachusetts (New York: 1965).

[13] Sumner Chilton Powell, Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town (Wesleyan: 1963), pp. 178-186; Kenneth Lockridge, A New England Town: The First Hundred Years (New York: 1970), pp. 3-36, 57-78. For the origins of the farm-town settlement pattern in Plymouth Colony see Darrett B. Rutman, Husbandmen of Plymouth, Farms and Villages in the Old Colony, 1620-1690 (Boston: 1967).

[14] E.G. Nellis, "Labor and Community in Massachusetts Bay: 1630-1660," Labor History 18 (1977), pp. 525-44.

[15] A general discussion of the small scale farmer as the "typical" Massachusetts resident in the eighteenth century can be found in J.T. Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), pp. 7-43, esp. p. 27. Main errs, however, when he presumes the 60% to 90% (depending on regional sample) of the population which held land to be full-time farmers and the remainder to be the local town merchant, artisan and laboring classes. The occupational structure was not quite so rigidly delineated; see Chapters 3-5 below. A better example

of the agricultural limitations of the contemporary subsistence farm is P.W. Bidwell and John Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington: 1925), pp. 130-133. The dual or multi-occupational status of the "typical farmer" is well defined in Bidwell, Rural Economy in New England (Hartford: 1916), esp. pp. 251 ff.

[16]Slaves did not constitute more than 3% of the Massachusetts population in the eighteenth century; see Appendix III. On the relatively limited incidence of white servitude see Abbot L. Smith, Colonists in Bondage (New York: 1947), pp. 4, 28-29.

[17]Richard B. Morris, "American Labor History Prior to the Civil War: Sources and Opportunities for Research," Labor History I (1960), pp. 308-18. Morris's own work, Government and Labor in Early America (New York: 1946), is an exception so far as its particular thesis goes.

[18]Smith, Colonists in Bondage; Marcus Jernegen, Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America (Chicago: 1931). These set the tone for many subsequent monographs and particular studies. It is no accident that most studies of labor, in this context (i.e., bonded labor), are set in the Chesapeake and South. See Morris, "American Labor History."

[19]On poverty and labor see Alan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," WMQ 28 (1971), pp. 375-412; J.A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," WMQ 22 (1965), pp. 75-92. On the role of "organized" labor in Revolutionary activity see especially Pauline Maier, From Resistance to Revolution (New York: 1972); Morris, Government and Labor; Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," WMQ 25 (1968), pp. 371-407, and "The White Oaks, Jack Tar and the Concept of the Inarticulate," WMQ 29 (1972), pp. 109-142.

[20]Beeman, "The New Social History," pp. 426-428.

CHAPTER II

THE LOCAL SETTING

Work was one element within a larger sphere of social institutions. Therefore, an examination of the social setting for work becomes an effective means of establishing a comprehensive background for the ways in which work patterns developed and were maintained in provincial Massachusetts. In that regard it is important to this study to discuss the general outlines of the province's economy and social organization before turning to the agricultural and local societies in which a narrower setting for work can be considered.

A conventional explanation of the overall economy of pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts proceeds from the standpoint of the province's status as a trading society. In brief outline, that view notes that from an early date in its history and throughout the provincial period Massachusetts produced such export commodities as timber, lumber, ships, barrels, leather, fish, salt, refined sugar and rum. A limited surplus of agricultural products was also exported as revenue-producing goods: beef, pork, mutton, flax and hemp, some live horses and cattle and occasionally some grains and flour. The commercial merchants of Boston, Salem and Newbury operated a large shipping fleet which enjoyed a significant share of the Empire's carrying trade and which yielded capital for local merchants and

investors. The port towns of the province contained businessmen who served exclusively and extensively as agents and insurers for British maritime commerce. In terms of direct trade, Massachusetts merchants dealt with England, Ireland, the West Indies and all of mainland North America, and the province was an important sector and linkage in the British imperial economic network as a center for logistical and financial services. Reciprocally, it served as a market for British manufactured goods.[1]

In outline that is the conventional explanation of the economy of pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts. At least so far as its cosmopolitan role was concerned, this visible and largely external economy of Massachusetts no doubt influenced the conditions for work in the province; and it is certain that the Imperial markets for Massachusetts products provided capital for provincial investment in local enterprises and that profits from imported merchandise created further support for provincial industries. Whether the province was a victim of a deliberate policy of restrictive British mercantilism or subject to an informal variant of Imperial economic protectionism is a topic much discussed by economic historians of colonial America and the first British Empire; and from these considerations, social and political questions have been addressed to the place and function of Massachusetts in the economy of Empire.[2] Interpreters of eighteenth century Massachusetts society frequently have sought to gauge the effects of trade on social and economic conditions in the province.

So far as the economic setting for work is concerned, much can be learned of this society by posing questions such as, was Massachusetts a "debtor" society — that is, did the value of its imports exceed that of its exports? Was production of a wider range of locally or internationally marketable manufactured items retarded by British policy and control? Was there growth, stagnation or diminution in the measured wealth of Massachusetts?[3]

But economic data for the period are fragmentary and it appears unlikely that an accurate description can be obtained for the precise workings of the Massachusetts economy. It is impossible to enumerate or evaluate a "gross product" for eighteenth century Massachusetts, and "standards of living" for this society are difficult to measure, let alone fix.[4] Yet historians have continued to examine the behavior of the provincial economy by regular reference to its performance within the trading system of the British Empire. By doing so they have made implicit assessments of the domestic economic and social conditions of the province.

In truth, provincial society was supported by two economies which were distinct and separate at one level of operation and only partly related at another. At the level of mercantile economic activity, commercial towns and classes did evolve and establish themselves in Massachusetts. Fortunes were made and some were broken, money and credit circulated and an economy of manufacturing, trade, commerce and investment flourished and receded cyclically over time

in the coastal towns of the province. But this mercantile-trade feature did not represent the dominant economic mode of the society.[5] Nor did its mechanisms occupy the majority of the population, directly or otherwise. In terms of the province's internal economy, the merchants, traders, craftsmen and workers of Boston, Salem, Newburyport and elsewhere were simply the most commercial components of Massachusetts economic society. Behind the coastal maritime and mercantile conglomeration of warehouses, workshops, docks and ships lay the agricultural heartland of provincial Massachusetts. It is not possible to say what exact proportion of the wealth of the province was derived from external trade and commerce but it can be shown that the economic activity that sustained the majority of the population was agriculture.[6] In terms of geography and population distribution, cultural, social and economic standards and performance, and in view of majority participation, provincial Massachusetts was an agrarian society founded on the basis of an agricultural subsistance economy.[7]

The demographic distinction between the "two economies," and the dominance of agrarianism was revealed by the fact that the province contained only three major commercial entrepôt ports: Boston, Salem and Newbury-Newburyport, and Boston was the only port devoted entirely to non-agricultural economic function. At no time between 1700 and 1770 did the combined size of these towns exceed 15% of the total Massachusetts population.[8] Fishing, which sustained the working populations of portions of the seaboard was concentrated in such

towns as Gloucester, Marblehead, Plymouth and Newbury. The population of these, and other primarily fishing communities constituted less than a tenth of the whole.[9] And a great many fishermen were also, concurrently, small-scale farmers. In broad outline then, less than a quarter of the people of Massachusetts gained their principal livelihoods from the commercial economies of the ports or from fishing.

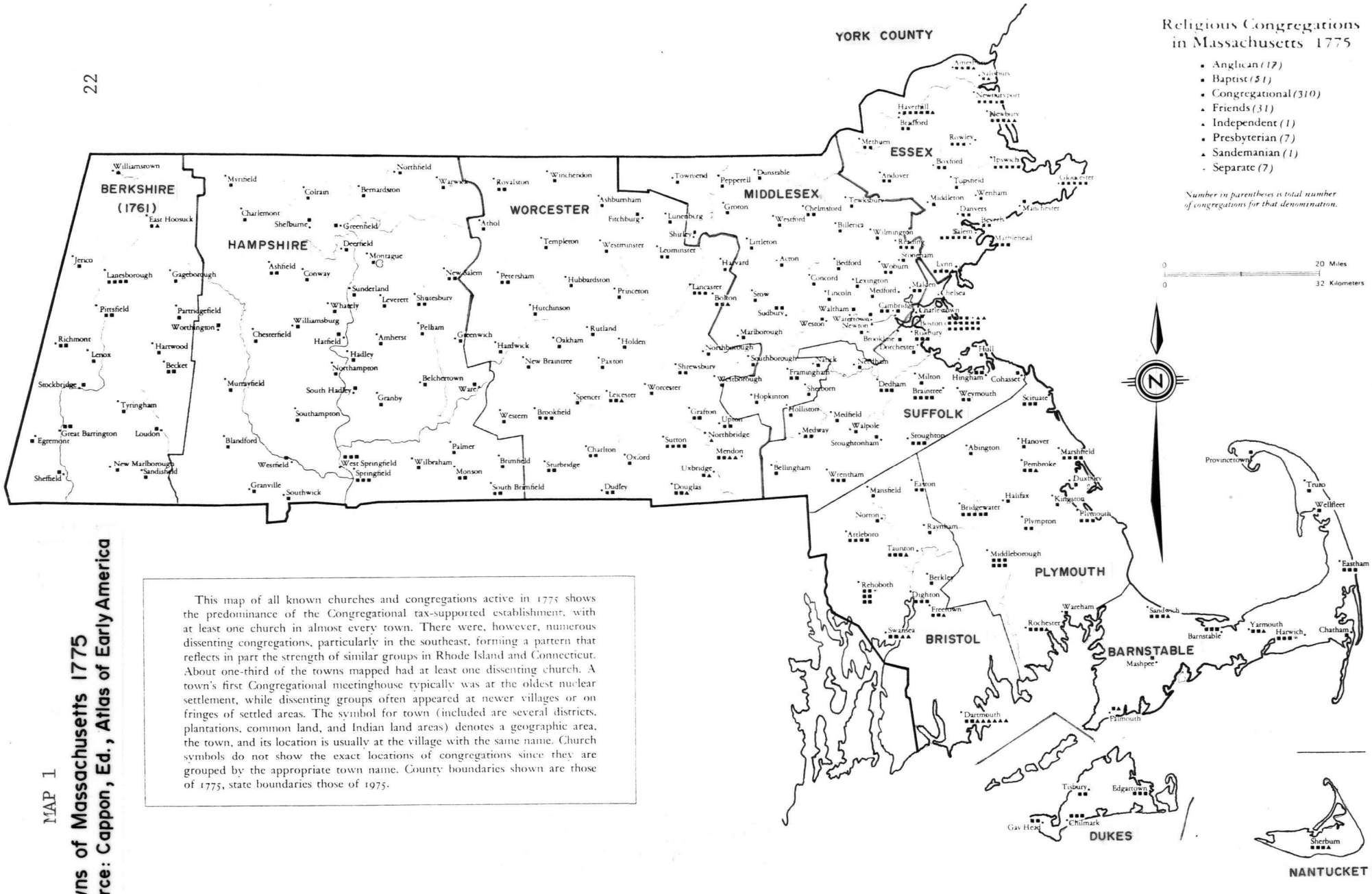
Certainly there was a convergence of economic function in the two sectors. Some surplus farm produce, grains, livestock, meats and hides did find their way into Boston, Salem and other coastal towns. Timber, sawn lumber, salt and some metal ores were found and processed within most areas of eastern Massachusetts, as part of the economic produce of farms and rural towns; and some of these products were shipped to the coast. Similarly, the imported manufactured goods, which entered mainly at Boston, were distributed and marketed through a network of connected traders and merchants who formed a province-wide system of internal commerce.[10] But the distinctive features of the labor economy of Boston and Salem were shipping, shipbuilding, distilling, leather working and other export-related industries which, along with purely local business, held no direct alliance with the economic and working conditions of the province's agricultural towns. In the rural towns the labor economy revolved around individually-operated subsistence farms and the local, domestic support economy related to those farms.

The working conditions, occupations and purposes and ends of work within those two economies presented contrasting settings which affected the economic, social and cultural standards and behavior of the respective residents and workers. But as the type of work, its substance, direction and performance, were determined by the economic and social settings in which work was conducted, so too were the respective settings shaped and sustained by the particular working habits and purposes of residents. Work permeated the lives of all in provincial Massachusetts as an activity that conformed to the special social qualities of the local community.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Massachusetts society, as it dealt with growth, change and time, was its traditional localism. The community was paramount in social organization. At the base of that organization was a local economy which served to secure residence and permanence. The agricultural community provided a common labor and social setting for the majority of the population of Massachusetts. But it was a highly localized economy. Rural provincial Massachusetts was comprised of a series of towns; a fabric of contiguous local communities (Map 1). At the heart of each was the Meeting House-Church, the locus of the ecclesiastical polity which at once caused these towns to exist and served as a binding agency which marked each of them as a socio-political entity.[11] The motive force behind the formation and continuance of these communities was an amalgam of religious, social, political and economic imperatives. The choice of location and the

MAP 1

Towns of Massachusetts 1775
Source: Cappon, Ed., Atlas of Early America



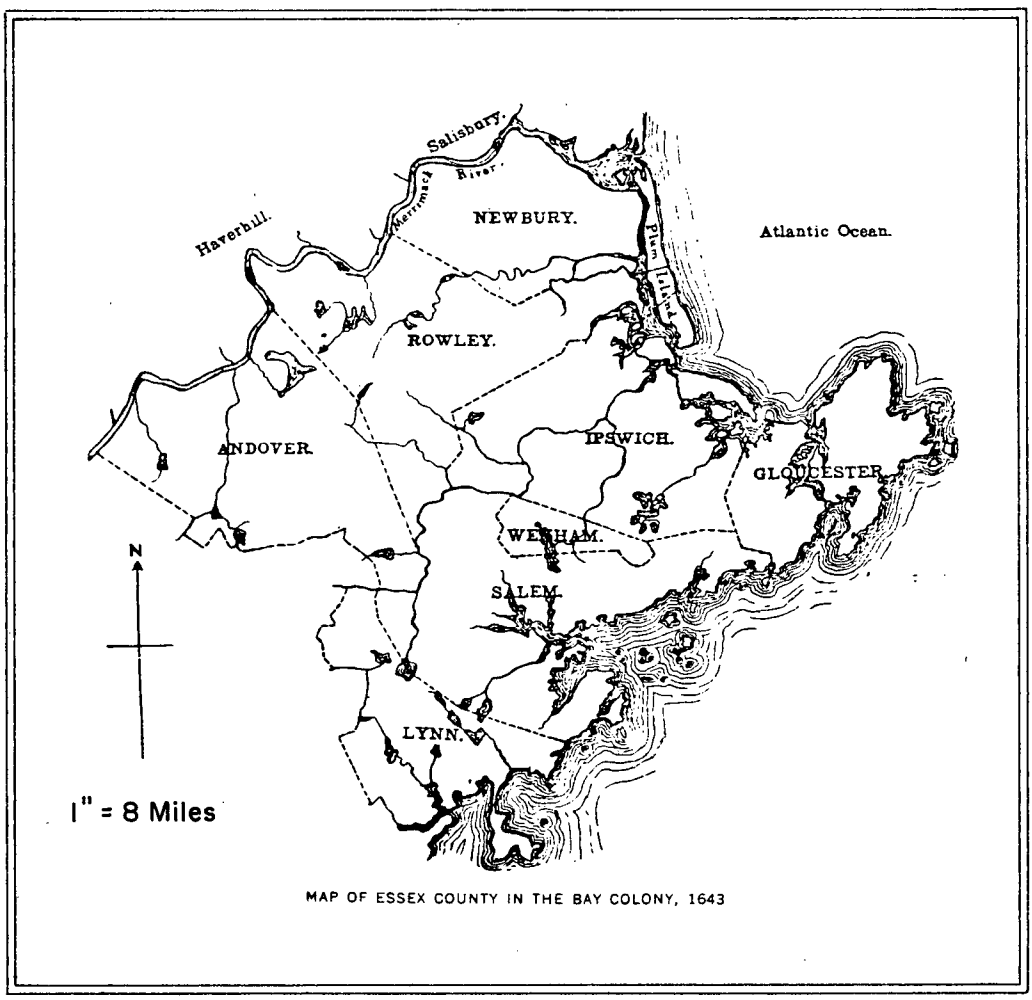
This map of all known churches and congregations active in 1775 shows the predominance of the Congregational tax-supported establishment, with at least one church in almost every town. There were, however, numerous dissenting congregations, particularly in the southeast, forming a pattern that reflects in part the strength of similar groups in Rhode Island and Connecticut. About one-third of the towns mapped had at least one dissenting church. A town's first Congregational meetinghouse typically was at the oldest nuclear settlement, while dissenting groups often appeared at newer villages or on fringes of settled areas. The symbol for town (included are several districts, plantations, common land, and Indian land areas) denotes a geographic area, the town, and its location is usually at the village with the same name. Church symbols do not show the exact locations of congregations since they are grouped by the appropriate town name. County boundaries shown are those of 1775, state boundaries those of 1975.

immediate impetus for occupation followed patterns laid down from the earliest point of claim and settlement by the founders of Massachusetts.[12] Those founders of the colony, the early migrants and their descendents formed a collective chartered corporation of common obligations, rights and aims. Massachusetts was to be a society of common principles and interest. It was a bona fide "community of interest" that directed groups of men and their families to receive and mark off a territory and to settle it, cultivate and order its functioning.[13]

These settlements, as corporations within a corporation, became the provincial towns of Massachusetts; and they were, almost universally, agricultural towns populated by independent land holding subsistance farmers. The political, social, economic and residential boundaries of the towns were coterminous with their territorial limits. These were large, consisting as they did of the complete farms and full time residences of two or three hundred families. Judicially, economically and socially these collections of farms <u>were</u> the towns; there was no marked geographical separation of "town" from "country" or farm (Map 2). But if these towns were large in territorial terms, they were small in terms of population. The insularity of life, as defined by the central pull of the Meeting House, gave these towns a compact flavor, and that characteristic was reinforced by the shared local economy. There was no significant economic alternative to farming and neither the means nor the market existed for intensive resource extraction or manufacturing.[14]

MAP 2

Seventeenth Century Towns of Essex County, Showing Common Town Boundaries. By 1775 These Ten Towns Had Divided into 21. See Map 1.



Source: T. Gage, History of Rowley (Boston: 1840).

The soil would yield a variety of edible crops and the basic materials for clothing and shelter; it would not produce large surpluses of exportable agricultural commodities. However, the cultivated soil of Massachusetts did produce an adequate flow of subsistence materials to ensure basic agricultural self-sufficiency, material security and permanent settlement. Along with the social imperatives for creating communities of congregational and corporate status — the conjunction of a church congregation with a collective land grant and a civic charter — there were economic factors that helped shape the subsistence farming town. The only agricultural products that Massachusetts managed to export in commercial volume during the provincial period were those of livestock and livestock products, and then only in limited quantity; certainly not sufficient to encourage capital investment in intensive livestock agriculture. The failure of the Massachusetts soil to produce high-yield cash crops for export revenue compounded the lack of capital for commercial agriculture. This factor, while not entirely responsible for the spread and durability of the subsistence farm community, added to the insularity and necessary self-sufficiency of the rural towns by removing a potential source of external economic intrusion. Without a major economic incentive for commercial agriculture the practice of subdividing — by partible inheritance and sale — was continued for dependents and heirs in eighteenth-century Massachusetts. As the pattern of small-scale farming persisted, the towns continued to grow slowly under the influence of the subsistence economics.[15]

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attempts were made in some inland towns to establish non-agricultural economic bases. The efforts to make Lynn and Saugus major iron and ironwork centers are well known.[16] Also in Essex County, at Rowley and Ipswich, a large-scale concentration of linen and wool manufacturing was tried.[17] In the eighteenth century a section of Braintree was organized into a failed series of glass factories and shops. The range of products, the numbers of attempts and the variety of regions selected were extensive.[18] In virtually all cases, these ventures failed to replace farming as the principal local endeavor; and most failed even to survive as complementary additions to agricultural enterprise. Imperial restrictions on colonial manufacturing was only one reason for these mostly aborted industrial schemes. The lack of a strong regional or colony-wide market demand was another.[19] These many enterprises did not survive because the commodities they sought to produce were already available in sufficient quantities to meet local demand within communities and regions. They were being produced by individuals in small quantities for other individuals.

Enough small ore deposits and small forges dotted the landscape to serve the local needs of communities or clusters of communities. Weaving, for example, when it was not a household activity was performed by a few local independent artisans. Most of the other materials consumed in the agrarian towns were produced either domestically, in the user's home, or locally by landholding farmers who were also

part-time tradesmen or merchants. Lumber, timber, bricks and leather along with metals and fabrics were all produced locally, in small quantities. Finished products such as shoes, leather goods, clothing, furniture, metal farm and household implements and many household goods like soap, candles and bedding were made locally and in the home. Those rarer or elaborate articles that were not available locally were imported into the communities, but usually from Boston and beyond and not from any inland facility or source. The rural farming communities of the province were much more than conclaves of like-minded farmers; they were largely autonomous and self-sufficient small agrarian economies.[20]

But the towns were not isolated from each other. The spread of settlement was westward, away from the Salem, Boston, Plymouth coastal corridor; and it continued westward throughout the eighteenth century. Moreover, many older towns of adequate size split when population concentration or political conflict demanded, and formed two separate communities within the original bounds of the old town.[21] New towns, in virgin territory usually were occupied by former residents of an adjacent settled and cultivated tract; or, if the new town was in some distant area of the province, the settlers were normally all from a common former community. Hence, there were social and familial bonds as well as geographical contacts between the communities.[22] This circle of relationships, within and between towns and regions, centered ultimately on the family unit.[23] The

individual communities were not isolated, socially or geographically and the individual residents and families living within the towns were not separated from each other. The common focal point for all local residents was the Meeting House, of course.[24] From there, it extended to an exchange of necessary economic services beyond subsistence farming and further cemented residents into constant contact with each other.[25]

Thus, in agricultural Massachusetts there were distinct but related strains of autonomous self-sufficiency and interrelationships and interdependence. This juxtaposition of self-reliance with dependence was the basic distinguishing influence on the characteristics of work in the rural setting. In the case of the single family, each was responsible for its own, independent basic material support. This was accomplished in the context of the subsistence farm where immediate dietary and material requirements could be obtained. At the same time, as part of a local economy, each family was linked to other family units within the community to exchange some work, goods, and services. Everyone looked to the Meeting House for moral, social, political and economic authority, leadership and governance and for personal participation in the community's collective affairs. Similarly, each town, as it nurtured its own small local subsistence economy did have occasion to engage in a larger regional economy of service, labor and material supply, exchange and transportation. The towns looked to the central governing agency, the General Court, as the source and

arbiter of their respective and collective social and political responsibilities and relationships. Finally, the pattern of settlement sustained many common demographic features and continuities. Towns developed to an approximate common size partly because government land grants and charters stipulated both numbers of settlers and farm lot sizes. Moreover, as Anne MacLear discovered in her examination of the Massachusetts town: "The similarity in the institutions and institutional development of the . . . towns is striking . . . the General Court kept a guiding hand and to its efforts must be ascribed a great part of the uniformity."[26]

At least three-quarters of the provincial population lived under those conditions; collections of families on small farms within a town and a broader series and network of towns. Not all farms were the same size, of course, and not quite all families owned or leased land. But enough of the farms did conform to a general mean size and enough of the population lived on and worked those farms to make the generalization apply to the majority of the rural population. And not all towns were of a like geographic and population size; but most were, and the variations do not alter the pattern of approximate conformity.[27]

Under the provincial Charter of 1691 Massachusetts contained seven counties. The original three eastern counties of the Colony, Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk all were formed in 1643; the western county of Hampshire was formed in 1662 and the three divisions of the former Plymouth Colony were included in the 1691 confederation.

Thereafter, the two island counties of Dukes and Nantucket were added in 1695 and the county of Worcester was created from the eastern precincts of Hampshire county in 1731. Berkshire was organized from western portions of Hampshire in 1761. The northern coastal county of York was a part of Massachusetts during the provincial period and much later became a part of Maine.[28] As administrative creations the counties followed the establishment of towns. They served as provincial judicial divisions for the towns within their respective boundaries and as organizational, maintenance and construction authorities for public works such as roads and bridges which linked the towns. The county system centralized some public institutions such as jails, almshouses and sheriffs offices — the latter as part of the Justice of the Peace and Sessional Court functions of the counties. Clearly, the counties were administrative mechanisms and did not reflect any real social, political, economic or ethnic uniqueness. The eastern counties were of similar age and each had a shoreline but each was predominately agricultural with the possible exception of Suffolk, half the population of which lived and worked in non-agricultural Boston. The western counties were relatively large in area and contained sizeable proportions of uncultivated, unoccupied and in many areas ungranted land. But if the counties were primarily administrative units and did not reveal or reflect any major regional differentiation of agricultural or civic organization, they still

serve as means of assessing and comparing land holding patterns, agricultural productivity, population density and town size. To be sure, there was some regional diversity in agricultural potential and preference and some variation in town sizes. These were mainly differences of geography, climate and length of settlement.[29]

By and large, the counties, as regions, reveal a striking similarity of demographic configuration and economic activity. The average cultivated acreage in all 173 provincial towns in 1751 was 3,353 acres. Essex county, with its larger towns, averaged 5,877 acres of cultivated land per town and Hampshire with its smaller towns, 1,773 acres.[30] These were the extremes. The average population of all the province's towns was approximately 1,100; the twenty-five towns of Bristol and Plymouth counties averaged slightly over 1,300 while the forty-eight towns of Hampshire and Worcester averaged about 750. But over half the towns in the province as a whole fell within 100 persons of the provincial average.[31] The percentage of land under direct and regular agricultural supervision within the political boundaries of Massachusetts was roughly 11%. Again the extremes in deviation were represented by Essex county, with its total land area divided into contiguous towns, with the high of 37%, and Hampshire, including the sparsely populated west with its extensive ungranted tracts and hilly terrain, the low of 2%. Otherwise, most regions conformed to the provincial average. The 1,100 people in the average provincial town represented approximately 200 to 300 rateable polls, that is, heads of households and adult white male workers.[32] In the

province overall, the average 3,353 acres of cultivated farmland per town amounted to 14.10 acres per poll, or 3.02 acres per capita. What is important, from the point of view of province-wide similarity and convention, is that the range of deviation from those averages was relatively small. The highest was in Bristol county, where there were 17.53 acres per poll and 3.76 per capita; the low average was in Suffolk county, where the figures were 10.47 and 2.25 cultivated acres respectively. An even more convincing evidence of provincial land-holding conformity was the narrow range of variation in arable acreage per household. In many cases there was more than one poll per dwelling — a father and an unmarried son, for example — so that the amount of cultivation per household, including all polls, averaged 24.7 acres across the province. In a regional comparison, the highest county average was 28.4 acres and the lowest, 20.4 (Table I). These comparisons do not include the unusual and lightly populated island counties of Dukes and Nantucket. The amount of agricultural use represented about 40% of the total occupied and titled land in provincial Massachusetts; the remaining 60% was being held as uncleared inventory, woodlots, unbroken and untaxed grazing land and various acreages that were unsuitable for cultivation.[33]

Nearly 80% of adult males in rural towns owned or leased some farm land; in some areas as many as 90% did so. The majority of these men tended between ten and forty acres, with the largest proportion operating approximately twenty-six acres (Table II).[34] The provincial

TABLE I

Land and Population Distribution by Town and County, c. 1751 (For Total Acres, Dwellings and Polls, See Appendix IV; For estimated County Populations, See Appendix III, iii)

County	Estimated % of Province Population	% of Province Cultivated Acres	% Cultivated of Total Land	Number of Towns	Estimated Average Population of Towns	Average Population Per Dwelling	Cultivated Acres Per Taxed Poll	Cultivated Acres Per Dwelling	Cultivated Acres Per Capita
Massachussetts	100.00	100.00	10.97	173	1,110	7.60	14.10	24.7	3.02
Essex	18.39	20.25	37.17	20	1,706	7.39	15.42	24.6	3.32
Suffolk*	15.74	11.67	23.69	18	1,679	7.19	10.47	28.4	2.25
Middlesex	15.66	17.29	19.00	36	836	7.20	15.46	24.0	3.33
Worcester	10.88	9.48	5.69	27	774	7.75	12.24	20.4	2.63
Plymouth	9.38	9.69	13.44	14	1,287	7.75	15.54	23.3	3.12
Bristol	7.92	9.85	16.12	11	1,384	6.54	17.53	25.6	3.76
Hampshire	7.88	6.41	2.13	21	720	10.31	11.48	25.4	2.46
York	6.68	6.08	N/A	13	988	9.11	12.85	25.0	2.74
Barnstable	5.00	6.08	13.78	9	1,065	7.48	17.26	27.5	3.67
Nantucket	1.26	0.71	14.16	1	2,433	9.14	8.56	15.7	1.71
Dukes	1.02	2.35	20.55	3	655	7.99	35.44	55.6	6.95

*Includes Boston

Sources: MHS MSS, "Valuations of Counties, 1751"; Hist. Data; M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134.

TABLE II

Land Use Distribution Sample

(Sample from the town of Roxbury (adjacent to Boston) for 1927)

The valuations for 100 of the town's 273 polls exist in manuscript form at MHS, listed under "Broadsides" "Valuations for Roxbury, 1727."

Acres	No. of Polls	% of Polls	No. of Acres	% of Acreage	Average Acres Per Poll
0	10	10	0	0	0
1-10	23	23	127	5.2	5.5
11-20	16	16	237	9.8	14.9
21-30	23	23	602	24.9	26.1
31-40	10	10	349	14.4	34.9
41-50	8	8	366	15.1	45.0
50+	10	10	730	30.2	73.0
Totals	100	100	2411	99.6*	

*This total does not arrive at 100% because of the absence of the second decimal place.

Acres in		Percent	Average Acres per Landholder
Tillage	261	10.82	2.9
Pasture	1234	51.18	13.7
Hay	784	32.52	8.7
Orchard	132	5.48	1.5
Total	2411		26.8

There were only 14 teams (28) of oxen among the 90 polls (of 100) who farmed.

averages of 14.10 cultivated acres per poll and 24.7 acres per household become rough estimates of the amount of land one man and his family could supervise.[35] By the middle of the eighteenth century the average land holding in the province was from fifty to one hundred acres, including the nearly 60% that was unused.[36] Certainly some of this latter 60% was useless for agriculture. But much of it was being held, unbroken, even in the older eastern counties, for the sons of contemporary farmers, or as an asset for old age or retirement. The simple, unavoidable fact is that most arable land in Massachusetts remained in small individual holdings and was being worked by the occupants of those holdings. The traditional pattern of widespread subsistance farming was being maintained late in the provincial period. It was being conducted by a large majority of the population within the confines of communities of roughly equivalent size. And the habits of individual farmers were considerably standardized throughout the province.[37]

Most of the soil of eastern and central was of the Brown Podzolic group — a relatively highly leached soil, low in organic chemicals and only modestly productive without added fertilization. The terrain was similarly uniform: largely undulating lowland with some hilly relief. The soil cover not only was of generally low fertility but was further distinguished by its stoniness (Map 3; Table III). The broad uniformity of farm size, soil and topographical characteristics did not mean that all farmers, in all regions,

MAP 3 (See Table III on p. 37) Soil Map of Massachusetts. Source: University of British Columbia, Maps Division

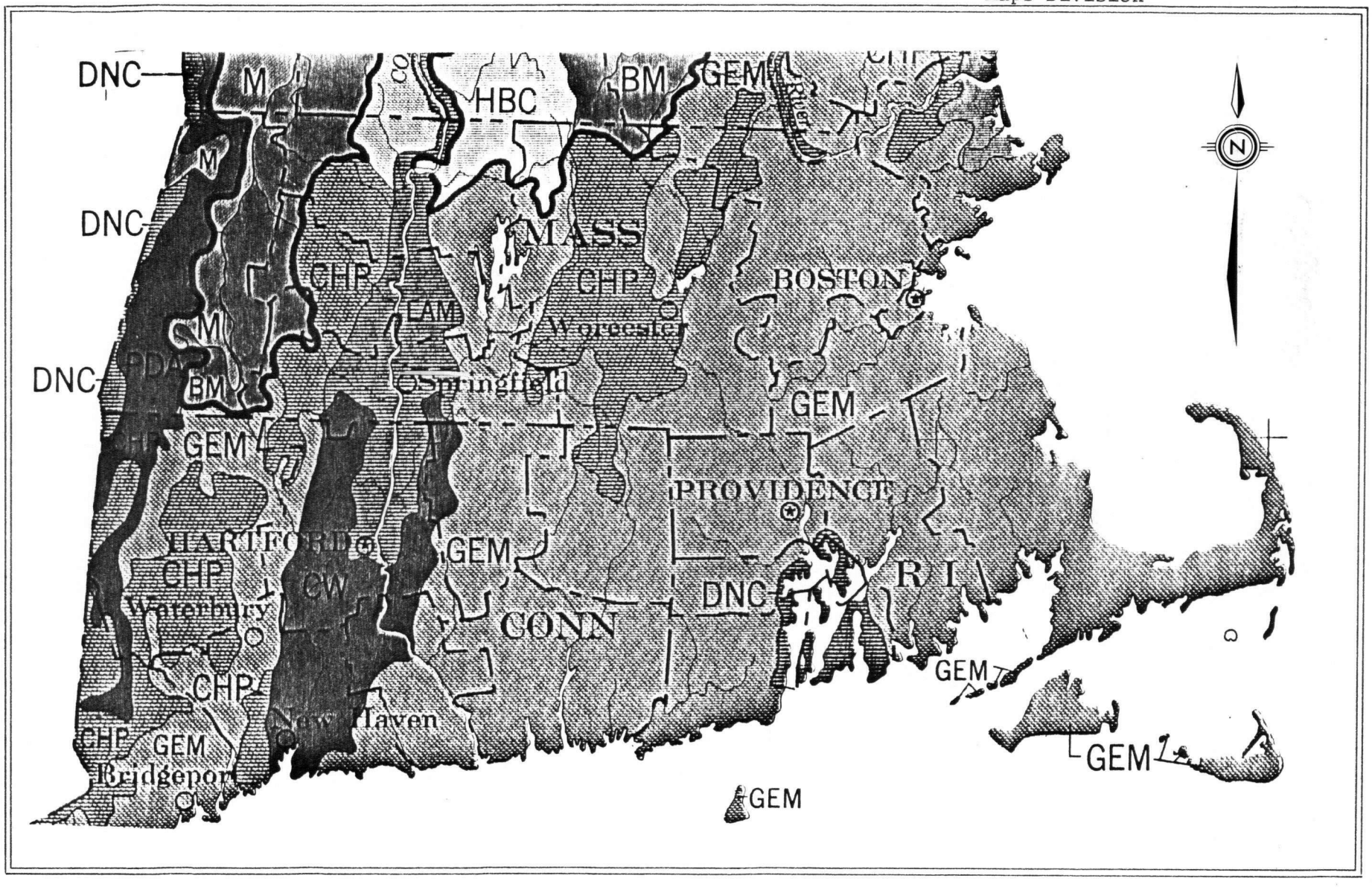


TABLE III

Soil Characteristics of Massachusetts (See Map 3)

Map Code	GEM	CHP	EAM
Relief Pattern	Undulating to hilly lowland	Undulating to hilly lowland	Level to undulating plain, Connecticut river flood plain
Soil Group	Brown Podzolic	Brown Podzolic	Brown Podzolic, Low humic gley
Soil Features	Low fertility, stoniness, hilly relief	Low fertility, stoniness	Level relief, droughtiness of sandier soils
Surface Soil Texture	Gravelly, or stony, fine sandy loam. Very friable	Loam, very friable	Fine, sandy loam. Loose
Surface depth	Moderately shallow to deep	Moderately shallow	Deep
Drainage	Moderate to rapid	Moderately rapid	Moderate to very rapid
Native Veg.	Mixed hardwoods (oak, maple), white Pine	Mixed northern hardwoods and conifers	Mixed hardwoods and conifers; maple, oak, white pine dominant
Principal Crops	Hay, corn, small grains	Hay, corn, small grains, pasture	Hay, corn, small grains

Source: University of British Columbia Maps Division.

followed a completely identical system of farming. For example, the proximity of the Boston-Salem market encouraged some Suffolk, Essex and Middlesex county farmers to raise more livestock, for marginal profit, than did farmers in other counties. The counties of Barnstable and Worcester contained more than average amounts of natural meadow and livestock raising was higher there than the provincial norm. Farmers in Hampshire cultivated over twice the provincial average of tillage, partly because of low yields per acre and because much of the settlement of the county was located on the Connecticut River valley flood plain — terrain that was amenable to tillage. Crop yields were lower than average in Bristol and Barnstable counties, in some cases because of partial soil exhaustion, and this too made for some regional differentiation in the precise workings of individual farms. The milder winters of Dukes and Nantucket counties meant that more than average amounts of land were left as winter pasture and less land was devoted to growing grasses for winter hay feed (Tables IV, V).

Obviously some farms were better located than others, in terms of transportation, water, natural meadow and contours of terrain — even within regions. Across the broad scope of a single soil group there were pockets of deep-loamed and more fertile soil cover, while in other nearby areas the soil was rockier and shallower than average. There were variations in personality in the exact management of the subsistence farm. Family size, in regard to need and labor availability, often

TABLE IV

Agricultural Land Use by County, 1751

County	Massachussetts	Essex	Suffolk	Middlesex	Worcester	Plymouth	Bristol	Hampshire	Barnstable	Nantucket	Dukes	York
Total Arable Acres	580,200	117,548	68,252	100,325	55,013	56,266	57,188	37,243	35,212	4,169	13,682	35,302
Tillage	104,774	7,360	7,804	20,187	12,077	11,624	11,842	20,490	8,343	501	977	3,569
(%)	(18.05)	(6.26)	(11.43)	(20.12)	(21.95)	(20.65)	(20.70)	(55.01)	(23.69)	(12.01)	(7.14)	(10.10)
Mowing	212,279	39,553	23,735	43,906	29,279	19,388	19,176	13,815	6,651	552	1,129	15,095
(%)	(36.58)	(33.64)	(34.77)	(43.76)	(53.22)	(34.45)	(33.53)	(37.09)	(18.88)	(13.24)	(8.25)	(42.75)
Pasture	248,861	67,951	34,592	33,112	12,175	23,764	24,170	2,036	20,172	3,116	11,571	16,202
(%)	(42.89)	(57.80)	(50.68)	(33.00)	(22.13)	(42.23)	(42.26)	(5.46)	(57.28)	(74.74)	(84.57)	(45.89)
Orchard	14,286	2,684	2,121	3,120	1,490	1,490	2,000	902	46	-	5	436
(%)	(2.45)	(2.28)	(3.10)	(3.10)	(2.69)	(2.64)	(3.49)	(2.42)	(0.13)	-	(0.03)	(1.23)
Bushels of Grain	1,413,470	246,249*	121,379	292,263	177,220	124,326	106,713	190,713	49,119	6,796	11,796	86,742*
Per Acre of Tillage	13.49	33.45*	15.55	14.47	14.67	10.69	9.01	9.30	5.88	13.56	12.23	24.30*
Mills (saw, grist, fulling) and Forges	864	116	95	131	117	130	94	66	51	3	7	

*Includes storage

Source: MHS MSS, "Valuations of the Counties, 1751."

TABLE V

Livestock Data Per County, 1751

County	Number of Mature Livestock	Number of Sheep (%)	Cattle (%)	Horses (%)	Goats	Swine (%)	Acres of Pasture Per Cattle & Horses	% of Provincial Human Population	% of Provincial Livestock
Massachusetts	357,000	233,502 (65.40)	79,614 (22.30)	22,061 (6.81)	3,091	18,732 (5.25)	2.45	100	100
Essex	51,076	31,743 (62.15)	13,674 (26.77)	3,265 (6.39)	46	2,348 (4.60)	4.01	18.39	14.30
Suffolk	35,878	22,700 (63.27)	8,853 (24.67)	2,362 (6.58)	490	1,473 (4.10)	3.08	15.74	10.04
Middlesex	51,355	28,386 (55.27)	15,960 (31.08)	4,265 (8.30)	20	2,724 (5.30)	2.34	15.66	14.38
Worcester	42,655	26,691 (62.57)	10,503 (24.62)	2,907 (6.81)	525	2,029 (4.67)	0.90	10.88	11.94
Plymouth	38,896	26,124 (67.18)	7,754 (19.93)	1,901 (4.89)	391	2,726 (7.00)	2.46	9.38	10.89
Bristol	45,895	33,717 (73.46)	6,866 (14.96)	2,250 (4.90)	454	2,608 (5.68)	2.65	7.92	12.85
Hampshire	23,046	14,051 (61.00)	4,826 (20.94)	2,736 (11.87)	137	1,296 (5.62)	0.27	7.88	6.45
York	20,601	11,162 (54.18)	5,997 (29.11)	1,142 (5.54)	101	2,199 (10.67)	2.27	6.68	5.77
Barnstable	25,627	19,639 (76.63)	3,909 (15.25)	868 (3.39)	117	1,094 (4.27)	4.22	5.00	7.17
Nantucket	7,373	6,738 (91.39)	472 (6.40)	159 (2.15)	2	2 (-)	11.50	1.26	2.06
Dukes	14,598	12,551	800	206	808	233	4.94	1.02	4.08

Source: MHS MSS, "Valuations of Counties, 1751."

determined the degree of attention given to either crop growing or livestock rearing. Another reason why tillage was more popular in Hampshire than elsewhere was that household size was larger than normal in that county; an average of two adult males per household meant that there was increased labor available for the manual demands of crop raising, which required more labor than did livestock management (Table I). There were other particular variations: some men simply were better farmers than were others.

Nevertheless, basic subsistence practices were fairly uniform throughout the province. The conformity in land use and average holdings is best illustrated by the fact that the percentage of provincial population per county closely matched each county's percentage of the provincial cultivated acreage. Moreover, it is worth repeating that the provincial average of 24.7 acres of arable land per household was close to the averages within each county — again excluding Dukes and Nantucket, and their combined 2.28% of the provincial population (Table I). These figures and comparisons, more than any other data, illustrate the scale and the uniformity of distribution of subsistence farming throughout Massachusetts.

By the beginning of the provincial period the earlier communal practice of common and open pasture and feed-grass fields had largely disappeared from towns; the commons lands had been distributed to private use. In the eighteenth century, individual farmers divided and worked their properties according to their own needs and preferences. Field systems were varied by region and by individual practice. But

for the purposes of subsistence, most farmers ordered their fields with a view to providing basic dietary materials for their families. Because the Massachusetts soil would not yield a sufficient volume of a cash crop for export, tilled fields were kept to a size that could be managed by a family and provide for all or most of its household grains.[38] The small tillage component — usually two to four acres — of the field arrangements of most farmers meant that they could relocate crop fields on their holdings without resort to crop rotation methods of soil maintenance. This technologically primitive practice was typical of a general absence of agricultural technical innovation among provincial subsistence farmers; a practice that reflected some of the permanence of work patterns in the rural setting. As Percy Bidwell notes:

> In the century and a half intervening between the settlement of New England and the opening of the nineteenth century, improvements of far-reaching significance had been introduced in English agriculture . . . . [In Massachusetts] as soon as the pioneer stage had passed . . . the colonists settled down in a routine husbandry. . . . There was no regularly observed succession of grain crops . . . and the principal cereals were alternated on the larger fields, sharing the land with small patches of oats, barley and flax . . . the land was usually broken up after being in grass 3 or 4 years, and then cropped for 3 years. 39

The mixed crop and livestock-rearing practices of provincial farmers reflected a mixed utility of time, climate, topography, economics and labor. Crop tillage was the most time consuming work and required the hardest physical labor. It was also very sensitive to the caprices of weather and the limitations of soil type, and was

further disciplined by seasonal climate.[40] But it was at the base of the farmer's personal economy. He needed grains for his household diet and any small surplus for sale or barter. Therefore, he balanced his land use with consideration of maximum feasible crop yield uppermost in his deliberations. He devoted the smallest proportion of his arable land and the bulk of his time and energy to crop raising. Livestock raising required more land and less labor than tillage, hence the farmer kept over 40% of his arable land in pasture with a further 35% in grasses to provide winter hay feed for his handful of livestock. Nearly 20% was given over to grain crops and the remaining 5% to orchard and vegetable gardens (Table IV). The general restrictions on extensive tillage can be seen as manifest in the provincal farm average of only 2.2 acres of edible crops. As a further means of agricultural economy and utility the farmer usually kept more sheep than cattle, the former being easier to raise and wool as important as leather in the local economies.[41]

Massachusetts produced corn, wheat, oats and rye as principal crops — much corn also went as feed for swine — with wheat the most desired crop because of its food value. The province produced barley for brewing, flax for linen fibers and a little hemp for commercial canvas production. Most of this produce was consumed at home in a variety of ways. In eighteenth century Massachusetts crop yields ran from ten to fifteen bushels per acre depending on grain type, seed quality, soil fertility, weather, personal industry and luck. Even

if the small farmer was bold enough to attempt to plant his entire crop in wheat — a lower-yielding grain than others in the province — forty to sixty bushels of ground wheat would barely supply the bread needs of a household of six to eight persons.[42] Each farmer attempted to grow as many types of cereal grains as he could, in order to avoid the risk of failure — through bad weather, poor seed or blight — of an entire crop made up of a single particular grain. Barley, corn, flax and hemp occasionally produced small marketable surpluses for the subsistance farmer, but only sporadically. What wool, hides and skins he did not use at home provided another source of irregular farm surplus. He would have his flour and meal ground at a local mill and often made his own cider — it being an essential ingredient of the contemporary diet; he killed, cured and packed his own livestock for meat. Many farmers had good stands of timber on the uncultivated portions of their lands where supplies of cordwood and some marketable wood for local sawmills could be obtained.[43]

The farm home was as much part of the farm economy as were the fields, livestock and woodlots. In the home, the wife of the farmer, as well as performing her customary domestic tasks of child rearing, baking, sewing, knitting and so on, also made soap and candles from the fats of animals butchered on the farm. She and her elder daughters spun linen yarn from flax seeds grown, reaped, treated and crushed by her husband and she spun some course wool fibers from her husband's shearing. She made clothes, often from fabrics woven

elsewhere in the community from yarns she had submitted.[44] The male children of the household, when they were old and able enough, joined their father in his work on the farm and elsewhere.[45] Work was distributed and shared according to the individual family members' capacities, the farm's particular organization and the needs of the total family. In that way entire families contributed as single units to the domestic farm economy. The farm thus provided the common economic base for a family's material needs and the family unit served as the practical means of extracting the maximum yield from the individual farm. But the agricultural seasons in Massachusetts were short and the amount of work required to operate a ten-to twenty-acre mixed farm consumed perhaps half the working year of an adult male. Therefore, he sought other work away from his small farm. The individual in the provincial rural town was not sequesterered in isolation on his own completely self-contained property.[46]

There is no doubt that the subsistence family farm was the dominant socio-economic mode of rural provincial society. But subsistence was all that the family farm could provide. The small farm was not absolutely capable of producing the total range of materials used by a family, just as it could not render total social autonomy. For, as the family needed the community for legal, social, moral and political leadership and guidance, the heads of households required the community for the material and economic resources that the subsistence farm alone could not provide. In short, the policy and

practice of settling, organizing and occupying rural Massachusetts were drawn from earlier Puritan principles that combined social and moral values with rudimentary material self-sufficiency. Work and morality were linked and then based in the socio-economic crucible of the family farm. The economic and intellectual values of the family and the larger society were upheld within this and the binding medium of the town. Without the availability of a cash crop, or the desire or opportunity for intensive non-agricultural industry or manufacturing, the society of rural Massachusetts arranged itself on thousands of small family farms. These were ideally suited to the congregational and corporate values of the society. Without a commercial agricultural base the large labor-intensive commercial farm operation was impractical. The absence in rural towns, of a significant concentration of commercial non-agricultural industrial enterprise further limited the economic alternatives of the rural worker. It was to the larger community of other small farmers that the individual subsistence farmer turned for added economic support, and for the social expression and fulfillment he found in the community's religious and political activities. Bound as he was to his farm by cultural preference and economic necessity and practicality, it was in the local and shared economy of the town that the independent farmer completed his income and security. It was necessary therefore, that the farmer be more than a farmer. He was obliged to possess a single or variety of alternative work talents and the means to apply them.[47]

There was also need in the communities of rural Massachusetts for a permanent and varied range of non-farm labor services. There was a mixture of the subsidiary goods and labor requirements of agriculture, with the assorted non-farming needs of any small pre-industrial community. The subsistence farmer was self-sufficient only to the level of his immediate agricultural means. His talents, his family and his farm provided a great deal of the basic necessities of life. But he also required buildings and building materials, farm and household implements, finished leather goods, furniture, clothing, footwear and a host of other manufactured items. No individual family could hope to be absolutely capable of providing for all its material and service essentials, and very few were capable of supporting their entire budgets from large-scale farming. The community, as a place of supply and exchange of added goods and services therefore became the source of the subsistence farmer's additional material needs and the outlet for his surplus time and labor. To meet the diverse demands of the whole farm community, that surplus labor often was refined or expanded as a skill in one of the local non-farm trades, services or crafts. The single most outstanding feature of the labor economy of rural Massachusetts arose directly from those premises and resulted in the existence of a farmer who was also proficient and active in another work activity. This vocational duality created in the rural worker a simultaneous independence and dependence in the context of labor, family, farm and community.

The agricultural town continued to accommodate this pattern of work and personal farming. From forty-two in number in 1650, in both Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies, they increased to eighty-four in 1700 and to 173 in 1754; there were 192 towns in the province in 1765 and 212 in 1775.[48] Spawned by the older settlements, these newer towns came into being with common political, social, economic and agricultural mandates and arrangements. The elementary configuration of Meeting House and individual farm lots was maintained. The majority of the new towns after 1700 arose from the spread of population both east and west of the Connecticut River valley towns; there was a continuous bifurcation of existing towns in the original eastern counties. As populations in some towns increased, as the average population for all towns rose, congestion was prevented by increased utilization of unused land, by emigration and internal rearrangement. The habits of agriculture and economic life remained as they were. A family could farm no more in 1750 and produce no higher yields than it did in 1650.[49]

Thus the new towns, like the old, were agricultural communities and constituted local economies to the extent that the farm economy had to be supplied with its non-agricultural domestic service and labor needs. And these communities, even when their populations reached and exceeded 1,100 were not large enough to support much labor specialization. Moreover, as a major reason for residency, farming remained an activity of virtually all adult males and their families. Central-

ized facilities for the manufacture and supply of the many necessary non-farm commodities were not developed in the small provincial market. As Stuart Bruchey notes: "No large supplies of capital or labor were seeking employment."[50] The local communities managed to produce and manufacture their commodity requirements from the skills and surplus labor of their farm populations; the production of non-agricultural commodities was conducted on a personal or very limited scale in the localized markets and economies of individual towns. The town in rural provincial Massachusetts had not subdivided itself into specialized labor sectors as had occurred in the larger, commercial setting of Boston where certain workers were employed for the entire year in a single work activity. As there was not a segment of labor devoted exclusively to farming, neither was there one committed wholly to construction, manufacturing, service or material supply. The factors that made virtually everyone a farmer also created very few full-time farmers. Those same factors also shaped towns and regions into agricultural communities of striking similarities. In this setting, the work habits of subsistence farmers were tempered and enlarged by other skills and occupations and a labor economy of fluidity, versatility and flexibility ensued.

NOTES

CHAPTER VII

[1]Bernard Bailyn, New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: 1955) sets the tone for this view of the Massachusetts economy at the start of the provincial period. See also Michael Kammen, Empire and Interest (New York: 1970), Chapter 3 and "Bibliographical Essay," pp. 158-164.

[2]A.M. Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution (New York: 1968), pp. 15-31; L.H. Gipson, The Coming of the Revolution (New York: 1954), pp. 10-84; Charles McL. Andrews, England's Commerical and Colonial Policy (New Haven: 1938); Curtis Nettels, "British Mercantilism and the Economic Development of the Thirteen Colonies," JEH 12 (1952), pp. 105-14. J.P. Greene, "Search for Identity: An Interpretation of the Meaning of Selected Patterns of Social Response in 18th Century America," JSH 3 (1970), pp. 189-220; Greene, "Political Mimesis: A Consideration of the Historical and Cultural Roots of Legislative Behavior in the British Colonies in the Eighteenth Century," AHR 75 (1969-70), pp. 337-68; John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," WMQ 11 (1954), pp. 200-13; Clarence Ver Steeg, The Formative Years, 1607-1763 (New York: 1964), pp. 173-202.

[3]Alice Hanson Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies about 1770," JEH 32 (1972), pp. 98-127. This article attempts to make sense of a complex problem and succeeds in providing some new insights, even though its methods are flawed.

[4]Appendix II.

[5]"Economic mode" is given to mean that activity which produced material support or livelihood.

[6]Jones, "Wealth Estimates," p. 124, notes that just over 70% of all measured wealth in 1770 in Massachusetts was in land.

[7]Jackson Turner Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), Chapter 1, esp. p. 18; Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society; and An Afterthought" in S. Katz, ed., Colonial America (Boston: 1971), pp. 466-91.

[8]Appendix III; M. Arch. MSS Vol. 130, "Valuations of Towns."

[9]Ibid.; Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes," Box 2. Clark estimates the number of commercial fishermen in Massachusetts in 1720 at 1,100.

[10]W.I. Davisson and D.J. Duggan, "Commerce in 17th Century Essex County," EIHC 107 (1971), pp. 113-43; E.R. Johnson, et al., History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce (Washington: 1915), Vol. I.

[11]Michael Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century (New York: 1970); Kenneth Lockridge and Alan Kreider, "The Evolution of Massachusetts Town Government, 1640-1740," WMQ 23 (1966), pp. 549-74; Anne Bush MacLear, Early New England Towns: A Comparative Study of Their Development (New York: 1908).

[12]Sumner Chilton Powell, Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town (Westleyan: 1963), pp. 178-86.

[13]Mass. Bay Recs. Vol. I, pp. 18, 116-121, 160, 353. The major acts concerning the purposes of town settlement, government, authority and purpose can be found in summary in William Whitmore, compiler, Colonial Laws, pp. 11, 147-9. See also Page Smith, As a City Upon a Hill: The Town in American History (New York: 1966), pp. 8-10.

[14]On the physical alignment of town farms and residences see Powell, Puritan Village and MacLear, Early New England Towns. On markets, manufacturing and farming see: V.S. Clark, History of Manufactures in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1916), pp. 87-122; P.W. Bidwell and John Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington: 1925), pp. 59, 119-120, 131; Richard Hofstadter, America, 1750: A Social Portrait (New York: 1973), pp. 142-151.

[15]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 84-101, 136; Darrett B. Rutman, "Gov. Winthrop's Garden Crop: The Significance of Agriculture in the Early Commerce of Mass. Bay," WMQ 20 (1963), pp. 396-415; Robert R. Walcott, "Husbandry in Colonial New England," NEQ 9 (1936), pp. 218-52. M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 1, "Agriculture," passim.

[16]Collections of the Old Colony Society, No. 3, pp. 131-62 (Taunton, Mass.: 1885); Clark, Hist. of Manufactures, pp. 54, 76, 138; Mass. Bay Recs., Vol. II, pp. 61, 81, 103, 105; Baker, MSS, Lynn Iron Works Folder, "Typescripts of Original Documents."

[17]W.R. Bagnall, The Textile Industries of the United States (Cambridge, Mass.: 1893), pp. 1-27.

[18]M. Arch. MSS., Vol. 59, pp. 355-7, 376-7 and passim for all rural manufacturing enterprises; Acts and Resolves, Vol. 3, pp. 1053-4 discusses the problems in locating monopoly businesses in rural communities.

[19]Clark, Hist. of Manufactures, pp. 9-30, 87-122; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, p. 131.

[20]For ore, coal, and other mineral deposits and for mills and forges, see Lester J. Cappon, editor, Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era, 1760-90 (Princeton: 1976). Also, see Curtiss Nettels, "The Menace of Colonial Manufacturing," NEQ 4 (1931), pp. 230-69; Clark, Hist. of Manufactures, pp. 73-86, 159-161; Main, Social Structure, pp. 21, 23, 27, 31-32.

[21]Historical Data Relating to Counties, Cities and Towns in Massachusetts (Boston: 1975), passim; Powell, Puritan Village.

[22]Lois K. Mathews, The Expansion of New England (Boston: 1909), pp. 90 ff; Robert Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York: 1976), pp. 68-108.

[23]Edmund Morgan, The Puritan Family (New York: 1944).

[24]Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms.

[25]Main, Social Structure, p. 27; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 126-131.

[26]MacLear, Early New England Towns, p. 181. Zuckerman, Peaceable Kingdoms; Gross, Minutemen, pp. 11-16.

[27]Main, Social Structure, pp. 7-42; MHS MSS "Roxbury Valuation, 1727," in a detailed breakdown of this assessment it was found that 92.6% of the population lived on plots of 1 to 108 acres of cultivated land. Of 273 rated polls, only 42 farmed less than 10 acres of cultivated land. The average for the 241 who occupied more than 10 acres was 27 acres of combined tillage, pasture, orchard and cultivated grass. The Roxbury figures were slightly higher than the provincial average. For town populations see M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuation of Towns," passim. These documents also contain data on land use, farm size, value and yields. See Appendix IV and Table II.

[28] Historical Data.

[29] MHS.MSS, "Valuations of Counties, 1751," in Miscellaneous Bound Manuscripts (see Appendix IV, this paper).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., Historical Data.

[32] M. Arch.MSS., Vol. 130, "Valuations of Towns." The number of persons per rateable poll can be given as 4.67 based on known gross population figures for the province and separate assessments of polls. See MHS.MSS. "Valuations of Counties, 1751" and Appendix III, and IV.

[33] Approximately 59% of titled land in 1767 was not being used for agriculture; M. Arch. MSS., Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns." For later figures see Bidwell, History of Agriculture, p. 119.

[34] MHS.MSS., "Roxbury Valuations"; J.T. Main, Social Structure, pp. 7-42.

[35] Walcott, "Husbandry"; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 33-39, 94 ff.

[36] Merill Jensen, "The American Revolution and American Agriculture," Agric. History 43 (1969), pp. 107-125; Walcott, "Husbandry"; Bidwell, Hist. of Agriculture, pp. 115-116; Kenneth Lockridge, A New England Town: The First Hundred Years (New York: 1970); Lockridge, "Land, Population." There is widespread disagreement on how much average land was held by proprietors after 1750. Certainly it was of greater quantity in the west than in the older eastern regions. The M. Arch., "Valuations of Towns" give more information on farmed land than on total land possessed by individuals but a figure close to 100 acres seems to be the provincial norm. The problem of fixing precise figures for regions, towns and individuals is compounded by the fact that not all land was deeded and recorded in transaction, especially between fathers and sons, and much land was leased and sub-leased under a variety of forms and methods.

[37]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, Chapter 9, esp. pp. 119-20, 131; Jensen, "American Agriculture," p. 124; Matthews, Expansion, p. 90 ff; Walcott, "Husbandry."

[38]On soils and yields, see B.T. Bunting, The Geography of Soil (Chicago: 1965); Jensen, "American Agriculture," pp. 110-125; Walcott, "Husbandry."

[39]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 84, 86.

[40]Walcott, "Husbandry"; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, p. 84 ff.

[41]MHS.MSS, "Roxbury Valuations"; Appendix IV.

[42]On crop yields see M. Arch. MSS., Vol. I, "Agriculture," passim; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 89-93. On bread diet, types, and the large amounts consumed, see MHS. Misc. Bound MSS, "Alms House Expenses," Mar. 1, 1760; Carl Bridenbaugh, "The High Cost of Living in Boston, 1728," NEQ 5 (1932), pp. 800-11; Acts and Resolves, Vol. 7, App. 2, pp. 567 ff. The "Military," Volumes (67-80), in M. Arch. MSS contain information on bread consumption.

[43]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. I, "Agriculture," passim.

[44]Alice Morse Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days (Stockbridge, Mass.: 1974), (1989), Chapters 1, 8, 9, 11.

[45]Walcott, "Husbandry."

[46]This point has been much debated. It has been argued that individualism and isolation increased as town common lands were broken up for private ownership and that earlier "corporatism" declined as a result of this process. See Richard Dunn, "The Social History of Early New England," AQ 24-5 (1972), pp. 661-679.

[47]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, p. 131.

[48]Historical Data, for the rise in average populations of towns see Appendix III, i.

[49]Walcott, "Husbandry"; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 5-146; Anonymous, Some Observations Relating to Massachusetts Bay (Boston: 1750), p. 22.

[50]Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1861 (New York: 1965), p. 71.

CHAPTER III

THE RURAL ARTISAN

In his discussion of rural families, subsistence farming and dual occupational status, James Henretta observed that these institutions and practices were:

> not only the result of geographical or economic factors. These men and women were enmeshed also in a web of social relationships and cultural expectations that inhibited the free-play of market forces. Much of the output of their farms was consumed by [local] residents, most of whom . . . were not paid wages for their labor. 1

Among the principal factors which determined the nature of work in the towns of rural Massachusetts were the strong influences of subsistence farming, the dual-occupation character of work and the material self-sufficiency of local economies. Work also involved the individual in a balance of independence and interdependence in his relations with the community. The use of barter, rather than cash wages, was an additional influence on the personal relationships between residents. The agricultural town was the dominant social setting for work in the province. In order to gain a better understanding of the relationship of work to community, it will be necessary to examine the major kinds of work which were performed locally. A close description of how work merged with the needs of the community, and

by whom and under what conditions it was performed, will show the strong influence of work patterns on the social character and stability of the community in Massachusetts. As the ends of work were directed toward the maintenance of the subsistence farm, the exact forms of work were reflected in the demands and limitations of extensive agriculture. The supremacy of the family farm, as a desired and fundamental social institution, was combined with local patterns of work to foster common conditions, interests and aims. These shared qualities underlined the durability of the society's institutional structure.

The records show that from the end of the seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth centuries, more than one hundred different occupational categories existed in rural Massachusetts. Not all of these were found in any one community at all times; the usual number in any town was about thirty. Apart from "laborers" and "husbandmen," these vocational titles invariably referred to artisans, that is to skilled, trained craftsmen. Nearly half of the rural male population claimed crafts credentials, and of the many trades and skilled occupations which served the agricultural community as ancillaries to the farming and domestic economies, four stood out as being predominant. These were blacksmithing, carpentry, shoemaking and leather working, and weaving-tailoring. Of these the blacksmith was the most vital to farming in non-mechanized agricultural society. The carpenter,

shoemaker and textile-clothesmaker provided the basic necessary adjuncts to domestic life. Of the hundred or more occupational divisions, only a few were not directly associated with the four principal artisan categories.[2]

Most were related as either material suppliers to the main occupations such as sawyers, forge-operators, tanners or fullers or were artisans who listed a sub-specialty as a mark of special expertise. For example, a man who was a general blacksmith might prefer to be known as a "locksmith" because he was perhaps the only specialized locksmith in the region; most of his blacksmith work would be of a more conventional shop variety, but even if he did locksmith work only rarely, he might nevertheless come to be referred to as a locksmith and not a blacksmith. Similarly, a leather worker, although he might produce everything from simple tanned hides to saddles, harnesses and even leather coats and breeches, might be designated a "harness maker" because he happened to make the best local harnesses and not because he spent a majority of his time in that particular activity. And so it was with carpenters vis-à-vis shingling, plastering, flooring or stairmaking; the specialty noted did not signify a principal occupational activity but rather a special or occasional expertise. In short, the great many occupational titles, when examined, can be reduced to a narrower range of general crafts. A rural carpenter or blacksmith understood and practiced the complete range of skills involved in his trade. The

rural community did have need of specialty goods, services and work but the local economy was too small to support many workers in full-time labor specialization. The principal trades were practiced by men who performed the most comprehensive range of tasks, including occasional specialties.[3] The rural artisan was versatile in the conduct of his craft; he was versatile also since he maintained a proprietary and vocational attachment to the land.[4]

It was that attachment to the land that determined the social and economic priorities of the rural artisan's life. It served as the starting point for his experience, as the legacy for his progeny, and it flavored the conduct of his working life. Yet while the farm was the central consideration in his economy the rural artisan also practiced his craft and relied on it and used it to establish his place in the community. The rural artisan was normally the son of a farmer-artisan. He was raised on a subsistence farm as part of the traditional farm family unit, receiving a rudimentary scholastic education and taking part in farm work, as an aid to his father, when he was eight or nine years old. From that point in his life, until he was fourteen to sixteen years old, the son of the artisan-farmer was included as part of the complete economic function of the family. At some point in his mid-teens, the boy would be apprenticed to learn a trade.[5] In keeping with Massachusetts custom, a practice encouraged by law and based on English precedent, the youth would learn a skill away from the home and his father's direct tutelage, while his father, if he required or desired an apprentice of his own

would seek one from outside the immediate family. This method of crafts training was predicated upon a principle of combining trades acumen with social exposure.[6] By removing the apprentice from the instruction of the father it was hoped that crafts training would be more disciplined, objective and rigorous than it would be at home; by placing the youth with another artisan and his family, it was expected that the young man would encounter wider communal standards of sociability, humility and respectability. Thus the young artisan entered independent adulthood in possession of a sense of personal and community responsibility and a skill learned at the hands of a neutral teacher. These attributes would support him while he refined his work skills, and until he either inherited land or saved enough to purchase, rent or lease a cultivated plot or property that could be cultivated.

Sometimes, when land was not available, or when there was insufficient work for the young journeyman to set up an independent household, the artisan would return home, to help on his father's land and practice his craft in the community as he was needed. In time, the young man would usually succeed in establishing himself in his own house, on land that he inherited, bought or leased, while he continued to gain experience in his craft and expand his working time and income. While it is certain that not all Massachusetts rural artisans followed that particular pattern, a majority did. Though many sons did follow their fathers' trades, not all boys

were automatically apprenticed to their father's crafts. Other considerations for the trade to be learned were the availability of apprenticeships in the community or nearby and the father's means — for there was usually a cost incurred by the parents. The boy's special vocational inclinations or talents were also considered. It can be assumed, on the basis of Robert Seybolt's samples, that at least half of the sons of rural artisans who were apprenticed, followed trades other than those of their fathers; and more than half began farming their own properties soon after completion of their apprenticeships.[7]

By his mid-to late-twenties, the young artisan would be married and would have begun a family. Eventually he would have anywhere from two to six or more children who survived infancy; the higher number of surviving children normally reflected an individual's sound economic status or prospects. With his family, his few cultivated acres and his crafts skill, the rural artisan was now at the head of a labor and economic unit within the agricultural community.[8] If the artisan's father had been successful in holding or amassing a large contiguous acreage for the purpose of settling his grown sons then the young artisan would reside in close proximity to his father. But usually the land obtained by the son was in another part of the town or even in another community. The process of land accumulation and disposal among rural artisans was varied and complex. Sometimes an eighteenth century son took possession of land that remained from

hundred-year-old grants that had not been exhausted by previous partible disposal. It should be remembered that 100 acres of land would provide "home lots" for several subsistence farms. In other ways, fathers attempted to ensure inheritable land by buying or leasing, over time, small quantities of land elsewhere in the town or in other towns and even in distant regions of the province. But land usually was available to the young rural artisan; parts of fifty-acre holdings, of which only half had been cultivated, were still being leased to be cleared and planted in the 1760s in the oldest settled sections of Massachusetts.[9]

As the basis for the family economy, the farm provided domicile, subsistence, privacy and a foundation for economic stability. The artisan's craft work directly and indirectly supplied the means of working the farm and of acquiring any non-agricultural requirements he did not produce for himself. At an early date the young artisan-farmer would find it necessary to "hire" a man and often that man's "boys" — either sons or apprentices — to work his land for him while he repaid this debt by performing skilled work. But later, as his own sons grew and his economic condition improved, he would reverse this practice and could send his sons, horses and oxen to work the land of others. Meanwhile, with a young and growing family the artisan-farmer was kept fully occupied by farm and craft. He balanced his financial accounts with an informal method of labor exchange and barter. He received help on his small farm, work materials for his

trade and domestic commodities in exchange for his own work and for goods or services produced by his craft. Of course he did as much as possible of his own farm work but in very busy periods, even on small acreages, help was often needed.[10]

Reciprocal farm work was not simply a matter of neighbor "helping" neighbor. These exchanges of labor were based upon a monetary value or its equivalent in service, commodity or labor. The value of the exchange was tied to a previous service performed by one of the parties and retired by the other; or the labor would be recorded, to be credited later by some other exchange of labor or goods. Few artisans suspended their crafts work entirely during the busy "growing season." It was reduced, of course, to allow for the very strict demands of tending to crops. But the work of the blacksmith, carpenter, shoemaker, tailor and weaver continued. In this way, the artisan-farmer was especially dependent upon other local workers to aid him in necessary farm work, just as he continued to require the goods and services provided by other artisans and as the community required his services and craft in all seasons. Thus, the artisan-farmer was early established as his own master, possessing a marketable skill along with the farm property that served to secure his basic dietary and household needs. That measure of independence could only be sustained by a close labor and economic relationship with the rest of the local community. In that way the artisan-farmer was at once an independent worker whose fortunes were inter-

dependent with a larger labor economy. Furthermore, with a minimum of money or hard currency being circulated, the flexible barter method of payment consolidated the individual's contact with and involvement in the shared economic affairs of the town and its residents.[11]

Within this system the rural blacksmith was the man mainly responsible for the material work needs of farmers. He shoed horses of course, but he made and repaired plows, hoes, scythes and other agricultural implements. For the home he repaired metal pots, pails and kettles, made door hinges, axe heads and other domestic metal products. In most towns of 200 to 300 families, there would be five or six blacksmiths, and while some did stress certain aspects of metalwork, most were involved in a combination of farrier work, farm tool and hardware repair and production. Typically, a local blacksmith did business with between thirty and fifty separate people in any year, performing services ranging from a few minutes sharpening a scythe to several weeks making a plow. He would have as many as thirty outstanding accounts at any time. This meant that his blacksmithing work was constantly being balanced for or against goods and labor and services provided for him. For at least four months between late autumn and the following sowing season, he would work full time at his craft for up to twelve hours a day, six days a week. At the height of the haying or harvest season, he might reduce his shop work to one or two days a week. The striking feature of the young blacksmith's work habits is the degree of hard, constant work involved in balancing the demands of the farm with the necessary

crafts work. This regimen was especially taxing during the first few years of farming and marriage. Then, the blacksmith, as other young artisan-farmers, was almost solely responsible for his family's income. But in time his eldest son would be supplementing the family income by doing occasional farm work on his father's behalf, away from home and earning about half the usual farm laborers rate of pay. Also, at that stage, this son could do more work on the home farm, in summer and winter, freeing his father from some expense and allowing him to perform more shop work.[12]

The life of Nathaniel Chamberlin, a Plymouth county blacksmith, followed that general pattern. He was born in 1722, and in 1743 he finished his apprenticeship, started his own shop, began farming fifteen inherited acres and married, all within a few months. Of his children born between 1745 and 1764, eight survived infancy, four each of boys and girls. The bulk of Chamberlin's early expenditure was for hiring men and animals for his farm work. Throughout his working life, Chamberlin received help on his farm, iron supplies and various industrial and domestic commodities in exchange for his blacksmithing. Naturally he did as much of his own farm work as he could but, in season, he often needed assistance; he paid for that aid with shop work. Over the course of twenty years, his accounts were balanced mostly by exchanges of goods and services and not by money payments. His scope was such that at various times Chamberlin had as many as forty accounts which were current; and the varieties of other trades — virtually all in the community — bestowed on

him a great deal of manoeuverability in his bartering. During the 1740s and 1750s, Chamberlin's labor represented the family's sole source of income. But by 1755 his eldest son, then ten years old, was contributing to the family budget, as Chamberlin debited a client, "for my boy and mare to plow." As the family matured its labor patterns changed. With fewer young children requiring her attention and energies the blacksmith's wife could begin carding and spinning more flax and wool both for her own family's clothing and textile needs and on contract to other families and to local weavers. With more family members taking part in the economy of the home, the family economic unit became more flexible and efficient. For example, a blacksmith with a wife, eight children and a resident apprentice, could supply his entire household with shoes for a year by providing a local shoemaker with about two weeks of assorted blacksmith work and by having his wife and adolescent daughters spin a quantity of linen yarn from the latter's own flax. The blacksmith's oldest son could complete the family's combined contribution and round off the value of the shoes, by working a few days in the shoemaker's hay meadow. In this way the maturing family combined to supplement the total income of the blacksmith's economy while he continued to do farm work, for himself and for others; and pursued his trade and sometimes performed other work for creditors who might have no need for blacksmithing but who demanded his labor for other tasks.[13]

The mutual exchange of work and goods barter meant that the blacksmith, when he needed help or materials or commodities, would

commit himself to repaying as he could. He would attempt to do this by means of his craft but often a creditor would require farm labor or other forms of work and service and the blacksmith would retire the debt with various forms of his or his family's labor. The reverse was true too, of course. Often, the blacksmith did not require shoes, or woven cloth or the services of a tailor for whom he had done work and would have the other man, or his family, repay the obligation with farm labor or other forms of work. Hence, in these matters of barter and reciprocity the kinds of work, goods and services exchanged depended upon the needs and capacities of both parties. The rural artisan, by being both craftsman and farmer, was and had to be very flexible with his work abilities. His personal versatility enlarged the total labor flexibility of the complete family unit. As a single economic unit in the context of a highly parochial local economy, the family had little need for cash. The artisan-farmer could manipulate his own and his family's labor and balance it against their combined needs.[14]

In the first half of the eighteenth century, a rural blacksmith in Massachusetts, with a busy trade and a farm of approximately fifteen acres of land would have a combined income roughly equal to that of the full-time wage earning Boston artisan. But he would receive less than one-fifth of that income in cash. If he was efficient and hard working, the rural blacksmith's expenditures would be slightly less than his assessed income. Even if little money was exchanged in this economy, all work and goods, no matter how they were repaid,

were given monetary values and incomes and expenditures were always evaluated in terms of the equivalent prices and wages of bartered items, services and labor. In some individual cases, and in some years for all rural artisans, income equivalent would fall below that of the full-time Boston artisan. But the annual budget of the rural artisan did not include many dietary and domestic items. The farm generated most of the family's food requirements and much clothing was made partly or completely at home. Wood from uncleared portions of the property and hides from the few slaughtered livestock provided another source of material self-sufficiency. A great deal of domestically-produced food and materials did not show up on the account books, ledgers and tax assessments of rural artisans. To speak of the incomes of rural, land holding artisans is to acknowledge the combined work earnings of the craftsman and his family and the unrecorded domestically-produced and consumed materials of subsistence farming. These latter "invisible" earnings helped the artisan farmer accumulate cash and credit from his other sources into a surplus for investment in more land, a better or larger house or shop or barn to accommodate a larger, growing family or to improve his working capacities. If he had sons, the artisan farmer was customarily obliged to attempt to secure land for their maturity.

Most farming artisans did not produce significant quantities of marketable farm commodities. A few skins, some shipments of grains, wool or flax were infrequent transactions. The artisan's livestock

consumed most of his hay and his family consumed most of the meat of his slaughtered animals. In fact, during the early years of his working life, the artisan farmer was as likely to "buy" feed, meat and household grains as he was to satisfy his own needs or produce a surplus. His circumstances, needs and productivity varied from year to year as his family grew and his work habits adjusted to these changes. In time, as the ratio of crafts work to farming stabilized, the artisan might expand his agricultural activities. But there were serious limitations to this practice. Subsistence farming on ten to fifteen acres required some 100 individual working days for seeding, weeding, haying, harvesting and related work. During the fall and winter another forty or fifty days would be taken up in grain threshing, corn husking, flax breaking, carting grain, stones and supplies, and caring for livestock. All of this would produce a range of foods and clothing and some other material needs for the immediate use of the family; any surplus was used as barter for manufactured items and some other labor or service requirements and occasionally a small surplus could be sold outside the community.[15]

For a single man this work obligation consumed half of his annual time and labor. He was left with an equal amount of time in which to practice his craft or other vocation and produce sufficient income or credit to meet his other extensive material requirements. Usually, with a good trade and sufficient energy and financial prudence, the artisan-farmer remained solvent and even managed to improve his

material condition. But the extent to which he could expand his agricultural production was always limited. The presence of his sons and the benefits of their added labor was usually temporary; the young males, as they matured, expected to be made independent from their fathers. Occasionally, a son did remain to help the artisan-farmer enlarge his farming operation but the normal course of events usually prevented this. Otherwise, the artisan could only increase his revenue and outside labor aid by increasing his crafts productivity and there were restrictions of time and means to this alternative. Extra cultivated land could not alone ensure a larger farming activity without a concomitant of cheap and plentiful farm labor. The latter was not available in any important numbers in provincial Massachusetts.[16]

Thus the rural artisan split his time between his craft and his farm. In some cases the amount of land, number of sons and other sources of income permitted an artisan to devote as much as 80% of his time and work to farming; in other cases the ratio could be accurately inverted. Normally a 40% farm-work to 60% craft-work balance was struck. Even in cases where an artisan's craft work brought a higher return in labor owed to him, it was seldom sufficient, over the short or long term, to permit substantial farm expansion. The artisan therefore usually settled upon a life-long mixture of trades work and farming. The advantages to converting, over time, to full-scale farming were not as promising as they might have been in a cash-crop,

labor-cheap economy. Rather, in the limited and small-scale rural economies of eighteenth century Massachusetts, the subsistence farmer was obliged also to be a non-farm worker and the artisan was required to be and chose to be a part-time and subsistence farmer.

The labor needs of individual communities and of larger regional areas were variable. Respective size of towns, their age, location, arable soil quantity and timber and mineral deposits all contributed to the specific economic standards and practices and work patterns in the individual town. As few as 70% and as many as 95% of family heads and adult males occupied cultivated or arable land within specific towns. But despite these variations and the enormously wide range of individual acreage holdings, from as little as one acre to as much as several hundred acres, nearly 65% of rural Massachusetts families farmed between ten and fifty acres. This is not to suggest a composite or "average" agricultural town for provincial Massachusetts; but a majority of communities did share certain common agricultural, economic, vocational and population features. The point to be made here is that ten to twenty acres of mixed cultivated land were as much as an eighteenth century family could farm effectively. This same acreage was insufficient to produce enough profit to completely supply that family's material needs. The phenomenon of combined occupations in this society is understandable on that basis.[17] The social purposes and imperatives of the founders and settlers of Massachusetts and their

successors when added to the economic limitations of its agriculture, were at the core of the province's rural labor economy. The supremacy of the family unit ensconced on its small subsistence farm, and the absence of either a dominant manufacturing facility or a commercial cash crop, required workers to be flexible, self-reliant and multi-skilled. Thus, while they enjoyed a measure of independence, in terms of disposal of their labors, they were required to be interdependent with the needs and opportunities of their communities.

The artisan-farmer stands as a model case of the individual worker's involvement in the economic life of the rural town. It further demonstrates the individual's wide labor flexibility. Today, most of the artisan-farmers of rural pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts would be considered "self-employed" and in a very strict sense, contemporaneously, they were. But essentially they exchanged their skills, labor and produce for the skills, labor and produce of others. The central place of the farm in the lives of those artisans can be accounted a personal preference as much as a necessity. For certainly in many cases a rural artisan, in some communities, could have supported a family from the income of his craft. But the possession of farm land afforded him an added means of labor exchange in the barter economy as well as a measure of material self-sufficiency. And socially, the farm provided him with a fixed property within the community where he could function more effectively as a domestic patriarch and a political participant under the traditional Puritan

criteria of church membership and residency. Although the concept of landless property — "personal wealth" — was established in the province, most rural artisan could not ensure a portable legacy for their successors, even though the law permitted the inheritance of personal wealth. Land, its cultivation and the transmission of farming habits, a learned skill and a possible inheritance of land were the surest and soundest means of legacy in this society. Thus was continuity assured. Land was passed on by partible inheritance in Massachusetts. There was no cash to bequeath, and no capital investment stocks in trade and commerce to pass on, but there was the endowment of an attachment to the land and its ancient economic and cultural purposes, and the communication to youth of a learned and useful alternative work skill. The rural artisan looked backward to the experience of his predecessors and forward in time to his own needs as he labored to support himself and his family. And beyond the material provisions of his work he sought to confirm the social and cultural priorities of his society.[18] Economically, the artisan applied his craft to the extent that personal circumstances and local conditions would allow. By his industry, skill and care he could add small parcels of land to his present holdings for the future needs of his family. The rural artisan seldom farmed more than twenty or so acres or achieved sufficient wealth to abandon his craft, employ men full time and cultivate more land for full-time farming; but he still saw his family's future in terms of land. The ends of skilled labor in rural society were focused upon agriculture.[19]

While the agricultural setting dictated the principal aims of skilled labor, other factors influenced its precise form and application. It has been noted that the conduct of skilled labor was modified by the size, composition and material requirements of local communities, and by the methods of labor and material barter and exchange that were practiced locally. The artisan as independent businessman was another feature of skilled labor in the rural economy. To a certain extent, all skilled workers in provincial society were entrepreneurs. That is to say, they performed as workers who produced a marketable product or service for their own disposal. As such they sought to control the entire material supply, labor and distribution of their crafts operation. The blacksmith, for example, when he could, leased or rented a coal pit or a wood-lot for cord wood as fuel supply for his shop forge. If he manufactured a great deal of farm implements he might cooperate in a joint ownership of a bloomery and iron forge where he could secure quantities of working iron. If this was not feasible he might "rent" time at a privately owned forge and produce his own rough metals. If he was fortunate, he might be reasonably close to a slitting mill from which he could readily obtain supplies of sheet, bar and finished bulk iron. Otherwise he was subject to high material costs and cartage charges; and so it was with most independent artisans. They aspired to own or share or be close to a source of raw material supplies. The blacksmith Chamberlin, for example, owned a "coal pit." Following this principle many

bricklayers were also brickmakers, carpenters were sawyers and shoemakers did their own tanning wherever possible. Many weaver-farmers kept large flocks of sheep and allotted more of their tillage acreage to flax.[20]

The principle at stake was control. Control of the sources of materials meant less bartering and fewer arrangements with suppliers in an economy dominated by multiple trade and labor agreements and exchanges. The artisan also was determined to control the finished product of his craft. The latter consideration was probably more important to the individual craftsman than resource ownership or control. By possessing free disposal of the ultimate use of his labor the artisan could be both selective in his choice of whom he dealt with and flexible when he had to be. The scale and operation of the local economy assisted and perpetuated the artisan's independent disposal of his labor. Most rural blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, weavers, tailors and other tradesmen did "bespoke" work and seldom produced items for sale in an unknown market or to anonymous purchasers. Most artisan work at the rural level was contracted in advance by individual users, and terms of price, or barter or labor exchange were mutually agreed upon before work was done.[21]

But some "stock manufacture" did occur. In a central and high volume trade such as shoemaking, a local artisan with a good reputation and a well established and predictable demand could anticipate the particular footwear needs of his customers. If his share of the local market was stable, the shoemaker might make shoes

in advance of actual need or request. Also, footwear was manufactured on a small scale for retail sale in Boston and occasionally for export to other colonies. But this practice, when it did occur was irregular and was always tangential or secondary to the role of the shoemaker as a local craftsman supplying the needs of his local community. Residence, agriculture and craft were the normal dominant influences on the rural shoemaker.[22]

Still, it was often necessary for a young journeyman shoemaker to make shoes on contract for another shoemaker. Early in his career, while devoting his summers to farming and his winters to his craft, he often made shoes, for wages, for a local "master shoemaker." At the same time, usually working in his farmhouse, he dealt directly, on his own behalf, with individual customers and families.[23] In this manner, he built a reputation, acquired a regular clientele and took part in the usual barter and labor exchange of the local agricultural community. The formal arrangement with the "master shoemaker" helped him regulate his income while he established his independent status in the community. Usually in these cases the retailer supplied the young shoemaker with stock leather and heels and purchased a fixed, contracted number of shoes. The master shoemaker then marketed those shoes to an outside distributor or to his own local customers. As the young shoemaker matured and began regulating his income and improving his own economic condition he sometimes reversed this procedure and in turn "employed" other young journeymen to whom he paid wages for contracted shoes. But there was not enough demand for this system

of shoemaking to ensure full-time and future security and whatever measure of prosperity was available to the artisan. Therefore, the rural shoemaker, even when successful, seldom relinquished his practice of farming in season and making shoes to order for local townspeople.[24]

By working nearly every day in his shop, an energetic and skilled shoemaker could produce approximately sixty pairs of shoes of all kinds in a busy winter season. With an occasional contract to supply shoes for an outside market, a local shoemaker, along with his apprentice and one or two contracted journeymen could make twelve pairs of shoes a week.[25] And there was no division of function, specialty or labor in provincial shoemaking; the "cordwainer" was expected to be capable of making all types of footwear from any design and he made a finished pair of shoes entirely by himself from tanned leather to product. Often, a servant or apprentice made wooden heels for the journeyman and occasionally these same helpers made leather heels and soles for specific orders. And local shoemakers did buy pre-made wooden heels from local woodworkers or from Boston merchants. But the typical shoe or boot in rural provincial Massachusetts was made entirely by a single shoemaker.[26] And as with most other handicrafts, the cost of labor involved in a pair of shoes was roughly 30% to 40% of the total price. This proportion was constant throughout the first half of the eighteenth century and was matched in other trades such as weaving, tailoring, harness-making and blacksmith work such as implement and tool manufacture.[27] The relative cost of labor, in

the final production of a commodity, was invariably less than half its retail or exchange value.

Shoemaking was one of the most popular of pre-industrial crafts and could be studied and perfected by an alert apprentice in as few as three years.[28] It was, therefore, a common trade among many who would otherwise have been unskilled. The wide use of leather in this society made shoemaking and other leather trades very competitive. The demand for leather goods was steady, high and universal. Harness-making was, along with shoe-making, a high-volume trade and one that was vital to the agrarian society. Some leather workers combined the two functions, but there was normally enough local demand for harnesses to encourage a separation of the two manufactures. While this discussion is focused on shoemakers, it should be noted that many of the labor, barter and production principles, and a similar seasonality of shop-work, applied equally to harnessmakers. In this atmosphere, the more successful shoemakers of the period possessed not only better than average skills and a reliable and high degree of personal productivity, but had deliberately emphasized their trade in the allotment of their time. In a town of 200 to 300 families, there might be as many as eight shoemakers — usually all part-time farmers — all of whom were dependent upon a certain amount of crafts work. Some were content with a marginal or irregular application of their trade while others pursued quantity production vigorously. In any case, those who prospered by their trade also tended to their agricultural subsistence in close tandem with their crafts and entrepreneurial activities.

The range of productivity by shoemaker-farmers was from twenty-five to 150 pairs of shoes and boots a year. There was little specialization in the rural shoemaking trades; individuals did not, for example, concentrate on making only or primarily a specific kind of shoe such as expensive riding or dress boots. Most shoemakers were compelled to deal with a variety of customers with whom they did a variety of business and so were necessarily versatile in the range of product they made. Some shoemakers, on their own and without other journeymen under contract, could do an astonishing volume of work. High productivity would bring a shoemaker the services of a great variety of clients. As noted, fifty separate customers a year was not unusual for a busy rural artisan. The universal need for shoes and the direct, supplier to user relationship meant that a productive shoemaker was in contact with the broadest possible spectrum of local society; customers who were involved in most aspects of the rural economy. Consequently, at least three-quarters of a competent and busy shoemaker's income was derived from goods and labor exchanged for shoes. In some years, for example, some shoemaker-farmers had their agricultural work conducted almost entirely by client-surrogates who had obtained shoes in exchange for labor or services.

As an example of the range of contacts two tradesman might have, and the extent of the barter system involved in the artisan's economy — and the community generally — the following transactions are typical and quite illustrative. Late in the provincial period

John Reed was a farmer-shoemaker in rural Suffolk county, about twelve miles from Boston. In the twelve months following February 1742/3 he recorded accounts with over thirty separate customers. All his transactions were given a monetary value but virtually no money was exchanged. Among the items Reed received as credit were hides, milk, rye, calf-skins, fat, cash, turnips, flax, honey, meat, earthenware, an almanac, dry fish, two pigs, wool, salt, hay, molasses, oil, plums, biscuits, cider, casks and fish. For house construction or repair, Reed received posts, rails, 1,000 shingles, 1,000 bricks, pavements, lime, clapboards and planks; all were gained in barter. Also, as barter, Reed received for his shop, "four dozen heels," "a side of cured leather" and tacks. Apart from goods, Reed bartered for the labor of others; from a client's slave "Sambo, splitting rails, plowing, driving plow two acres, sliding six loads of wood." From the white servant of a customer, Reed was given "a days planting, one day thatching a barn, a day's work hoeing and mortising eight posts," From the labor of customers themselves, he received "carting dung and hay," "helping in carrying hay," "carting corn," "carting stones," "gathering corn and picking apples," "carting hides to Braintree," and "hoeing, mowing and butchering." For the construction of his dwelling, Reed credited a mason with chimney work, laying paths, making mortar, underpinning and "you and Nathaniel's work." From a blacksmith he received some axe sharpening, a spindle and a hoe. A tailor provided him with a frock, a doublet and a jacket and breeches,

and "driving my plow" and "your wife for work" (unspecified). Reed also had a deed written and "borrowed horses." He balanced all these goods and services with shoemaking and shoe repair. As late as 1764, while operating a twenty-acre farm, Reed worked all or part of 250 days making and repairing shoes. Jacob Adams, a shoemaker with similar practices, who lived in Essex at the beginning of the provincial period, farmed over twenty acres, yet in 1700 he spent nearly 200 days in his shop.[29]

A good shoemaker, like other successful rural artisans, could, by exchange and production, provide himself and family with many goods and services for regular agricultural and domestic needs and uses. But some long-term assets accrued from the surplus value of successful artisan work. A shoemaker could buy an acre or two of land or arrange a long-term lease by contracting to supply a certain family's footwear needs over several years. This kind of arrangement had to be mutually tenable and agreeable, of course. If it was, it could benefit both parties by ensuring some future needs and improving the economic conditions of the individuals and families involved. The surrender of an acre of land by exchange for labor, or the lease rights to several acres, was often a very practical means of barter for a landowner — often an artisan himself — to ensure an uninterrupted long-term supply of one of his family's basic necessities, in this case footwear. For the shoemaker, this form of long-term labor-product arrangement was a convenient and manageable means of

providing a fixed asset for his family's future. Some shoemakers could have new houses or workshops or barns built for them, using materials acquired or owed in barter, and contracting the construction to a carpenter with whom a long-term shoe supply arrangement had been made. All artisan-farmers and their families shared common needs, wants and expectations. This brought most into direct contact with each other, in some degree, at some time in all communities. The diversity of talents involved in a commonly-shared economy resulted in a fluid system of barter and a permanent social connection.[30]

A few shoemakers worked up to 95% of the time at their craft. Such was the local demand for footwear that the efficient shoemaker could use shoe manufacture and repair as his only means of barter exchange. He might even produce shoes during the agricultural season while others contracted to do his farm work for him. The shoemaker-farmer best exemplifies the low-cash nature of the local rural economy. With his wide ranging clientele and their individual resources and skills, the busy rural shoemaker had virtually no need for money. His taxes could be paid in his or a debtor's farm produce or by the money payment of someone who was indebted to him.[31] If his contribution to the construction or repair of the local meeting house was paid <u>for</u> him by a local grist or saw mill operator for example, the shoemaker could retire the debt with shoes — a commodity always in demand. In these communities even the ministers of the local congregations were drawn into the steady and persistent practice of barter exchange.

Salaries were seldom paid entirely in cash and the ministers were often landowners and part-time farmers and were obliged to engage in the local exchange and circulation of goods and services. The normal perquisites of the church were always given in the form of farm produce, handicraft products and free work.[32]

To speak of wages in provincial rural Massachusetts is to refer to the relative value of skilled to unskilled work, which itself was tied to the basic values of certain foodstuffs, materials and goods. These in turn reflected the tangible value of the combined material and labor involved in the provision of a commodity or service. Relative scarcity and plentitude moderated all values, of course, but for the skilled artisan his work-time and product represented a fixed value in barter. A pair of ordinary men's work or walking shoes was worth two days mowing or a bushel of wheat or a day's carpentry; two cords of firewood or twenty pounds of horse or steer hide. The system of barter was at once the cause and the solution of the paucity of specie and paper money in these rural towns.[33] The barter system survived in this setting for a number of reasons, not the least of which was its simple utility in the parochial community. But there were other reasons why barter, and not cash, was prevalent in the economic affairs of the rural communities, and chief among those was the absence of a central provincial agency to regulate a stable and reliable currency and issue local coinage and bills based upon systematic production and purchasing values. Otherwise, the money used in Massachusetts was drawn from everywhere in the Atlantic

world; its flow was small and irregular and its values were always subject to change. Moreover, without a large wage-labor component in the working population, the small provincial communities had little need for cash as a medium of exchange. The barter system obliged the community to function more as an integrated economic unit than might have been the case otherwise. The constant and fluid exchange of labor permeated the working and social activities of all residents to the point where a highly individualized process of labor exchange resulted and was maintained.

The dealings between one artisan and another normally produced a direct exchange of service or product of the respective crafts of the two parties. From unskilled workers, farm labor and assorted menial work service was obtained. From partly-skilled workers the artisan could round out his material and service requirements. Some such relationships were maintained over many years and even for lifetimes. Those workers who possessed no precise craft and who farmed fewer than ten acres were obliged to greatly diversify their work activity. The semi-skilled handyman or jack-of-all-trades was a common feature of rural towns. One such worker — John Porter — who farmed only five acres of land, was also a carter, cider maker, informal weaver, wood sawyer, coal digger and general laborer. Others proved useful in the local economies by being versatile and efficient in a number of other necessary work functions. In dealings between John Reed, the shoemaker, for instance, and John Porter, the handyman,

the former would provide only shoes and in return would have his apples pressed to cider, some of his own fibers woven into cloth and most of his cartage done for him. There would be some isolated exchanges of farm work to help balance the joint labor and service account. Carting was essential to all artisan-farmers in the province. It was needed to transport grain to the local mill, of course. But for the artisan, cartage was vital to the movement and delivery of raw materials such as lumber, hides, metals and other stocks, supplies and products. On the farm, cordwood had to be moved and stones cleared from fields. A team and wagon were not beyond the means of the individual farmer-artisan, but the work of carting was time consuming and involved heavy manual labor.[34]

Otherwise the semi-skilled worker killed and skinned the beef and swine of the busy artisan. Perhaps, too, he stitched some rough clothes or wove some linen or wool, made beer and cider and sent his sons to hoe, weed and mow for others. By spreading his work activities widely and variously he developed useful skills and experience. Usually he was a man of some native talent and dexterity who could help a carpenter by measuring and sawing wood and nailing, shingling or performing other related tasks. For the shoemaker or leather worker he might tan hides or curry them; for the blacksmith he might do skilled labor such as hammering implement parts or sharpening hoes, axe heads and scythes. He would not do finished work or a large quantity of work to the point where he might violate

trades qualification statutes and standards. But his partly-developed and manifold skills made him invaluable to many artisans during especially busy periods; and his versatility afforded both he and the community a single flexible source of labor exchange.[35] A semi-skilled worker with a fairly large household might require as many as twenty-five footwear transactions a year, including new shoes and repairs. By being versatile and available for a large number of different jobs and services, the semi-skilled worker was of great use to the shoemaker, in this case, and possessed the ready and direct means to pay for his footwear needs.

These flexible relationships helped sustain the comprehensive nature of community labor exchange. When a non-artisan required extra field work for his own farm, an artisan would sometimes oblige by redirecting some menial labor which was owed to him, to the other's use. A debt for labor, goods or services could be bartered by the creditor to a third party. The common method of recording these transactions was by the ledger book system or by the issuance of personal credit notes which were exchanged among participants. As self-sufficient as might be the individual artisan-farmer, he too did some laboring for others, even unskilled workers, on their lands or during the construction of a house or barn. He did it for work credit, if convenient, or as a voluntary favor during times of need or for harvest emergency, for example. The practice of transferring a labor or service or commodity debt from one man to another was

conducted as follows: if a shoemaker owned a blacksmith for a scythe, for example, and was owed by another man for a pair of shoes, he might channel the labor of his debtor to the blacksmith's use and all three transactions would be closed. As usual these arrangements had to be amenable to all parties.[36] Other types of labor surrogation and credit transfer were practiced too. If a man was successful, affluent or prominent enough to employ a servant, slave or apprentice, he used that employee as a regular means of providing outside labor to retire debt or obtain credit for services or goods supplied to himself. Always, the sons of artisan-farmers were indispensible in attending to the more rudimentary and menial farm tasks which might be owed to others.

In every way, vocational and economic flexibility was a keynote for individuals and families in the economic life of the rural community. Men had to be wide-ranging in their work habits and financial associations within the otherwise stable structure of the local economy. Artisans had to be versatile within their crafts. As noted, blacksmiths and shoemakers manufactured finished products; the former making a very wide range of articles. Often both processed the raw materials that were necessary to their crafts. The rural carpenter was essentially a frame builder, erecting houses, barns, workshops, bridges and making additions and repairs to existing structures. But he also did "shop work," making furniture, chests, benches, wagons and other appliances. He repaired and made parts

for other wooden items, fashioning wheels, axles, gates, doors and window frames, and he was capable of a host of varied carpentry work that was being done by crafts specialists in larger eighteenth century urban communities. The rural carpenter made tools such as spinning wheels and hoe, axe and scythe handles. Many rural carpenters found themselves doing most of these carpentry jobs in the space of one, two or a few years. He did not, indeed he could not reduce his craft to a single sub-specialty. Naturally, some carpenters did more house carpentry than shop work, and vice versa. But most were obliged to diversify their skills and include a variety of related functions, as local need dictated.[37]

In building construction work, the rural carpenter in the absence of a mason, might do some masonry, bricklaying and plastering and here and there he would do painting, shingling and fencing; though in most cases, the individual householder did these latter jobs. He might contract for the complete construction of a building, as the "housewright" and sub-contract to one or two other carpenters. Or he might act as a sub-contractor himself, to assist another carpenter or to do a specified portion of the construction. In house construction, the carpenter was the customary principal contractor. In this enterprise the industry, versatility and genius of the rural craftsman was given full rein. Not only did the carpenter design and build the basic house frame but the same man often completed the

general exterior and interior construction. He made, hung and finished the doors, turned, shaped and installed the stair banisters, built the staircase and laid the stairs and floors. When and if necessary, he made and installed the window frames and fitted the glass, and he could cut, shape and apply ornamental woodwork. An experienced journeyman carpenter in rural Massachusetts, given adequate time, resources and labor assistance, was capable of making every piece of finished wood that went into the eighteenth century wooden frame building and of erecting and installing each piece and all other materials according to his own plans.[38]

The special demands of building construction meant that carpentry, among the skilled trades, required long-term commitment and involved a slight deviation from the ordinary rural artisan's labor habits. For most artisans, of whatever craft, contracted work or service involved numerous but brief duration commitments. In terms of the relative scale of time involved in many local jobs, a horse could be shod in an hour or two and a plow share could be made in a week. It took a day to make a pair of shoes or a simple jacket and a yard of linen cloth could be woven in an afternoon.[39] But a large house took months to build and finish and a multi-purpose barn could take up to several weeks to complete. Therefore some rural carpenters did become building entrepreneurs and as such contracted larger construction projects. The normal procedure then would be for the contractors to sub-contract portions of the project to local

carpenters; and many housewrights engaged young, sometimes landless carpenters for full time employment of up to six months at a time. Other active construction carpenters employed a servant laborer, who would agree to a term of short "servitude" — usually for a fixed period of six months or a year. This employee-servant was clothed and housed and fed by the carpenter and his labor contract would be mutually renegotiable and renewable at the termination of each indenture. During 1719-1720, for example, John Pearson, a "housewright," his servant and another carpenter worked on one house for 124 consecutive days under Pearson's sub-contract to a "master builder." They spent a further 90 and 82 days together respectively on two other houses in rural Essex county, for other contractors. At the conclusion of these contracts, the "servant" was released from his commitment and was paid a sum of earned money, "beyond keep," which had been withheld by Pearson.[40] Some carpenters, who concentrated their efforts on building construction, filled in the gaps between larger contracts by doing skilled shop work if they had the opportunity, and some became, by turn, expert cabinetmakers.

A major social and economic problem for these construction carpenters was geographical distance between home and work project. In most cases they had farms to attend to and here the employment of a servant could be doubly useful. To be sequestered for an extended period of time on a large project in another town was normally inconvenient for the rural carpenter. Hence, much carpentry work

was distributed as small jobs by the contracting housewright. He might contract one man to make the window frames or doors and another to apply the clapboard or install the floors and so on.[41] In this manner most rural carpenters managed to maintain their dual occupational status as both artisan and farmer. Full-time carpentry in construction was a potentially lucrative activity in the long term. But its future benefits could not be seen or touched. Only land and the annual yield of the farm could provide a source of security for the future. The rural economic laws of limited market and widespread individual land ownership, combined with a large number of available and competitive carpenters to shape the attitudes, behavior and working conditions of these men. The result was an "industry" that was localized and made up of many individual skilled workers who each possessed a comprehensive range of versatile skills. The wider effects of this system limited trades specialization and retarded the development of dominant regional general contractors.

The absence of a centralized contracting apparatus or a legal or defacto specialization in rural carpentry was customary also in the leather trades. The Massachusetts laws which insisted on strict separation of the various stages of leather production had been enacted to ensure quality control of product and to stabilize the supply and price of leather; the same laws had been prompted by Boston's trades collectives in the early stage of seventeenth century settlement. But these ordinances were not appropriate or enforcable in

the agricultural economy. In Boston, the tanning stage of leather manufacture was kept distinct from the curing and other primary processes, and all were performed by separate specialists. Similarly, the production of harnesses, gloves, saddles, shoes and leather clothes was done by artisans who specialized and were regulated to manufacture a single leather product.[42] But in the rural towns these functions often were the variegated practice of one man. The rural shoemaker was sometimes also a tanner and would process fresh hide through the many stages of leather down to the pair of shoes he fashioned at his bench. Of course, in the local barter economy surplus hides or dressed or tanned leather appeared everywhere as exchange commodities and shoemakers bargained their services for leather that came from a variety of sources. Some artisan-farmers tanned their own leather and supplied shoemakers only with enough material for the shoes they required for their own use. In larger rural towns there was less need or opportunity for a local shoemaker to tan hides or work leather into proper condition; but even here a complete separation of function did not occur, and only rarely were tanners exclusive trades specialists in any rural town.[43]

Of all the crafts practiced in rural provincial Massachusetts, shoemaking was the one most likely to evolve into an organized wage-labor manufacturing industry. But a sound system of division of labor; of pre-cut parts and separate construction processes, controlled retail marketing and central operation, did not ensue. Of all commodities,

the shoe and some forms of clothing were high-volume items of similar design, cost, purpose and wear. Men, women and children usually required two pairs of shoes each a year in this society. Nearly 250,000 pairs of shoes were made in the province annually in the decades prior to the Revolution.[44] Yet this potential was not exploited in the form of a centralized, disciplined, wage-labor industry. Distribution was only a limited prohibition because a twenty-mile radius market could have been accommodated from a single, central manufacturing and distribution location. Nor was mechanical primitiveness a major restraint to production; some commercial shops in Boston employed several men making shoes by hand for wages, for export.[45]

Yet in rural Massachusetts the individual local bespoke shoemaker prevailed. A combination of the strength of the barter system at the community level, the imperatives of agriculture and the traditional emphasis on land ensured the survival of the independent shoemaker. All labor found a basic place in agriculture and did not require the apparatus of an industrial employer. A basic livelihood could be derived from the land of each individual worker. Furthermore, without a cash flow or a wider use of bills of credit, no industrial investor could function effectively on a substantial scale. No investor or organizer could expect to interrupt the highly personalized method of barter that existed in the rural towns. For even if he did base his operation on the exchange of his product for commodities and further exchanged those commodities for wages and raw

materials, the ultimate aim of accumulating capital would be defeated by the local absence of capital and the patterns of work of the local populations.[46] The barter system worked efficiently in the economic structures of the towns, it was informal but binding and variable by its personalized operation. It was flexible because it was individualized. Mass produced shoes, even if they had been available, could not have competed with the locally made shoes of the farmer-shoemaker, because he was part of a labor and goods exchange economy that made his product easier to acquire and pay for. Apart from the difficulty of organizing independent shoemakers into a full-time industrial enterprise, any attempt to centralize shoemaking, or weaving or clothes-making, would have intruded upon the working methods, traditions and purposes of local society.

The close integration of agriculture and artisanship and the scale of individual family and community labor was most clearly demonstrated in local textile and clothing manufacturing practices. Virtually all spinning in provincial Massachusetts was done in the home. The distaff members of every family were responsible for spinning yarns for family and household needs. Flax thread was the most common yarn produced by this society. Derived from the broken and spun flax boll, which was grown easily on nearly every farm in the province, linen was plentiful and versatile. Wool was next in quantity and importance and some combination linen and wool textiles were made locally. The majority of rural households spun yarn

sufficient for their particular fabric and clothing needs.[47] But where the spinning wheel was a universal household appliance, the looms required for weaving were far fewer and more centralized in the communities.[48]

Hence, most households contracted to have their own yarns woven by local journeymen weavers. The cloths were usually returned to the same households to be made into bedding, linens and undergarments, and some clothing. Most outer clothing, of wool, leather or linen-woolen mixes was made by local tailors. Towns were almost self-sufficient in supplying their local clothing requirements. More elaborate and expensive clothing would be brought into the towns from Boston, or Salem, made there often from imported cloths and accessories. Some local tailors imported fabrics and made dress or fancy clothing in the towns. But most forms of plain clothing and certainly all work clothing was made locally, from locally produced fibers and woven cloths.[49] Weavers usually were capable of doing some tailoring and many tailors combined weaving with their clothesmaking practices. But because of the volume and regularity of the textile and clothing trades and the quantities of cloth and clothing required to satisfy them, the two trades were often separate or if not, one or the other would be given emphasis by combination weaver-tailors.[50]

Some tailors, like some shoemakers, were occupied nearly full time with their crafts. But most were not. Again, the relative size and location of the community, the number of local practitioners and the degree of competition, and the personal vocational preferences

of individual craftsmen all determined the incidence and level of limited specialization. Weaving was done by many individuals, at various levels of proficiency, quality and volume. It was a marginal and winter-season enterprise for many farmer-artisans who happened to possess a loom; some others wove only for their personal needs while most towns contained several skilled and trained weavers who could devote more time to quantity production. For most part-time weavers the trade was very useful as a winter occupation, when reduced farm work made an alternative income source necessary. Thus many were encouraged to take up weaving and by this process helped keep the trade decentralized and competitive. Ebenezer Wright, a weaver in Hampshire county in the early eighteenth century, regularly exchanged fibers, bleaches and dyes with four other independent weavers. He also did some spinning, knitting and tailoring. Even as the busiest weaver in the town of Westford, Wright regularly exchanged his own farm labor for that of his neighbors.[51] As noted, some weaving was done by men who had not been apprenticed to the trade but who had learned the process informally and could include occasional rough weaving in their repertoire of informal skills. Another important determinant in the scale and dispersal of local weaving was the mechanical limitations of the eighteenth century loom. Of course Cartwright's power loom did not appear until well after 1785, but some innovations of mechanical technique and size had been developed by 1760 in England. But in rural provincial Massachusetts the most

common loom available was small and crude and whether hand or foot operated was severely limited in its productive capacity. As evidence of the effect small-scale weaving had on the retardation of weaving technology, the loom used in Massachusetts had not advanced beyond the fixed-frame type. As V.S. Clark notes, "the fly-shuttle loom was not used . . . until after the Revolution."[52] The cost of importing more sophisticated and larger looms was prohibitive even to rural weavers with a busy trade.[53] Moreover, the market conditions in the local communities presented formidable obstacles to the profitability of an expensive larger, faster, more productive loom or one that produced finer cloths. The looms that did exist in rural Massachusetts were, despite being small and clumsy, suited to the part-time habits of local weaver-farmers and others who wove in very small quantities, at irregular intervals for individual customers.

The acquisition of wool, or flax and spun yarn, in the course of agricultural production, household work and barter exchange meant that families had access to most of their own raw textile materials. Still, the independent weaver would, whenever possible, arrange for a supply of fibers, to maintain a stock of materials for contract work. But full time specialized weaving operations required fairly large capital investments in raw materials, buildings and implements. A steady flow and bulk storage of materials, large bleach and dye yards and facilities, a disciplined, sedentary work force and an inventory of various cloth types and sizes would have been necessary for a centralized, bulk commercial weaving enterprise.[54] Like commercial

large-scale shoemaking, a single, set and predictable market would have been required. Again, local conditions, practices and traditions forestalled the development of centralized textile production. As with shoemaking, a potential commercial enterprise was left to individual artisans.

The most active rural weavers allotted perhaps one-third of their working year to weaving. A production of 250 yards of woven textiles was considered a busy year for a rural weaver. To stress the general part-time nature of local weaving it should be noted that a competent weaver, operating a small hand loom, and working sixty hours a week all year, could produce 1,000 yards of cloth in eighteenth century Massachusetts.[55]

Similarly, most rural tailors devoted less than six months of any year to clothesmaking. The individual tailor-farmer survived because he could cater to the clothing needs of customers whose purchasing capacity was steady over the long term but unpredictable from day to day or season to season. Moreover, the means of payment were of such an erratic and personalized nature that only an independent, flexible tailor, and several of them in the same community could satisfactorily provide the clothing requirements of that community. They too had farms and families and these factors, as much as anything else, influenced their working activities. A family's income and security was the sum of all its component occupational functions banded into a single labor-economic unit

within the community. At the base of this individual family economy was the subsistence farm. A man might style himself "tailor" or "weaver," but in agricultural Massachusetts that designation merely depicted his principal contribution to the common economy of the town. His labor, in terms of its total application was much more varied and its end purpose was much more than the production of a single commodity.

Butchers, bakers, brewers and coopers were not found in any quantity in rural Massachusetts. Meat, hides, bread, beer and containers were high volume staples in the rural town. But the artisan-farmer usually killed his own livestock or had it done for him by another farmer. Bread was baked in the individual farmhouse and most men brewed limited amounts of beer for personal use. Casks and barrels for the storage of provisions or for the shipment of surplus grain, flour and meat, were made by the versatile carpenter. Of course some men were more efficient or had more free time for the killing of animals and the stripping of hides; and some men did make more and better beer than others. A few towns, in some regions, exported sufficient produce to require the services of a cooper. But by and large there was no place in the agricultural towns for these and many other craft occupations. Apart from the several basic vocational skills demanded by simple agrarian society, most specialized crafts belonged in the commercial towns of the seaboard. But there were exceptions to this general rule. Some towns did

contain a "staymaker," or "barber," "wig maker," "brazier," "wheelwright," "chairmaker," "saddler," "glover" and so on. But those instances of occupational specialization were unusual and most of these crafts designations were given as specialty variants of a more central trade.

The skilled worker in the rural town possessed two things of note: his vocational aptitude and his land. The degree to which he spent his time with either of these was variable, but both demanded his consideration and attention. While the rural artisan was principally occupied with farming and the prosecution of his craft, he showed no aversion to extending his labor, at times as a menial, to a variety of tasks which arose from personal or community obligation. He was head of a family but not its sole economic mainstay. The family contributed to its own welfare as a unit and not as a collection of single individuals; it was not a dependency. The rural artisan was most likely a blacksmith, carpenter, shoemaker, weaver, clothier or leatherworker of some sort, or a tradesman directly connected with those crafts. Above all he was an independent worker. Not only did he have control over the disposal of his labor, but he was flexible and talented enough to govern his household economy and important and useful enough to affect the economic status and behavior of his community. At the same time, he was subject to the vocational needs of the community, the vagaries of climate, weather and soil, and rhythmic influences of seasons.

It is pointless to discuss which of his possessions, his craft or his land, was most crucial to his welfare; or the extent to which he was dependent on or independent from the influences of the general community. All were parts of the continuous and persistent pattern of settlement and residence, civil organization, social tradition, cultural preference and agrarian economy. To function in this society, domestically, socially and economically, the majority of skilled workers found that the vocational duality of farming and crafts was the most suitable practice. At least to the end of the provincial period, no major demographic, economic, political or technological innovation interrupted the fixed but dual role of the skilled worker in the agricultural towns of Massachusetts.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

[1]J.A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," WMQ 35 (1978), p. 19.

[2]Henry W. Belknap, Trades and Tradesmen in Essex County (Salem: 1929), p. 96; M. Arch. MSS, "Muster Rolls for the Crown Point Expedition, 1756," in Vol. 94, pp. 167-557. Belknap lists over 500 men and records 118 different trades. The muster rolls contain the names and occupations of 2,544 men. Among the skilled occupations (over half of the total) over 80% were in woodwork, metalwork and leather trades. From a sample of 193 names on the 1756 muster rolls for rural Plymouth county, the following pattern emerged:

Occupation Given	No.	%
Laborer-husbandman*	95	49.2
Wood crafts	23	11.9
Leather crafts	22	11.4
Metal crafts	21	10.9
Cloth crafts	15	7.8
Others	17	8.8

*See Chapter IV.

[3]M. Arch. MSS., Vols. 39-44, "Judiciary"; Vol. 59,"Manufactures"; Vol. 71, "Military"; Vols. 244-254, "Accounts." These volumes contain hundreds of work contracts, descriptions of working conditions and standards of work, prices wages and legally required qualifications of artisans.

[4]M. Arch. MSS., Vol. 1, "Agriculture"; Vols. 112-117, "Towns"; Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns"; and "Biographical Index". Land ownership and trades occupations were sampled and matched for over 200 artisans.

[5]Baker MSS. Catalogue numbers 403, 446, 641 and 871 contain over fifty sets of private papers showing artisan's sons being apprenticed. For further statistics and discussion, see Robert F. Seybolt, Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Training in Colonial New England and New York (New York: 1917).

[6]W.H. Whitmore, compiler, The Colonial Laws of Massachusetts (Boston: 1889), pp. 26-28; Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 64 ff. For

an example of a standard apprenticeship indenture form with notes on obligations, expectations and purposes, see Edward Stephens, Relief of Apprentices Wronged by their Masters (London: 1687) (in use in Provincial Massachusetts). See also MHS Misc. Bd. MSS for April 1725.

[7]Seybolt, Apprenticeship; U.S. Bureau of Apprenticeship, "Apprenticeship Training Since Colonial Days" (Washington: 1950); Philip Greven Jr., Four Generations: Population Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1970).

[8]Edmund Morgan, The Puritan Family (New York: 1944, 1966); J.A. Henretta, The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815 (Toronto: 1973), pp. 9-15. Greven, Four Generations. On marriage age and family size, see Daniel Scott Smith, "The Demographic History of Colonial New England," WMQ 32 (1972), p. 177.

[9]For examples of mid-eighteenth century land leases, legacy arrangements, and the fresh cultivation of older settled land, see: M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 11, "Agriculture"; Vol. 43 "Judicical," pp. 449-51; Vol. 44, "Judical," p. 46 ff and passim. For Suffolk County Deeds and Probate Court land holding and inheritance transactions regarding artisans in Suffolk County, see MHS "Thwing Catalogue." See also Manfred Jonas, "The Wills of the Early Settlers of Essex County," EIHC 96 (1960), pp. 228-35; R.A. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York: 1976), Chapter 4; R.R. Walcott, "Husbandry in Colonial New England," NEQ 9 (1936), pp. 218-52; P.W. Bidwell and J. Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington: 1925), pp. 49-58, 115; Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society 1630-1790: and an Afterthought" in S. Katz, ed., Colonial America (Boston: 1971), pp. 466-91.

[10]Baker MSS, 871 C443, "Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin, 1743-75"' 641 A 214, "Jacob Adams Account Book (n.p.) 1673-93"; 641 r 324, "John Reed Account Book, 1740-1818 (n.p.)." Blanche Hazard, "Jacob Adams Shoemaking Accounts," Bulletin of the Business History Society 9 (1935), No. 6, pp. 86-92. For a sample of barter exchange among rural artisans see Appendix I.

[11]J.R. Commons, et al., History of Labor in the United States Vol. I (New York: 1918), David J. Saposs Section, pp. 25-168.

[12]Baker MSS 871 A 616, "Blacksmith's Ledger, 1703-28,(n.p.); Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin."

[13]"Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin, 1743-1775"; Rolla Tryon, Household Manufactures in the United States, 1640-1860 (Chicago: 1917), Chapter 2.

[14]"Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin"; "Jacob Adams Account Book"; Alice Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days (Stockbridge, Mass.: 1898), pp. 1-32, 252-280.

[15]"Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin," pp. 44-64.

[16]Marcus Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America (Chicago: 1931), pp. 45-56; J.T. Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), pp. 21, 30; Abbot Smith, Colonists in Bondage (New York: 1947), pp. 4, 28-29.

[17]MHS MSS, "Roxbury Valuations, 1727"; M. Arch. MSS Vol. 130, "Valuations of Towns"; Bidwell and Falconer, History of Agriculture, pp. 20-40; J.T. Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), pp. 7-43.

[18]J.A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," WMQ 35 (1978), pp. 3-32.

[19]Bruno Foreman, "Salem Tradesmen and Craftsmen c 1762," EIHC 107 (1971), pp. 62-82, notes that in mid-18th century Salem, a commercial town with limited available farm property, over 50% of local artisans decreed farm property in their estates. In more agricultural towns, the percentage rises to as much as 95%. See Watertown Records 1634-1829; D.G. Hill, Dedham Records 1635-1845; M.F. Pierce, ed., Town of Weston Records; S.A. Bates, ed., Braintree Records 1640-1793. All passim. Copies of all at MHS. For 17th century examples of land accumulation by artisans, see Jonas, "The Wills of Early Settlers."

[20]This entrepreneurial aspect of the rural artisan can be found in their accounts. For blacksmiths see "Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin"; "Blacksmiths Ledger." For carpenters see Baker MSS 446 P 361, "Pearson Family Account Books," Vol. 2. For bricklayers and masons see MHS MSS, "John Marshall Diary 1688-1711." For weavers and tailors see Baker MSS 1 B 291, "Bartlett Accounts, 1704-1760," Vol. 1; Bagnall, Textile Industries, pp. 1-27; A.H. Cole, The American Wool Manufacture (New York: 1926), Vol. 1, Chapters 1-4. For shoemakers see "Adams Accounts," "Reed Accounts" and Baker MSS "John Baker Accounts", Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes," Box 2.

[21]V.S. Clark, History of Manufacturing in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1929), pp. 87-88. Saposs, History of Labor, pp. 160-68.

[22]"Jacob Adams Account Book"; "Account Book of John Reed"; Blanche Hazard, The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts Before 1875 (Cambridge, Mass.: 1921), Chapter 1.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Jacobs Adams, while serving as the Suffield, Hamps. Co. representative to the General Court from 1711-17 and in his late fifties, was still making shoes for neighbors who repayed by "pulling flax," "work in fields," "carting stones," etc. See "Transcription and biography" (typescript) in "Jacob Adams Account Book."

[25]"John Baker Accounts"; Account Books of "Jacob Adams"and "John Reed."

[26]"V.S. Clark Papers," Box 2; Clark, History of Manufactures, p. 82.

[27]U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "History of Wages," Bulletin No. 604 (1934); "Wages in the Colonial Period," Bulletin No. 499 (1929); MHS MSS "Ezekial Price Papers, 1754-85," Sheets 199-322 contains detailed relative labor-material costs for textile weaving. MHS MSS "Joseph Belknap Ledger, 1748-85," Vol. 7 gives ratios for leather tanning, curing and leather goods manufacture. Baker MSS 451 M 358 "Edward Marrett Daybooks and Invoice Books" and Baker MSS 451 R 281 "Daniel Rea Daybooks and Ledgers" give labor and material values for tailoring. See "Account Book of Nathaniel Chamberlin" for the comparable ratios for metalwork.

[28]"V.S. Clark Papers," Box 2.

[29]"John Reed Account Book." See also "Jacob Adams Account Book."

[30]See Appendix I.

[31]Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 92, 214, 413, 484.

[32]For an excellent example of the economic conditions of rural ministers see MHS MSS, "Letter for N. Ellis, March 31, 1736" in "Cushing Papers." The best overall source for the economic and proprietary activities of colonial Massachusetts ministers is Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates 17 Vols. (Boston: 1873-1975).

[33]See Appendix II.

[34]"John Porter Accounts" and "Samuel Pratt Accounts" in "John Reed Account Book." See Appendix I.

[35]Ibid.; Baker MSS 77 S 419 "Bayes Manchester Account Book, 1708-1729"; Baker MSS 871 C 985 "Pyam Cushing Account Books," 2 Vols.

[36]For example, "Nathaniel Chamberlin Account Book," pp. 50, 60-68.

[37]Baker MSS 446 P 361, "Pearson Family Account Books," 2 Vols., Vol. 1.

[38]The Town and Country Builders Assistant (Boston: 1786); Joseph Moxon, Mechanick Exercises . . . applied to . . . smithing, joinery, carpentry, turning, bricklayery (London: 1703). Copy at Kress Library, Harvard; Belknap, Trades and Tradesmen; Carl Bridenbaugh, Colonial Craftsmen (New York: 1950). MHS Misc. Bd. MSS Dec. 25, 1736, "Construction Contract of John White." A great many examples of carpenter versatility can be found in MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, 1700-1760, passim.

[39]See above, notes 20 and 25.

[40]"Pearson Family Account Books," Vol. 2. Also, M. Arch. MSS Vol. 59, pp. 391-4, "Gunter Contract." For voluntary short term servitude in rural provincial Massachusetts see MHS Misc. Bd. MSS April 21, 1726 and March 2, 1749.

[41]"Construction Contract of John White"; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS "Letter from John Cotman," August 23, 1745.

[42]Whitmore, Colonial Laws, pp. 88-90; Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 312-14 ff. For organizations of artisans in Boston, see Mary Roys Baker, "Anglo-Massachusetts Trade Union Roots, 1130-1790," in Labor History 14 (1973), pp. 352-96.

[43]"Jacob Adams Account Book"; Sappos, Industrial Society.

[44]Hazard, Boot and Shoe Industry, Chapter 1.

[45]"V.S. Clark Notes," Box 2.

[46]Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 151-2.

[47]Earle, Home Life, Chapters 7-8; W.R. Bagnall, Textile Industries of the United States, Chapter 1.

[48]Bruno Foreman, "The Account Book of John Gould, Weaver, 1697-1724," EIHC 105 (1969), pp. 36-49. A.L. Cummings, Rural Household Inventories (Boston: 1964), asserts the universality of home spinning.

[49]Bagnall, Textile Industries, Chapter 1. On leather clothing use and manufacture see "Joseph Belknap Ledger," Vol. 7; Baker MSS 403 N 751, "Mathew Noble Ledger, 1766."

[50]Baker MSS 1 B 291, Vol. 1, "Bartlett Accounts, 1704-1760." Three generations of Bartletts were combination farmers-weavers-tailors. Although they emphasized weaving as their chief alternative to farming, in some years their tailoring accounts exceeded the value of weaving.

[51]Baker MSS 44 W 948, "Ebenezer Wright Account Book, 1710-90."

[52]Clark, History of Manufactures, p. 160; Earle, Home Life, Chapter 4. For the technology of textile production and its status in eighteenth century England, see S.D. Chapman, "The Textile Factory before Arkwright: A Typology of Factory Development." Bus. Hist. Rev. 48 (1974), pp. 451-78.

[53]"Ezekiel Price Papers," Sheets 311-12. The price of an imported, partly mechanized English-made hand loom would have cost Wright (note 51) the equivalent of five years rent of five acres of arable land. Most looms at work in rural communities were made locally or in Boston. On land costs see J.T. Main, Social Structure, pp. 166-76.

[54]See records of The Society for Encouraging Industry and Employing the Poor in "Ezekial Price Papers."

[55]Ibid. To produce 1,000 yards of loomed coarse linen in a year would have required the total yarn produced annually by ten full-time spinners. The "Ezekial Price Papers" is perhaps the best source for spinning and weaving technology, methods and production figures in provincial Massachusetts, Sheets 199-322 contain calculations, estimates and examples of contemporary cloth production.

CHAPTER IV

HUSBANDMEN AND LABORERS

Artisans represented the skilled, trained vocational backbone of the rural economy. But not all men were skilled in terms of possessing special training, and those who were not constituted the largest plurality of rural workers. These were the husbandmen and laborers of the agricultural towns. And if the artisans can be judged "skilled" in reference to crafts acumen and occupational practice, the husbandmen and laborers of this society were "unskilled" by simple reason of not having learned a manual trade or craft. Yet the word "unskilled" had no common contemporary usage. The words most frequently used to define the working status of men were "mechanic," "artisan," "handi-craftsman," "laborer" and "husbandman." A "mechanic" was simply anyone, trained or not, who worked with his hands in a non-agricultural occupation. The artisans and handicraftsmen were those who possessed a special, legal industrial (i.e., non-agricultural) skill. While it was acknowledged that a learned skill was an advantage to the individual and the community, there was felt to be no serious disadvantage in <u>not</u> possessing a skilled craft. A "habit of work" was more important in this society than particular work credentials, and only children were deemed to be "unskilled." Anyone who worked diligently and regularly at any occupation was considered to possess certain laboring attributes that went beyond categories of qualifications.[1]

Yet the community did insist on the use of an occupational suffix in legal and formal matters. The terms "artisan," "mechanic" or "handicraftsman" were seldom used in individual cases but were applied to groups or as collective generalizations. Occupational designations fell into several distinct forms of identification and definition. On the one hand, if a worker possessed and practiced an apprenticed craft, the particular trade was given; hence the appendages "carpenter," "weaver," "cordwainer," "tanner" and so on. The word "merchant" was very broad in its meaning and included some storekeepers as well as wealthy international traders and businessmen. Some senior and wealthy businessmen, along with many professionals, justices and politicians were known as "esquire" or "gentleman." For those petty businessmen who had not yet achieved sufficient prominance for the designation "merchant," suffixes such as "retailers," "taverner" or "distiller" were used.[2]

The system, if such it was, had social meaning as well as legal purpose, and it was flexible. A man's station in the social and economic order was subject to change over time and according to circumstance. In Boston and elsewhere in the province's commercial economy, a man might change his occupational status several times in his lifetime if he progressed from "laborer" through a craft or crafts to entrepreneur, merchant or businessman. This form of vocational and social mobility was common in eighteenth century Boston. In addition, a man might have adjusted his occupational status from

year to year or season to season. A mariner, for example, who spent part of his year ashore could be alternatively a "seaman," and a "carter" or "laborer." Sailors were usually termed "mariners" whether they were common seamen or ship's officers; indeed many ship owners were also referred to as "mariners." In the specialized work environment of Boston, a blacksmith might alternatively be a brazier, and a carpenter a blockmaker, or a barber-wigmaker a dentist, if sub-specialties were involved in the individual's craft, and this specialization differed from that of the rural artisan. The Boston carpenter, for example, often abandoned general carpentry to specialize exclusively in a particular branch of the trade.[3]

In agricultural Massachusetts, vocational designations were more fundamental and straightforward. In spite of the pragmatic and fluid quality of work in the rural communities, men usually held a single occupational title for the duration of their working lives. The near-universal alternative of farming minimized extensive vocational change. Occasionally, if workers, skilled or otherwise, rose in social, economic or political status the occupational suffix might be dropped and replaced by "esquire" or "gentleman." But often, when the rank perhaps invited the use of "gentleman," the rural celebrity continued to use his old occupational title. One man, for example, a shoemaker, became a successful commercial farmer and prominant landowner and a member of the General Court and was referred to as "gentleman" in Boston; but in his local rural community he remained a "shoemaker" in the tax and assessment rolls.[4] The terms "farmer"

and "yeoman" commonly applied to those who not only farmed full time but who employed others in their operations and produced marketable agricultural surplus.[5] But the most common occupational designations in rural Massachusetts were those of "husbandman" and "laborer."[6]

These latter named were not unskilled in any meaningful way. For, while a great deal of the work these men did was manual rather than technical or studied, they were required to possess a considerable degree of knowledge and experience of all facets of agricultural work. Moreover, they performed many other tasks in the community that fell outside wholly agricultural employment but which did not demand special training. Their work was a combination of physical labor, agricultural expertise and assistance and support to the more refined functions of the craftsman. For their own personal economies, these husbandmen and laborers were necessarily versatile in an informal manner. Many were adept in tanning leather, weaving, rough carpentry and the many other tasks that arose and were part of the operation of a farm. To refer to them as "unskilled" is to distinguish them from artisans and to seek clarity in identifying a significant body of resident workers in rural society. The unskilled workers of rural provincial Massachusetts were those who had no formal, legalized apprenticeship training, no matter what their occupations might be. As such they represented a vocational constituency that differed in many ways from the rural artisans. As part of the same community and economy, their collective status

was subject to the same laws of self-sufficiency, interdependency and communal usefulness. But their vocational distinctiveness was reflected in other social and economic particulars. In the provincial social order and mind, if not in its lexicon, "skilled" and "unskilled" did have some definition.[7]

The apprenticeship system that had excluded the province's husbandmen and laborers operated on a set of established rules and circumstantial determinants. First, the population grew at a high and fairly constant rate. From 1690 to 1760 the provincial population increased by some 350%, at an average decennial rate of slightly more than 24%; in one extraordinary decade, 1710-1720, the growth rate was 45.8%.[8] Thus, with a minimum of per capita economic growth, or even decline, and given the relatively stable nature of local economic and labor practices, the skilled occupations would require additions and a replacement factor roughly equal to population increase.[9] The policies and strict enforcement actions of various provincial legal authorities limited the influence of immigration on growth. The formal control of immigration and of intra-provincial transiency meant that towns grew more from internal demographic factors than from external contributions.[10] Even the creation of new towns was more a result of indigenous provincial population growth than of a regular influx of immigrants. It has been noted that the economic configurations of towns and the behavior of workers and families precluded a high incidence of full-time crafts occupation.

This further stabilized the local demand for trained artisans. The figures are difficult to obtain, but even if 40% of rural adult males practiced an occupational skill, in varying degrees of activity, not all of these artisans would simultaneously need an apprentice. And if fewer than 40% of males were being apprenticed, the remainder were left to a limited number and choice of alternatives.[11]

For some, apprenticeship was simply delayed, until the local need for craftsmen was balanced against local growth and the inevitable replacement of older artisans. For most, however, crafts training was never a consideration. The sons of local merchants and professionals normally followed in their fathers' paths; some of these sons inherited enough land at an early age to be unconcerned with an alternative work skill. Future vocational status was usually determined at an early stage of youth, frequently as soon as a boy's eleventh or twelfth year. At that time, the economic means, needs and vocational status of the father were brought to bear on a son's future. The requirements of the town's practicing artisans and the subject boy's intelligence, aptitude and native abilities all contributed to his later occupational role. For the sons of the province's husbandmen and laborers, the opportunities to acquire apprenticed skills were quite circumscribed. Certainly, the majority of artisans ensured that their own sons were given preference in trades training and much of the turnover in artisans was accomplished this way. Often, quite simply, a rural laborer could not afford to lose a son's contribution to the household economy or

meet the fees or obligations of indentured apprenticeship. So, for a majority of the sons of the unskilled, there was no substitute to their fathers' status. The sons of some saw-and grist-mill operators, or those whose fathers owned marketable wood, ore, coal or salt deposits, did have access to careers as alternatives to either apprenticeship or farm laboring. But for most, the future lay in owning a small piece of cultivated land and contributing to the local economy as an unskilled or partly skilled worker.[12]

The best available estimate of the ratio of skilled to unskilled free workers in rural provincial society indicates that about 40% of all adult males possessed crafts credentials. Approximately 45% were listed as "laborers" or "husbandmen," while the remaining 15% were merchants, mill operators, forge owners, kiln owners, carters and so on. Professionals such as lawyers, teachers and ministers represented a small percentage of the latter figure. Of the total working population — free and slave — less than 10% were in servitude.[13] To speak of "landless laborers" in this society would be, by and large, a fallacy. A "poll" in Massachusetts was any free white male over the age of sixteen years who was subject to local and provincial tax assessment because he owned or leased property, worked for income or derived income from rents, investments or other business. According to the provincial "valuation" assessments, in most years over 90% of all polls were taxed. Nearly 80% of all polls, in addition to their listed occupations owned, leased or rented some cultivated land. There is

nothing to indicate that the 20% who did no farming were predominately "laborers." What can be established is that laborers and husbandmen generally possessed fewer acres of farm land than did skilled workers, professionals, especially clergy, most rural merchants and entrepreneurs. Thus, skilled and unskilled workers had a common if unequal proprietary interest in the land. The successful artisan-farmer occupied more farmland than he could manage individually and efficiently and his use of land was both practical, as farmed subsistence, and reserved as property collateral and as legacy.[14]

The terms laborer and husbandman might imply separate and specific forms of unskilled labor. But they were used interchangeably in the assessment rolls of rural communities. The rural laborer derived a major portion of his livelihood from farm work, an activity synonymous with the conventional meaning of "husbandman." If a distinction can be made, it would be in terms of land ownership and relative average acreages, and the relative amount of work performed on the individual's own property. "Husbandmen," so called in official tax records, sometimes farmed more of their own acreages than did "laborers." But the distinction was slight, usually amounting to the difference between five- and ten-acre holdings, and was made more as a personal preference than as an objective and practical definition. It is of some importance, in regard to social context, that the title "laborer" was not treated with opprobrium but normally defined a small subsistence farmer who also worked elsewhere in the community in non-

artisan capacities. The term "husbandman" was not applied to someone who farmed full time either only for himself or only for others, but really meant "farmer" and "laborer."[15]

On the average, the unskilled worker occupied fewer acres than did the artisan-farmer. Yet in most cases he farmed no less than he and his family could effectively manage. He was subject to the same agricultural forces that affected the artisan-farmer: a short season and variable seed, soil, and weather conditions, primitive implements and farming techniques, and problems of organizing his own labor. The common agricultural impediments were compounded for the less affluent laborer-farmer. Usually, he owned no oxen and his facilities and equipment were smaller, older and less efficient. His family was smaller as a result of his more limited economy and therefore did not contribute labor on the scale of the artisan's family unit. His plow was necessarily small and simple, to permit individual use, and even with borrowed or hired oxen, the seeding of more than two or three acres of tillage crops was a prohibitive task. The plow most commonly used in provincial Massachusetts was the "Carey Plow" which has been noted by Percy Bidwell as having "the land-side and standard made of wood [with] a wooden mould-board, often roughly plated over with old pieces of . . . sheet iron. It had a clumsy wrought iron share, while the handles were upright, held in place by two wooden pins." The planting and harvesting seasons — usually three or four weeks in April-May and September-October, respectively — were too short to

allow for a protracted or more leisurely application of individual labor. Often, the husbandman was obliged to assist a team or single horse to pull his plow, using his wife, a son, daughter or neighbor to steady the implement. The subsequent weeding and thinning of crops was accomplished with a simple hoe and demanded long days of regular and repeated stooped manual work. Harvesting meant even more intense and exhausting work, with the threat of rain, frost or premature crop ripeness adding urgency to the physical demands of reaping. Meanwhile, haying and some livestock supervision, stone clearing, fencing and other regular maintenance work occupied the small farmer for much of the six months between early April and late September-early October. Writing in the American Museum in 1787, General Warren of Massachusetts, in deprecating the primitiveness of provincial farming techniques, observed that even those husbandmen with extensive acreages were constrained by the labor and seasonal limitations of subsistence farming. On crop tillage he noted: "one miserable team, a paltry plow and everything in the same proportion; three acres of Indian corn . . . as many acres of half-starved English grain . . . and a small yard of turnips complete the tillage, and the whole is conducted perhaps by a man and a boy and performed in half their time." Like the artisan-farmer, the unskilled laborer-farmer spent between 100 and 150 days a year tending to his own agricultural needs and obligations; he was then left with an equal or greater number of working days — most of them in winter — with which to fill out his annual income.

Like the artisan-farmer, the husbandman often required assistance on his own small acreage. Hence his deep involvement in the barter and labor-exchange economy of the local community.[16]

With no single vital skill with which to barter, the agricultural laborer proved most useful to the local economy by his provision of manual labor. He paid for his family's shoes and clothing not with self-produced commodities or special vocational expertise, but with his varied labor. The unskilled subsistence farmer spent a great deal of his time weeding, haying and threshing for artisan-farmers to whom he was indebted for household and farm supply goods and services. He cut trees, hauled wood, cleared stones from fields, built and repaired fences and slaughtered and skinned livestock; he supplemented and augmented his subsistence by substituting for others on obligatory public works such as road, ditch and bridge maintenance. He paid his taxes, tithes and Meeting House fees and charges with his labor.[17] Occasionally he amassed a small surplus of work credit and could negotiate with others for labor assistance on his small home lot, if necessary. In these and other ways the unskilled worker's regimen was not unlike that of any in the community, in the practical use and exchange of his time and labor. Of course, his work differed from the artisan's, in kind and in relative value. He spent a majority of his working life, in the work he did outside his own holding, repaying debts incurred for goods and services previously extended to him. He differed from the rural artisan in that regard also. In a way, the unskilled laborer-farmer was as close as possible

to being "employed." The skilled worker was "engaged" to perform a task or produce an item and was usually "owed" for his work. The reverse was true in the case of the unskilled worker who, after arranging for his own and his family's material or service needs, found himself beholden to a creditor who would thereafter supervise his labor as repayment. In short, the skilled artisan, and especially the more successful of them, was more often a creditor in his accounting; the unskilled laborer nearly always owed labor. But that labor was crucial to local conditions and in many respects the place of the laborer was as vital as any in the economy of the rural community.[18]

It is unlikely that more than 5% of all adult white males in provincial Massachusetts were long term indentured servants; and only about 3% of the total working population were negro slaves. In fact, in rural Massachusetts the figure for slaves never exceeded 2% during the provincial period.[19] In view of the absence of any centralized industrial facilities and the paucity of large-scale commercial agriculture, these figures are not surprising. There was no economic incentive or opportunity to employ large numbers of dependent unskilled workers in permanent wage-related employment. But the local small farm-and community-centred economies did require a permanent presence and regular and reliable supply of unskilled labor. Because of the orientation of the towns' economies, hired unskilled labor was only practicable on a small and personalized scale. It was needed and

applied in much the same manner as was skilled labor: briefly, extensively, by and for individuals, for personal and variable use.

In rural society there was occasion for and the practice of servitude. Apprentices became de facto servant-trainee-employees. Many daughters of laborers and husbandmen found their way into the homes of more affluent men, as domestic servants to artisans, merchants, farmers, and business entrepreneurs. Unskilled workers sometimes indentured themselves as "servants" to commercial farmers, artisans and merchants. But apart from the normal four-to-seven year terms of residential apprenticeship, these other arrangements were for brief and temporary duration. The usual term of voluntary servitude was for six months or a year, with some exceptions of up to two years.[20] In the case of agricultural servitude, many large landowners leased five, ten or more acres of arable land to rural laborers on long term agreement, prefering this method of land utilization and profit to direct term-employment of the agricultural labor that would have been necessary for the owner's personal operation of the land. Lease payments, in whatever form, were often considered more attractive than the potential problems of the management and direct responsibility of short-term resident servant labor.[21]

Yet another form of legal short-term voluntary servitude existed in rural provincial Massachusetts. Agreements of indenture were made for the purpose of retiring specific debts. Many unskilled workers owed annual lease payments and retired these obligations by

consenting to work exclusively for the leasor under terms and conditions mutually agreeable. If a laborer's debts to a local artisan were large enough, often for a year's supply of shoes or clothing or blacksmith's work, for example, the debtor would formally agree to an extended supply of farm labor equal to the value of the amount owed. Here, eighteenth century servitude acquires a unique meaning. For although the "master" in these cases would have full access to the labor of the contracting "servant," the latter was sometimes permitted by a generous master to attend to his personal agricultural and domestic work and affairs as a priority. The terms and conditions of servitude were relaxed, flexible and were customarily for specified and temporary purposes.[22]

Even apprentices, who were, strictly speaking, practical servants, were not mere employees. Certainly they were expected to contribute to the economic advantage of their masters in return for the transference of knowledge and crafts expertise. But apprenticeship also was a complex of social, moral and scholastic learning and the master was under a rigid obligation to guide the young ward through adolescence to manhood. This legally mandated responsibility stressed the inclusion of the apprentice into the hierarchy of the host family unit, as an active family member. Naturally the apprentice was a worker engaged by his artisan-master, but his status extended beyond that of a servant-employee. Abuses of this arrangement, such as masters using the apprentices' time in excessive

field work to the detriment of shop work, for example, were closely monitored by parents, neighbors and constables and reported and corrected by local authorities.[23]

With only a marginal servant class — one that was fluid and transitory in composition — and with an economy based on individual production and pragmatic working conditions and relationships, rural society's labor needs were filled by workers who were independent, mobile and versatile. The individual unskilled worker was incorporated into the local economy as a full participant in the community's social and economic organization. The unskilled worker in rural provincial Massachusetts occupied a novel position within society in contrast to some other laboring classes elsewhere in the Atlantic world and western Europe. The rural laborer in eighteenth century Massachusetts usually owned or had leasehold on the subsistence land he occupied.[24]

In Massachusetts the unskilled rural worker was not a member of a bonded, indentured servant class. He was not subject to the steady and perpetual dictates of a master or single employer, nor dependent upon the vagaries of manorial or gentry-controlled tenancy, nor of the dogmatic laws of cash crop, mercantile or manufacturing economies. He did not suffer the economic, social and political proscriptions of landless farm laborers in England or the indentured and post-indentured agricultural servants of the Chesapeake.[25] In Massachusetts, because the rural laborer usually enjoyed church membership and held title to land, he was often eligible to vote on and participate in a wide range of issues that were common to the entire

community. He was above all, an integral and important independent link in the modest and local economies of agrarian and communal Massachusetts. And although his chief source and means of independence, stability and security was his labor and not a special skill, or ownership of substantial disposable real estate, he was relatively free to deploy his labor, as much on his own terms as at the command or under the authority of others. There can be no mistake that he was indebted often to merchants, artisans and landowners and that his labor was invariably his only method of repayment of those debts. A regular demand for farm help meant that the unskilled worker was permitted and even encouraged to repay with his labor when time, the nature and importance of the work and the occasion for mutual convenience coalesced. In all matters it was the possession of land that afforded a measure of equality for the rural laboring population.[26]

Still, there were some disparities between skilled and unskilled workers. A laborer's work was consistently valued at nearly 60% that of the artisan. Moreover, the latter normally farmed about 50% more acreage than the laborer.[27] While this gap was significant, it was not in itself the main cause of economic and social distinction between the two groups. Rather, it was a symptom of the perpetuation of basic advantages inherent in crafts vocations and the attendant property accumulations. The sons of artisans were more likely to inherit more land at adulthood in addition to the inevitable and more remunerative trades training they would have received. The

artisan-farmer turned his higher earning power into extended agricultural activity by bartering his services for substitute farm labor. The added value of his crafts work sometimes produced sufficient credit to afford the gradual purchase, lease or rental of small parcels of land that he could re-sell, sub-lease or otherwise manipulate as a material asset; or he simply accumulated land for future bequeath.

Despite the laws and practices which favored partible inheritance, the small holdings of laborers meant that unskilled or untrained workers inherited only a little, if any arable land from their usually less affluent fathers and were often left to their own means to acquire a suitable farm property for a maximum possible level of agricultural self-sufficiency. His smaller income, measured in the credit his labor brought, hindered his opportunities in this regard, as it did thereafter constrict his ability to amass and reserve land for possible heirs. Nevertheless, leased land was available to him and in most cases the rural laborer did manage to obtain a respectable home lot acreage; one that would provide immediate material support and that could be enlarged and later possibly subdivided, in very small, four- and five-acre plots, and transferred as subsistence bases to one or more successors. The gap between skilled and unskilled men was real in terms of economic condition, opportunity, and legacy, but it did not prevent the rural landed laborer from enjoying a firm measure of independence and possibly full participation in the affairs of the community.

In Massachusetts all men were taxed according to their real and personal worth; both the value of property and the value of work were included in public tax assessments. The method of tax assessment used in the province was based upon a percentage of the value of real estate and earnings. The total value of property was calculated at six times its annual rent value. This was taxed along with personal estate or income, at rates which ranged from a "penny in the pound" to over eightpence, depending on local and provincial financial needs. The rates were set annually, and seldom did the tax exceed one or two pence per pound of income or real estate. The majority of unskilled workers paid more tax on the value of their personal estates — farm produce and other measured work income — than they did on real property. The balance was roughly equal for most artisan-farmers. The point to be noted here is that most laborers and husbandmen <u>were</u> taxed. Fewer than 10% of all rural white male adults were not rated in any given year and the individuals included in that 10% did not always appear perennially. To be considered rateable and then assessed in provincial Massachusetts was to be judged solvent. The great majority of unskilled workers in the agrarian towns were considered solvent under the law in the provincial period, on the basis of their combined real and personal worth. This solvency gave unskilled workers actual or potential access to local political participation while it offered them assurances of continued social and economic welfare.[28]

While unskilled workers did participate in the political, social and economic affairs of the local community, they did so at a level generally below that of the artisan-farmer, merchant or large landowner. Certainly, rural laborers and husbandmen represented a stratum of "second-class citizens," and there were various restrictions imposed on them by their economic limitations. Unskilled workers rarely occupied senior local elected or appointed positions; selectmen, justices, secretaries and most posts at least to the level of constable were held by commercial farmers, merchants, entrepreneurs, and artisans. Only minor appointments such as "hog-reeves" and "fence-viewers" were given to laborers who were well established in the community. Socially, unskilled workers married later, had smaller families and lived in more modest material circumstances than did artisans. The laborer's household size was necessarily smaller than that of others in the community; many artisans, for example, augmented their larger family size by including a resident apprentice and servant girl. Many of those servant girls were the daughters of local laborers; and this form of contact between the families of vocational groups was a linkage in the socio-economic bond that ran through communities. The barter and labor exchange between artisans and laborers, their sons, daughters and wives, and a limited political voice in the community gave the unskilled worker an important social and occupational niche in society. The fact that this niche indicated a lower economic status and was reflected in a diminished social and political role did mean a

reduced standard of citizenship. But this distinction was not permanent and absolutely perpetual. Although their conditions and circumstances were less rewarding and their horizons lower than those of artisans, rural unskilled workers were not a fixed subordinate class. The election and appointment of former laborers in Watertown, Braintree, Dedham and other towns is evidence of some social and political mobility.[29]

Generally, local economic and vocational conditions were stable and persistent. But these agents of continuity did not preclude some occupational, economic and social mobility for individuals and groups. The minor husbandman, occupying ten or fewer acres of cultivated land and busy with the seasonal and perennial pressures of subsistence was ever concerned with his immediate and short-term needs, relying upon and applying his labor in a complex of activities, obligations and necessities. His opportunity for vocational and subsequent economic improvement was abridged by the limits of his proprietary value and the relative worth of his work. Yet the socio-economic boundaries imposed upon the rural laborer did not always devolve to their children. Sons could transcend their fathers' stations in a society that fostered fluid work patterns and which supported continued personalized economic transaction. The simple integration of unskilled workers into all corners of the local economies and the common affiliation with the land, in the form of independent and private subsistence farming, created a constant social intercourse between skilled and unskilled

workers, their families and all residents and their respective social and economic positions and function.

In this setting it was difficult, if not impossible, for any group or even a majority in the community to exclude, segregate or debase the unskilled worker and his family when the latter normally possessed the ethnic features and religious affiliation that were required of everyone else for membership in the corporate Massachusetts town. Moreover, these workers were vital, as individuals, to the support of the towns' orderly material undertakings. Without the apparatus or desire for a permanent industrial or agricultural laboring class, there existed no means or institutional precedent for creating or maintaining a body of cheap, disciplined unskilled labor. The stability of the Massachusetts town was predicated upon principles of balanced co-existence in all matters of community life. The corporate-congregational system was best upheld when the majority of inhabitants shared at least some basic equality. In rural society, residency was tenuous without a fixed and necessary place in the community; the possession of even a small farm acreage, a useful work alternative and adaptability in the conduct of individual economic and vocational behavior were the qualities that ensured a place in the community for the rural laborer. Certain families, at certain times, did constitute a dependent source of available cheap labor for the more affluent. But few men, of any vocational or economic standing, needed or could afford full-time, permanent employees.

Moreover, there was seldom a surplus of laborers in rural provincial Massachusetts. Indeed, the records suggest that there

was a constant marginal shortage of labor that was aggravated by periodic excessive shortages.[30] These more troublesome shortages always occurred at critical junctures in the agricultural calendar however, principally at harvest time. These favorable opportunities for the farm worker often were countered by shortages of work during some winters. But usually there was a stable demand for unskilled labor; and that demand was made by multiple and small-scale competitive elements. The scope of this competition and the short-term nature of contractual-or barter-labor accords meant that the unskilled worker and his family were never bound to a single source of outside employment; one that could nullify the worker's liberty to engage in the local economy as an independent factor. The unskilled worker, despite his lower earning capacities and economic profile, could not be exploited by long-term dependency or commitment to unfair low return for his labor. Once again, as the form of the rural economy allowed the skilled worker to be both craftsman and farmer-landowner, that same structure granted the unskilled worker an agricultural base and a certain freedom and mobility in his other and necessary vocational pursuits. Indeed, the economic framework of rural culture was founded upon those characteristics and demanded that mobility from all its labor participants.

In that way the rural unskilled worker was part of a continuing paradox. While he was, in most respects, a private dispenser of his time, service and labor, not unlike the artisan, nevertheless he was burdened by the socio-economic and political factors enumerated

earlier. With no serious expansion of the skilled labor economy, and with no easy or predictable access to more land and more extensive farming in the local community, the unskilled worker, his family and heirs had to seek economic and social improvement within a fairly stable and sometimes static local economy. The most practical and common method of advancement for the adult laboring farmer was a patient application of his labor over time under a personal program of constant work and disciplined frugality. Thus, a man might gradually lease or purchase a few more acres of farm land or more livestock. Often this was achieved through the development of indispensible or more profitable skills. By observation, experience and informal instruction the unskilled worker improved his dexterity and promoted the demand for and value of his labor in many non-crafts specialties.

The more successful husbandmen and agrarian laborers were very often eclectic handymen who practiced various skills up to but short of the level of the formal instructed trades. And as it is not possible to lump together all artisan-farmers as possessing equal aptitude, worth and status, or vocational behaviour, there was also a graduation of conditions among unskilled workers. Some were simply better workers, more reliable and proficient than others and more sophisticated managers of their time, barter arrangements and lands. Some bartered their labor for capital credit with which to secure land or support a later apprenticeship. Many of these men often

aspired to and matched the social and political credentials of the average artisan-farmer, without ever having learned or practiced an accredited crafts skill. An outstanding example of the multi-talented, indispensible handyman-laborer was Cockerel Reeves of Essex county, who spent over twenty years as a laborer before settling on his own farm. He lived in the town of Salem but did most of his work in neighboring agricultural towns. According to his own record, Reeves considered himself a "citizen" and an important man "of business." He was exceptional among laborers in that he kept accounts of his daily and short-term labor agreements. To emphasize his versatility, within the space of three months in 1711 he charged separate employers for "pasturing and caring for a horse, making clogs, going to island with ship, making heels, cording wood, pulling down a barn, washing fish, making a saw, three days work on ship [building], work aboard ship, putting up a bedstead, work in garden, grinding knives, making a hoe handle, making cider, killing lambs, carting ten yards of crap, framing, slat-work." If Reeves was not typical of the rural laborer, his variety of work does indicate the kinds of jobs available to the unskilled worker.[31]

Offspring did not automatically inherit their fathers' vocational and socio-economic status. The adult sons of rural laborers, in the event of no inheritable land, or no prospect of reasonable purchase or lease of land and lacking an apprenticed skill, were not inevitably assumed to repeat their fathers' experiences. Adult

voluntary apprenticeship, in another location at an opportune time, offered one means of improved vocational opportunity. New towns in the west of the province or in New Hampshire, with cheaper land and obtainable land reserves, made agricultural self-sufficiency a reality for some.[32] A son of an unskilled worker might even remain in the town of his birth and endure a precarious livelihood until he could plant himself on a small independent farm. Or, he might take a late apprenticeship locally, if the opportunity arose and if he could arrange a personal servitude indenture with a craftsman in order to defray the cost of apprenticeship. Many unskilled men obtained and developed high demand service occupations such as carting, sawing, cider-making and small-scale milling. By these means, unskilled, sometimes landless men improved their conditions, increased their incomes and eventually possessed some land and a larger measure of economic independence and security.

Some landless men removed to Boston or Salem to go to sea or to attempt to secure apprenticeships in the many crafts practiced in the commercial economies.[33] Some became sailors for part of the year, returning to rural communities when agricultural activity created a higher than usual demand for unskilled labor.[34] Of course, geographical mobility was more convenient for unmarried males than for those who had been settled by home and family; yet many married unskilled rural men manned the New England coasting vessels for part of their incomes.

In short, despite the relative permanence of the rural society's various institutions and practices, no fixed, permanent and transgen-

erational subordinate working class existed or evolved. Within the continuous and predictable patterns of communal society and its economy, workers were free to change occupations, learn skills, determine their vocational and economic contacts and aspire to the ideal of transmittable landed estate. Moreover, workers were not bound to repeat the precise or even general work habits and socio-economic conditions of their forebearers. Still, a distinction was maintained between skilled and unskilled workers. It was not a legal differentiation except where the law insisted on certain crafts credentials in the production of certain essential commodities or in the practice of various skilled services. Only rarely did the law single out a particular occupational group for special control or biased legislation. For example, when transient workers sought residence or when their presence threatened existing business.[35]

Distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers were not generally determined by an genealogical precedent. Of course minority ethnic, racial or sectarian backgrounds created automatic vocational as well as social barriers. But the laws concerning residency made ethnic or religious minorities a very small part of the population of most towns. These were explicit in the laws and practices of "warning out" unwanted migrants. Provincial Massachusetts was approximately 90% English <u>and</u> 75% Congregationalist.[36] Social differences between artisans and laborers were not formed by religion, race or parentage but rather by the nature of the labor requirements of the local

communities and by the multiple options, talents and ambitions of individuals. Certainly the reduced economic and material assets of poorer unskilled workers tended to devolve to subsequent generations and affect the vocational status of successors. But those reduced assets did not mean that the sons of laborers had no alternative to their fathers' stations in society.

The working life of an unskilled worker was similar in outline to that of the artisan-farmer. It was a blend of farm work and varied related and general labor commitments and practices. The combination of sabbaths, thanksgivings, days of fast and humiliation, various social, familial, political, weather and health interruptions left the provincial rural worker with some 200 to 300 working days to fill in a year. The lower figure applied to some artisan-farmers whose social and political obligations demanded a good deal of his time. Among the evidence remaining of annual days worked by various men is that of John Marshall, a mason who worked between 228 and 241 days a year between 1700 and 1711; he was politically active every year in positions ranging from militia officer to constable, and once as a selectman. John Reed, a shoemaker and farmer, served in various official capacities in Weymouth while he averaged 250 working days a year in the 1750s and 1760s. Joseph Andrews, a commercial farmer, normally worked between 210 and 260 days a year in farm-related work, depending on "service in the town's behalf." Cockerel Reeves, on the other hand, with no civic commitments, worked as many as 305 days in one year, 1707.[37]

Agricultural and directly related work kept some going from late March until mid-November. The most difficult months for work, naturally, were January through March. Then, the unskilled worker was most often engaged in whatever limited construction and cartage work he could find; and he aided the working artisans in their shops or at their benches if such work were available. Otherwise he broke and "swingled" flax stalks into usable fibers and if he could weave or stitch, sew or knit he would retreat to his home to produce what he could in this "fireside" activity. He cut wood or made shingles or laths or bricks.[38] Occasionally, he extracted pitch or potash or dug salt. Over the course of a year, some 75% of the unskilled workers' labors were directly or indirectly tied to farming; for their own and for others' operations. This involved all manner of field labor and livestock management. It included butchering, skinning, packing and shearing. The laborer picked the stones from fields and carted them; he also gathered and carted dung, wood, hides and produce; he built and repaired fences and cleared ditches. He was, like all workers and landowners, subject to legal harvest impressment when a shortened reaping season threatened local grain yields.[39]

In providing for basic self-sufficiency, both the benefits and inadequacies of subsistence farming were similar for artisan and laborer alike. A fully developed and utilized small farm of ten fertile and productive acres would return virtually all the basic foods consumed annually by a family of five. That production, of

the grain and meat staples, included forty to sixty bushels of mixed edible grains, apples for cider and turnips, and one-to-three slaughtered livestock, usually one steer and one sheep or swine. The subsistence farmer in eastern Massachusetts had little opportunity to supplement his diet with wild birds and game. The same ten-acre farm would provide between half and all of the five-member family's basic clothing materials of leather, spun linen and wool. When combined, these commodities constituted about half or less of the family's material budget. If the family wanted or required other foods such as eggs, butter, cheese, beer and fish, these had to be obtained with work outside the home lot, or with a domestic enterprise such as cider-pressing, weaving or rough leather work. Most other material needs — cordwood, lumber, furniture and tools — were paid for by other services, as were taxes, tithes and any lease payments. To live at a material level that was neither too rude nor precarious, the subsistence laborer-farmer was pressed to work as often and as hard as he could. While this regime did not bestow any measure of refinement, luxury or regular savings, it could and did afford a basic and manageable standard of living.[40]

A chief concern of the laborer-farmer was with securing as many working days as possible. His budget was determined more by quantity of work than by quality, although the better his work was, the more skilled and lucrative would be the kinds of tasks he was offered. Therefore, he could not afford many missed days of employment.

The demand was normally so great for his labor that only weather and ill health forced him into unproductive and unremunerative idleness. Socially, according to Perry Miller, his recreation and rest were regulated by the sabbath and he accorded himself only a little playful leisure.[41] His labors were physical, long and often lonely and monotonous. Yet overall it was not a working life of unrelieved tedium and meniality. From day to day and from season to season there was some variety in the tasks the unskilled worker was expected to perform. In the process of completing this extended work pattern, the laborer-farmer was exposed to a great deal of social contact with the rest of the community. In many ways his labor and his social life were one, shared first with his family and extending to include his neighbors and a significant portion of the community. No matter how sensitive he was to health, weather and the variable productivity of his farm, the rural laborer usually obtained a measure of stability and opportunity within his community. He achieved this by working long days, often at physically demanding tasks, and by participating as an independent and useful member of an intimate and mostly cash-free local economy.

NOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1]H.W. Belknap, Trades and Tradesmen of Essex County (Salem, Mass.: 1929), passim. M. Arch. MSS., Vols. 39-44, 47, 71 all give examples of contemporary usage. For "Husbandmen," Vol. 40, pp. 478, 500, 645, 653. On "laborers" see Vol. 44, pp. 10, 281, 599, 600 ff. On the use of the terms "mechanic," "artisan," "handicraftsman" see Mass. Bay Recs. and Acts and Resolves, Vols. 1-5. Both passim.

[2]M. Arch. MSS., Ibid.; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS., "Depositions."

[3]MHS, Thwing Catalogue. Included in the biographical and estate information are hundreds of examples of occupational mobility and titular variations.

[4]W.H. Whitmore, ed., Massachusetts Civil List (Albany: 1870), p. 86; Baker MSS., "Jacob Adams Account Book."

[5]M. Arch. MSS., Vol. I, "Agricultural"; Vols. 40-46, indexes, passim.

[6]M. Arch. MSS., Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls," pp. 167-557. Over 2,500 names and occupations from rural residents were sampled from these lists. Another 300 names and occupations were sampled from M. Arch. MSS., mostly, Vols. 39-46, 70-71, 244-245. See Chapter 3, n. 2, this paper.

[7]Occasionally the terms were used, often in matters dealing with poverty, idleness and charity. Then, it was often urged that the poor and idle be taught "skills," or be made "skillful." See especially the sermons of Samuel Cooper and Charles Chauncy at MHS and the laws governing apprenticeship and idleness in Colonial Laws, Mass. Bay Recs. and Acts and Resolves. The standard term for an industrial "skill" used in indenture contracts was "trade or mystery" or "art, trade or calling," see MHS Misc. Bd., "Apprentice Indentures," 1725.

[8]Appendix III, i.

[9]On the question of general growth, stagnation or decline in the provincial economy, see Alice Hanson Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies About 1770," JEH 32 (1972), pp. 98-127; Marc Egnall, "The Economic Development of the Thirteen Continental Colonies, 1720-1775," WMQ 32 (1975), pp. 191-222; Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1861 (New York: 1965), pp. 16-65.

[10]J. Potter, "The Growth of American Population, 1700-1860," in Glass and Everslley, eds., Population in History (London: 1965); Daniel Scott Smith, "The Demographic History of Colonial New England," JEH 32 (1972), pp. 165-183; Clifford K. Shipton, "Immigration to New England, 1680-1740," Journal of Political Economy 44 (1936), pp. 225-239; Josiah Benton, Warning Out in New England, 1656-1817 (Boston: 1911).

[11]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 94; Belknap, Trades and Occupations; J.T. Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), pp. 21-23, speaks of 10% of rural Massachusetts workers as being artisans. He is referring to full-time or even landless artisans who did no personal farming. Main, like others, encourages the notion that to farm at the subsistence level in the eighteenth century made one a "farmer" and nothing more. For a more realistic appraisal of the self-sufficiency and multi-vocational status of practically all "farmers," including the incidence of artisanship among subsistence farmers, see P.W. Bidwell and John Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington: 1925), pp. 115-133.

[12]Alice Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days (New York: 1899), pp. 40 ff.; Robert F. Seybolt, Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Education in Colonial New England and New York (New York: 1917).

[13]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 94, pp. 157-557; Main, Social Structure, pp. 7-43; Bidwell, Rural Economy in New England (Hartford: 1916), p. 241 ff. Although the latter deals mainly with the early National Period, the author is at pains to establish precedents in the provincial period. For a sample of rural occupations, see Chapter III, n. 2, this paper.

[14]Bidwell, Rural Economy, Introduction. M. Arch MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns."

[15]Trench Coxe, View of the United States of America (London: 1794), pp. 442-460. Coxe went beyond New England and the provincial period, of course, but his observations and views of the American farmer as being necessarily versatile, multi-vocational and even dependent on other income sources and employment offers a sobering antidote to his more influential (to historians) contemporary, Crevecoeur. The latter's celebrated "new man," the stereotyped American yeoman, has persisted as an image of the eighteenth century farmer. See J. Hector St. J. Crevecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer (reprint, New York: 1916).

[16]General Warren, American Museum, Vol. 2 (1787), No. 4, p. 347. Robert R. Walcott, "Husbandry in Colonial New England," NEQ 9 (1936), pp. 218-52. On the limited number of oxen see MHS MSS "Roxbury Valuations," 1727; On farm implenents see Bidwell and Falconer, History of Agriculture, esp. pp. 123-25.

[17]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 8, p. 236, Vol. 12 "Ecclesiastical, 1739-49," passim; Baker MSS. Account Books "Nathaniel Chamberlin," "Jacob Adams," "John Reed," "Cockerel Reeves"; Appendix I.

[18]Baker MSS., Ibid.; Appendix I.

[19]Abbot Smith, Colonists in Bondage (New York: 1947), pp. 28-29, 316-17; E.J. McManus, Black Bondage in the North (Syracuse: 1973), pp. 36-107. Appendix III.

[20]The most complete study of servitude in Massachusetts is Lawrence Towner, "A Good Master Well Served: A Social History of Servitude in Massachusetts, 1620-1750" (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Northwestern, 1955). For the high turnover in servants in provincial Massachusetts see MHS MSS, "Benjamin Wadsworth Account Book and Diary 1692-1727." In a thirty year period Wadsworth employed nearly 100 servants, never more than two at a time. The average tenure per servant, male and female, was four months. For some of the reasons for servant turnover see Towner, "A Fondness for Freedom: Servant Protest in Puritan Society," WMQ 19 (1962), pp. 201-19.

[21]Bidwell and Falconer, History of Agriculture, p. 133.

[22]Baker MSS "Ebenezer Wright Account Book," "Abidijah Upton Accounts," "Pearson Accounts," "John Reed Account Book"; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, "Depositions." M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 40, p. 585.

[23]Robert F. Seybolt, Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Training in Colonial New England and New York (New York: 1917).

[24]D.C. Coleman, "Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth Century," EHR 8 (1956), pp. 283-95; C.B. MacPherson, "Servants and Laborers in Seventeenth Century England" in Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval (Oxford: 1973); J.R. Commons, et al., History of Labor in the United States, Vol. I (New York: 1917), pp. 25-168. E.S. Furniss, The Position of the Laborer in a System of Nationalism . . . (New York: 1920).

[25]Russell R. Menard, "From Servant to Freeholder: Status, Mobility and Property Accumulation in 17th Century Maryland," WMQ 30 (1973), pp. 37-64. On the status of rural laborers in England, see Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost (London: 1965), especially pp. 22-52, including Gregory King's assessment and census tables for 1688.

[26]Appendix I.

[27]V.S. Clark, History of Manufacturing in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1916), pp. 144-158; Main, Social Structure, pp. 68-114. The wage differential between skilled and unskilled work (the latter 2/3 to 1/2 of skilled value) was constant from 1630 to 1775. The many account books at Baker MSS and the MHS Misc. Bd. MSS contain hundreds of examples to support this. For actual wages, at various times, see Main, pp. 68-114; U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, Bulletin 499 (1929), "Wages in the Colonial Period."

[28]MHS MSS "Roxbury Valuations 1727"; M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns." On assessment and taxing principles and laws and rates see Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 92, 214, 413, 484 and annually through Vols. 2-5. On franchise qualifications, voting and political participation see Katherine Brown, "The Controversy over the Franchise in Puritan Massachusetts, 1954-1974," WMQ 33 (1976), pp. 212-241; Michael Zuckerman, "Social Context of Democracy in Massachusetts," WMQ 25 (1968), pp. 523-44.

[29]On civic appointments see M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 112-118, "Towns"; Watertown Records 1634-1829 (Watertown, Mass.: 1894-1939); S.A. Bates, editor, Braintree Records 1640-1793; D.G. Hill, ed., Dedham Records, 1635-1845. Kenneth Lockridge and Alan Kreider, "The Evolution of Mass. Town Government, 1640-1740," WMQ 23 (1966), pp. 549-574. On families and relative family size, see Smith, "Demographic History," p. 177.

[30]R.B. Morris, Government and Labor in Early America (New York: 1946), p. 60 ff. Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 152-155.

[31]Baker MSS, "Cockerel Reeves Account Book; 1708-1729"; MHS Thwing Catalogue contains many hundreds of cases of upward economic mobility among "laborers." The evidence is drawn largely from probate and deed records. Another fine detailed example of a prospering, industrious and talented landless laborer is MHS MSS "Benjamin Bangs Diary 1742-61." See also A.L. Cummings, Rural Household Inventories (Boston: 1964).

[32]Lois K. Mathews, The Expansion of New England (Boston: 1909).

[33]Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes," Box 2.

[34]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, p. 133; "Benjamin Bangs Diary." For many examples of the rural origins of enlisting sailors see MHS MSS "Rovert Treat Paine Papers," Vol. I. See also Elmo Hohman, History of American Merchant Seamen (New York: 1956).

[35]As in the case of "disruptive, disreputable" transient pedlars. See "An Act against Hawkers, Pedlars and Petty Chapmen," Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 720-21 (November 1713) and renewed thereafter, Acts and Resolves, Vol. 2, pp. 47, 232, 385. On criminal proceedings against various unskilled, usually transient, workers see M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 43-44.

[36]Benton, Warning Out. On the ethnic and religious homogeneity of provincial Massachusetts, see Historical Statistics, Colonial Times to the Present Washington: 1961), Section Z.

[37]MHS MSS, "John Marshall Diary 1688-1711"; "Joseph Andrews Journal 1731-1777"; "John Metcalf Commonplace Book 1730-90." Baker MSS, "John Reed Account Book"; "Pearson Accounts." These prominant artisans, farmers and merchants, all active socially and politically all worked more than two hundred days a year. For the working days of husbandmen and laborers, see Walcott, "Husbandry." For the meaning of the sabbath and other religious holidays see Sidney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: 1972).

[38]Walcott, "Husbandry"; "John Porter Accounts" and "Samuel Pratt Accounts" in "John Reed Account Book." Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 115-131.

[39] Ibid., on harvest impressment see Mass. Bay Recs., Vol. III, p. 102. This Act, first issued in the 1650s under various forms, remained on the statute books throughout the eighteenth century and was often referred to. See M. Arch., Vols. 42-43.

[40] "Joseph Andrews Journal"; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 115-131; Main, Social Structure, pp. 115-163; Walcott, "Husbandry."

[41] Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge: 1953), esp. Book IV. Even Marshall, a successful artisan who had some control over his income was bitter when he missed work through bad weather or ill health: "Diary," pp. 140, 152, 168. Cockerel Reeves, while working as a day laborer, took one day of "play" in one year, see "Account Book," n.p. For a comparison with the annual working days and recreation habits of contemporaneous English artisans and laborers, see Keith Thomas, "Work and Leisure in Pre-industrial Society," Past and Present 29 (1964), pp. 50-66.

CHAPTER V

THE RURAL SPECIALIST

Not all free workers in rural Massachusetts were artisan-farmers or laborer-farmers. Those who were not, though they represented a minority, were numerous enough and their specialities important enough to exert some significant influence on the local economies and further define the rural labor economy. They were the full-time specialists or single occupation workers of this society. They included the full-time farmer, the full-time, non-farming artisan and the non-farming service trades such as material suppliers and manufacturers and small merchants. This group, or groups, constituted perhaps one-third of the adult free white male population of rural provincial Massachusetts. Naturally, this number included the 20% or so of the population who possessed no arable land; and it would include a further 10% of the total population who conducted full time personal commercial farm operations. Generally, this one-third of the working population was made up of equal parts of the main single-occupation categories. Thus in regions, if not in every town, 10% of the workers would be full-time artisans and 10% were in the service trades as exclusive enterprises; another 10% would be full-time farmers tending entirely to their own properties.[1]

The society's few professionals, the justices, lawyers, teachers and physicians, were almost invariably also farmers, large

landowners or merchants. The number of landless full-time laborers was not significant and the status of these workers, like those in servitude, was transitory. As noted, the landless laborer was always subject to a change of status through the acquisition of some land, migration from the community, adult apprenticeship, voluntary short-term residential servitude or involvement in an independent service enterprise such as woodcutting, sawing, carting, forgework, brickmaking, salt mining or any assortment of these that would ensure long-term and reliable subsistence. General short-term, day-to-day farm and ancillary labor, for which the demand was constant and high, was performed by the community's landed laboring population. It was rare, in the agricultural towns, for an "unskilled" worker to specialize as a contract laborer, even if he possessed a variety of semi-skilled aptitudes, without also possessing a small acreage of productive farm land.[2]

But similar variables did not apply to other rural work specialists; and where specialization occurred, it was often the result of the deliberate preference of the individual specialist. Certainly external matters influenced the decision by individuals to pursue a single work occupation. Local demand and opportunity were critical factors, and the individual's background and circumstance further determined the necessity or advantages to specialization. For example, a young, possibly landless artisan might have forsaken farming entirely if the local market could support him in full-time employment of his craft. And a son raised to inherit a fully functioning commercial

farm might never contemplate or be offered an alternative to full-time independent farming. Usually, however, the decision on a suitable vocation was based on personal choice. Most men who did become single occupation specialists did have access to alternatives. Few in this society were without the occasion to avail themselves of two or more labor alternatives. In fact the social and economic organization of provincial rural society encouraged and even demanded cross and multiple labor habits. Those who chose to narrow their work enterprise into a specific and exclusive occupation did so for reasons of personality, aptitude and preference; and to a certain degree they did so also for personal gain. Some were in positions to exploit the advantages of better land, easier capital funding or access to transportation. Hence, many rural specialists were or stemmed from or became society's more secure, fortunate or gifted, ambitious and even wealthier labor plurality.[3]

In the labor heirarchy of the rural economy it was often these specialists who occupied the highest social levels as a labor aristocracy or elite. But the same qualities of economic localism and communalism which made personalized and pragmatic working habits the dominant labor mode, also tempered social differences in the labor hierarchy. Rural specialists, though their work might have yielded a high economic and social return, in some cases, could not remove themselves from the context of the local and wholly collective labor economy. That is to say, they did not stand apart from the community

as a special class of employers, for example, but were compelled to conform to the scale and limitations and labor practices of the local economy. Most important, they did not form an alliance of superior or influential or consciously collective self-interest.[4] They remained as distinct and individual components in the shared and interdependent economic world of the rural community. As such they were workers themselves and did not control the labor of others to any great extent. Their uniqueness lay in the particular style and organization of their work practices. Their conformity was imposed by the universal necessity of work and the communal purposes of labor.[5]

One simple definition of the provincial commercial farmer was that he exchanged no work with others, agriculturally or otherwise, except with members of his family. He spent his entire working year within the precincts of his, or close relatives', farming operations. Normally, the full-time farmer began commercial operations following the inheritance or early possession of a comparatively large cultivated or arable acreage of superior soil quality; land that was well watered for livestock and free of natural obstacles to tillage, such as hills, ravines and rock outcrops. If he had been willed the necessary amount of land he was probably the son of a successful man who might have had some or all of his sons trained in an alternative craft in their formative years. In that event, upon receipt of the land, the prospective farmer would put aside his other work to devote himself to full-time farming. This required a sufficiently well organized

and, in Massachusetts, a thoroughly varied operation, or one that could be made to function as such. If the inherited land was only partially or even marginally cultivated and stocked, as was often the case, the new proprietor would be obliged to support himself with other work while he farmed at a subsistence level and eventually converted unbroken or disused land to cultivation to the point where the farm would produce a complete livelihood. In that case, the gradual and deliberate process of abandoning all or any other work to become a full-time farmer was a personal decision.

In a culture where land was a common and desired asset and farming the principal occupation, it was inevitable that full-time farming should exist, despite the commercial and labor limitations. Moreover, the fact that most men were raised to a habit of both farm and alternative work skills adds to the element of personal choice as a determinant of full-time farming. Most artisan-farmers were obliged, and some preferred to spend their working lives mixing farm with non-farm occupations. This flexibility was seen as the most suitable means for accommodating present and future needs and for involving the inclusive family unit in the local economy. Often, the artisan or part-time farmer tried but failed to progress to full-time farming. When he failed, it was because he did not amass sufficient land to exploit. Or, because of the insufficient time and labor of himself, his family or bartered labor in the community, he was unable to exploit any aggregate of land he did possess or amass. Then, his unused land would lie as an asset, as negotiable,

transferrable property, and not as an exclusive labor endeavor.[6]

Thus, choice was combined with opportunity and material preconditions as the principal determinant in who became a commercial farmer, how and under what conditions this was achieved, and the numbers who actually met the various criteria. Along with the necessary quantity of land and an appropriate agricultural diversification, the full-time farmer also required regular assistance and the constant cooperation of available labor. This latter was best accomplished by the extended family agricultural enterprise. Here, adjacent or nearby farms were occupied by a father, brother, brother in law, cousin or uncle.[7] Together they owned, leased or rented and shared some common tillage, grass and pasturage acreage. They assisted each other with reciprocal labor and service on the respective "home lots" and exchanged and circulated the labors of their own full-time or seasonal servants when necessary. Seeding, weeding, haying and harvesting, along with livestock pasturing, wintering and killing, were the more common collective enterprises and required concerted labor. These tasks were performed, when possible, in rotation on the respective individual holdings by all or several members of the extended operations. In this system the particular acreage, produce, management and income were the responsibility and reward of the individual farmer. The independent full-time farmer owned and operated his own farm, certainly, but he did so usually as part of a familial labor collective.[8]

For the individual to succeed as an independent full-time farmer in the provincial setting he required volume and variety of produce. This in turn required at least forty acres of mixed cultivated land and usually an equal or greater amount in timber stands, natural meadow and salt marsh grassland. The precise amount was variable of course, according to region (topography, rainfall, soil type and natural vegetation) and relative individual skill, energy and ambition. The farm had to yield much more than a fractional surplus of produce. To be capable of supporting the entire budget of a family, it had to produce regular annual marketable quantities of grain, meat, hides, wool and hay to be sold or traded in volume locally or in Boston.[9] If a contrast were to be drawn between the needs and capacities of commercial and subsistence farmers, it would show that the former required at least four times the amount of cultivated land of the latter and an even higher ratio of yield from each acre.[10] Grain, while ultimately more valuable, was not the predominant concern of the commercial farmer largely because it was the most labor intensive of farm-produced commodities and was subject to a great range of unpredictable growing and harvesting factors. It shared importance with livestock raising. Sheep made up nearly 65% of all provincial livestock and cattle nearly 25%. They each afforded roughly equal financial return to the farmer and were popular because of the reliability of their growth and marketability. Sheep were cheaper and easier to manage in volume and their large numbers reflected the advantages of raising them.

In 1750 there were over 230,000 sheep in Massachusetts (Table V, p. 40). In fact, live sheep, cattle, swine — and their meats and by-products — and to a lesser degree horses, were the only agricultural products that provincial Massachusetts exported in commercial quantity to the British Empire. But even that trade did not involve sufficient amounts of product to warrant large capital investment in livestock farming. Moreover, the soil of Massachusetts would not yield commercial quantities of grain; a factor that encouraged the predominance of subsistence farming and further retarded capital investment in commercial agriculture. This particular obstacle to capital growth in rural Massachusetts no doubt influenced the slow development of new farming techniques and labor use and was an added stimulus to the economic localism and self-sufficiency of the rural communities. But if the commercial possibilities of raising livestock were limited, nevertheless it was not unusual for a medium-sized commercial farmer to possess a flock of 100 or more. These and the twenty or so mature cattle he would kill in a year provided the full-time farmer with a considerable amount of winter work.[11]

Paradoxically, the volume that made full-time farming possible, as a year around specialty, also demanded more than a farmer's individual labor. The immediate family of the farmer performed the same labor functions as did the subsistence farm family with the exception that the sons of commercial farmers seldom worked outside the home farm and the daughters rarely, if ever, became resident domestic servants else-

where. On commercial farms the male children and youths assisted their fathers in the fields and barns while the young females worked with and alongside their mothers and baked, sewed, spun and made soap and candles, raised vegetables and performed other domestic and farm-related tasks. But the bulk of the extra labor required on the commercial farm was adult male labor and was obtained by exchange and by short-term servitude. If these farms did contain any resident long-term laboring servants, a single negro slave was normally employed. The major winter work for the farmer consisted of tending to livestock, cutting construction timber and cutting and cording fire wood, breaking and "swingling" flax stalks and separating grains, husking corn for feed, and repairing buildings and implements. It differed little from the winter work of subsistence farmers except in terms of volume. Where the part-time farmer was hard pressed to find sufficient and constant work in the winter, the commercial farmer spent every day working on his property, or in work directly related to it.

In this and other ways the full-time farmer worked as hard or harder than any labor he might employ. Moreover, regular and necessary winter work was both dangerous and uncomfortable. For example, tending to those livestock which were not in or close to barns and which might be scattered in rough winter pasturage or carting supplies along inferior roads, sometimes in the complete darkness in the harshest weather. Indoor work, which by proper management the farmer organized for the winter, was dirty, tedious and backbreaking; especially work

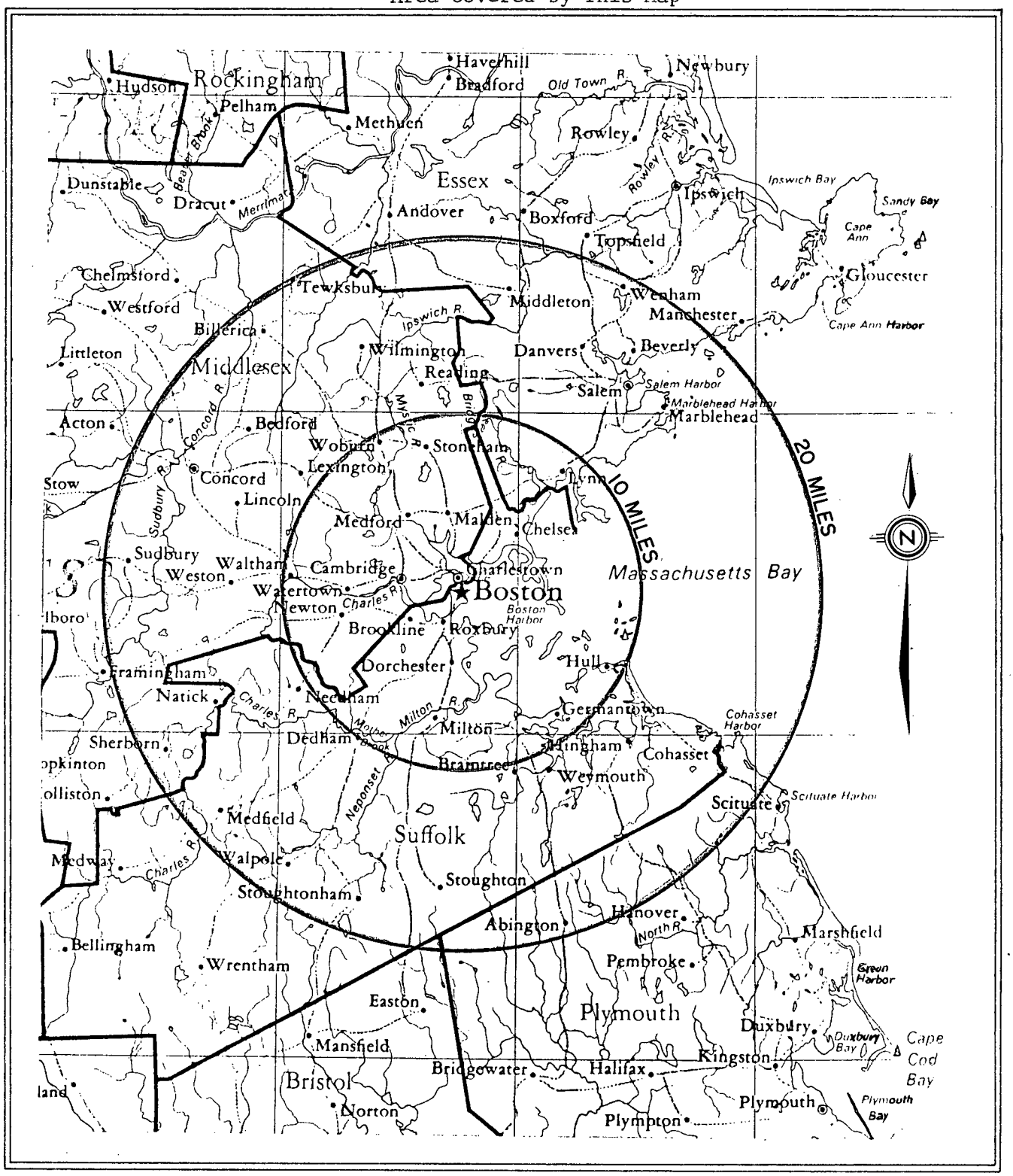
with wool, raw hides, flax and wheat. In the growing and harvesting seasons the farmer, no matter who or how many he had to help him, worked every day, at the most menial tasks, from dawn to dark. All this work involved tiring manual labor and required regular attendance. Often the farmer's own added exertions precluded the need to hire at least one extra hand. The provincial commercial farmer was a working farmer and not a "gentleman farmer" or one who merely organized and supervised the farm operation, including its labor. The latter did exist in this society, but only as extremely rare exceptions. In fact, for an example of the laboring habits of commercial farmers and the usual familial labor network they utilized, the largest farm in the town of Roxbury, near Boston, in the 1720s contained slightly over one hundred acres of cultivation and employed only two full-time "servants." The great majority of full-time commercial farmers were men who worked manually for an average of 250 days a year, on their own and their families' acreages.[12]

The commercial farmer derived his entire livelihood from an agricultural enterprise that provided his immediate material needs and produced income from a commercially marketed surplus. Some of this commercial surplus was needed in the local community, but only a little and only in some localities. The greater part of the commercial yield went to Boston or Salem for consumption there or for export. As a consequence, many commercial farm operations were within convenient transportation distance of Boston or another port and close to access

routes. But even late in the provincial period the location of the province's population meant that over half the province's cultivated land lay within thirty miles of either Boston or Salem (Map 4) so that commercial farms were distributed fairly well throughout those regions and towns. Inevitably, there was a higher percentage of commercial farms in the immediate area of the coastal population centres but they were not, even here, a dominant feature of the landscape.[13] By and large, the economy of Massachusetts did not encourage commercial farming. Extensive large acreage farming was retarded by the practice of subsistence farming which at once supplied most of the needs of the local communities. The absence of a cash crop and the higher profitability of selling or leasing land further impeded the accumulation of huge centralized acreages; the subsistence farm also prevented the formation of a native landless farm laboring class. It bears repeating that all this was tied to the absence of an exportable high-volume cash crop.

Nevertheless, the commercial farm did exist in provincial Massachusetts and it and the working, full-time farmer fitted into the local economies in important ways even if their individual and collective influences on the community were limited. Socially and politically, the commercial farmer occupied a higher-than-average status; but he did not dominate local politics or society. He was more important to the local community in other ways. The excess produce from these productive farms could balance local demand for grains, hay, meat and hides when

Towns of Eastern Massachusetts, c. 1770. Approximately 50% of the Province's Population and 40% of its Towns were Located in the Area Covered by This Map



Source: Cappon, ed., Atlas of Early American History.

required and the larger farm unit and household provided frequent work for local artisans. The commercial farm created work for many marginal subsistence farmers and laborers and sometimes created limited term "servitude" when that became a recourse for some. In these ways it was useful without being dominant or regressive in terms of individual and community labor patterns. The limitations on its scale and the overall work discipline shared by the full-time farmer and all workers kept the influences of commercial farming at a modest level. The commercial farmer was still attached to the wider communal economy and society. For as efficient and self-contained as it was, the largest commercial farm in Massachusetts was not even remotely like the economic systems such as manorial tenancy operations and planations elsewhere. In some eighteenth century plantations in Virginia and the West Indies, everything from workshops to leather yards to quarters for resident laborers represented an extreme of agricultural concentration.[14] In provincial Massachusetts the extreme was represented by the working full-time farmer who was perhaps more dependent on the local community of independent artisans and laborers than they were on him.

The full-time artisan in the agricultural town was perhaps more unusual than the full-time farmer. By not farming at all, at any level, this artisan broke with the fundamental practice of dietary self-sufficiency and also stood as a unique exception to the rural labor-and goods-exchange barter economy. He produced no food, plant fibers or hides and required only occasional exchange of labor for

his own services. Consequently, he dealt frequently for cash or bills of credit. By concentrating all his time in his trade he was less flexible than others and his bartering activities were diminished.[15] The full-time rural artisan was never free to assist his customers or neighbors in their farm or related labor needs. It is clear that virtually all artisans in rural Massachusetts owned land or had access to purchasable or leasable farm property. Why the full-time artisan chose to exempt himself from the customary dual or mixed farm and crafts labor and economic pattern of his fellow tradesman remains a complex question; one that involved personality and socio-economic factors that belied the practices of the majority of Massachusetts workers.

In this society, land was the basic, practical measure of security, independence and economic, social and political status. The possession of land reflected a fixed real stake in the affairs and future of the community. The traditional and continuing economic standards of agrarian society demanded the encouraged individual self-sufficiency — for the majority this was best achieved by subsistence farming. The conjuction of these two factors, the possession of land and at least the partial farming of it, was a normal imperative for meeting the residential requirements of the consensual community. For the artisan to own land and not farm it for his own use, or to be landless and remain so, required at least two preconditions: one, that the artisan's craft was in sufficient demand so that he could

best serve his own and the community's interests by practising it to the exclusion of farming; and two, that his competence and productivity were superior to other competitive artisans of the same trade and could ensure for him a regular, constant and future demand for his work. In the area of demand, it was in the basic crafts of blacksmithing, shoemaking, weaving-tailoring, carpentry and masonry that the full-time artisan flourished. But demand was contingent upon a market of sufficient size and predictability to support full-time specialization. Hence the full-time artisan was most often found in the larger than average rural towns of more than 500 families, or in towns within more heavily populated regions. For shoemakers, blacksmiths and textile artisans the local volume of demand was usually a sufficient market for full-time enterprise; for carpenters and masons, proximity to Boston or Salem was equally important.[16]

Full-time artisans were not a common feature of all communities and their uniqueness was as much a function of location as it was of occupational specialization. As many as one in four and as few as one in ten of local craftsmen were full-time operatives, and in some very small communities there were no full-time artisans at all. John Marshall, the Braintree mason, kept a daily work journal from 1688 to 1711; it provides a vivid portrait of the life of a full-time rural artisan. The geographical range of his work took him to Boston, Hingham, Weymouth, Milton, Medfield and Dorchester — towns as far as twenty miles from his home. He noted that he was contracted to "brick an

oven in Medfield, there being no mason there." Marshall began his diary: "Here is contained in this book some brief memorials of my own business, how I spend my time, what work I do, and where, some remarkable providences recorded and the weather remembered." His meticulous notes over a twenty-two year span illustrate the seasonality of construction work in rural society. An early winter could disrupt the planned economy of the independent artisan: "As to November last [1703], it was a right winter month. I never knew the like for frost, snow and tedious weather. I never did so little work in November since I knew what work is"; he worked only eight days. But an early spring was a boon to the same man; summarizing a mild March [1708/9], Marshall noted: "This month hath been a very good, comfortable month. I wrought [worked] near twenty days at my trade." For most of the winter Marshall was kept busy preparing materials for the building season, but this alone did not fully stabilize the flow of his annual income. So he dealt in livestock — not as a subsistence farmer — by buying, feeding, killing and selling a few pigs and cattle in the winter, in a barn on his property. But winter was also a time of domestic gratification for Marshall; he spent more time at home with his family, attended more Town Meetings and — as a deeply religious man — took part in more Church-related activities.[17]

Most full-time artisans spent their entire working year in preparing and performing their contracted obligations. For the in-door crafts such as blacksmithing, the emphasis was in maintaining an

even flow of work. Builders could and did encounter slack periods due mostly to weather restrictions and were obliged to arrange most of their indoor work for the winter months. They also used these periods to prepare materials for the busier summer construction season. Masons spent the December to March period securing materials, making bricks in milder weather, carving stone and cutting laths, while carpenters stocked wood, sawed and sized standard cuts, made studs and shingles, secured nails, sealants and paint and repaired and replaced tools. To anticipate and secure medium-and long-term future work assignments artisans had to predict the need for their services, organize their time and contracts and be of reliable proficiency and reputation in order to attract future demand. The construction artisan was not only more geographically mobile than the shop craftsman but his work contracts were for larger scale projects and involved more formal arrangements. The shop artisan dealt with a large number of clients and retained a high degree of extensive, personal economic relations with his customers.

Often, full-time carpenters and masons were away from home for days and even weeks at a time when their work contracts were located at some distance from their residences. A ten-mile separation of work and home usually negated commuting. Travel by horse, cart or coach was not practical or sensible in the dark or in bad weather and when fully engaged on a work project, the artisan utilized all daylight hours in working. Therefore, he might spend considerable time

lodging with his client. And if the carpenter or mason chose to spend part of his working year in Boston or Salem or elsewhere where shipbuilding, shop, warehouse and residential construction was a constant source of employment, he would be compelled to stay in inns, taverns or boarding houses. For the rural laborer and some part-time artisans, the range of their working areas was determined by the distance a man could walk in an hour or so, to and from a place of work in the morning and evening. Thus the full-time construction artisan made significant social and domestic sacrifices to pursue his craft. At the least, his normal family life was frequently interrupted. While others spent the spring, summer and fall months working at home, or in the fields at home or adjacent to home, the full-time carpenter or mason might be ten, twenty or more miles away. Yet these men maintained permanent residences in rural towns of their birth or choice and a large number of them took an active and often important part in the social and political affairs of their communities.[18] What made these full-time artisans deviate from the more conventional work habits of their neighbors was often simply a matter of personal choice. This choice had to be made and then supported by a fixed residence in the community and a continued participation in its affairs. As long as the latter could be maintained, the question of individual choice or preference could be resolved. Most men made the decision to specialize in a full-time non-agricultural occupation for obvious economic advantage. Some men, for example, with large land holdings, received more farm

produce by way of lease payments than they might have raised themselves. A few others found that the equivalent effort in crafts work produced more than enough income to purchase farm produce that was normally gained by longer, harder and sometimes unproductive farm labor. Still, the obstacles against full-time, non-farm labor specialization were many and formidable. The problems of scale and volume were the most prohibitive. Rural society contained a great many competing artisans who served a fractionalized market of individual customers, with whom they dealt directly. For the more stationary trades such as tailoring, weaving and smithing, residential and family stability was not the problem it was for full-time carpenters and masons. But for all, a knowledge of organizational and financial procedures was necessary to conduct a full-time craft enterprise. Not all artisans possessed those auxiliary talents. So it was that full-time artisan status, maintained for the duration of a working life, was an extraordinary occurrence in provincial rural society. That it did exist on a marginal scale says something of minor variations of personalities and local economies. But its limited presence tends to confirm the general localism of scale and the flexible nature of individual labor habits in the rural economic setting. The simplicity of rural labor and economic arrangements overshadowed the imitation of the contemporary marketing practices of the skilled artisan in Boston, and marked a contrast in work habits in the two settings.[19]

Yet another group of workers in rural Massachusetts stood apart from the majority. This group was composed of various labor specialists, but they shared common qualities by reason of their rejection of either farming or artisanship. This collective was made up of the small merchants, traders, carters, bloomery owners and workers, saw, grist and fulling mill operators and various other full-time non-crafts, non-farm specialists.[20] Usually, most of these business or occupational functions were conducted by part-time farmers. For example, a subsistence farmer with a good stream on his property could establish a grist mill; if some occupied land contained adequate quantities of ore, a farmer might have established a forge if he had or could have obtained the expertise. A large supply of timber on an individual plot could provide extra work and income for a farmer in chopping, cording and sawing wood, even to the extent of establishing a small saw mill. Many farmers engaged in carting as an alternative but non-skilled occupation. Indeed, much of the supplementary work and service activities associated with the rural community were conducted by semi-skilled or unskilled subsistence farmers.[21] For the most part these occupations, along with the skilled crafts, supplemented and balanced the livelihoods and work habits of part time farmers in the local economies. But many of these functions were important enough and sufficiently regular to require or encourage the full-time attention of individuals.

Because these enterprises involved skills, but not necessarily crafts training or apprenticeship, they fall into a distinctive labor category. They were entrepreneurial practices, for although they were primarily laboring activities there was a vital element of business organization implicit in them. Furthermore, a high proportion of the income of these men was in the form of cash and credit bills; so that while they were conspicuously linked to the local barter and exchange economies, the operators and proprietors of these services, lacking various farm commodities and having little or no disposable exchange labor, were obliged to deal on a narrower barter range.[22] The full-time saw mill operator, for example, could offer only his sawing services in exchange for all his other material needs. By not possessing a farm, he required and negotiated very little labor as payment. Still, he did manage to engage in his special and popular service and exchange it for the goods and services of local farmers and artisans. A great deal of the service worker's business was conducted using the materials supplied by customers — this was especially true of mill operators — and in that case his service was specifically one of labor.

By not requiring extra labor for his own personal economy, the full-time miller or sawyer was often limited to accepting cash, or goods for his own use or for retrade.[23] The non-artisan specialists were fully integrated into the local barter systems; and while in many cases much of their incomes was derived from many small cash payments, they dealt with a sufficient quantity of goods payments to be included in the predominately non-cash economy. In short, the special non-

labor exchange qualities of these occupations still did not exclude them from the general integrated local economies. Many of them, like some full time artisans, owned and sub-leased farm land to others and received payments in farm produce.

In the case of millers, the service provided by their labors was one of converting a raw material, grain, wood or wool, into a usable product usually to be refined further by an artisan. Ironworks or bloomery operators followed a pattern similar to that of millers and supplied blacksmiths with metal, as tanners provided leather for shoemakers. In some cases the suppliers of the materials and the recipients of the service were the same persons; as in the case of the Pearson family of millers and carpenters who owned extensive woodlots and milled their own lumber for their shop and construction work. Or William Bartlett, a Hampshire county weaver-tailor-farmer who received raw wool from other farmers in return for weaving — as well as producing his own — and had a local fulling-mill prepare that material into fibers for his shop. Similarly, Nathaniel Chamberlin, a blacksmith, owned a share in an iron-ore mine and often supplied the local bloomery with ore, to furnish iron for his own forge. Some shoemaker-farmers contracted with nearby tanneries and had hides from their own and others' animals "worked up" and returned to them as stock for their shops.[24] But often the supply sources and production ends were unrelated.

In any event, the service operators were in the full flow of the internally-linked and circulating local economies. Some enlarged their entrepreneurial scope to embrace some regular control of supply and demand and to engage in related or other service enterprises. A mine owner-cum-forge operator might also operate his own cartage and distribution facilities and service. Occasionally, a local saw-grist- and even fulling-mill might be under single family control, perhaps supported by a woodlot operation, grain storage facility and a shearing barn. Brick kiln managers or owners often also owned or leased lime and clay pits. The amount of vertical and horizontal integration within and between service operations was varied, ranging from negligible raw-material and distribution control to substantial local monopoly. Again the Pearson family serves as an example, this time of local domination of supply and production. They owned woodlots, and saw-mills and contracted extensive house construction in Rowley and Newbury in Essex county. Moreover, they operated a fulling-mill and a grist-mill and processed many of the raw materials they received in barter for their service and carpentry work. However, this scale and diversity was unusual in most rural areas.[25]

As the varieties of scope and scale were many, these service "industries" did offer some opportunity for commercial and business expression, with profits being used to expand an operation, secure some direct or tangential aspect of it or simply to accumulate land if possible. When leased to others, land led to an indirect participation in farming, even as a mere source of farm payment in lieu of

rental charges. But as large and extensive as some of these service operations became, the vast majority remained the single full-time occupation of individuals.[26] As with the rural shop crafts and production, the possibilities for extended market manipulation were severely restrained. Distance, a dispersed population and the localized and barter economies created balanced competition in small markets. An ephemeral wage-labor source further curtailed the possibilities for local or regional dominance or monopoly, except in rare cases.[27]

The most notable feature of these service trades was that they were crucial to the local economies. Demand for them was constant over time and was spread widely through the community so that these enterprises attracted, permitted and gave full-time employment for some workers. Men entered these labor specialties because they found that they could exploit their lands more usefully by using the properties' non-agricultural resources rather than by farming or because they lacked an ordinary crafts skill, or because they did not possess any or enough arable acreage to farm. Most of these enterprises were permanent and inheritable, of course, but some were brief endeavors — wood stands became depleted, or ore deposits were used up or became mechanically inaccessible. When men remained in service occupations they did so because this type of long-term vocation provided a good livelihood, sometimes equal to that of many artisan-farmers and usually greater than that of the ordinary laborer-farmer. So long as the agrarian community and its compact economy survived, the contribution of these

supportive enterprises remained necessary and convenient and demand for them stayed constant. The technologies of milling, mining, forging and furnace and kiln work, along with transportation continued mostly unchanged during the provincial period. So, too, did the work habits and managerial methods of the individual workers and operators.[28] The incomes, productivity and combined farm-and shop-work practices of shoemakers such as Jacob Adams and John Baker were nearly identical; though they lived, respectively, at the start and end of the provincial period. The range of goods and the methods of production of blacksmiths Nathaniel Chamberlin and James Kingsley were quite similar, though these men were separated by a half-century. The inventories of storekeepers such as Pyam Cushing and Bayes Manchester, while forty years apart, were remarkably similar; and the account books of John Hayward and Mathew Noble, tanners, might be interchangeable, though they lived at opposite ends of the province. The Pearsons operated the same grist-mill, without major overhaul or innovation, for over fifty years. In Stuart Bruchey's words:

> for the most part market and transport limitations dictated that [industries] be . . . 'neighborhood manufactures,' widely dispersed rather than geographically concentrated, local manufactures protected by high transport costs from the competition of distant producers. They were 'homespun industries,' utilizing the tools belonging to age-old handicraft traditions . . . and . . . were small in scale. Furthermore, they were technologically 'backward.' Water power was employed in the mill and furnace industries but . . . wheels were undershot and utilized only a fraction of the water power applied to them. 29

Moreover, as Charles Grant puts it, "most of the non-farm enterprises were sawmills, gristmills, fulling mills and tanneries. These were profit seeking businesses but they were also social necessities in a rural community."[30]

It is perhaps difficult to think of a small merchant, a trader, stockkeeper, distributor and retailer, as a "worker." Yet in eighteenth century Massachusetts, the rural town merchants were quite definitely workers; certainly in the broad contemporary meaning of the term which included necessary manual work. In addition, the merchants of rural Massachusetts were independent residential traders and not transient pedlars or employed agents of the larger commercial wholesalers and retailers of Boston or Salem. Within the boundaries of the province itinerant trading by pedlars, mostly from Boston, was forbidden by law and proscriptions on this practice were rigidly enforced. The "Yankee Pedlar" of fact and fable was a later phenomenon or one that existed outside Massachusetts in the provincial period. While the larger merchants in some of the bigger rural towns did maintain contractual links with Boston distributors, the full-time merchant in the inland towns was essentially a central mechanism in the circulation and exchange of locally obtainable commodities. Usually merchandising simply was part of the local labor and goods exchange economy. As every worker was something of an entrepreneur in the sense of managing the disposal of his labor and product, so was he also a merchant in that he transmitted a great variety of goods in the course of his

participation in the local labor and barter economy. But the local economies did have need of a limited number of full-time merchants. The towns would support men who could serve as neutral handlers of local goods; commodities that otherwise could not be exchanged fairly or conveniently between other contracting workers. They also served to obtain stock and distribute the large number of items that came from outside the rural communities, among them wines, spices, coffee, tea, sugar, paper, fancy textiles, tools, some farm, home and workshop utensils and other imported merchandise.[31]

These merchants operated the only common retail facility in the rural town — the general store. There, goods could be either bought, sold or traded. At this level the merchant in rural Massachusetts was not unlike merchant shop keepers everywhere in the eighteenth century — he was a commodity retailer. But beyond that function his role and activities differed considerably from those of his counterparts elsewhere. In the first place, he received other goods as payment for his own stock. Second, his was a complete "general store" operation and was not a specialty outlet as were most in Boston. Most important, the rural merchant-trader was also a worker. His position as a dealer in various manufactured items obliged him to perform regularly a wide range of minor specialty skilled work functions. The merchants of rural Massachusetts also occasionally doubled as gunsmiths, clock and watch makers and repairers, wood carvers, fine metal workers, vintners, cheesemakers, barbers, dentists and surgeons.[32] Some were part time tailors — normally using imported fabrics — weavers or

cabinetmakers, or any multiple combination of those specialties. In fact, the great many product and labor specialties for which the local economy had some need but not enough demand to warrant the presence of a resident craftsman were supplied by the local retail merchants. Many were skilled bookkeepers and some worked as professional accountants and as scribes. Some went so far as to provide teaching and legal services. Most of the work done by these merchants was associated directly with their trading practices; for example, it was necessary to be able to repair the rifle one made or sold.[33]

The qualities required of a merchant in this setting were chiefly those of intelligence, above-average literacy, manual dexterity and versatility. In order to be a successful retailer in the close, small economy of the rural town, the merchant had to supplement his trade by filling the skilled and semi-skilled gaps in the local labor economy. Often those merchants who could or who chose, farmed for themselves or did occasional farm work for others. Most acquired land as they established themselves in the community. A great many merchants were not trained in youth to be traders. Many were enterprising local men who, though talented, had not learned an apprenticed trade. Others were landless men who had perhaps been formally trained in a craft but had found insufficient work in it to fully support themselves and had turned to performing a variety of skilled services and had gradually added retailing to their enterprises.[34] In provincial rural Massachusetts, the sons of merchants normally learned a trade,

inherited some land and chose dual artisanship and farming as a means of livelihood. But many remained in their fathers' businesses — often one of several sons would be groomed for the merchant's life — sometimes expanding where and whenever possible, and occasionally branching out into milling or some other service activity.[35] The economics of the agricultural towns, as constant and continuous as they were, nevertheless demanded and encouraged versatility from its workers and their enterprises. There were exceptions, of course, and some of them have been noted. The merchant stands as a rare case of specialization in this society; but it was a specialization made up of many smaller specialties.

NOTES

CHAPTER V

[1]Jackson Turner Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), pp. 21-24; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls," Vol. 130, "Valuations of Towns." The number of full-time specialists varied from town to town, of course. As few as 10% and as many as 40% of workers would devote themselves to a single labor activity, and those numbers were determined by factors such as size and location of towns, land availability and type, and access to raw material sources. On resource industries and local manufacturing, see V.S. Clark, History of Manufactures in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1916), pp. 73-122. Also, see Chapter 4, notes 11, 13, 14, in this paper.

[2]There were exceptions but not a great many. For full-time professionals, see MHS MSS, "Robert Treat Paine Papers," Vol. 1. For landless laborers, see Baker MSS, "Cockerel Reeves Account Book."

[3]On the matter of vocational choice, see MHS Proceedings 1 (1884-5), pp. 148-63 and MHS Proceedings 14 (1900-1), pp. 13-34; Main Social Structure, pp. 164-196. For striking examples of conscious specialization and economic motive, see MHS MSS, "Diary of John Marshall, 1688-1711," (a mason) and "Joseph Andrews Journals" (a farmer); Baker MSS 446 P 361, "Pearson Family Account Books, 1684-1799." The latter was a family who for four generations operated mills, woodlots, kilns and wool-fulling and weaving facilities.

[4]R.B. Morris, Government and Labor in Early America (New York: 1946); Mary Roys Baker, "Anglo-Massachusetts Trade Union Roots, 1130-1790," Labor History 14 (1973), pp. 352-396. Both discuss labor "pluralism" and "collectivism" but neither sees it as an especially important feature of pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts.

[5]David J. Saposs, in J.R. Commons et al., The History of American Labor, Vol. 1 (New York: 1918), pp. 25-168.

[6]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 1, "Agriculture," Vols. 17-19, "Estates," Vols. 40-44, "Judicial," Vols. 45-46, "Lands," Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns," Vols. 244-54, "Accounts." These volumes, containing between them thousands of pages of various agricultural data, afford a comprehensive source of land use, proximity of family farm units, inheritance and lease transactions and alternate occupational activity.

[7] Ibid., MHS, "Thwing Catalogue" contains a detailed and comprehensive genealogical summary of the Suffolk County Deeds and Probate Court records for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

[8] "Joseph Andrews Journals" gives rich detail of these activities over a forty-year period, approximately 1731-1777. Also, see Robert Walcott, "Husbandry in Colonial New England," NEQ 9 (1936), pp. 218-252; Anon., American Husbandry (London: 1775); Metcalf Bowler, Treatise on Agriculture and Practical Husbandry (Providence, R.I.: 1786).

[9] P.W. Bidwell and John Falconer, Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington: 1925), pp. 40-48, 132-142.

[10] Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 115, 126; Main, Social Structure, pp. 105-6. MHS MSS, "Roxbury Valuations, 1727." Also, see Chapter 2, Notes 33, 34 in this paper.

[11] Appendix IV; "Joseph Andrews Journals"; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, p. 135.

[12] Ibid.; "Roxbury Valuations." Of the relatively few "gentlemen farmers," the best example of their social and economic habits can be seen in "Captain Henry Dow Diary" cited in H.M. Forbes, compiler, New England Diaries (Topsfield, Mass.: 1923), esp. p. 84.

[13] M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuations."

[14] For Virginia plantations, see Gerald Mullin, Flight and Rebellion (New York: 1972); For West Indies, see Philip Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade (New York: 1969); See also "Joseph Andrews Journals"; M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 40-44, "Judicial" on work agreements, contracts and produce circulation. These references deal mostly with breaches of agreements and with inappropriate barter values.

[15] Baker MSS, "Nathanial Chamberlin Account Book"; MHS MSS, "John Marshall Diary." Chamberlin, a blacksmith-farmer who derived about 50% of his income from his craft, usually received about 20% of his total income in cash and Bills of Credit payments. Marshall, a full time rural mason, received over 50% of his payments in cash and bills.

[16]"John Marshall Diary." For the incidence of rural construction workers coming into Boston to work, see BCR, Vols. 8-17, indexes under "Trade, Condition Of," and "Tradesmen." For example, see Vol. 14, pp. 238-40. On the frequency of full time shoemakers, smiths and textile workers in more heavily populated regions such as eastern Essex county, see Bruno Foreman, "Salem Tradesmen and Craftsmen, c. 1762," EIHC 107 (1971), pp. 62-82, and H.W. Belknap, Trades and Tradesmen of Essex County (Salem: 1929).

[17]"John Marshall Diary." On the distribution of full-time artisans, see Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 130-131. For examples of some very small towns containing no full time artisans, see M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns."

[18]"John Marshall Diary" contains many poignant examples of the sacrifices of commuting and of the extended absences from home of the rural construction artisan. Marshall was very active in local politics and socio-religious affairs. For other examples see Baker MSS, "Pearson Family Accounts" especially Vol. 2. Some Observations Relating to Massachusetts (no author) (Boston: 1750) makes occasional reference to the political activities of rural artisans. A sample of 100 men and their occupational titles was taken from MHS "Thwing Catalogue" and compared with the same names in W.H. Whitmore, Massachusetts Civil List . . . 1630-1774 (Albany: 1870) and with officials in the town records of Braintree, Concord, Dedham and Watertown (at MHS).

[19]"John Marshall Diary" and the related comments in MHS Proceedings 1 (1884-5), pp. 148-163. On Boston artisans, see Chapter VI ff. in this paper.

[20]Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 73-86, 159-193.

[21]M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 112-118, "Towns"; Appendix I; "Pearson Family Accounts," Vol. 1.

[22]Baker MSS, "Pyam Cushing Labor Accounts, 1739-1777"; "Bayes Manchester Account Books." On private and public Bills of Credit see Jacob Felt, An Historical Account of Massachusetts Currency (Boston: 1839).

[23]MHS MSS, "John Metcalf Commonplace Book, 1730-1790." Baker MSS "Jacob Nash Account Books, 1705-10," "Pearson Family Accounts."

[24]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 40, p. 757 ff cites many examples. Baker, MSS, "Nathanial Chamberlin Accounts"; "Pearson Family Accounts"; "William Barlett Accounts"; "John Reed"; Jacob Adams Accounts."

[25]"Pearson Family Accounts." M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 59, "Manufactures."

[26]Ibid., Saposs, History of Labor, pp. 25-77.

[27]Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 87-122, 159-64, 207. Some short-term monopolies for resource extraction and manufacturing were granted by government authority but these usually were intended to encourage local activity were none existed and were not used to suppress existing enterprises. See M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 59, "Manufactures" and Mass. Bay Recs., Vol. 4, and Acts and Resolves, Vols. 1-5 and Appendices, all in index references. Occasionally a single milling operation did come to dominate a local area, see "Pearson Family Accounts," but the distribution of mills and forges remained wide and their numbers high and their scale small. See M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130, "Valuations." On the distribution and location of mills, see Table III. Over 60% of the province's bloomeries (and iron ore deposits) were in Plymouth and Barnstable counties, see Appendix IV.

[28]On technology, see Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 164-80.

[29]Baker MSS Account Books, "Jacob Adams," "John Baker," "Nathaniel Chamberlin," "James Kingsley," "Pyam Cushing," "Bayes Manchester," "John Hayward," "Mathew Noble," "Pearson Family." Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth (New York: 1965), pp. 89-90.

[30]Charles Grant, Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent (New York: 1961), p. 11.

[31]On anti-Pedlar laws, see Acts and Resolves, Vol. 1, pp. 720-1, Vol. 2, pp. 47, 232, 385. Also see M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 44, "Judicial," especially p. 603. For the independent status of rural merchants, see Baker, MSS, "Bayes Manchester Account Book," "Pyam Cushing Accounts," "William Bartlett Accounts." Essex Institute MSS "William Thomas Accounts." For an example of the contractual links with Boston merchants, see Houghton Library MSS, "William Palfrey Legal and Financial Papers." Also, see the merchants catalogues at M. Arch. and MHS.

[32]"Pyam Cushing Accounts," "William Thomas Accounts."

[33]Ibid. Cushing was an accomplished "scribbler," gunsmith, clock-maker and cheese-maker, and he "pulled teeth" frequently. Thomas was a part time schoolteacher and made marketable furniture as well as retailing imported goods. Twice in his life he abandoned merchandising to farm but in each case he retained some storekeeping accounts.

[34]Saposs, History of Labor, pp. 25-168.

[35]"Pearson Family Accounts."

CHAPTER VI

THE COMMERCIAL SETTING AND THE BOSTON ARTISAN

> All trades have fallen into their ranks and places, to their great advantage; . . . carpenters, joiners, glaziers, painters, follow their trades only; gunsmiths, locksmiths, blacksmiths, nailers, cutters, have left the husbandman to follow the plow and cart, and they their trades; weavers, brewers, bakers, coster-mongers, felt makers, braziers, pewterers and tinkers, ropemakers, masons, lime, brick and tile makers, cardmakers . . . turners, pumpmakers, wheelers, glovers, fellmongers, furriers are orderly turned to their trades, besides divers sorts of shopkeepers and some who have a mystery beyond others, as have the vintners.[1]

Thus did Edward Johnson describe the workers of Boston of 1647, a mere seventeen years after the founding of the town. While he admired the orderliness of the Boston labor economy, Johnson did not disdain the agrarian society of the majority of Massachusetts workers. His enthusiasm was for a balanced economy of commerce and agriculture and like many contemporaries he saw great social and economic advantage in Boston's commercial and industrial organization and activity. Eventually, Johnson hoped, towns like Boston would dot the otherwise agrarian Massachusetts landscape and the Puritan ideal of landed self-sufficiency would be supported by local commercial and industrial economies. One hundred years after Johnson's observations, Boston remained the province's only purely commercial centre because the orderly separations of farming and industrial work that Johnson had foreseen for rural Massachusetts, had not occurred; there, the non-

agricultural economy was integrated with the farm economy and most workers took part in both agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. But if Boston had evolved as an exception to the rest of the provincial labor economy, it was an important exception. Its special qualities add a great deal to the complete picture of provincial labor.

The chief distinguishing feature of work in Boston — in contrast to work in the rural towns — was that it had been narrowed to full-time labor specialties. The Boston worker did not apply his labor in a variable manner, by occupation and season, as did the rural worker. Labor in Boston was organized on a wage and cash basis; barter was little used. The relationship of the Boston worker to his community was highlighted by that factor, and the means, conduct and purposes of his labor reflected the particular social conditions which arose from participation in a commercial economy. Just as in rural towns work was a basic underpinning of local social arrangements, so too, in Boston, did it define the urban social structure. Although work patterns and hence, economic and social circumstances were different in the two settings, workers in both economies aspired to comparable goals of improvement and security. While such goals took different forms in the two settings, they were attainable in each.

In 1750 Boston was a crowded commercial town of about eight square miles and contained nearly 16,000 inhabitants, including some 3,000 adult male workers who lived in fewer than 2,000 dwellings. The town was ringed by over 200,000 linear feet of wharfage and was

the site for over twenty slaughterhouses, thirty distilleries, thirty tanneries, about 200 warehouses and ten active shipbuilding yards. It was home port to over one hundred ocean-going cargo vessels and cleared nearly 1,000 dockings and departures annually. Another component of this dense landscape was the presence of nearly 300 "shops" and "workhouses." [2]

Edward Johnson's phrase, "all trades have fallen into their places," depicted the degree of labor specialization which best suited the commercial needs of Boston. Furthermore, the working population of Boston, in Johnson's time and throughout the provincial period, was not only a specialized body but was highly skilled as well. Although detailed employment data do not exist for Boston before 1790, the figures from 1790 are partly confirmed by scattered muster roll information from 1756, and can be used as a rough guide to the extent of artisanship in the Boston population. Those employment figures show that over half of Boston's workers were shop, construction and service craftsmen. A further one-fifth to one-quarter were merchants — local, regional and international — and specialty retailers-artisans. Fewer than 20% of the town's working population were "unskilled" — "laborers," "mariners" or "servants" (Table VI).

In his description of Boston, Johnson added that coopers, tailors, tanners, shoemakers, brewers and bakers had by that time formed "corporations." That is, they had organized themselves into self-regulating crafts associations and had been granted certain monopoly privileges. Prices, product standards and distribution had been legally regulated by acts of the General Court and the Boston

TABLE VI

Boston Employment Statistics

1. 1790 Occupational Census (Total Adult Male Population - 2,860)

General Category	Number	Percent	Examples of Occupations
Artisans	1,271	44.44	building, cloth, food, metal, wood and misc. crafts
Tradesmen	474	16.57	retailers, traders, merchants
Professional	219	7.66	lawyers, ministers, teachers
Unskilled	188	6.58	laborers (157)
Service	183	6.40	barbers, taverners, truckmen
Mariners	117	4.09	includes mates, sailors
Full-time Government	67	2.35	government and law officers
Clerical	66	2.31	bookkeepers, scribes
Total Employed	2,585	90.40	
Others	295	9.60	

Gentlemen, 23 (0.80%); Retired and Unemployed, 106 (3.70%); Servants (white), 63 (2.20%); Poor (no trade), 27 (0.94%); Poor (sick, lame), 28 (0.98%); Unemployed, 28 (0.98%).

Source: BCR, Vol. 10, pp. 171 ff.

2. Sample of occupations from 1756 Muster Rolls

Category	Number	Percent	Category	Number	Percent
Shipbuilding	36	12.58	Carpenter	26	9.09
(Caulker			Cooper	26	9.09
Ropemaker			Laborer	24	8.39
Shipwright			Mariner	18	6.29
Shipjoiner			Blacksmith	16	5.60
Sailmaker)			Baker	10	3.50
Cordwainer	32	10.48	Barber	8	2.80
Tailor	30	10.48	Weaver	8	2.80
Others	52	18.18			

Total number in sample, 286; number of occupations, 33.

Source: M. Arch, MSS, Vol. 94, pp. 167-557.

Town Meeting.[3] These crafts associations had not formed "guilds" based explicitly on English models because Massachusetts workers were already endowed with the particular political and economic privileges included in English guild status. Rather, they, as equal members of the community, had joined with government authority to ensure quality in product, protection for skilled specialists and regulation of qualified participation in those respective crafts. These criteria were seen as necessary mechanisms for the social and economic stability of Massachusetts. Fixed wages, prices, and regulation of work, trade and product quality were central to the General Court's concern and its chartered mandate for orderly settlement, social conformity and control and the maintenance of economic stability. Artisans, skilled workers and trades entrepreneurs, as active or potentially equal political members of society were guaranteed freedom by the Charters of 1629 and 1691 to practice their vocations. The public of Massachusetts was to be protected against excessive prices, shoddy work, inferior product and disruptive, unregulated competition. Frequent, voluminous and strict labor-related ordinances, early in the Colony's history, resulted in conditions of regulated crafts specialization and wage and price controls for the workers of Boston.[4]

These laws, and the incentives for enacting and enforcing them, developed from conditions in the early history of Boston. Thereafter, the work standards demanded in the crafts credentials of Boston artisans were considered legal, authentic and beneficial in other coastal commercial towns, and were applied equally to the

rural interior of the Colony. The basis for wage and price assessment was the annually fixed value of foodstuffs, usually edible grain produced in the Colony — and was followed everywhere in Massachusetts.[5] But two points arising from Johnson's remarks underline the differences in the working conditions between Boston and the rural, agrarian communities. First, Johnson cited the existence of trades associations in Boston. Second, he noted the great numbers and varieties of artisans who followed "their trades only," to the exclusion of other vocational pursuits. Neither of these features was possible in rural Massachusetts. The absence of a "company" of brewers or tanners in say Concord, a town of about 1,200 inhabitants in 1750, or dozens of comparable farm communities was an obvious reflection of both the size of rural populations and their economic arrangements. Where Concord might contain six blacksmiths, Boston because of its size would possess upwards of forty. And whereas Concord had no pumpmakers, ropemakers or pewterers, Boston's commercial economy demanded several of each. Perhaps five of the six blacksmiths in agricultural Concord would not of course, practice "their trades only"; and the fluid, small-scale and personalized exchange of labor, services and goods in the farming town made crafts organizations inoperable. Boston's relative size, location and commercial economy gave it a special and unique labor quality, in contrast to the conditions that prevailed in rural communities. What Johnson had discovered and recorded in the middle of the seventeenth century remained true of Boston in the provincial

period. By 1750 Boston was one hundred and twenty years old and its social and economic character had been firmly established.

Boston's size and the nature of its economy, relative to the rest of the towns of Massachusetts, were determined shortly after the initial settlement of the Colony. The town was only briefly an agricultural community.[6] Thereafter it served as an exit port for raw materials and some of the colony's few manufactured articles; it was a port of entry for the steady flow of finished manufactured goods from England and elsewhere, and for a variety of other commodities. It was a political, judicial and business administration centre. During the entire pre-Revolutionary period, Boston accounted for approximately 10% of the Massachusetts population, achieving a maximum of about 15% in 1650 and again in 1720, during periods of economic expansion in the town, and declining to a low of less than 8% in the 1760s. Throughout the provincial period its population was roughly ten times that of the average rural community.[7]

Size alone accounted for much of Boston's special labor characteristics. The town attracted and sustained full-time workers of a great variety of skills and occupations to serve a large resident non-agricultural population. Food, clothing, shelter and other vital domestic day-to-day necessities could not be produced locally as they were in the village-farm labor economy of agricultural society. Therefore, in Boston, bakers, butchers, weavers, tailors, carpenters, brewers, retailers and others were engaged the year around in providing those goods and services which individual families provided

themselves, either in whole or in part, in the agricultural town. The absence of productive agricultural acreage meant that Boston inhabitants, of all types, had to buy food, and could not supply their own hides for their own leather or the flax and wool for their own spinning; nor did they have convenient access to timber and other construction materials. Agricultural produce for the Boston market was provided by individual rural suppliers who sold directly to Boston's commercial distributors. Those fundamental factors which created and sustained the system of labor and materials exchange and barter in rural Massachusetts, were missing in Boston. At the basic level of domestic subsistence, workers in Boston were required to buy finished goods from artisans and business craftsmen who themselves were responsible for the acquisition of purchased raw materials for their work.[8]

There were other basic differences in the work habits of men and their families in Boston and in rural towns. In the latter, the intimate scale of labor was further influenced by agricultural cycles so that rural workers' labor practices were partly determined by seasonal work rhythms. In Boston, climate, weather and seasons obviously had little effect on how a worker conducted his craft, labor or service, or how he managed his time. For example, the Boston tailor had no need to abandon his shop to sow, weed, mow or reap; conversely, he had no cause to pick up his craft as a means of livelihood in an "off-season." In Boston, occupations were usually

narrowed to one enterprise. No matter what his employment, the Boston worker, in contrast to the rural worker, was subject to less fluctuation of need and application, and his work life was more tuned to daily, projected and predictable habits. Demand for the services of the Boston artisan was tied to an economic activity that was more constant than that of the rural craftsman; the major influences on the work practices of Boston artisans were a large and fairly stable consumer market, the commercial economy and some competition from other tradesmen.[9]

Farming provided a common economic underpinning for all workers in rural Massachusetts. No such single base existed in Boston. Agriculture and its allied activities, were the central economic and vocational determinants of the local rural domestic labor economies. In Boston, the economic base was less monolithic. The fact that it was predominantly a mercantile-maritime economy did not mean that all workers were engaged directly in that enterprise. Transshipping and distribution were its mainstays. But associated with these modes were a number of important economic ancillaries. Boston contained extensive storage and distribution facilities such as wharves, docks and warehouses. This entailed a lively and substantial construction industry. As a significant Atlantic port, the town offered employment for a large skilled labor force who provided repairs and alterations to local and visiting shipping. The range of other industries related to merchant shipping was broad and varied. Coopering and container manufacture was a notable enter-

prise, as were packing and cartage. Indeed, at the middle of the eighteenth century as many as fifty ships were tied up to Boston's wharves at any time. Over two hundred cargo vessels with a combined weight of over twenty thousand net tons were registered in the province and over half of these were Boston based.[10] Shipping and its sister enterprises constituted a central, continuous and profitable economic foundation for Boston's existence. That same foundation attracted and held a large population which was dependent upon it as both a source of livelihood and a means to social and economic security and improvement. Farming served to bind the workers and families of rural Massachusetts to the rural town economies and offered long term stability. By comparison, the mercantile economy of Boston provided the means for the similar motives of that town's workers and their families.

In that light, Johnson's outline of work specialization becomes clearer. The merchants who controlled the economy of Boston sat atop a labor system which fashioned itself to accomplish the effective business of mercantile commerce. Two factors came together to define that labor system: a locus of business activity which was firmly rooted, and expansive, and a population which was permanent and well tuned to the conduct of mercantile enterprise. In the provincial period, Boston contained between 100 and 200 wharves and warehouses (the terms were sometimes interchangeable) and a male working population that was 1,500 in 1690 and over 3,500

in the mid to late 1730s.[11] The warehousing economy alone employed as much as 10% of Boston's labor as clerks, shoremen, boatmen, coopers and carters. It provided steady, full time work for carpenters, masons and blacksmiths who built, enlarged, maintained and improved the facilities of trade. With an established economic core that offered employment for a large permanent work population, a series of necessary, but dependent, sub-economies flourished. In the service sector, tailors, barbers, wig-makers, potters and furniture makers found fixed employments and the provision trades, baking, brewing and butchering were drawn into the general economy. As these trades became entrenched in the town, the construction crafts expanded and took a key role to meet the domestic requirements of the large residential population and substantial numbers of house carpenters, masons, bricklayers, glaziers and joiners were attached to the town's labor economy.

The population of Boston grew up around a disciplined economic base. That economy was one principally of commerce and the workers of Boston had adapted themselves to its scale, requirements and opportunities. But while the scale and force of the town's mercantile economy were large enough to pervade virtually all aspects of economic life in the community, that economy did not occupy large numbers of workers in any <u>single</u> common work activity under the aegis of one dominant industry. Commerce created a network of related businesses and a demand for relatively small numbers of skilled workers in any one of a wide range of enterprises. In this setting, specialization

by individuals and small groups was the outstanding quality of labour.[12]

Commerce was a major economic influence on the Boston worker but it was by no means the only outlet for his labor. While manufacturing did not reach the size of the trade economy, nevertheless it did exert a striking influence on the overall labor pattern of the town. Shipbuilding, rum distilling and sugar baking, and leather-work manufacture were old and important Boston industries. It has been noted that the relatively small size of the Massachusetts population and the peculiar form of the local subsistence economies permitted only a small and irregular market for provincially manufactured products; and no practical means for centralized, orderly production, distribution and sale existed or was feasible. What the province did manufacture centrally and in quantity was mainly for export. It possessed the raw materials for shipbuilding and leather manufacture and the molasses obtained in the West Indian carrying trade provided the stock for rum and sugar cake. At peak production, ship construction was an extremely valuable source of employment and focus of capital investment. In exceptional years as much as 10,000 tons of shipping was produced in Boston, for clients everywhere in the British Empire. But those were extraordinary, if not rare tonnages and were conditional on Imperial boom and impetus.[13] Otherwise, the construction of vessels, of all sizes and classes, was the main business function of perhaps ten entrepreneurs who between them averaged 2,000 to 4,000 tons of new shipping annually. That this enterprise would employ some 200 men directly, for all or part of

the year, was of great importance to the artisans who depended on steady employment. Equally notable as a measure of the extent of specialization in Boston, is the fact that this manufacture involved up to thirty separate crafts and skills, workers and suppliers.[14]

The building of a single vessel of one-hundred tons took six months or more and required the services of a diversity of crafts specialists. In this area of manufacture there was a clear definition of skilled crafts. A ship carpenter was distinguished from a house carpenter and a ship joiner from a house joiner or shop joiner. Shipbuilding, perhaps more than any other manufacture or business, illustrates the degree of craft specialization in Boston and underlines one of the fundamental differences between skilled work in Boston and in the rural town. Within the categories of the ship wood-trades there were many subdivisions: turners and block-makers were sub-specialties of carpentry and carvers were specialized joiners. Caulkers, riggers and painters were among other principal specialists in ship construction. The industry required many ready-made components, and ropemakers, sailmakers and chandlers operated workshops as direct suppliers to riggers and fitters. The blacksmiths who made and attached the metal fixtures for ships were also specialists who narrowed their skills beyond general blacksmithing. Ships were fitted with a wide assortment of unique and precise parts and accessories and many blacksmiths concentrated on perfecting certain kinds of metalwork and specialized in making railing, or brackets or spikes. All these refinements of the craft required special aptitude, training

and experience and the existence of a fixed enterprise such as shipbuilding encouraged the refinement of skills among artisans and created a spontaneous demand for a body of full-time specialists and sub-specialists. Shipbuilding also maintained a small army of local suppliers of wood, pitch, nails, barrels, glass, metal, paint and a host of other raw, bulk and finished materials. Thus a sub-industry of other specialized workers was attached to shipbuilding.[16]

Next to shipbuilding, leather and leather goods manufacturing was another important source of employment. In 1750, Boston afforded full-time work for over thirty butchers and these men, who themselves employed some unskilled labor, served two related purposes. Primarily, they slaughtered cattle to provide meat for the local population and for ships' supplies and some export for the maritime trade; and they furnished hides for the town's leather industries.[17] Hides and some partly finished leather were supplied to Boston from outside the town, from the rural surpluses, but the main source of raw material supply for Boston's leather workers was the town's butchers. Some two-thirds of the hides used in Boston were from beef cattle brought into the town, sold privately or at market and slaughtered by Boston's butchers; the remaining one-third was delivered from the countryside as raw or partly treated or tanned hides.[18] Demand for leather goods in Boston and for export created a flourishing industry. Several thousand hides a year were curried, tanned, dressed and processed in Boston. And although the various stages of leather work were practiced by distinct trades, some Boston tanneries integrated the entire

leather refining process into a single linear system involving permanent work forces of up to twenty men. For example, the largest leather tanning and manufacturing shop in provincial Boston was that of Joseph Belknap who had begun his own career as a contracting leather dresser in a commercial tannery. By the 1750s, Belknap was operating a complete tannery-manufactory which produced everything from marketed tanned leather to gloves, harnesses, breeches, coats, saddles and even some shoes. He sold tanned shoe leather to local individual shoemakers and exported bulk leather to other colonies. But while Belknap's business engaged over twenty men in its operation, at various times, he was not really an "employer." He provided space, facilities, materials and markets for an assortment of specialized independent craftsmen. The only "wages" he paid were to some semi-skilled "handlers" he employed. The artisans in his operation were contracted to work at their own specialties, on a "piece-work" basis for specific quantities or periods of time, while they accumulated capital and developed retail contacts to establish their own small tanneries or production shops.[19]

Outer work clothing, saddles and harnesses, boots, shoes and gloves were the major items produced by Boston's leather industry. It is difficult to estimate what proportion of these products was used domestically, in Boston and the province, and how much was exported. But Boston's glovers and shoemakers did supply stock for shipment to other mainland American colonies and to the West Indies

and probably marketed more in those places than they did in rural Massachusetts, where local craftsmen satisfied most of the local demands. Gloves were a possible exception; most rural leatherworkers did not appear to be interested in glovemaking. But the export rule applied to footwear and the overseas market, which took 9,000 pairs of shoes annually in the 1750s, was as important as the Boston market. Dressed or tanned hides were the main leather commodity shipped from Boston to the Empire. Leather work was a consistent and perennial enterprise in provincial Boston and occupied a significant minority of the working population.[20] It was organized and patterned by sub-processes into a phased method of manufacture, so that dressers, tanners and curers each conducted their stages of the process independently. In that way, as a fixed economic activity and subdivided by craft, it was operated and controlled by many, separate full-time specialists. It was, therefore, not so much a single industry as a composite of several industries in many independent hands.[21] The significance of this arrangement was that individual workers, and not merchants or investors, determined the methods of leather manufacturing in Boston. Even though he was producing largely for an impersonal market, the leather worker, like the rural artisan, retained a great deal of control over the disposal of his labor.

The third major export manufacturing sector in Boston was distilling, and in its own way was more closely related to the town's mercantile economy than were either shipbuilding or leather production.

Merchants in the town controlled the supply and ownership of molassses. They were also key factors in the export and sale of rum. And many of the community's stills and sugar-baking shops were owned by trading merchants. Nevertheless because rum was popular and commercially profitable, and was difficult to make on a domestic scale, distilling was a buoyant manufacturing enterprise for many artisans in provincial Boston. As many as forty still houses operated in the town in some years, and throughout the provincial period, especially after 1710, an average of thirty stills produced rum.[22] An ordinary eighteenth century commercial distillery, including cask-filling and storage, could be operated by two or three skilled men. While many stills were owned by merchants who contracted master distillers, many of the latter did progress to obtain their own facilities. But if the many stills of Boston did function as one, two or three man operations, their collective presence provided steady work for another large number of related skilled specialists.[23]

Coopers were indispensible to rum production and storage and shipment; a corps of these tradesmen were permanently attached to the distilling industry. Specialist coopers made, maintained and repaired the vats and vessels of the stills while others manufactured the casks, barrels and hogsheads required for storage and transportation. As distilling was closely allied to Boston's role as a commercial port, coopers represented a direct link between the town's manufacturing sector and its mercantile economy. The cooper was popular throughout the economy of provincial Boston. The storage

and shipping technology of the age made his special skills crucial to both manufacturing and the export of raw and finished goods. The distiller was helpless without the cooper and each ship built in Boston was fitted with storage barrels built and installed by local coopers. Boston merchants shipped rum, salt, meat and flour in locally made barrels and each ship carried its food and water supplies in casks and barrels fashioned by Boston coopers. The merchants also traded in new, empty barrels and in the component parts of barrels: hoops, staves and tops, all the produce of coopers.[24] In view of their widespread influence and their importance to the local economy, and the consequent necessity for high and consistent standards, coopers were among the most closely regulated — in terms of product quality — of Boston's artisans, along with bakers and leather workers. But they were also the best organized, in terms of cooperation to secure raw materials and in self-regulated control of the numbers of coopers, relative to demand. Yet in the midst of their collectivism and mutual protectionism, coopers remained supremely independent. Few of them collaborated in partnerships or small companies in order to exploit the market by monopoly or systematic volume production. The typical cooperage in Boston was a one-man shop replete with the tools and facilities for cutting, shaping, bending and treating wood and fabricating complete barrels and other containers. There was no distinction, or sub-specialization, between "dry" and "wet" cooperage.[25]

Shipbuilding, leather production and distilling were sustained by a concentrated local market and a fairly constant export demand. They had developed into permanent features of the economy of provincial Boston and, like maritime trade, were of sufficient scale and persistence to promote the presence of large numbers of artisans of diverse talents, skills and functions. Moreover, the durability of these economic enterprises ensured that perceived economic and vocational conditions were transmitted from one generation of workers to the next. Thus, Boston was not merely an economic and vocational variation of the social conditions of rural Massachusetts. Its industrial and commercial economy had shaped a set of work patterns that differed radically from those of rural Massachusetts; the absence of a personal subsistence base such as the family farm was a principal cause of labor specialization in Boston. But the full-time prosecution of their crafts were as meaningful to the workers of Boston as were the mixed occupational characteristics of the rural tradition to the subsistence farmer. Both sets of labor activities shared a common value: their respective exponents considered them as being permanent and transferrable to others.

The commercial enterprises of Boston were complete processes, from the treatment of raw materials to the fashioning of a finished product. Certainly economic fluctuation did affect the level of productive manufacture and the amount of trade from year to year and from decade to decade, but Boston's principal employment enterprises retained their permanent qualities. When the town's growth ceased

after 1740 and did not resume until after 1780, its economic base stabilized rather than expanded and the established employment bases remained highly active and did not decline to the end of the provincial period. The fundamental nature of work in the town and the character and style of the town's artisans were not affected by the stabilization of the town's size. The scale and varieties of Boston's industries were such that the Boston artisan was required to exercise his craft in a full-time occupation; it was usually necessary for him to develop and practice a further specialization.[26]

Provincial Boston's economy was not monolithic, but its component enterprises were closely linked. The industries outlined above can not be seen as wholly distinct and unrelated branches of the town's economy. For a start, the capital for the prosecution of Boston's manufacturing and mercantile industries came largely from the resident merchant community. These merchants, businessmen, agents and investors also controlled the means for the distribution of the exported product of Boston's commerce. Trading merchants often owned ship yards or stills or tan yards and sometimes served as independent or representative buyers of new ships, stocks of rum or timber or leather. As the majority of ships built in Massachusetts were for export to registry elsewhere, the Boston merchants, with their business skills and their money or credit contacts, were vital in the provision and procurement of construction contracts and scales. Even the manufacturing economy of Boston, though it did function as an autonomous industrial sector, and was comprised of many discrete industries and practitioners, was thoroughly

connected, if not auxilliary to the mercantile economy of the town.

The workers of Boston were woven into a broad-based economy. The artisans who built the ships, made the run, or produced leather goods or wood products were dependent upon the local merchants' market connections and capital. There were other overlaps in the work patterns. The several hundred seamen who manned Boston-registered trading vessels were home for part of each year or in alternate years, between voyages and contracts. When ashore these sailore engaged in sedentary occupations. They helped in the marginal, unskilled work associated with shipbuilding and the tanneries, warehouses, workshops, docks and public works of the town. A further example of this was the carters. Normally, carters provided overland transportation for the materials of the mercantile economy, that is, the trucking involved in maritime trade, the carriage of export goods into Boston's wharves and the imported items within and beyond the town. Often, when wharf demand was sluggish, they also served the manufacturing sector with their skills, equipment, connections and time. In these ways, the town's various labor and economic activities were connected and shared. Money that was made in trade was often invested in local manufacturing and material supply, thereby creating a need for local artisans who were in turn supported by an elastic labor and service work population.[27]

Trade and commerce had helped fund and stimulate some local manufacture and together had formed an enduring economic foundation for Boston. The combined mercantile-manufacturing economy and the population

it supported generated a considerable domestic and service economy. It is not possible to determine accurately the relative numbers of artisans involved in either the mercantile and export manufacturing economy or the local market economy. But it is likely that a majority of Boston's artisans were attached to the purely local economy which supplied the goods, services and construction for the resident population.[28] The level of organized utility of skills and specialities that was present in manufacturing was replicated in localized services. These services were provided by artisans who furnished Boston's household, civic and wholly local, commercial work and supplied commodities to the local market. They were, in many cases, men of similar trades backgrounds to those in manufacturing and export-related work. In the high-volume crafts of metal, wood and leather work, the domestic artisan could support a full-time specialization. For example, the carpenter who worked in the shipbuilding industry usually did little or no house carpentry and left that field open to the house construction specialist. Similarly, a blacksmith who made and installed ship fixtures normally did not shoe horses or make and repair household implements. Some shoemakers concentrated their efforts on pre-manufacture for export while others were employed entirely in local custom work.

That form of crafts specialization represented only one marked division of trades work. There were, in Boston, large numbers of artisans whose specialities were primarily suited to the domestic economy. Home baking was a limited venture in the small, crowded

houses and apartments of Boston's workers, and commercial baking, unknown in rural Massachusetts, was a substantial Boston enterprise. The physical limitations of the Boston tenement kitchen were compounded by the difficulty in obtaining fuel and flour. Although there were public granaries in Boston, the town's commercial bakers had primary access to the town's grain and flour supplies. They baked the biscuits for the local merchant fleet and combined this activity with the lucrative domestic market for bread. Commercial baking had existed in Boston from the mid-seventeenth century and had grown to replace a good deal of the home baking in the town. But it did not represent a hardship or restriction of self-sufficienty on the local population. The cessation of widespread home baking in the town was roughly coincidental with Boston's shift from mixed agriculture and commerce to an absolutely non-agricultural economy. The process was hurried by the high cost and irregular availability of fuel. By the middle of the provincial period, the practice of buying bread was a matter of long established formality for Boston's workers.[29]

Baking serves as an example of the commercialization of many household labor economies. Brewing, weaving, soap, candle and clothes-making were among domestic enterprises that were gone from many of Boston's homes long before the end of the seventeenth century, while they remained mainstays of the rural household throughout the provincial period.[30] There were obvious material and logistical reasons for this, of course. In 1740, some 5,000 persons were crowded into an area of north-end Boston that measured less than one square mile. The average

population density of the towns of eastern Massachusetts at this time was less than twenty-five per square mile. There were fewer than thirty milk cows in north-end Boston's four wards and only a scattering of small garden plots. Material self-sufficiency was a natural condition of subsistence farming and was illustrated by the fact that rural towns of only 1,000 residents contained an average of five mills — of assorted types — where local inhabitants had their own materials processed for their own uses. In Boston, in the late provincial period, there were only eight mills — four of them saw mills — to serve the town. Normally, Boston householders did not have access to raw materials but even if they did have some stock, there were no local processing facilities, such as grist or saw mills, for them to use. Therefore, in Boston, raw materials were purchased in wholesale quantities by the town's retail craftsmen, suppliers and manufacturers, from rural surpluses, and converted into finished items and sold to local consumers. Quite simply, the materials — such as grains, hides, wool and lumber — required for the production of basic home utilities, and the space to conduct manufacture, were not readily available to many Boston workers. Living quarters were smaller and much more crowded than those in rural dwellings; tenement houses in north-end Boston contained slightly over ten people on the average, while the usual population of the larger eastern rural Massachusetts house was less than 7.6.[31] Even if materials were acquired, by trade or purchase in Boston, there was a further disincentive to produce goods for personal

home consumption because of the official controls that kept prices stable and supplies regular. This was an accepted condition of life in Boston and the abdication by many Bostonians, of ordinary pre-industrial household manufacturing resulted from a combination of difficulty in household production and ease of retail purchase. It also marked a further distinction in the organization of work and the nature of market practices between the rural and the Boston communities.

The independent worker in provincial Boston did not see, and was not forced to accept, the disappearance of domestic self-sufficiency in the face of sudden or encroaching commercial marketing and urban crowding. This condition had been part of the Boston social, economic and work environment for generations.[32] A significant household labor practice which did endure in general, in Boston, was home spinning. But even here, the yarns produced at home by wives and daughters were made from purchased or contracted flax and wool and were not always used to provide fabrics for home-made personal clothing; normally, they were sold to commercial weavers or tailors to supplement the family income.[33]

The labor economy of Boston was a wage exchange economy. A parallel development of trades and occupational specialization in the non-agrarian setting was the absence of the barter medium of labor and commodity exchange. Money and bills of credit replaced the latter. There was some peripheral bartering in Boston, and, when convenient, workers exchanged labor, respective skilled services, or items of their own produce or possession. But such exchanges were limited by

the fact that most artisans in Boston existed within the strict confines of their labor specialty. That specialty was directed to a specific vocational end and consumed the greatest portion of the worker's time and attention. There was no agriculture with which to produce negotiable staple materials and commodities for barter. There was, in short, very little chance and need for labor fluidity and little versatility. Because of this, labor and economic relationships and contacts were more impersonal than they were in the rural communities.[34]

To a large extent, the household staples for Boston were provided by a retail economy. The shops and workhouses of Boston were specialty operations and were occupied by bakers, brewers, shoemakers, joiners, furniture-makers, weavers, tailors, blacksmiths and many others who supplied the everyday material requirements of the population. These shops and workhouses included the more "industrial" establishments such as ropewalks (works), sail lofts, glass works, cooperages, tanneries and leather-work shops. They included strictly retail shops too, where local and imported merchandise was sold direct to consumers. There were clothing shops, taverns, victualers, bookshops, jewelry shops, household merchandise stores (selling candles, soap, bedding, kitchenware and pottery) and other retail outlets which sold prestocked goods to a dependent population.[35]

The town's public market supplied farm produce and permitted stalls to be set up by an assortment of "hucksters," small merchants and retailing artisans. The specialization that existed in the general

artisan population extended to these work and retail shops. Outside the public market, most of the tradesmen who did retail directly to the public, such as shoemakers and clothiers, combined their operations in one location. And among the scores of blacksmiths, shoemakers, tailors and bakers who dealt with the local market, were some more exotic crafts: wigmakers, gold and silver smiths, watchmakers, gunsmiths, armorers, staymakers, locksmiths, japanners, wood carvers, saddlers, hatters, scribes, bookkeepers and vintners. Work that was done by part-time farmers in rural Massachusetts became the sole activity of a Boston artisan. The general store of the rural town became the specialty shop of a Boston retailer. As money and credit bills replaced barter in Boston, they became "commodities" in themselves and were used, not only as "capital mechanisms," but as alternatives to labor and staple exchange and barter. In these significant ways, self-sufficiency in Boston was measured in terms of successful specialization and the possession of capital, and not in labor flexibility and self-produced material subsistence. In Boston there were laborers who specialized in chimney-sweeping; blacksmiths who had refined their specialities to become toolmakers, or cutlers; joiners who made only furniture, or coaches or chairs; brickmakers who became potters, making dishes, cups and bowls; carpenters who made only shoe heels, or carts and wagons; masons who specialized in plastering or chimney work; and wheelwrights who made only spinning wheels or only cart wheels, or only mill wheels.[36]

Some tailors, shoemakers, coopers and joiners, among others, did "set work" for their own or another's retail stock or, like heel makers, made specialty parts for assembly elsewhere. Brick, nail, lath, heel and candle makers, sawyers, brewers, weavers and potters did more "set work" for an unknown, unseen clientele, then they did bespoke or direct custom work.[37] Moreover, among certain artisan groups there was evidence of another form of specialization, in contrast to rural Massachusetts. Tailors, shoemakers and leather finishers often narrowed their work to suit a specific economic or social class. Most tailors did make clothing for all classes; the prospering merchant could have an elaborate, fashionable and expensive suit of clothes made for him by a tailor who also made plain clothing for artisans or could furnish the merchant's slave, servant or apprentice with both work clothing and a "dress" suit of plain material and design. But some tailors made only expensive and decorative apparel, while others made clothing exclusively for workers and their families. Still others specialized in only women's or children's clothing. The same was true of shoemakers, glovers and hatters. Many of these artisans imitated English styles, designs and construction methods, often unsuccessfully, leaving many fashionable customers to import completed goods. Many tailors, for example, made a good livelihood from doing nothing more than importing fancy materials and accessories.[38]

Massachusetts did not produce the expensive and refined fibers and fabrics found in Europe, and when these fabrics were demanded by

Boston's merchants and social elites, they were imported along with the latest fashion designs. While the more affluent of Boston's society had access to brocades, ribbons, silks, finer cottons, linens and woolens, smooth felts and stylish buttons and clasps, the majority of the less prosperous inhabitants clothed themselves in coarse worsteds, linens, felts, kerseys and leather coats and breeches. The seventeenth century sumptuary laws, included in the general regulations pertaining to social rank and position and orderly control, survived into late eighteenth century Boston not simply as an economic distinction but also as a mechanism for crafts specialization.[39]

So far, two distinct, but interdependent, sectors of the Boston labor economy have been delineated: the mercantile and manufacturing enterprises that looked beyond Boston for economic sustenance and which generated capital and incomes which circulated through the town via the second sector — the local or domestic economies, most of which were retail in nature. In both cases, the artisans involved were specialized on two levels. In the first place, certain trades were required in one sector of activity and not in the other; and second, within various trades there were subdivisions of specialization. In all cases, workers exchanged their labor and produced goods for wages, fees or prices. But those same workers, when contracted, sub-contracted or hired to perform a task or produce an article, were responsible for their own tools and work places and for acquiring their own raw materials. Whether the end result of a worker's effort was a "part"

of a ship or a segment in a leather and leather goods manufacturing process, or whether, like shoemakers, tailors and cabinetmakers, he produced a complete and finished item, the artisan retained the full use and disposal of his skilled labor.[40]

Specialization did not erode the customary meaning of the contemporary term "craftsman." For example, the thirty or so various crafts required to manufacture a completed sea-ready cargo ship, were not simply thirty stages of a manufacturing process. The thirty artisans in question were also refining special qualities drawn from their wider crafts backgrounds and applying them separately and individually toward a coherent whole product.[41] These man could and did utilize other aspects of their crafts skills away from shipbuilding when opportunity, choice or necessity dictated. Therefore, a certain minor flexibility did occur among Boston's artisans. But it was more a variation of work location, employer or trades sub-specialty than one of outright vocational flexibility and versatility such as that practiced in the rural towns.[42] Apart from shipbuilding, there was no single labor-intensive industrial enterprise in provincial Boston and no set or permanent division of labor within any single work shop or manufactory. Indeed, the great majority of work shops were single-man operations. Specialization of skills and the full-time occupation of those skills did not entail long-term employment in one location or for one master craftsman or entrepreneur. Nor did it mean that the individual artisan surrendered his independent negotiating rights or his primary function in either labor transactions or work organization.[43]

For most of the provincial period, Boston was home to a large body of ships carpenters. Shipbuilding was a labor-intensive industry. But individual contractors built one ship at a time and dealt with independent contracting artisans singly or in small groups and only in terms of the work required on a single, specified vessel. Artisans moved from one contractor to another as particular work was completed or contracts expired. They turned their general trades skills to non-maritime work when shipbuilding declined or ceased or when there was a personal advantage in working elsewhere. James Russell, for example, was alternatively a "housewright" and a "shipwright." His specialty was in "hull work," but he was a competent "house builder" and "wharf builder." In the space of three years, between 1747 and 1750, Russell worked on four major ships and "framed" at least five "houses."[44] Similarly, the shoemaker who did shop work for a master shoemaker still made a complete pair of shoes and retained and improved his skills. He was free to negotiate the price of his labor and product and could move laterally or upward within his trade. He would have ample opportunity to produce independently, when the proper circumstances, his skill and his ambition coalesced. Seldom was the artisan obliged to remain with one employer or to limit himself to one activity. By devoting himself more or less full time to his craft, in contrast to the artisan in the rural town, and in many cases evolving a specialty from his craft, the Boston artisan fitted his vocational attributes to the special labor needs and practices of the Boston economy in a way that

would enhance his economic opportunities. By perfecting his skills and with careful application of his craft and labor, the Boston artisan remained independent.[45] If the substance and surroundings of his vocational world were markedly different from those of the rural artisan, he was no less a free man. Nor was his measure of security and economic stability less attainable than that of his rural counterpart. But the practical ends of his work were represented by distinctly differing material factors, and were achieved in the prosecution of his trade to its logical upward limit. Entrepreneurship, meaning the control, management and manipulation of labor, product and profit beyond a purely personal level, was the condition to which the Boston artisan aspired if he sought to establish his position in the community and secure a stable economic future for himself, his family and his successors.

NOTES

CHAPTER VI

[1]Edward Johnson, Wonder Working Providences of Scions Saviour in New England (1655), (edition, New York: 1910), Book 3, p. 209.

[2]Appendix III, i, ii; Boston Assessment Census of 1742, in BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, "Valuations of Counties, 1751"; MHS MSS, "Price's Map of Boston" 1739, 1769; Shattuck, Census. The Boston censuses of 1742, 1752 and 1765 cited by Shattuck are broken into wards and give numbers of dwellings. See also M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns," especially Vol. 130, pp. 92-147.

[3]R.B. Morris, Government and Labor in Early America (New York: 1946), pp. 35-71; Mary Roys Baker, "Anglo-Massachusetts Trade Union Roots, 1630-1790," Labor History 14 (1973), pp. 352-96; E.G. Nellis, "Labor and Community in Mass. Bay: 1630-1660," Labor History 18 (1977), pp. 525-44.

[4]Ibid.; Mass. Bay Recs., Vol. I, 74, 92, 326, 340; Jacob Felt, An Historical Account of Mass. Currency (Boston: 1839), Wage and Price Appendices.

[5]Mass. Bay Recs., Vol. I, 92, 340; V.S. Clark, History of Manufacture in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1916), pp. 31-73; W.B. Weedon, Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789 (New York: 1890), Vol. I; Morris, Government and Labor, Chapters 1-2; Baker, "Anglo-Massachusetts Trade Union Roots."

[6]Darrett B. Rutman, Winthrop's Boston, 1630-1649 (Chapel Hill: 1965); Johnson, Wonder Working Providence.

[7]G.B. Warden, Boston, 1689-1776 (Boston: 1970), pp. 102-25; Johnson, Wonder Working Providences; Appendix III; Shattuck, Census, contains an extensive resume of colonial population and demographic information for Boston.

[8]Weedon, Economic and Social History, Vol. 1; A.H. Cole, The American Wool Manufacture (New York: 1926), Vol. 1, p. 49, note.

[9]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-40, 280-82; Warden, Boston, pp. 15-34.

[10]Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes," Box 2; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 7; Lotte and Bernard Bailyn, Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714 (Cambridge: 1959). There were another 10,000 tons of fishing vessels in the province, M. Arch., Vol. 130.

[11]Shattuck, Census, pp. 2-6; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130, "Valuations of Towns," "Boston." BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369. "Adult male workers" and "polls" are the same thing.

[12]BCR, Vols. 7, 8, 11-17, 19-20, "Minutes of Town Meeting" and "Selectmen's Minutes," 1660-1768, indexes, especially under "Shipbuilding," "Still Houses," "Slaughter Houses," "Tan Yards," "Houses," "Wharves," etc. M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls," pp. 302, 324, 328, 333, 347, 401. Warden, Boston, pp. 15-34.

[13]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-40; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 7; Vol. 117, "Towns" ("Hallowell's Report"), pp. 60-68.

[14]Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes"; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 7, "Commercial"; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, 1694-5, 1695; February 11-17, 1759, "Wentworth Letters." Wentworth, a shipwright, gives excellent details on trades functions, numbers of workers, costs per ton, wages, and contract procedures. Also, see MHS MSS, "Robert Treat Paine Papers" for 1754 and 1757.

[15]MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, 1759, "Wentworth Letters"; M. Arch., Vol. 40, pp. 16-30; Vol. 43, pp. 130-136; Vol. 244, "Accounts," pp. 57-85.

[16]M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 60-66, "Maritime"; Vols. 244-254, "Accounts." See especially "Ropemakers," "Blockmakers," "Ship Carpenters," "Sawyers," "Sailmakers," "Coopers." BCR, Vols. 11-17 under "Shops" and "Workshops," and "Trades."

[17]BCR, Vol. 14, p. 221; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, "Petition," n.d. 1755; Boston Town Papers, Vol. 7, pp. 1-2.

[18]Ibid. The public market, at which must beef and hide were sold in the late provincial period, annually handled some 1,200 cattle and over 500 raw hides.

[19]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 220-222; MHS MSS, "Joseph Belknap Ledger 1748-1785," pp. 45-75.

[20]Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 99, 142, 167, 201, 209, 212. M. Arch., Vol. 40, pp. 256, 609; Vol. 44, pp. 329-30; Vol. 117, p. 60; Vol. 244, document 486, folio 321; Vol. 43, pp. 59-67.

[21]W.H. Whitmore, compiler, Colonial Laws . . . (Boston: 1889), pp. 88-90; "Joseph Belknap Ledger"; M. Arch., Vol. 117, p. 60 gives estimates on numbers of men involved in leather work and some figures on production of shoes, gloves, etc.

[22]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-40; M. Arch., Vol. 117, pp. 60-68.

[23]MHS. Misc. Bd. MSS contains many references to distilling economics and still operation. Most of the material in these volumes is of a personal, private type and reveals the high degree of professional competence and pride of these skilled business artisans. Unfortunately, these manuscripts are in unnumbered volumes, organized only by chronology, and are not indexed. The best single manuscript source for the building, stocking and operation of an eighteenth century Boston distillery is in MHS, MSS "Robert Treat Paine Papers" (1754). These accounts show the enormous building and material stock expense (about 3 to 4 times the annual income of a tradesman. There is some reference to the profit-sharing system used between Paine, the owner, and his contracted still operators.

[24]Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 31-122; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 59, "Manufactures"; Vol. 70, p. 567; Vol. 41, p. 35; Vol. 44, p. 74; Vol. 117, pp. 61, 66.

[25]BCR, Vols. 7-8, 11-17, 19-20. Indexed under "Coopers" and "Cooperage." On regulation see Colonial Laws, pp. 16-17.

[26]On growth, periodic fluctuation and temporary decline, and on the stabilization of the Boston economy after 1740, see Warden, Boston, and various reports and petitions in BCR, Vol. 14 and in M. Arch., Vol. 117 under "Boston." On worker specialization, see M. Arch. "Trades" catalogue. A sample of 200 artisans who were listed in Probate and Deeds records under broad crafts categories was taken from MHS "Thwing Catalogue" and compared to specialized work done by the same men listed in the genealogical indexes at M. Arch. and BCR.

[27]On sailors see Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes." On carters, M. Arch., Vol. 59. The various linkages in the Boston commercial economy are discussed in Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness . . . (New York: 1938) and Cities in Revolt . . . (New York: 1955) and Warden, Boston, pp. 15-126.

[28]M. Arch., Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls" indicates a 2-1 ratio in favor of workers involved in "local" economies over those in "export" related occupations.

[29]On bakers see BCR, Vols. 7-8, 11-17, 19-20 under "Bakers," "Baking," "Bread," "Grain"; M. Arch. Index file on "Bakers"; on the Boston Public Granary see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, pp. 229-30 especially. Baking, judging from the extraordinary amount of public attention it received, was the most closely regulated trade and retail activity in provincial Boston. See W.H. Whitmore, compiler, Colonial Laws . . . (Boston: 1889), p. 8; Mass. Bay Recs., Vols. 1-5, passim; Acts and Resolves, Vols. 1-5, passim.

[30]M. Arch., Vol. 59, "Manufactures."

[31]See above, note 2; and Warden, Boston, Chapters 2 and 7. See especially Appendix III. Ward populations are found in the Shattuck references in note 2 in this present chapter. For mills in Boston, and in most rural towns, see M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130, especially pp. 92-147.

[32]On the varying and various uses of cash, private and public bills of credit, see Felt, History of Mass. Currency; Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes"; A.H. Cole, American Wool Manufacture estimates that nearly all financial transactions which involved workers were conducted using "wages" and not barter or labor credit.

[33]W.R. Bagnall, The Textile Industries of the United States (Cambridge, Mass.: 1898), Chapters 1-2.

[34]"Joseph Belknap Ledgers" and "Robert Treat Paine Papers" list hundreds of examples of labor contracts and agreements. See especially the following artisan accounts at Baker MSS, "Hopestill Foster Ledger" (wood products); "Joseph Pico Daybook" (cooper, packer, warehousing); "John Parker Accounts" (potter); "Jacob Nash Accounts" (distiller); "Edward Marrett Accounts (tailor); "James Russell Receipt Book" (carpenter, house contractor).

[35]W.M. Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History (2nd ed. Cambridge: 1968); Justin Winsor, editor, The Memorial History of Boston, Including Suffolk County (Boston: 1881), Vols. 1-2; Annie Thwing, The Crooked and Narrow Streets of Boston (Boston: 1920); Anon. Some Considerations Against the Setting up of a Market (Boston: 1733) (copy at MHS).

[36]Ibid., and M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 59, "Manufactures." The latter reference shows the wide use of the term "huckster" in provincial Massachusetts.

[37]"V.S. Clark Notes," Box 6; M. Arch. MSS., Vol. 59, "Manufactures"; the amount of "set work" in relation to "bespoke" work among various Boston trades is further discussed in BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-40, "Petition to the General Court."

[38]Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes," Boxes 1 & 2; MSS 451 r 281, "Daniel Rea Daybooks and Ledgers, 1736-84," 3 Vols. (tailor); MSS 451 M 358, "Edward Marrett Daybooks and Invoices, 1750-80"; Houghton MSS, "Marrett Diaries."

[39]Ibid., and Colonial Laws, pp. 5-6.

[40]"V.S. Clark Notes," Box 1.

[41]MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, "Wentworth Letter" (1759).

[42]Boston Town Papers, Vol. 2, pp. 2-11; MHS, "Thwing Catalogue," and sample survey of trades credentials and work specialties cited here in note 26.

[43]"Joseph Belknap Ledgers." Belknap, a leather-works entrepreneur, operated a large operation of both primary leather treatment and leather goods manufacture. He regularly renegotiated contract terms with a fluid number of artisans who used his facilities and shared his organization and market.

[44]Baker MSS, "James Russell Receipt Books; 1747-1754"; for examples, see M. Arch., Vol. 44, pp. 16-30; Vol. 43, pp. 130-136.

[45]"V.S. Clark Notes," Boxes 1 and 2.

CHAPTER VII

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ARTISAN

The exploitation of his special skills and vocational independence was the Boston artisan's conventional method of gaining social and economic advancement. By developing a work specialty, he sought to further the demand for his services in the selective Boston economy; by exercising full contact with all facets of his craft and retaining a legitimate freedom to dispose of his time and labor, the artisan attempted to expand his income and advance his status. While it was true that all skilled workers in Boston operated as free individuals within the economy and were self-employed to the extent that they contracted specific terms of employment, service or production, there was nevertheless a hierarchy of contractors, sub-contractors, and employed craftsmen among the artisan population of Boston.[1]

There was no contemporary use of the word "entrepreneur" to describe a business function in the use of labor and product. But the terms "housewright" and "master builder," "house carpenter" and "carpenter" denoted distinctions of status and authority between several artisans of the same trade in the construction industry. In shipbuilding, the word "ship" replaced "house" to define a similar organization of relative superiority. To translate the practical

meanings of these work designations: the "housewright" was one who "built houses," the "house carpenter" was one who "worked on houses" and the "carpenter" was one, usually, who did preliminary carpentry of a general nature.[2] Unlike the format prevailing in the rural setting, where the simple term "carpenters" was used almost exclusively, and where contractors and sub-contractors regularly changed positions from time to time when more pressing domestic or agricultural issues arose, the system for the construction of buildings in Boston was conducted on a principle of fixed business and labor specialties. In Boston, in the construction of a house, the customer usually contracted the entire project, including such things as drainage systems and sidewalks, to a single man. The contractor in this case would be a housewright, a master craftsman who, over time, had acquired the skill, experience, reputation, capital or credit to undertake such projects and had elevated himself from independent artisan to entrepreneur. This man possessed the means and expertise to estimate a profitable cost, employ workers, organize the design and acquire materials and supervise construction. One of Boston's most successful "master builders" of the late provincial period was Thomas Gunter. He "built" the "Manufactory House" near Boston Common in 1753 under contract to the General Court and a consortium of local merchants. These businessmen shared their mercantile contacts with Gunter and ensured him a sufficient and regular supply of materials for the large project. Gunter, who had progressed from a sub-contracting general carpenter in the 1730s, to a building entrepreneur, had,

by the 1750s, acquired a good capital base of his own and excellent credit and material supply connections.[3]

When terms had been set between the housewright and the client — often part funds were advanced for material and labor — the contractor engaged from one to three "house carpenters," depending on the size, design and purpose of the structure and the amount of time allotted for its completion. These house carpenters were left to arrange for the supply of their own necessary materials and labor. They contracted with suppliers for the lumber, nails, and fixtures for which they were responsible. Then they employed skilled and unskilled help. The former were usually journeymen carpenters or masons who would be accompanied by apprentices. Wages were determined or negotiated between the house carpenter and other carpenters or masons and their helpers, and charged directly to the housewright-contractor. Throughout, the housewright was wholly in charge of arranging and directing the many and various tradesmen who took part in the project.[4] Principal among the other specialists were chimney and foundation masons, joiners, shinglers, glaziers, and braziers and blacksmiths for brass fixtures and fireplace metalwork. In each case, the individual artisan was responsible for his own skilled or unskilled labor assistance and for any materials which had not already been provided by the housewright.

There was some necessary diversity and flexibility of organization and work on these projects. Daily wages or specified piece-

work sections of the project were sometimes paid directly by the customer to the individual artisan, although the housewright normally did this and included adjustments for materials and extra labor. Among the workers, the mason was especially versatile and often a single mason laid the foundations, built the fireplace, chimneys and property-line walls and plastered and painted the interiors. The common carpenter often did the shingling and rough beamwork, clapboarding and flooring. Many of the laborers in house building had considerable experience and were given some specialized tasks such as measuring and cutting, to complement their otherwise wholly manual functions. The finished interior work and specialty additions and adornments also were sub-contracted by the housewright. Glaziers were contracted, rather than "employed," to custom cut, fit and install windows and charged for both time and materials. Carpenters or joiners hung doors and finished wall panelling and floors and the joiners did all the specialty carving and other interior finished wood work. Blacksmiths and braziers were hired on similar terms to make, shape and apply the various rough and fancy metal fittings. The significance of this system of sub-contracting was that it afforded the individual worker a large measure of independence in his negotiating of labor and material costs. Furthermore, it instilled in building artisans a knowledge of organization of labor, time and material procurement; that experience was most most useful, as John Cotman observed, "to understand the business of contracts" if the journeyman was later to be a master builder.[5]

Of course there were variations on this scheme. Sometimes the housewright himself did most or all of the rough structural work, but his function was normally one of organizer and supervisor of the project. The arrangements for materials were flexible too. There was a large and regular market for building supplies in Boston. The annual construction of an average of between 2,000 and 4,000 tons of shipping and roughly 100 houses, shops or wharf additions had established a supply industry that linked some nearby rural sawmills with Boston lumber and building material wholesalers. Occasionally the client provided all or a portion of the required materials and the resulting form of sub-contracting was altered from normal practice, sometimes creating complications and confusion among the various enlisted artisans.[6] In some cases, the housewright's control of capital and his business connections were extensive enough for him to control the cost and supply of building materials and sub-contractors were left to work for daily wages or lump sums. Occasionally, sub-contracting artisans chose to have the contractor arrange all material supply and labor help, deciding that a daily wage or mutually agreed gross charge was more convenient to them. But ideally, and usually, buildings in Boston were erected as the outline indicates: by the engagement, by a client, of a master-builder who then regulated the process. The important ramification of this system was the emphasis on sub-contracting rather than direct wage and term employment. While various subordinate artisans were under the direction of a senior, influential and managerial artisan-entrepreneur, this system

still afforded those tradesmen a large measure of independence and flexibility. As individual sub-contractors, these artisans could, by hard work and judicious use of labor and materials, have some control over the financial benefits to themselves; so that even within the heirarchy of trades business divisions, the useful and independent application of a specialized skill could ensure free and profitable individual use of labor. A similar method of contracting and deployment of labor was followed in shipbuilding, and there, as in building construction, many of the contractors were former sub-contracting or even wage artisans who had risen to a position of prominence in their respective crafts. As Benjamin Hallowell reported in 1756, sub-contracting was very widespread in the shipbuilding industry and he perceived the economic and social benefits of this practice to be in the wider distribution of capital and the encouragement of a "spirit" of individual enterprise in incipient contractors. He felt that sub-contracting — more than "wages" — helped balance and increase the tax assessment for the town.[7]

House building serves as an appropriate example of the internal ordering of trades practices. Carpentry was the single most necessary and popular craft in provincial Boston and perhaps 10% of the town's artisans followed that trade (Table VI). And the reason for its popularity was simple: population growth and concentration, and the enormous preponderance of wood over brick or stone in residential and industrial-shop construction. Nearly three-quarters of Boston's buildings and all of its wharfage was made of wood.[8] The construction

industry was an attractive means for the circulation of capital and credit collateral. For employment, construction was as vital to the town's artisans as were the mercantile, manufacturing and local economies.[9] Thus it was an important sub-economy and was reliably constant except in times of acute financial or population retrenchment. But over the length of the provincial period, an average of over 100 houses a year, including replacements, were built in the town. In extraordinary periods, such as that which followed the fire of 1711, when 400 buildings were destroyed and had to be replaced, and when the town's population was growing rapidly, house construction in Boston probably employed more workers than any other local collective enterprise. It was during periods of rapid growth, as well as in the perennial replacement and repair market, that the intelligent, ambitious and resourceful carpenters advanced their economic status.

The numbers of carpenters who rose to "master builders" was impressive. A sample of fifty "carpenters" of the 1720-30 decade in Boston, revealed that at least twenty were "builders" or "contractors" by the 1740s and 1750s. Some examples, to be found in the records, are the aforementioned Thomas Gunter, along with Thomas Atkins, John Clough, Benjamin and William Eustus, Thomas Jones, Joshua Thornton, Robert Pierpont, James Ridgeway and Tilestone Onesipharus. What distinguishes these names further is that these men, or their sons were later to be found listed as "merchants." The upward limits of status for ambitious carpenters did not terminate with "master builder."[10] Entrepreneurship was a means by which all Boston artisans, of all

callings, could seek to consolidate and improve the social and economic positions in the community for themselves, their families and heirs. Entrepreneurship was the upper status level for successful, practicing artisans and was gained by time, energy, diligence, crafts skill, frugality, sobriety, luck and opportunism. Certainly the prospects were leavened by current economic conditions and relative demand. By comparison, the farmer-artisan also considered the ends of working in rural Massachusetts to be solvency, residential permanence and labor stability; but his prosecution of crafts acumen and contracts was accompanied or followed by the possession of agricultural landed estate. In Boston the artisan aspired to the same social and material goals, but he pursued his aims by advancing his craft and work from a portable specialty to a business or entrepreneurial end; and his version of real estate was measured in buildings and building lots.[11] In Boston, property meant houses, shops, warehouses and wharves and land was measured in feet and not acres. But in Boston the value of structures was seven or more times that of rural houses, barns and shops. Buildings in Boston produced revenue and had fixed value, just as arable land had in the rural towns. In both cases property was a frequent and profitable means of money or credit exchange and collateral. Whether in arable acreage or in a Boston tenement, property was pursued as a mark of solvency and social security. For the Boston worker, entrepreneurship coexisted with the ownership of property, and became the means of augmenting his general

vocational practices. As G.B. Warden discovered in his analyses of Boston property, about 40% of the value of annual property transactions between 1690 and 1760 involved "craftsmen." That 40% figure is very close to the number of artisans in the Boston population.[12]

If entrepreneurship can be said to comprise investment and risk, and the organization, marketing, distribution, pricing and general control of the yields from one's own and/or another's labor, then most Boston artisans practiced a rudimentary form of entrepreneurship, even as ordinary independent workers. The clearest example of the individual artisan as entrepreneur lay in the retail crafts. The independent baker, brewer-taverner, weaver, tailor or shoemaker all practiced business management as part of their artisan status by directly retailing their own finished products.[13] Even the carter, among the lowest of the trained or apprenticed crafts, was essentially a businessman who negotiated freely with others for his time, labor, skill, connections and facilities. The small scale of the provincial retail economy, even in a concentrated market like Boston, did not permit a full separation of manufacturers from distributors, and many single craftsmen acted as producers, retailers and businessmen; that is, they personally arranged stock and materials, fashioned a product and retailed it, on their own and the individual customer's terms. Often coupled with the activity of retailing were rare skills such as those of watchmakers, goldsmiths or printers. The blacksmith, anywhere in provincial Massachusetts, stands as a prime example of the self-employed artisan, owning his forge and shop, responsible for his own tools and raw materials, and dealing directly with the market-retail end of his labor enterprise.[14]

However, there was a graduated scale of entrepreneurship. It ran the spectrum of endeavour from individually-run shops to large-scale labor control and eventually was practiced through capital investment and mercantile venture. The example of the housewright is one case of labor management in which the contractor actually made a profit from the labor of others and had overall, if informal, control in the collective produce of several independent artisans. But individual businessmen who did exercise extensive control, could not govern large labor systems comprised of numerous dependent workers. The largest leather-producing yard and work house in provincial Boston, owned by a former independent leather dresser, Joseph Belknap, involved only twenty men. Because of the laws pertaining to crafts exclusivity, the various stages of the leather manufacturing process were subdivided into tanning, curing, dressing and so on; and the artisans within those divisions retained both their skills and status and control over their roles in the process.[15] Moreover, they were free to strike out as independent shop owners and they frequently did, when capital was obtained and when conditions were opportune. the owner of the operation did have rights of sale and marketing and therefore did profit directly from the labors of others, but he was still obliged to deal with his contracted workers in terms of the value of their respective labors and their disposable skills.

Artisan-entrepreneurs flourished in shop crafts such as shoemaking, weaving, tailoring and coopering. Although the majority of these trades were conducted by individuals in one-man shops, there was an elaborate sub-contracting network within these industries. Often, a young journeyman, unable to purchase or arrange credit for stocks of raw materials, inexperienced in quantity production, unknown in the community and uncertain of market prospects, would sub-contract his labor to an established artisan-retailer. The latter, because of the nature of the particular commodity and with consideration of market demand, would stock finished goods for volume sale to direct users or other retail or export merchants. This practice was especially common among coopers and weavers. The young journeyman would then contract to produce finished products for the master-journeyman's stocks, usually in the latter's shop or work premises. But this kind of operation and arrangement was limited by the uncertain general market and by the inevitable departure — for individual, personal production — by the sub-contracting artisan. Few, if any, shoemaking shops in Boston were occupied by more than five journeymen at any time and similar numbers appeared in weaving, tailoring, coopering, furniture-making and most other shop industries. Moreover, even when a master-artisan did "employ" others to produce for him, the frequent turnover of workers made his own production goals unattainable or at least unpredictable over the long term.[16]

The combination of a limited and variable market and the independent nature of Boston artisans set certain bounds on large shop industries. These limitations were compounded by the customary attitude of provincial artisans, who had traditionally maintained social and economic independence through negotiable credit for investment in shops, and by practicing their "arts" completely and individually. Competition among individuals set limits to the scale of crafts entrepreneurism and prevented concentrations of industrial crafts under single management. Shipwrights and housewrights often found themselves competing for general contracts with carpenters who had previously sub-contracted from them.[17] Some trades, such as house-joinery, could not be organized as wage-labor businesses because of the peculiar nature of the particular craft; joiners were needed constantly, of course, but only for short periods of time, for a large number of small, brief, specialized separate tasks and by a great variety of customers.

The limits to industrial, retail or construction business expansion, meant that the mature and ambitious artisan-entrepreneur had to settle at a fixed level of prosperity or if he was bold enough, redirect his capital interests.[18] In provincial Boston, the surest way to obtain wealth, and social and political standing and influence, was to employ capital. To reach beyond crafts entrepreneurship to the status of "merchant" and "gentlemen" was to become involved in commercial trading and the organization and manipulation of capital,

collateral and ready credit. Capital, in the form of property, imported inventories of volume stock, external trade, shipping and investment, could ignore the boundaries of the Boston economy. Much new capital came from British sources, often from investors who collaborated with Boston merchants in the high-yield shipping commerce of the Atlantic colonies. Normally this form of investment involved only modest risk; but some investment capital was available to risk-taking entrepreneurs for use in new shipping or different or larger cargoes, or even in local mercantile activity. Capital and local and foreign credit flowed through and beyond the small scale economies of the independent business artisan, the small shops and production ventures.[19]

There had been a merchant class in Massachusetts from the founding of the Colony. By the middle of the provincial period it numbered over 200 prominent local, provincial, imperial and international traders, shippers and investors. It represented the top level of the several hundred wholesalers, retailers and business artisans who considered themselves "merchants" in eighteenth century Boston. This upper layer of wealth and influence was varied and hierarchical of course, but its members all shared a common attribute: they derived incomes from beyond the precincts of Boston. As a social group it was influential and successful and as the seventeenth century evolved it had consolidated itself into a self-perpetuating stratum that governed the Massachusetts polity and economy. At its core was a

cluster of families whose sons and grandsons inherited merchant status into and beyond the eighteenth century. It was by turns competitive and cooperative. Its membership expanded and receded with the economy. New names regularly appeared in its ranks as a few older names disappeared for one reason or another. To its number were added merchants and investors from outside Boston who came to take part in the town's maritime trade economy.[20]

Throughout, this merchant class included and attracted the successful small merchants and entrepreneurs who had risen in wealth, stature and influence from the status of artisan. Of course, only a tiny minority of Boston's artisans or their sons achieved the rank and distinction of "gentleman" or "merchant, esquire," but enough of them attained merchant status to demonstrate the ultimate success of the skilled worker in this society. These titles were extremely important in eighteenth century Boston; "gentleman" usually referred to a retired man of substantial wealth and was rare. In fact there were only twenty-three so listed in the 1790 census and twenty-one in the 1765 Assessment Roll. "Merchant, esquire" was an informal title given to the most successful of the merchant class, and of the 200 wealthiest Boston merchants of 1754, fewer than fifty were known as "Merchant, esquire." Both titles had political or judicial connotations. Of Boston's most prominant merchants in the 1750s, some of the names reveal the humbler origins of their parentage: for example, Belcher (storekeeper); Belknap (leatherworker); Brown (blacksmith); Thornton (carpenter). But the rise to social and economic prominance

in Boston's ruling merchant class was restricted to a small proportion of artisans and their offspring.[21] Nevertheless, among the artisans of Boston who eventually settled on economic, social and political rungs somewhere between employed or sub-contracting journeymen and merchant status, most did leave behind some property and estate and sons trained in a profitable craft. That legacy was a small measure of the security and station they sought to attain through their vocational skills and their labors.[22]

NOTES

CHAPTER VII

[1]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 220-222, 238-40, 280-82 contains members of artisan's committees and describes the "leading" tradesmen and retailers as being representative of the upper levels of crafts groups.

[2]Joseph Moxon, Mechanick Exercises: or the Doctrine of Handiworks, Applied in the Arts of Smithing, Joinery, Carpentry, Turning, Bricklayery (London: 1703) (copy at Kress Library, Harvard); William Pain, The Practical House Carpenter (Boston: 1796); The Town and Country Builder's Assistant (Boston: 1786); The Carpenters' Rules of Work in the Town of Boston (Boston: 1795).

[3]M. Arch. MSS., Vol. 59, pp. 391-4, 430, "Thomas Gunter Building Account"; Baker MSS, "James Russell Receipt Books."

[4]"Gunter Account." On carpenters arranging for their own materials, see "James Russell Receipt Books," "Pearson Family Accounts," "Palfrey Accounts"; See also, Carl Bridenbaugh, Colonial Craftsmen (Chicago: 1950), pp. 65-96.

[5]The Town and Country Builder's Assistant; passim, MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, (1702-3)(1704)(1709)(1725)(1739-40), all construction accounts. "Letters of John Cotman" (1745).

[6]Ibid. On the building supply industry, see BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 220-82.

[7]M. Arch., Vol. 59, pp. 367-8, "Benjamin Hallowell's Report"; BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-40; G.H. Preble, "Early Shipbuilding in Massachusetts," NEGHR 23 (1869), pp. 38-41.

[8]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-41; Annie Thwing, Crooked and Narrow Streets of Boston (Boston: 1920), Chapter 1.

[9]BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369; Shattuck, Census, pp. 206, 42-65; Thwing, Crooked and Narrow Streets.

[10]MHS, "Thwing Catalogue" and Boston Town Papers, Vols. 1-7. See also, for 1711 fire, BCR, Vol. 11, pp. 148, 152-157. There were other major fires in 1691, 1702, 1759, 1760. On numbers of residential houses built annually, see BCR, Vols. 7-20, indexed under "houses" and "dwellings." On fires in colonial Boston, see MHS Collections, Vol. 1, pp. 81 ff; Vol. 3, pp. 241 ff.

[11]MHS, "Thwing Catalogue" contains extracts from the entire extant Suffolk County Deed and Probate Records for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Bruce Daniels, "Defining Economic Classes in Colonial Massachusetts, 1700-1776," AAS Proc. 83 (1973), pp. 251-59.

[12]For property values, see M. Arch., Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns." For the meaning of property to Boston workers, see G.B. Warden, "The Distribution of Property in Boston, 1692-1789," Perspectives in American History 10 (1976), pp. 81-128, especially p. 121.

[13]Baker MSS, "Jacob Nash Accounts"; "Edward Marrett Daybooks"; "Daniel Rea Daybooks." BCR, Vols. 7-20, indexed under "retailers," "trades" and "licenses."

[14]BCR, Vol. 17, pp. 161-2, 222, 239, 259, 260, 296; J.R. Commons, et al., History of Labor in the United States, Vol. 1 (New York: 1918), David J. Saposs section, pp. 25-168.

[15]MHS MSS, "Joseph Belknap Ledgers." According to Massachusetts laws, Belknap could not manipulate the prices charged by and the standards of the work of his contracting artisans; nor could he have a tanner, for example, do leather dressing. See Colonial Laws, pp. 88-90, and passim for other trades. See also Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 312-14.

[16]Baker MSS, "V.S. Clark Notes," Box 2; Blanche Hazard, The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts Before 1875 (Cambridge: 1921).

[17]History of Labor, pp. 25-168.

[18]V.S. Clark, History of Manufactures in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1916), pp. 144-158.

[19]A.M. Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution (reprint, New York: 1968), pp. 15-31. G.B. Warden, Boston, 1689-1776 (Boston: 1970), Chapters 2 to 5.

[20]For especially good examples of the social, political and economic activities of Boston's richest merchants see MHS "Hancock Papers"; "Robert Treat Paine Papers"; "Ezekial Price Papers"; "Davis Papers." Houghton MSS, "Palfrey Papers." For a list of Boston's 200 or so most economically influential citizens in the 1750s, see Articles of the Society for Encouraging Industry and Employing the Poor (Boston, reprinted 1754). For genealogical data concerning the origins and backgrounds of Boston's senior merchant class, see MHS, "Merchants" catalogue, "Thwing Catalogue" and W.H. Whitmore, Massachusetts Civil List for the Colonial and Provincial Periods, 1630-1774 (Albany: 1870).

[21]Ibid., especially "Thwing Catalogue"; Mass. Civil List; Articles of the Society.

[22]Ibid., Warden, "Distribution of Property," pp. 81-128.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNSKILLED WORKER IN BOSTON

The unskilled worker in provincial Boston, untrained and unapprenticed and possessing only limited work skills, was not involved in the town's major industries to any great extent. Boston's manufacturing, construction, merchandising, shipping, services and retailing economies, required more skilled than unskilled labor, and the small and mostly personalized scale of most businesses did not need significant amounts of purely manual or even partly-skilled labor.[1] There was, however, a resident population of laborers in the Boston economy which was adapted to the other requirements of the town's economy. These laborers were employed in the town's "heavier" industries — on the docks and wharves as handlers of goods and raw materials in transit and storage and in the yards and warehouses of the leather yards, slaughter houses and construction material suppliers. Some were employed as full-or part-time helpers to the busier tradesmen in the construction or manufacturing sector. But here, as everywhere in the Boston economy, the demand for laborers was sometimes variable and always involved small numbers. There was no single employer who demanded large numbers of unskilled workers. Most provincial artisans did a considerable amount of their own preparatory, ancillary and manual work. Even the movement of goods through Boston's waterfront facilities where manual labor was regularly required, was

often handled on a small scale by the individual warehouser or receiver or shipper.[2] Certainly, laborers did not constitute a majority of the working population of Boston, or even the largest plurality, but the town's unskilled workers did represent an important group. The conditions, activities and status of these workers can enlarge the picture of the influences of work on the social lives of provincial Bostonians.

In rural Massachusetts the central and dominant economic influence on the laborer was subsistence agriculture. As an asset and a preliminary means of sufficiency and working for others, as an alternative and complementary source of livelihood, farming served as a foundation for the rural laborer's personal economy. The fluid nature of the rural non-agricultural economy provided the laborer with a further, predictable labor outlet and means of income. In rural Massachusetts the presence of significant numbers of laborers was necessary to the labor-exchange method of farming. He was assured an acceptable level of economic security and social condition and place in the community because the rural "unskilled worker" — the husbandman and the farm laborer — was considered vital to the local economies and constituted the largest single plurality of the rural population. There were wide contrasts between the status of laborers in Boston and the role and quanitities of unskilled workers in the agricultural towns. Boston's economy provided no single activity to which all unskilled workers could turn as a basis for subsistence. Boston's economy demanded specialized, full-time single

occupations, and inhibited cross-vocational mobility. The opportunities for steady, regular employment for laborers in Boston were hampered equally by the town's lack of a single industrial base and by the full-time, specialized resourcefulness of its artisans.[3]

As noted previously, available data indicate that of a white adult male working population of nearly 3,000 in 1750, fewer than one-fifth of that number were unskilled. Over half the workers of Boston were skilled artisans and crafts retailers, and another approximately one-fifth were merchants, large and small, service workers such as barbers and taverners, professionals and full time government officials. A further 5% were retired, unemployed and sick and lame. Fewer than 5% of Boston's adult white population were in short term servitude (Table VI). The figure of 20% unskilled shrinks when non-artisan, but semi-skilled, specialties are deducted: ferrymen, boatmen, porters, shoremen (dock workers) and chimneysweeps were usually unapprenticed and did not require crafts credentials, but these workers were occupied full time in their respective semi-or partly-skilled functions and were not laborers in any real sense.[4] A laborer in provincial Boston was a day laborer, and possessed no single source of protracted unskilled employment. These were the totally unskilled workers of the town, having no trade and no fixed marketable service skill. A large permanent force of unskilled workers, performing only manual and menial tasks was not required by the Boston economy and did not exist. In fact, what marginal, sporadic and day to day need there was for unskilled labor was filled by the laboring servants

and bonded negroes of more prosperous artisans and trades entrepreneurs and by free negroes and those landed seamen who were between or had terminated voyage contracts. Though it was not large, there was an identifiable unskilled labor population in provincial Boston, and it was made up largely of free blacks and landed seamen.[5]

During the provincial period, as many as 1,500, and as few as 400, free and bonded blacks, males and females, adults and children, lived in Boston; throughout, roughly two-thirds were males and two-thirds of those were adults. Free negroes comprised as little as 30% in 1690, and as much as 60% in 1760, of the total number of blacks. The black population of Boston rose along with the general population increase from some 400 in 1690 to over 1,500 in the early 1750s, and declined thereafter to about 850 in 1765. The percentage of free blacks increased as a proportion of the total, throughout the period. The largest number of free male adult blacks in Boston in the eighteenth century probably was 300, a number that diminished steadily as free negroes fled Boston for other parts of the province and elsewhere in New England.[6] The importance of these figures and trends is that they indicate that as the ratio of free blacks to slaves rose, the total number in the town decreased. Almost all free and bonded blacks were unskilled. The flight of free blacks from Boston, to sea or to other regions, suggests a lack of demand for their unskilled labor in Boston. Certainly this migration cannot be explained simply in terms of local social, economic and vocational discrimination

against free negroes; similar prejudices existed everywhere in provincial New England and in degree throughout the English colonies of America. Clearly, many free blacks left Boston to find work as unskilled labor and not to seek more legal or social tolerance.[7]

The common seamen who manned Boston's trading fleet likewise formed a measurable plurality of workers. In the period between 1720 and 1750, some 600 sailors were employed on Boston-based vessels at any given time. And as many as 200 of these men would be ashore, between sailings, for up to several months at a time.[8] Moreover, there was a regular turnover among mariners, as men took to the sea for a living for limited periods of from one voyage to several years service and returned to permanent residence and work ashore. In short, there was a constant presence of sailors in Boston who were between contracts or entering or leaving the service. But the numbers who chose to reside in Boston during their time ashore was negligible. Of the several hundred men regularly employed on Boston ships, at least half came from rural Massachusetts, usually landless, unskilled sons of husbandmen, young men who had selected the sea as both a means of livelihood and to save for future economic independence. Between sailings or at the final termination of contracts, these men returned to their rural homes. It was not unusual to find a few "mariners" and "seamen" listed among the inhabitants of small inland agricultural towns in Massachusetts.[9] Thus, fewer than half of the port's sailors chose to live in Boston when ashore, temporarily or permanently. Therefore, the chief sources of Boston's laboring population were floating and transient classes, the surplus

of which was scattered elsewhere in the Massachusetts and New England economies. There, unskilled labor might find work and more suitable vocational opportunity, than was available in Boston.

If Boston's commercial economy offered no major employer to attract and hold a large body of unskilled workers, nevertheless there was one area of public employment that provided a reason for some free blacks, ex-mariners and other unskilled workers to remain in town. The civic government of Boston itself was a major employer of men in the provincial period.[10] To put this into perspective, Boston was more heavily populated that six of the province's eleven counties, and as many people lived in Boston as in the rest of Suffolk county, in which the town was situated. The public works and installations that elsewhere would be spread over several hundred square miles of an agricultural county were concentrated, albeit in a different arrangement, within a few thousand acres in Boston.[11] The public works of Boston consumed a considerable outlay of finances and labor. The annual Town budget for public works and services was larger than the annual budgets of most of the town's individual commercial and industrial enterprises.[12] As a contractor, the local government was the largest single source of work and service for the town's artisans, entrepreneurs and material provisioners, and it was by far the single most important employer of men, directly and indirectly. That is not to say that the Town of Boston represented a distinct economic and occupational alternative to the town's primary and major

private enterprises. Certainly the combined value of either shipbuilding, other manufacturing or private construction far outweighed that of the public economy. But as a single concentration of funds and labor needs, the Town was a very influential economic factor and it was the largest single employer of unskilled labor.[13]

Apart from the operation of its political and administrative authority, the government of Boston — that is, the Town Meeting — built, owned, managed and maintained an extensive number of buildings, and public facilities and conducted varied public works. A partial list of the responsibilities of the Town Meeting would include the almshouse, workhouse, Town House (Meeting House), several official residences, the public market, granary, public wharf, prison, four or five public schools, several fire engines and barns, two separate gun batteries, various and extensive wall and turret fortifications, several bridges, two graveyards and more than forty streets of differing widths and lengths and over sixty smaller lanes and alleys.[14] Imperial and provincial properties, though they were the responsibilities of senior government, were partly administered by local authority and were built and maintained by Boston interests. These included official residences, courts and customs houses, the large Castle William military establishment with its 120 guns, and the provincial lighthouse, both in Boston harbor, and the Province House, the seat of the General Court. Most of these were substantial properties and were erected and maintained by contractors and artisans who otherwise engaged in the town's private construction economy.[15] The real value of these installations to the workers of Boston was in

improvement, repair, additions and replacements. Each year, scores of contracts were issued to individual for limited work; to contractors who organized several trades for more ambitious or elaborate work; and occasionally to partnerships of artisan-contractors for large projects such as the eight-month construction of retaining walls near the dam on the town's outskirts or the year-long contract for abutments and supports for the town's largest bridge.[16]

Construction and the regular repair and maintenance of public works kept many artisans and contractors fully employed, many for periods of months and even years. Furthermore, the provision of services and commodities to public institutions was a minor boon to many retailers, merchants and some craftsmen who came to be in the indirect employ of the Town. So reliable and lucrative were the Town's material and labor needs that a number of artisans and businessmen came to depend upon them as a principal or sole source of income. Construction was linked to growth, of course, and when Boston's population and economy stabilized after 1740, structural maintenance and repair became the most common public building works. This diminished the scope and value of individual work contracts. Residual smaller tasks appealed to, and attracted, individual artisans, and the distribution of public contracts, by bid and sometimes by direct appointment, correspondingly was very widespread. In some years over one hundred individuals debited the Town accounts for labor, service or material charges.[17] Large-scale contracting continued with occasional

new large construction projects or more frequent major repairs and rehabilitations. But the most necessary and regular item of Boston's public works was street and wharf improvement, enlargement and maintenance. It was there that Boston's largest public works contractors thrived and where the town's unskilled laborers were most consistently needed and employed.[18]

Street paving contracts were taken usually by specialty bricklayers (bricks being the only contemporary paving material). A major single project, lasting three to six months, employed about twenty full-time laborers. The contractor in these public works was responsible for materials and wages and billed the Town for gross, but not itemized, charges that included those expenditures and his own personal services expenses. These latter amounts were measured in costs for "my work," "my time" or "my oversight" (supervision and organization). The contractors hired laborers directly or through any sub-contractors who might be involved. Always, the contractor, if he normally employed a white servant, free or bound negro, or part time laborer-helper, would include that man in the work and add his wages separately on the invoices he presented to the Town. Street work also employed masons, some carpenters and blacksmiths, for posts, boardwalks and metal street inlays, and a great many carters. For carters, a less profitable trade than most others, as well as for laborers, street work provided a steady means of subsistence. The absence of even rudimentary mechanical equipment for building, paving, widening, lengthening and maintaining

even unpaved streets and lanes meant that gangs of men constantly were at work in the thoroughfares of Boston in all but the most severe winter months; and then, in periods of thaw, laborers would be out to continue a project or complete an unfinished contract.[19]

It was in such work gangs that Boston's resident free negroes and otherwise-idle seamen found regular employment. Others found work there too: the artisan's casual helper, the idle shoreman or porter and many others who sought employment in the inconstant Boston unskilled labor market, could fill in the year's working days in street work. Manuacturing and shipbuilding did not require any significant number of unskilled workers, except irregularly and indirectly, and most house, commercial and public building construction utilized only a few of the town's free unskilled workers. The erection of major repair of dams, bridges and fortifications was too infrequent to be a dependable source of livelihood for laborers. But work on Boston's streets and wharves, which were included as streets in public contracts, was a predictable means of income for the unskilled. Upward of one hundred Boston laborers were employed in this activity in any year and a sizeable number derived all or a majority of their incomes from it. In summary, Boston did have a constant population of unskilled workers, but it was small and was comprised mostly of part-time or erstwhile sailors and of free blacks; and if the local economy provided a single mode of employment for these workers, it was in public works and chiefly in street, highway and alley work.[20]

The reasons for men achieving adulthood in Boston without learning a recognized, formal and useful trade were matters of parental means and influence or of individual character, personality the family's economic circumstances during the male's adolescence. To be unskilled in Boston was to be handicapped or even prevented from reaching the society's minimum standards of income and property. The unskilled worker married later than the skilled worker, if at all, supported fewer children and lived a far less commodious life than did the ordinary artisan.[21] He had less opportunity to secure savings, credit or property for his old age, his family's comfort or his children's inheritance. It was not the strain of monotony or the extreme physical demands of unskilled labor that made his position unattractive and personally unfulfilling — practically all men in provincial society encountered some drudgery and manual work, whether they were farmers, artisans or small merchants. Rather it was the restrictions placed on his income and personal financial self-reliance and the limited choices for advancement that made unskilled laboring an untenable and difficult vocation. To some extent his dietary and clothing needs could be assured by masters and term employers, and, during unemployment, by charity. But in any event his wage rate remained approximately half that of the artisan. These daily wage rates were set legally, periodically, the General Court and involved fines and punishment for violations. In the case of artisans, some

rates were set by a process of petition and negotiation between the "corporations" of specific Boston trades and the Court. But most skilled work was set at equal rates for all crafts. The daily rate for blacksmith's work in 1730 was four shillings; it was the same for carpenters, masons, tanners, shoemakers and other artisans. The daily rate for "laborers" — a legal classification meaning unapprenticed, or unlicensed as a "porter" or "carter" for example — were set arbitrarily by the General Court. These rates were set at between one-half and two-thirds of the average rate for artisans; there was another rate for laborers set at one-third the artisan's pay, if the laborer was "found" during his employment. It is of some significance that artisans and semi-skilled service workers could circumvent "wage rates" by negotiating with clients or employers on a piece-work, sub-contracting or finished-commodity basis, where variables such as time, materials and distance (for carters, for example) could be manipulated. Unlike the others, the "laborer" in Boston was usually employed and paid by the day. In that case, the laborer's means to enlarge his income by contracting, and thus increase his control over his work and his future by energy and dexterity, were virtually non-existant.[22]

When fully employed, the wage income of an unskilled day laborer would barely meet the annual basic food, clothing and modest rented shelter expenses for a man, a wife and two young children, even when the wife produced extra income by spinning, sewing or laundering;

Food alone, for four people, consumed over half of a day laborer's combined household income. And the upshot of the laborer's plight, in that regard, was that he could not possibly afford any meagre luxuries or added comforts, or even good quality furniture or household fixtures. Nor could he educate his children or arrange for vocational training for them. Moreover, any illness, unexpected expenses or prolonged curtailment of income was tantamount to charity-supported poverty. At the best of times it was a precarious condition in which the Boston laborer could not hope to elevate his economic and social position. Unlike the position of the rural laborer, it was not a life that was acceptably stable. It was not a status that was endured by all Boston laborers. The Boston economy did not encourage an abundance of unskilled laborers, and for that important minority who formed the town's laboring population, there was no incentive to remain in that condition.[23]

Apart from the employment offered by public works, which at best afforded a measure of subsistence, the unskilled worker had to seek support and security in the interstices of the town's private economy. Always, there was a need for some unskilled labor, of course, but it was irregular and tenuous — a day here, and a few days there, and the constant threat of abbreviated income was always present. At times there were genuine shortages of unskilled labor in Boston, but these were not fixed by any single industry, function, location

or season. A laborer might have a few days work sawing wood for a carpenter, or unloading a ship, or packing hides at dockside or any number of short term assignments, and repeat the cycle throughout the year and not miss a day's work. But he found very little permanent and guaranteed employment of a kind that would allow him to plan his life against a guaranteed future income or obtain limited credit for immediate material improvement. Thus, when penury or the lack of a settled vocational place in the community became insupportable, the laborer attempted to find a more suitable, long-term solution to his vocational predicament. Many followed the rural example of voluntary limited-term servitude or adult apprenticeship. But the former required acute desperation or the pressure of an unpayable debt, and the latter was normally contingent on propitious timing.[24]

Many dissatisfied laborers became seamen for temporary or permanent relief, and perpetuated the rotation of maritime transience and residential unskilled labor. When Boston's sometimes erratic economy caused recession and threatened to reduce employment or aggravated the instability of the unskilled, some left for other coastal or agricultural towns — although in both instances there was always the difficulty of obtaining resident status. Still others remained in Boston and managed to gain access to some lower skilled trades, as full-time porters, shoremen and leather handlers, for example. There at least, because of traditional trades organization and protectionism, — porters, for example, helped the Town Meeting

regulate their numbers and set their rates — permanent and more lucrative work could be secured and a measure of financial independence could be enjoyed. In some cases, medium-term servitude of from one to three years led to training in specialized non-artisan auxiliary occupations. If a master or contracted-term employer were a shoemaker, for example, the contracted laborer might learn leather cutting or heel making; tanners' laborers learned leather stretching and blacksmiths' helpers assisted in rough forging and bellows operation. Laborers who were contracted to masons were taught lath making and plaster mixing and other related tasks and basic trades skills. The laborer of a licensed small boatmaker or wagon maker was instructed and permitted to attach or assemble some parts, always under supervision. Any of these and similar employments, while they offered current stability for the laborer, also presented future apprenticeship prospects.[25]

There were other methods of escaping the status of day laborer for the unskilled resident of Boston. As well as providing employment in contracted public works, the Town of Boston directly employed many men in full-time administrative and official services capacities. The Town required many and assorted public services and possessed the budget and authority to grant exclusive licences to individuals in civic employment. Although technically the recipients of those licenses were paid by the users of the services they provided, and not by the town itself, monopoly rights of practice by the grace of the

Town and on its behalf, marked these occupations as civic employments. Naturally, some of these service occupations were not available to unskilled laborers — schoolteachers, jailers and alms master were obvious exceptions. But laborers could and did obtain permanent and renewable posts as scavengers, who were paid directly from the Town budget, gravediggers, public porters and public grain handlers.[26] The Town issued licenses to tavern-keepers and usually reserved those favors for widows, handicapped men and aged laborers. Other permits were given to ferrymen, messengers and livery keepers, all of whom would be otherwise unskilled and who were often funded, for stock, facilities and bonding, by local merchants, who also used their influences in recommending many laborers for civic licenses.[27]

Dozens of paid civic administration appointments were made by the Selectmen and various Town Meeting assemblies and committees. It took about one hundred men to administer and operate the Town's civil and public affairs and most appointments and elections were made annually. The respective responsibilities, authority, importance and pay of these posts were matched by the personal qualifications and social status of the office holders. Some positions were completely full-time endeavours and others involved only periodic attention. But very few unskilled workers were engaged in civic administration. Among those positions filled by the town's business, merchant, professional and artisan-entrepreneur cless, were the elected Selectmen, of course, and the Town clerk, several tax assessors and collectors,

the keeper of the public granary and the master of the public wharf, the eight overseers of the poor and the constables. From the town's artisans and smaller merchants were drawn the leather, lumber and grain sealers, the heads of the two watches and the various ward fire engine masters. Only as members of the Town watch, which involved nearly twenty posts, or occasionally as part time members of a fire engine crew, were laborers involved in direct civil administration or service. It is worth noting, in terms of time and income, that whereas the Town often had problems in securing a paid appointee — as assessor or constable for example, many prefering to pay a fine and find a substitute — there was constant competition for the few posts open to laborers, either as nominated appointees or licensees. In many cases, the laborer-applicant was favored by the intercession and backing of a local man of influence. In the acquision of public licenses it was often the political and financial largesse of a particular merchant that assured the success of a laborer's application. These acts of beneficence were for the most part, motivated either by concern for a current or former servant or a desire to control the poor tax by convenient employment of a real or potential charity case.[28]

If there was a stratum of poor in provincial Boston, it was made up of the town's unskilled workers and not of a destitute class. The majority of the poor in Boston were working poor, those who were living on the margin of subsistence while normally employed as laborers. But its membership was not fixed. Its composition changed regularly as men acquired more reliable and remunerative skills and

occupations or as they and their families quit the town. Turnover was frequent and high and there was little continuity in the families who remained in that condition.[29] Moreover, the unskilled worker represented a minority of between 10% and 20% of the town's working population and only a fraction of that number were bona fide impoverished day laborers. Still, many laborers and their families must be viewed as working poor, and for some occasional and sometimes frequent resort to official poor relief was necessary for subsistence. The working poor, despite their restricted economic and social lives, retained some measure of independence and could and did escape to better conditions and opportunity. In this regard, the town's merchant and artisan community did much to alleviate the poverty of some laborers by offering training, permanent work and promotions. Whether cynical, to reduce the burden of the poor tax, or as genuine acts of charity and social and moral concern, this method of aid helped keep down the numbers of working poor.[30]

The working poor were distinguished, in law and status, from the idle poor, the impious, intemperate and anti-social residents whose unemployment was often deliberate or preferred. Massachusetts law had long made provision for control of this "vice," by making local authorities responsible for its regulation and eradication. In the smaller communities this control was exercised within the home and throughout the community by direct, personalized enforcement and persuasion and by communal social pressure. But in the larger,

impersonal setting of Boston, control of idleness was institutionalized outside the home.[31]

The Almshouse and Workhouse in Boston housed those whose habits or circumstances marked them as idle poor. The destitute, whether lazy, lame, aged, abandoned youth or widows, were, when possible, sequestered in those public institutions and were made to be productive or were kept occupied. In this way, education and re-education of "work habits" were administered. Potentially disruptive, criminal, or anti-social elements as well as dependents who were helpless or susceptible to idleness, were removed from the streets of the town, and a mild form of punishment, correction or protection, by non-penal incarceration was accomplished. Up to 1738, the Almshouse was used as both residential charity relief for the town's genuinely incapacitated and as a site for productive charity where the idle but healthy poor could be put to work. After 1738 the functions were separated, more as a result of increased general population than from a percentage increase of idle poor. The Almshouse contained from as few as fifty to just over one hundred people, depending on the circumstances of Boston's economy. The Workhouse usually held thirty to fifty persons engaged in mandatory employment such as supervised commercial weaving or shoemaking. These figures represented the extremes in the numbers of the town's indigent population. And another ten to twenty persons were to be located at any time in the town jail, there as a result of debt or poverty-related crime.[32]

For Boston's working poor, marginal subsistence meant a precarious social existence; one that was exacerbated by the short-term and irregular work market and by the vagaries of the Boston commercial economy. Boston's economy and population stabilized in the 1735-1745 period. Some shipbuilding activity had moved north to the other coastal towns which were nearer the receding timber resources and some of Boston's other industries, such as distilling and leather manufacturing suffered stagnation and in some instances a fall in production. Some small maufacturers removed their shops and capital to other parts of the province and New England, often for tax reasons. Boston's population declined from a peak of nearly 17,000 in 1740 to 15,731 in 1752 and remained at roughly that level until after the Revolution.[33]

For the skilled artisan and small merchant, removal from Boston for economic improvement, or in the wake of particular recession, meant little hardship. They merely followed the relocation of their industrial associates or moved their marketable skills to other towns where their crafts or entrepreneurial abilities could be exploited and where economic and social values, standards and status could be continued. For certain unskilled workers who were dependent on the various private and public laboring needs of the town's economy, the migration of a few artisans and merchants and a slight decline in economic activity could be disastrous. As noted, without relatives, backers or a need for his services, the laborer had difficulty in being "admitted" to another town. The Town of Boston itself practiced a

strict control of incoming population, and at times virtually forbade the admission of unskilled workers.[34] The social consequences of even slight economic lapses were potentially destructive for the married unskilled laborer. If he went to sea he left his family with an insecure income; most sailors contracted for an advance of sea wages and periodic sums were paid thereafter to the man's dependents by the contracting merchant or ship owner. But those subsequent payments were variable and sometimes irregular for they were contingent on the amounts and values of cargoes handled during the contracted voyage.

Economic vicissitudes aside, the absence of a father created serious social disruption in the homes of the working poor. Many men went to sea and did not return. Other laborers simply abandoned their families and fled to the west or to other colonies. One of the corollaries of distressed circumstances, among the working as well as the idle poor, was the forced servitude or very early involuntary apprenticeship of their children. This was a regular occurrence with the poor that increased with underemployment. Parents committed their children to terms of apprenticeship and servitude of up to fifteen years, and in the process forfeited parental contact and influence. For orphans, or for children of the destitute, the legal authority and service arrangements were in the hands of local government — the Overseers of the Poor — and the initiative lay with those public authorities. But there were enough examples of voluntary commitments by parents to indicate the extent and persistence of this

problem for the working poor. It was a practice as old as Boston; it was heightened in times of economic uncertainty. Of the male children involved in this process, nearly half managed to be located in local trades and industries. The rest were sent out of Boston to learn any one of sixty trades or occupations, or in the case of over one-third of the total, to farmers, principally as agricultural assistants. Virtually all the young females involved in child servitude went into domestic service. While this practice had the effect of destroying or tampering with normal family life — sometimes only one in three of the children of the working poor were removed — in many cases it was the only assurance of any family life for certain children. The median age of these young indentures was nine but some were as young as five years.[35]

This system of contractual foster parentage, and the exteme youth of the indentured, derived from the hardships of the unskilled working poor and the disjointed domestic conditions caused by underemployment, widowhood or chronic penury, and must be considered as radically different from the usual apprenticeship practice of the skilled and solvent unskilled workers of the province. In the latter event, the children and youth of more solvent workers were indentured outside the home to learn skills and habits for their own future self-sufficiency and only after the child had spent its formative years with its own parents. Usually, children were at home until they were thirteen or fourteen, and their indentures were from five to seven years. In the case of Boston's working poor, the reasons for settling children outside the home often resulted from an inability to support

those children. Official attitude encouraged these forms of early and long term indenture of poor children as a means of reducing the actual or potential cost of public poor relief and of upholding the traditional Puritan precepts of moral, social, familial and vocational conventions for children who otherwise would be denied those influences.[36]

Along with the forced or necessary indentures of the town's orphans and the children of the working poor, family dislocation caused other local social and economic problems — the absence of a male in the family home is an example of this. An official tax assessor's census of 1742 determined that the total population of Boston, 16,382, included "1,200 widows, 1,000 whereof are in low circumstances." Contemporary usage included as "widows" all married women who happened to be living alone. The 1,200 women cited in the assessor's report would certainly include a substantial proportion of "grass widows", whose husbands were at sea or had permanently or temporarily abandoned the home. But many were genuinely bereaved widows whose husbands had died at sea or in military actions or from disease or accidents or had simply, in old age, preceded their wives.[37] Of the 200 women not deemed to be in "low circumstances", it can assumed that they were the former wives of successful or prudent artisans and merchants and had been willed adequate estates of property or investment revenues or stock. Some of the troubled 1,000 were also possessors of property but could not subsist without additional income.

The majority of the 1,000 "widows" who were considered needy, constituted another stratum, and a large one, of both workers and working poor. As such, they served an important function in Boston's textile and clothing economy. Virtually all the linen and woolen fibers used by Boston's commercial weavers came from the spinning wheels of the town's single women; daughters at home, and widows.[38] But full-time spinning could provide only a rough subsistence and many of these independent women were included at times on the town's poor-relief rolls. Under a deliberate policy of Boston's licensing authority, most tavern, rooming house and eating shop permits were issued to widows. Many more took servant's work in the homes of the more affluent. But for several hundred women in provincial Boston, full-time spinning and periodic charity were the major sources of material support. The condition implicit in the term "low circumstances" did not mean that Boston's working "widows" were desperately poor. Rather, it appears that their position, as low-income and subsistence inhabitants, restricted their opportunities for employment and offered little chance of a fuller, more comfortable or economically and socially mobile life.[39]

Certainly not all of Boston's unskilled workers can be counted as working poor. There were opportunities within the Boston economy for the unskilled man to learn a trade in his adult life or to gain permanent employment in a service trade or as public licensee. Some laborers became quite indispensible, in the manner of the rural handyman, and were talented, versatile and very useful while remaining independent day laborers and technically "unskilled."[40] But very few

unskilled workers could attain or preserve a permanent and economically satisfactory place in the community as contract laborers. If they did not escape the status of casual, limited-term laborer by moving vocationally upward, they risked permanent borderline poverty. Furthermore, continuance in a position of subsistence laborer endangered the individual's ability to find a fixed place in the community's social, economic and even political process. The day laborer had difficulty in starting a family and if he did, ran the risk of having it dismembered; he had no hope of attaining political participation in Boston's civic government. By contrast, the agricultural laborer did find social and economic security in his status, and was assured a permanent domicile in the rural town because his vocational contribution was vital to the agricultural economy and because invariably he possessed enough arable land to be a least partially self-sufficient. These qualities meant that the rural unskilled worker could claim an active and respected place in the community. He was at the centre of a relatively stable family unit which itself was involved in the various social and economic activities of the rural town. In those respects the rural laborer was closer in status to the rural artisan than was the Boston laborer to that of the Boston artisan.[41]

From Edward Johnson's time to the end of the provincial period, Boston's economy was supported by a working population comprised largely of trained, independent artisans of a great variety

of skills and specialties. These artisans were fitted to the well defined functions of a commercial, manufacturing and service entrepot. The nature of Boston's economic enterprises, and the multiplicity and small size of the units within those enterprises, precluded the need for a large and stable force of unskilled workers. What need Boston did have for unskilled labor, on the edges of the private commercial economies and in public works, was filled to a large extent by a socio-economic class that was impermanent; mostly migrant seamen and freed blacks. It is worth repeating that this class was a creation of Boston's role as a commercial, mercantile port. That same economy denied the establishment of a resident and permanent class of unskilled laborers and invited its laboring population to be temporary in substance. There were always unskilled workers in Boston. But there was nothing in the town's economy to encourage or permit the persistence of laboring families, either occupationally or residentially, so that if the town's economy did require a measure of unskilled labor, those involved in it were workers who were in the process of acquiring new skills, or were moving through Boston. Unlike the rural towns, Boston had no common means of labor exchange and did not accommodate a permanent population of unskilled labor.

NOTES

CHPATER VIII

[1]In a sample of over 200 provincial work contracts, in construction, manufacturing and transportation, taken from MHS Misc. Bd. MSS and M. Arch., Vols. 59, 244, 245. I found only one example of a project that employed over ten laborers for more than a few days. Details are in Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, pp. 200 ff. The work was a combined private-public contract for retaining walls between the town pond and several adjacent mills.

[2]BCR, Vol. 17, pp. 161-162.

[3]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 220-22, 238-41, 280-2.

[4]Lemuel Shattuck, Report of the Census of 1845 (Boston: 1846), pp. 2-132; M. Arch., Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls"; BCR, Vols. 7-20, "Licenses," "poor," "Almshouse." The 1790 U.S. Census, excerpted in BCR, Vol. 10, pp. 171 ff. lists only 157 "laborers" of a total working population of 2,585.

[5]Boston Town Papers, Vols. 1-7, "Contracts."

[6]Appendix III; Boston census in BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, "Census of Negro Slaves in the Province," 1754; Edgar J. McManus, Black Bondage in the North (Syracuse: 1973), pp. 36-107, 199. Shattuck, Census, p. 132.

[7]McManus, Black Bondage, pp. 36-107; BCR, Vols. 11-17, "Negroes" in index. The Town of Boston encouraged blacks to depart for other colonies, see BCR, Vol. 17, p. 88. On blacks going to sea on Boston-and Massachusetts-based ships, see Lorenzo Greene, The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1775 (New York: 1945).

[8]"V.S. Clark Notes," Box 1; M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 60-65, "Maritimes."

[9]M. Arch., Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls." Elmo Hohman, History of American Merchant Seamen (New York: 1956).

[10]Boston Town Papers, Vols. 1-7; BCR, Vols. 11-20. The former reference concerns public works entirely; the latter shows the mechanisms and official management of public works.

[11]Appendix III; W.M. Whitehill, Boston: A Topographical History (Cambridge: 1968), Chapter 1; MHS, "Price's Boston Maps, 1739 and 1769."

[12]Compare the Town Budget of 1745, Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, p. 208 B, with the town's two largest shipyards in 1747, M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 117, pp. 60-68, "Hallowell Report."

[13]A fact that was stressed a great deal in the Town's regular petitions to the General Court for tax relief. As a constant employer of otherwise unemployable men, the Town sought a certain subsidy for its public works. See BCR, especially Vol. 14, pp. 238-40.

[14]Shattuck, Census, pp. 64-5; "Price Maps"; Whitehill, Topographical History; BCR, Vols. 11-20, passim.

[15]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 70, "Military," pp. 564-5, 597, 600, 637, 647.

[16]Boston Town Papers, Vol. 2, p. 40; Vol. 3, p. 48; Vol. 5, p. 120.

[17]Ibid., Vols. 2-5 indexes.

[18]Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 40, 108, 128, 178, 222, 233 are examples of the 10 major street contracts issued by the Town in a normal year.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Some street and highway work gangs were comprised entirely or mainly of blacks. For example, see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 2, p. 233; BCR, Vol. 20, p. 218.

[21]Stephen Erlanger, "The Colonial Worker in Boston, 1775," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1976. For the yet unresolved debate on rising or decreasing poverty among provincial Boston workers, and on living conditions generally, see J.A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," WMQ 22 (1965), pp. 75-92, and G.B. Warden, "The Distribution of Property in Boston, 1692-1775,"

Perspectives in American History 10 (1976), pp. 81-128. Henretta argues more poverty and diminished expectations by using tax assessment data as a gauge; Warden, using property transaction data, claims that the material lives of all workers was improving during the provincial period.

[22] Ibid.; See also Warden, "Inequality and Instability in Eighteenth Century Boston: A Reappraisal," JIH 6 (1976), pp. 585-620. On wage rates see "Wages in the Colonial Period" (U.S. Bulletin 499, 1929) and Chapter IX, note 10, in the present paper.

[23] Ibid.; Carl Bridenbaugh, "The High Cost of Living in Boston, 1728," NEQ 5 (1932), pp. 800-11; J.T. Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), pp. 68-163.

[24] Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, pp. 139-144 gives examples of these practices. For voluntary indenturing to retire small debts, see MHS Misc. Bd. MSS (1737, 1738, 1759).

[25] Boston Town Papers, on porters and shoremen, Vol. 3, p. 229; Vol. 4, p. 140; BCR, Vols. 12-13. On artisan's helpers, see MHS MSS, "John Marshall Diary"; Baker, MSS, "James Russell Receipts," "Pearson Accounts." On the fates of many of Boston's working poor, see Douglas Jones, "The Strolling Poor: Transiency in Eighteenth Century Massachusetts," JSH 8 (1975), pp. 28-54.

[26] Boston Town Papers, Vol. 3 contains many examples of full-time public employments including exhaustive detail of gravedigging (p. 56) and scavengers (Vol. 4, p. 280). On porters, scavengers, gravediggers, messengers and public carters, see BCR, Vols. 7-20, indexes.

[27] Much of this funding and help was given in hope of reducing the poor tax. On public licenses for private enterprise, see BCR, Vols. 11-17 especially, under "licenses," "taverners," "truckers," "inholders," etc. On petitions by widows, handicapped and aged see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, pp. 280-286. In some years over seventy-five of these licenses were issued, renewed, cancelled or exchanged. See Boston Town Papers, Vol. 2, p. 97. On merchant financial support for porters see Vol. 4, pp. 140, 144.

[28] Robert F. Seybolt, The Town Officials of Colonial Boston, 1620-1775 (Cambridge: 1939) contains the names of all known civic administrators, appointees and town employees during Boston's pre-Revolutionary

history. They were extracted from BCR and Boston Town Papers. For selected years between 1700 and 1760, names were taken from Seybolt's lists and compared with the genealogical, economic and occupational details found in MHS "Thwing Catalogue." On application by laborers for civic employment, see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 3, p. 56. On petitions from Town watch for pay increases see Vol. 3, p. 64. For substitution in civic appointments, see Seybolt, Town Officials. For merchant support of laborer's applications for licenses and employment, including depositions and bonds, see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, pp. 132-203.

[29]Warden, "Distribution of Property."

[30]For collective, private efforts to find full-time employment or advance crafts training for the unskilled working poor, see BCR, Vol. 8, pp. 147-8, 154; Vol. 13, p. 80. And the records of The Society for encouraging Industry and Employing the Poor in MHS, "Ezekial Price Papers," Sheets 141-322. Also, see "Articles of the Society" and the sermons of Charles Chauncy, Thomas Barnard and Samuel Cooper, all at MHS (and in Evans Catalogue, 1750-56).

[31]Colonial Laws, pp. 26, 103, 123, 126-8; Acts and Resolves, Vol. 1, pp. 64-68, Vol. 2, pp. 756-8.

[32]On the Almshouse, see BCR, Vol. 7, p. 186, Vol. 13, pp. 194, 294-6, Vol. 15, pp. 20-1, 75-6, 292, Vol. 17, pp. 86-9, 232-3, 148. And passim, Vols. 11-20. On the Workhouse (built in 1738), see BCR, Vol. 15, pp. 27, 30, 38, 66, 189. On the populations of these institutions, see BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369. On prison figures and reasons for incarcerations, see MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, for 1734, 1740, 1742, 1752.

[33]G.B. Warden, Boston, 1689-1775 (Boston: 1970), Chapter 2; BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 238-41, 280-2; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 59, pp. 60-8.

[34]The authority for residency requirements and for control of migrants was given to towns. See Josiah Benton, Warning Out in New England, 1656-1817 (Boston: 1911). In some years the Town of Boston "warned out" an average of nearly forty persons a month, see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 7, p. 73.

[35]Lawrence Towner, "The Indentures of Boston's Poor Apprentices, 1734-1805," Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Transactions 43 (1956), pp. 417-68.

[36] Ibid.; Acts and Resolves, Vol. I, pp. 64-8, Vol. II, pp. 756-8 (especially section 7) give ample explanation and justification for the official encouragement of early indenture of the children of the poor.

[37] BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369; Daniel Scott Smith, "The Demographic History of Colonial New England," JEH 32 (1972), pp. 165-83. On "lost" seamen, see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, p. 135.

[38] W.R. Bagnall, The Textile Industries of the United States (Cambridge: 1893), pp. 28-62.

[39] Ibid. On the issuance of commercial licences to widows, see Boston Town Papers, Vol. 4, p. 135. There are several dozen good examples of petitions, appeals and decisions on the licensing of widows in BCR, Vols. 7-20, indexes; "widows," "fees," "licences."

[40] Baker MSS, "Cockerel Reeves Account Book, 1708-1729."

[41] On voting qualification and participation in Town Meetings, in Boston and in the rural towns, see Ellis Ames (no title), MHS Proceedings 10 (1868), pp. 370-75; Alan Kreider and Kenneth Lockridge, "The Evolution of Massachusetts Town Government, 1640-1740," WMQ 23 (1966), pp. 549-74. The Town Meeting was ostensibly a democratic forum where eligible freeholders "voted" on local issues and ordinances, in conjunction with the elected selectmen. However, relative town size could determine the degree of participation in this process — even among eligible residents. For example, as many as 1,500 men in Boston were franchised in the eighteenth century, but the Meeting House had a 250 - 300 person capacity. By contrast, 100 men often attended Braintree Town Meetings in the 1700-1710 period; at that time Braintree had fewer than 300 "rateable polls," see MHS MSS, "John Marshall Diary." This interesting aspect of local politics has not been emphasized enough in the pertinent work of such historians as Kreider and Lockridge, Richard and Katherine Brown, and Michael Zuckerman. (See Bibliography)

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

GROWTH AND STABILITY IN PROVINCIAL MASACHUSETTS: THE CASE OF LABOR

So far, two distinct economic settings for labor have been observed as existing in provincial Massachusetts. One of these was the agrarian town and the other the commercial economy of Boston. The arrangements and practices of labor within those settings have been seen as direct reflections of the two economies. The descriptions have concluded that the community, either the rural town, or the commercial centre as represented by Boston, was a major influence in how work was performed, the formal and informal classification of labor and where labor was employed; the quality of life in the community also was influenced by the ends or attainments sought in work. The provincial period, roughly that span of time between 1690 and 1765, has been treated as a whole, for the purpose of examining the broader outlines of labor in the broadest possible scope of time. Rather than adopt a linear, progressive approach, this study made comparative examinations of labor at either end of the period and at points in between. The important conclusion of this examination is that the fundamental qualities of local economic conditions did not change and the ways in which work was organized and accomplished remained constant throughout the period.

Three successive generations shared the same respective economic mode, labor technology and communal setting for their labors; the means,

behavior and expectations of workers in 1690 were remarkably similar to those of 1765. The rural shoemaker of the 1760s still worked at a bench in a shop adjacent to his farmhouse for similar income levels and social expectations, as his predecessor had done three generations earlier.[1] Ship builders in Boston still subcontracted for portions of projects in 1765, in much the same manner as their business antecedents had done.[2] Labor practices and relations in provincial Massachusetts were presented as an unbroken continuum because no important restructuring or change was detected.

Nevertheless, even in "provincial," parochial and insular Massachusetts, important and sometimes novel events did occur and for the workers and residents of this settled world, broader issues appeared to test the durability of the ordered patterns and institutions of their social and working lives. Most of the great events of the provincial period, those unusual or unexpected or major interruptions of affairs, were disruptive rather than destructive and the resilience of Massachusetts society helped the community to absorb the potential disorder that major social instrusions can ignite. War and disease were regular and even anticipated disturbances of normal life. The province was under a near constant threat from either hostile Indian tribes or from the French or from a combination of allied French and Indian incursions. Local and Imperial military conflict peaked frequently in the periods from the mid-1690s to about 1713, and from 1739 to the late 1740s and again during the 1754 to 1763 era. These various states of

warfare were each of them capable of dislocating life in Massachusetts; the province was actively involved in territorial defense and troop supply for these actual or prospective hostilities. But a long-established program of universal militia training and preparedness, at the local community level, and a practice of securing the frontier of settlement with pre-emptive aggression, stabilized and partly neutralized the effects of war and the possible impediments to controlled expansion and secure settlement.[3]

Disease was as endemic to provincial society as was the threat of war. Indeed, the presence or eruption of disease in the provincial community was an accepted social hardship. But there were also epidemics of such scale that major economic, social and demographic consequences were possible. In Boston, three massive and stubborn smallpox outbreaks in 1721, 1730 and 1752 each infected half of the residents and were fatal to between 5% and 8% of the town's population. Each smallpox epidemic caused serious social and economic interruption, including mass flights of panic and the suspension of normal business and labor affairs. But Boston recovered each time; flight was temporary and all other activities resumed their long-term patterns and trends.[4] In rural Massachusetts, regionalized and occasionally widespread epidemics of infectious and lethal "throat distempers," dysentry and diphtheria occurred in 1711, 1735, 1745 and 1756 notably, and resulted in a doubling of mortality rates in some towns and regions. But again, as in the case of Boston, the rural communities resumed their affairs in the aftermaths of these

disorders, without any lingering changes in local conditions.[5] Certainly individuals and families were permanently affected by war and disease and there can be no cold dismissal of the long-term effects of suffering, loss and deprivation caused by these calamities. But life in the communities continued, and for the vast majority of the population no social or economic restructuring resulted from these aberrations.

These wars and disease crises did not in and of themselves change the face or substance of communal society. In fact no event, nor series of events, of these kinds seriously affected the orderly flow of life. The changes that did occur in eighteenth century society, would be more gradual or evolutionary and would owe their strength and effectiveness to a necessary quality of wide and deep pervasiveness. So far as the worker in society was concerned, war and disease did not permanently intrude upon his practices, purposes or status. However, in a more directly social and political way, changes in religious behavior and affiliation, both slow and sudden, were potentially more vital and disturbing. A decline in congregational authority or a rise in sectarianism, non-conformity or even the appearance or development of latitudinarian trends had an impact on the social and political organization and balance within many communities. The Great Awakening and the increase in non-Congregationalism caused or reflected certain processes of political change.[6]

The central place of the Church in the social and political lives of provincial men and women cannot be understated; nor can the

fact of religious change in the eighteenth century be denied. As social and political arrangements were subject to a reordering, in light of religious evolution and change, it was possible that economic and working relationships, habits and conditions similarly could be rearranged. As the economic setting of work was derived from a set of ecclesiastical, political and social principles and structures, any substantial change in the latter should change some features of the economic activities of workers. Yet there is no evidence that such a reaction occurred. It appears that when and wherever new religious and political structures developed in towns or regionally across the province, the rules and practices of work and established labor patterns remained unaltered.[7] Workers, of whatever type or status, continued to operate in the familiar conditions of their respective environments. Ecclesiastical and local political change or adjustment certainly may have affected protocol and leadership, but it did not seriously affect the ways and means, purposes and rewards of labor.

A more direct source of economic interference — monetary and currency fluctuation — did plague the province regularly and persistently and often resulted in or coincided with general or selective economic tribulation. Indeed, some of the events associated with financial change caused near-crisis conditions by creating widely swinging monetary values and currency shortages and excess emissions of paper money.[8] In the 1740s, for example, in the wake of concerted financial speculation by investors in a massive land bank scheme that

was supported by Government emission of huge sums of paper currency, a nearly 800% annual inflation rate greatly devalued the Massachusetts currency and there was considerable confusion in the financial transactions of all residents, at all levels of economic life.[9] But corrections were made very quickly and smoothly at the local level when commodity and labor values were distorted by either gradual or rapid currency debasement and irregularity. The rural worker knew immediately, through local official publicity, what the reformed value of his labor was in relation to the goods and services it normally brought, no matter how much the latter were revalued by currency and other financial fluctuation. The short-and longer-term effects of changing monetary values, and other provincial financial uncertainties and reconstructions, did not perceptibly reshape the economic configurations and practices of the near autonomous and largely cash-free economies of the agrarian communities. Even in Boston, and in other commercial economies, where the availability and value of capital, credit, currency and bills of exchange were crucial to the international and inter-colonial component of the economy, no great alteration of working life and no measurable reassessment of labor value could be observed. Over the first six decades of the eighteenth century, the most significant change in the relation of artisan's wage values to commodity values was a slight increase in favor of wage rates when compared to the quoted value of the central commodity, wheat.[10]

The domestic consequences of Imperial economic policy and controls, prior to the 1763-1765 period, though they obviously exerted an influence on the positions and attitudes of most merchants, did not transform or interrupt the working conditions and practices of the majority of Boston's artisans and middle class entrepreneurs.[11]

All the foregoing events, crises, interruptions and potentially transforming forces and trends constituted, in whole or in part, a process that might suggest change in the larger structure of Massachusetts society. From the perspective of post-Revolutionary America, it is perhaps possible to construct a coherent history of evolutionary change in provincial society. But even if the persistence of disease, war, religious and political rearrangement, and economic and financial irregularities can be seen as contributing to a plausible evolution and change in the total structure of provincial Massachusetts, it does not follow that each component aspect of that structure should be similarly involved in the process of change.[12] It can be argued that labor was largely exempted from those effects. From the viewpoint of the 1760s, not much had changed in the circumstances and activities of workers in the province. In fact, the advance of time and the military, monetary, religious and political events and processes may indeed have been changing the world around the provincial worker. But his working life, and the immediate cultural, social, political and material aspects of his particular situation remained much as they had been for his grandfather. So it was for the majority of workers and working families in provincial society.

Perhaps the most significant change in the outward appearance of provincial Massachusetts was the near quadrupling of population between 1690 and 1760. Rural growth did effect change in certain towns while it simply enlarged most; and the effects of population growth on some towns was perhaps the greatest observable cause of a marginal reorganization of conditions among a minority of workers. At one very important level, however, population increase did not change the substance of working life, in the community or for the individual; it merely expanded the scale and reach of existing institutions and facilities and included ever larger numbers of workers in traditional conditions. Despite the more than doubling of the number of Massachusetts towns between 1700 and 1765 (84 to 192), the average populations of towns nevertheless grew from some 700 to slightly more than 1,100 during the same period. But this growth was for the most part, and in the great majority of towns, absorbed into existing and ongoing institutions; and traditional methods of work and opportunities for land continued.[13] Therefore, a large proportion of the new population was assimilated by the established socio-economic system of subsistence farming and alternative vocational practice. There was still room for expansion of this system in the later provincial period. But while this pattern held true for most towns and for most workers and their successors in the province, it did not apply to all.

Some towns in eastern Massachusetts did grow to a point where normal land holding ratios and vocational practices were jeopardised

and where dual farming and laboring ceased for an increased percentage of residents. The principal locations for these developments were among the traditionally large towns of eastern Essex county and in some of the larger towns within the close radius of Boston. In communities such as Salem, Newbury, Newburyport, Ipswich and Andover in Essex, and in Cambridge, Charlestown, Braintree, Hingham and Weymouth, near Boston, and in other larger towns in Bristol and Plymouth counties, chiefly Bridgewater, Middleborough, Taunton, Rehoboth and Dartmouth, subsistence farming declined as a major basis for work.[14] The immediate causes of these shifts in work patterns were derived from straightforward population growth. In towns such as Ipswich and Newbury, a fixed and much parcelled land area and high population density dating from the seventeenth century and an unflagging birth rate had gradually reduced the amount of land available to numbers of succeeding heirs. The percentage of land holding workers dropped in these communities as populations rose and available land per capita declined on a finite land base.[15] This trend was exacerbated by immobility among second and third generation eighteenth century males. Many of these young men were content to remain in the towns of their births and work as landless laborers and drift into the growing commercial economies of their own or nearby towns, rather than migrate to newer towns and opportunities for land elsewhere in western Massachusetts and New Hampshire.[16]

The same pressure of population and the deliberate and voluntary immobility of young landless men resulted in similar modifications in the province's established two-level or intermediate economies. Salem and Newburyport perhaps were the outstanding examples of the seventeenth century mixed economy, where the population had divided itself into two distinguishable sectors of separate agricultural and commercial economic and occupational functions.[17] By the end of the provincial period, Salem's population was nearly 6,000 and it was the second largest town in the province. While previously about 60% of Salem's inhabitants had occupied farms, the number had fallen to nearly 40% in the 1760s.[18] Commercial and manufacturing activity had increased proportionally.

As Boston's economy and population levelled out after 1740, much of the natural growth and expansion in Massachusetts shipbuilding, distilling, leather production, wood products manufacturing, coopering, warehousing and shipping devolved to communities such as Salem. Newburyport, Braintree and some erstwhile predominantly agricultural coastal towns.[19] The specialized artisans, skilled and semi-skilled workers, normally the marked feature of the Boston labor economy, were becoming established in increasing numbers and as a growing proportion of all workers, in towns where agriculture was receding as a principal labor mode.[20] In short, the growth in the province's commercial, non-agricultural economy, that growth which occurred along with general population increase, was being decentralized away from its prior

concentration in Boston. And as it was, it was supported by a growing number of non-agricultural workers, and a high percentage of them, in the relatively crowded precincts of older and larger eastern coastal communities.[21]

These economic and vocational developments were limited, however, to a dozen or so towns on or close to the Massachusetts seaboard. The province's commercial fishing towns, principally Gloucester and Marblehead — whose populations reached 3,000 each by 1770 — and Plymouth, where together some 1,200 families gained their livelihoods from fishing or a mixture of fishing and farming, were unaffected by population growth and commercial economic diffusion because the stocks of fish, and the markets for them permitted orderly expansion.[22] Certainly the populations of most fishing communities increased, but there, just as in the inland farm communities, work patterns continued untrammelled and means of livelihood and customs were passed on to others in a setting that could accommodate them. The effects of growth and the redistribution of commercial economic enterprise were slight and geographically selective.

For most of Massachusetts and for virtually all of it beyond the littoral, the traditional means and methods of work and the economic context of community endured. Men still worked in the same ways for familiar ends. The conventional terms and objectives of work in 1690 were available and attainable, under similar conditions, in 1760. There had been no industrial or agricultural innovation in mechanical or technological devices or in organizational technique or practice.

In itself, this relative stasis in economic and vocational methods assured a certain continuity for labor. But the chief agency of stability and continuity was the local community. There, the institutions of home, farm, family and labor exchange, and the community's capacity to provide some land for most, and the plasticity of its economy, meant that it could incorporate steady and substantial growth over three generations without being transformed in the process. Indeed, it was in the traditionally fluid-labor economies of the rural agricultural towns that most of the population growth in Massachusetts took place, so that in the area of least change there occurred the greatest percentage of growth. For example, the regions of Worcester and Hampshire counties in the west, and York county in the north accounted for 25.4% of the province's population in 1751; between 1751 and 1765 these wholly agricultural areas absorbed 45.36% of the population growth in Massachusetts — 23,509 of 51,819 — to increase their share to nearly 30% of the total population. In her study of institutional influence Lois Mathews found that most of the growth in late provincial society took place in agricultural communities and concluded that Massachusetts was more agricultural in 1775 than it had been at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[23]

In fact, the amount of cultivated acreage continued to increase after the provincial period and rose from 580,200 acres in 1751 to 1,265,000 acres in 1801. The population of Massachusetts more than doubled in this same half-century: from 192,000 to 422,000.

The acres per capita of cultivated land was nearly constant — at 3.02 in 1751 and 3.00 in 1801. Certainly this agricultural consistency, on a finite territorial base, was aided by better land-use techniques, the breaking and reclamation of previously ignored waste land, and by mechanical innovation. But as Percy Bidwell points out, most of these "advances" occurred after the Revolution when the need for a more intensive use of land forced Massachusetts farmers finally to adopt agricultural techniques they had ignored up to the 1770s. Indeed, according to Bidwell, as late as the 1780s farms and farming had not changed significantly since the beginning of the century, even in the older, settled regions. There was still no incentive for intensive "productivity" for profit; a process that would have spurred more advanced land-use and implement techniques. Moreover, it has been suggested in this present study that traditional ways of farming, for a constant proportion of the population, were continued in the province because subsistence family farming and established methods of productivity suited the economic and labor purposes of rural society. Prior to the Revolution the rate of population increase, while persistent, had not been sufficient to compel a more "scientific" use of land and tools in order to support more people on less available land. Although land was not so plentiful in eastern Massachusetts in the 1760s as it had been in 1690, there was still enough available to maintain extensive subsistence farming for an important majority of the rural population. It should be remembered that of all titled land in Masachusetts in 1750 only 40% was under cultivation — a mere 11% of the total land area of the province.[24]

Nevertheless, some limiting factors regarding agricultural growth, land availability and rural labor stability should be repeated. In both older and newer settled regions of the province the available "new" land base was indeed shrinking in the face of population increase and the demand for arable soil. By 1760 there were only a few unbroken, ungranted tracts of fertile land left within Massachusetts and these were in the far west and north of the province; and the amount of available older deeded and subdivided land was decreasing. Quite simply, population and farm land were approaching an imbalance. Each generation laid claim to its expected share of arable land and felt obliged to amass, hold and then transfer land to its successors. The available land base was finite and there is no question that contemporaries were aware and concerned about the limits to continual agricultural expansion. Schemes to secure tracts of land, individually or as members of communal groups, in western Massachusetts, New Hampshire and elsewhere in New England, had been organized and chartered since the late seventeenth century.[25] At the end of the provincial period organized attempts were made by land speculators to lure presumed land-short or landless Massachusetts men to Nova Scotia; a plan, incidentally, that failed to achieve its intended form or scale.[26] In most of Massachusetts, however, individual titled land holdings were decreasing in size by the late 1760s, as more sons and lessees demanded more pieces of former 100 to 200 acre properties.[27] What deflected the pressure on land, or minimized its effects, was the durability of the

scale, technology and labor dynamics of subsistence farming. So long as the farm remained a single family unit its operable size was fixed. The practice of obtaining ten to twenty acres of farm land by purchase, lease or bequeath, for a constant or rising percentage of the population, continued to the end of the provincial period.[28]

The second point to be made regarding labor stability in rural Massachusetts concerns local social institutions. These, of course, were tied to the original causes and purposes of subsistence farming.[29] The farm, the family and the community survived and remained as stable and continuing agencies because they had been designed, molded and upheld to conform to the availability, use and transferrence of farm land. The limitations to commercial farming continued beyond the provincial period, so that subsistence farming remained the dominant agricultural mode. Certainly there were bounds to the size at which a particular community could continue to serve as a self-sufficient market, dependent on a majority of its inhabitants retaining a landed interest as subsistence farmers. But to the end of the provincial period the average Massachusetts town had not reached that bound or limit. It remained a non-commercial, largely self-contained labor and economic market, fulfilling that role and being nourished by an independent, ethnically homogeneous and economically balanced population which exchanged its labor on an interdependent but highly personalized basis. The Meeting House, as a symbol of cultural and communal cohesion, with its offices of religious and political management and control, stood as the official

fulcrum of social life in the community. But it was work, rather than the ecclesiastical polity, that committed the individual adult male to the community and its collective interest.

In these pages workers often have been considered en masse, as collective and even definable groups of artisans, farmers, laborers and entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to depict and emphasize the independence and uniqueness implicit in the habits of men who were multi-talented, self-reliant and vocationally mobile in their working lives. Although much evidence was drawn from impersonal sources, these men should not be regarded entirely as statistics. They were individuals, and the evidence of their activities, conditions and goals was drawn in large part from their own records.[30] The worker in provincial society was a personality. But there was an apparent paradox in his situation. Certainly he was a member of a culture and habitat that demanded religious and political conformity and strict social accountability to the community. Yet he possessed the means to express himself as a free individual, in the context of his family and work. As such the provincial man displayed a character that is at odds with the stereotyped solitary, brooding and pessimistic New Englander.[31] Rather, he was hopeful and cooperative, like Cockerel Reeves, and enjoyed his work, took pride in it, shared and exchanged it with others as did John Reed, the shoemaker, and demonstrated a personal responsibility, creativity and resourcefulness like those qualities of John Marshall, the mason, that indicates both a liberal

conviviality and a strong individual character. He was as outgoing in his working life as he was docile in the face of Church authority. And as much as he commanded his children with stern and doctrinaire edicts, he included them naturally and amiably in his work. In the rural setting, the worker's independence and necessary cooperativeness was marked in practice by the advantages and restrictions of subsistence farming. And if his world was, overall, somewhat closed, familiar and predictable, it was not vocationally or socially narrow.[32]

The rural worker's measure of independence began with his own self-sufficiency, his ability to provide as much of his basic material needs as was feasible, by his own means and with his own hands. By way of contrast, his Boston counterpart and others in the non-agricultural economy, drew their chief means of self-reliance from the demand for their particular skills and a judicious management of those skills. In both cases, the crucial principles of work were to establish a base of material sufficiency, either the subsistence farm or a highly marketable crafts specialty, and then to become a necessary member of a wider economy of demand and opportunity. Workers in Boston could not be controlled by a class of industrial despots. Indeed, the attitude and conduct of Boston's capitalists and senior merchants were, for the most part, liberal and benign, as in the examples of Boston merchants supporting license applications and funding the stock for semi-skilled workers. The scale and universality of independent artisanship meant that skilled service, manufacturing, or construction work was in the

hands and under the control of individual tradesmen and was governed by the market conditions of small scale enterprise, competition and free disposal of labor.

These considerations inevitably lead to the problem of communalism versus self interest; and which of those factors exerted the greatest influence on the behavior and attitudes of provincial workers. Certainly, according to one theory, individualism and self-improvement were hallmarks of all work.[38] For the subsistence farmer, either as a part time artisan or as a landed laborer, more land, more labor and commodity credit and an even larger degree of self-control over time and work were the central incentives of working life. For the Boston laborer, an unequivocal escape from his condition was his sole, self-interested aim; and the commercial artisan sought property and upward levels of entrepreneurial and business status as the ends of his labors. All these various forms of material aspiration followed the individual's initial and early securing of an economic place in community life. It cannot be denied that workers in provincial Massachusetts did aspire to a condition of <u>more</u>: more estate, real and personal, more economic independence and ultimately more control over their own and the working lives of others. It may well be that attitudes and ethics were non-altruistic and selfishly acquisitive. But economic conditions applied serious restraints to personal aggrandizement. Independence and acquisitiveness could only be upheld within the context of the local and communal economy. That economy functioned

only in the practical operation of labor and economic interdependence and interchange.[34]

A balance was struck between the apparent motives of workers and the extent to which those intentions could be realized. The community itself was the market catalyst for labor and economic exchange, and within the community the self-interested individual was linked to the independent activities of all other workers. That is not to say that working life in this society was aggressively competitive and that the more able victimized the less assertive or less capable. Rather, it was in the best interest of the individual to increase his own livelihood, comfort and security by acceding to the independence of others. The rural artisan still had to negotiate mutually agreeable terms of goods and labor exchange with the less influential husbandman; they served each other's purposes effectively in a setting that provided no cheap labor pool or mass marketing of commodities, and did not encourage either. So long as farms were small and farming was extensively widespread among the population, laboring and economic intercourse was personalized, fluid and constantly a process of interdependence.

In Boston, so long as crafts were personalized and not in any way "industrialized" in intensive and large scale organization, the many local artisans had to deal with each other, as both provider and consumer and not with an impersonal, detached "employer," or market; nor could the Boston artisan hope to become such an employer. No

matter how high he went, or how much influence he exercised over the labor of others, the Boston artisan remained respectful and dependent of the free labor of other artisans in the community. Perhaps the senior and wealthier merchants of Boston slipped from the general rules of economic and work reciprocation and mutual dependency, and can be seen as distinctive economic creatures who had achieved the full bloom of acquisitive self-interest. But these men were exceptions to the whole of working life in the province. This group represented a very small minority in Massachusetts and if its influence was disproportionate to its size, that influence was at best indirect and immaterial to the work habits and social conditions of the great majority of workers in Boston and in the province as a whole.[35]

The stability of the provincial economy, as it merged with labor conditions and practices, can be seen in the phenomenon of Boston's growth and eventual saturation and relative decline. The end of population and economic growth in the town, in the 1740s, was a consequence of the limits of eighteenth century provincial commercial and industrial concentration. The dispersal of traditional Boston investment and crafts enterprises to other towns was only partly due to the appeal and growth of those other communities. By 1740, provincial Boston had reached the extent of its capacity to attract, hold and expand any new economic activity or population. Boston became crowded with too many independent artisans competing in a slackening economy. The traditional independent status of the crafts specialists required

an atmosphere of multiple small-scale industrial enterprises, a wide and personalized market for his skills and an opportunity for some expansion and property possession. Without the introduction of concentrated, large scale and mass production manufacturing facilities, Boston could not expand its economic base. The physical limitations of the town, and the entrenched fragmented scale of its commercial industries meant that without a serious reordering of its economy, the town's growth would eventually stabilize. Boston did not change its economic character and stabilization occurred before the end of the provincial period.[36]

In 1750, Boston merchants attempted to organize a linen-textile factory, modelled on English and Irish examples of flow production, industrial technique and profit margins and quantitative and intensive labor employment, only to see it flounder after a few years of depressing failure. The ambitious plan was resurrected in the late 1760s, in the midst of the non-importation clamor, and again failed. The scheme was doomed largely because it was too grandiose and premature. Its failure served notice of the severe limitations of the Massachusetts market, a market that provided its own textiles much more efficiently at the domestic and local level. Furthermore, the linen manufacturing scheme could not find a passive and needy skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled work force to man it.[37]

In the middle of the provincial period Boston had stood as a specialized community of pre-industrial commerce and manufacturing. By

1750, it served as a model of the mature pre-industrial Massachusetts commercial town. To grow again, it would have to change. It would require investment in manufacturing industries, a less self-reliant market to serve, and an available labor population to operate and depend on its jobs and to rely on its wages. The market would have to increase substantially before any such changes could take place. In short, renewed growth in Boston was contingent upon a restructuring of its economy, and that would require a radical change in the economic, social, vocational and technical standards and conditions in the town and in the province. Boston would have to wait for the larger demand created by the national United States market and a general diminution of local and agricultural self-sufficiency. Those markets would be served by the development of the factory system and its manning by a landless labor force. These did not affect Boston until the early decades of the nineteenth century and to the end of the provincial period no such developments were in sight.[38] The rural town could grow and retain its fluid and multi-vocational labor economy only if it could continue to provide subsistence farming opportunities for increased population. Boston's growth was predicated upon a similar principle of scale and economic and vocational balance. The end of Boston's growth did not spell a change in the commercial labor economy of the town; rather, the town's failure to grow reflected the market's resistance to change, and confirmed the strength and durability of its labor economy.

Nevertheless, the clearest observable change in the labor economy of pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts did occur in the commercial sector; in the non-agricultural small manufacturing and shop-industry economy. But even there the changes were not of general significance but were largely superficial and involved a modest expansion of traditional shop industries. For a start, in terms of numbers and geography, this component of the province's economy was overshadowed by the persistently larger agricultural economy.[39] Moreover, the changes were not substantive. They did not affect the way men worked or the organization and ordinary arrangements of specialized, individualized artisan and service work. Nor did the changes enlarge the commercial sector as a proportion of the whole economy. There was no redirection of capital investment in new kinds of production items or methods, or in distribution technique. Instead it was mostly a matter of relocation, as some towns acquired a few shop industries for the first time and other previously partly commercial towns expanded their commercial economies at the expense of agriculture. Here, it might be argued, there was a measurable break with the agrarian tradition. But these changes occurred only where commercial patterns had been established in the previous century, and in a few towns in the extreme east of the province where size and some landlessness, coupled with the overflow of Boston's economy, changed the working lives of some residents. Those towns must be seen as exceptions. No similar

adjustments accrued to the rest of the province. There, subsistence farming continued to define the local economies and dominate the economic and social habits of workers.

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There was no "typical" workman in provincial Massachusetts, but a diverse population of workers who shared similar or comparable socio-economic goals. These were pursued in one of two commonly shared economic settings and to a slight degree in a third setting that offered elements of the two principal modes. Within the shared economies, workers possessed basic independent means with which to assure themselves and their families of a measure of material self sufficiency. Certainly, this society of workers was not without differentiation and stratification. There were degrees of wealth and influence and contrary degrees of economic hardship and socio-political exclusion. There were various layers of economic condition and opportunity. As revealed by this study, some men and their families and some groups had more opportunity to advance or improve themselves than did others, and some lived richer, fuller and more secure and satisfying lives. But very little of this represented extremes of wealth and poverty, and none of it was based upon perpetuated or arbitrary qualifications of genealogy or location. In the working lives of this population, and by extension in its social order, there was greater equality and stability of condition than there was disparity and mobility.

In terms of equality and stability and their relationship to the lack of economic change in provincial Massachusetts, Stuart Bruchey has noted that a minimum "of horizontal social movement . . . tended to make for a relatively lesser degree of vertical mobility." Moreover, he claimed, "probably in few societies in history have the means of subsistence been so widely distributed" as in early Massachusetts. The combination of residential persistence, insularity and subsistence agriculture created what Bruchey calls an "ignorance of want . . . , without wants markets cannot exist and to the extent that families and communities enjoyed a high degree of self-sufficiency, to the extent that transportation obstacles and low incomes per capita limited the size of markets, specialization and the diversification of the economy, to that extent [economic] growth was inhibited." As growth in the economy was inhibited, so too were substantive changes in the economy.[40]

It is possible to locate social, economic and political "classes" in provincial society, but it is not so easy to identify a "working class." In any case, the most significant quality of work and workers in provincial Massachusetts was the strength of the social and economic institutions that surrounded labor, and the durability of labor's practiced forms, and the stability these reflected of the historical background. So far as work was concerned, the eighteenth century was not so much an overture to the nineteenth century as it was an extension of the seventeenth century.

NOTES

CHAPTER IX

[1]Baker, MSS. For the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, among the most graphic artisan accounts are those of "Jacob Adams" (shoemaker), "Blacksmith's Ledger," "Cockerel Reeves" (laborer), "Jacob Nash" (Sawyer, laborer, handyman), MHS MSS, "John Marshall Diary" (mason). For the mid and late provincial period, among the most thorough accounts and papers are, Baker, MSS, "Nathaniel Chamberlin" (blacksmith), "John Reed" (shoemaker), "Pyam Cushing" (merchant, storekeeper), "Edward Marrett" (tailor), "John Hayward" (tanner), and MHS MSS, "Joseph Andrews Journal" (farmer). Especially useful for chronological comparison because they cover the entire period, are Baker, MSS, "Ebenezer Wright Accounts" (weavers) 1708-1790, "Pearson Family Accounts" (millers, carpenters) 1684-1799, "Bartlett Accounts" (weavers, tailors) 1704-1765. Adams and Reed, shoemakers, at either end of the period and in widely separated locations (east and west), operated on almost identical socio-economic principles, using the same techniques, and production and barter methods, and both farmed.

[2]MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, October 1695, "Articles of Agreement" (a seven page contract involving over thirty artisans); February 1759, "Wentworth Letter." Also, see "Hallowell Report" (1956) in M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 117, pp. 64-5, 67-8, and Vol. 7, "Commercial" (shipping, 1697-1714). MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, March 1726/7, "Caulkers Contract."

[3]M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 29-34, "Indian" and "Indian Treaties"; Vols. 67-79, "Military." A good summary of pre-Revolutionary militia history and its purposes, actions and organizations can be found in John Shy, Toward Lexington, The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the Revolution (New York: 1965), Chapters 1 and 2. Shy points out that prior to 1754 the province was virtually responsible for the mostly capable of its own military needs, on land at least.

[4]Lemuel Shattuck, Report . . to Obtain the . . . Census (Boston: 1946), pp. 71-2, 126-133; John Blake, Public Health in the Town of Boston 1630-1822 (Cambridge: 1959); BCR, Vol. 8, pp. 154-167, Vol. 13, pp. 81-2, 308, Vol. 14, pp. 221, 238; MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, July 24, 1752.

[5]Richard Shyrock, Medicine and Society in America, 1660-1860 (Boston: 1960). There are vivid and touching descriptions of periodic, local rural epidemics of contagious disease in "John Marshall Diary" for 1697, 1701 and 1711.

[6]There is a huge literature on the ecclesiastical history of eighteenth century Massachusetts. Much of the work to 1970 is cited and reviewed in Michael McGiffert, "American Puritan Studies in the 1960s," WMQ 27 (1970), pp. 36-67. Still the best single study of the intertwined theological, esslesiastical and political evolution of the provincial Church is Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (Cambridge: 1953). A different approach, but with similar emphasis on the religious and political causes and effects of change, is Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution (Cambridge: 1966). On the numbers and locations of "new" sects in 1775, see Map 1, this paper.

[7]Ibid. This unchanging character of work and working arrangements in the face of changing religious attitudes and socio-political alignments, is in some way contrary to the thesis of declining "corporatism" and rising "self-interest" and "acquisitiveness." This theme, albeit set in Connecticut, is most persuasively developed in Richard Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1763 (Cambridge: 1967). Also, see Chapter II, Note 45 in this paper, and note 31 below.

[8]Andrew MacFarlane Davis, Currency and Banking in the Province of Massachusetts Bay (New York: 1901); Jacob Felt, An Historical Account of Massachusetts Currency (Boston: 1839).

[9]Ibid. On the rates of inflation after 1740, see M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 101-102, "Pecuniary."

[10]For example, the official wage rate for all skilled artisan work rose gradually from about 2/- (Massachusetts currency) per day in the mid-to late- seventeenth century to about 4/6 per day in the 1730s. It jumped to between 30/- and 40/- a day in the 1740s and settled at 5/- to 5/6 when the Massachusetts currency was stabilized and revalued in 1750. ("Old Tenor" to "Lawful Money"). Except for the 1740s, Massachusetts currency was usually valued at between 75% and 85% Sterling. On the speed at which workers' wage rates were adjusted to slow or sudden changes, revaluations, depreciations, inflations and deflations in currency value and commodity prices, see the Account Books of "Daniel Rea," "Edward Marrett," "Bartless Family," "Pearson Family," and "Pyam Cushing" (all at Baker, MSS). Many of these and other artisans kept their accounts in two or three different monetary

values. Also, see "Wages in the Colonial Period" (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 499, 1929). On the relationship between wage rates and property and commodity prices and values, see Felt, Massachusetts Currency, appendices, and A.H. Cole, Wholesale Commodity Prices in the U.S., 1700-1861 (Cambridge: 1938), p. 5 and Appendix A. On slowly rising wage values, especially against wheat prices, see "Wages in Colonial Pico Daybook" and compare with Cole, Commodity Prices.

[11]On merchants and Imperial monetary policy, see especially Curtis P. Nettels, The Money Supply of the American Colonies Before 1720 (Madison, Wisconsin: 1934).

[12]The Revolution stands like a monolith to the historiography of provincial America. Leaving aside the enormous and controversial literature of "consensual" versus "conflict" theoretical causes of the Revolution, and the intellectual, purely political, economic and ideological roots and linkages to the Revolution (see Bernard Bailyn, "The Central Themes of the American Revolution" in Kurtz and Hutson, eds., Essays on the American Revolution (New York: 1973) and passim), a useful example of using the Revolution as a means of tracing long term provincial social restructuring and change is J. Franklin Jameson, The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement (Boston: 1963, reprint). A well argued version of the theory of "macro" change and "micro" stability, with strong relevance to provincial families, farming and labor, is J.A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentalité in Pre-Industrial America," WMQ 35 (1978), pp. 3-32.

[13]Appendix III; M. Arch. MSS, Vols. 130-134, "Valuations." Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society, and an Afterthought," in Katz, ed., Colonial America. . . (Boston: 1971) admits to continuing availability of land while arguing smaller parcels of subsistence farm holdings, pp. 472-73. However, his "crowding" thesis fails to respect the physical limits of single-family farming and the traditional dual occupational practices of subsistence farmers. Lockridge does detect and show changed conditions and trends in many towns, but his thesis is more applicable to the 1780-1800 period than to the late provincial period. See P.W. Bidwell and John Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington: 1925), pp. 69-101.

[14]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls"; Vols. 130-134, "Valuations of Towns"; Lockridge, "Land, Population"; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 115-146; Manfred Jonas, "The Wills of the Early Settlers of Essex County," EIHC 96 (1960), pp. 228-35; E.P. Hamilton, "Early Industry of the Neponset and Charles," MHS Proceedings 71 (1959), pp. 108-123. See M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130, in pertinent county and town sections.

[15]On the seventeenth century conditions see H.W. Belknap, Trades and Tradesmen of Essex County (Salem: 1929); on later population growth and land distribution see M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130, "Newbury" and "Ipswich." Jacob Felt, History of Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton (Cambridge: 1834).

[16]Lockridge, "Land, Population," pp. 474-76; Philip Greven Jr., Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca: 1970).

[17]Sidney Perley, History of Salem (1926): W.I. Davisson and D.J. Duggan, "Commerce in Seventeenth Century Essex County," EIHC 107 (1971), pp. 113-43; Bruno Foreman, "Salem Tradesmen and Craftsmen, c. 1762," EIHC 107 (1971), pp. 62-82; D.W. Koch, "Income Distribution and Political Structure in Seventeenth Century Salem," EIHC 105 (1969), pp. 50-71. M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130 gives relative farming units, "industrial" facilities and personal income assessments.

[18]Perley, History of Salem; Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt (New York: 1955), p. 216.

[19]BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 220-22, 238, 40, 280-82; M. Arch., Vol. 117, pp. 60-70.

[20]M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130, "Valuations"; Vol. 94, "Muster Rolls."

[21]Ibid., and Lockridge, "Land, Population."

[22]Baker, MSS,"V.S. Clark Notes," Box 6, notes 600 full-time and "self-employed" fishermen in 1721, and as many as 1,100 fishermen all told (he cites Board of Trade estimates). For the polls and estates of the main fishing communities, see M. Arch. MSS, 130, "Gloucester," "Marblehead," "Plymouth." Sidney Perley, "Marblehead in 1700," EIHC 48 (1912), pp. 79-84, describes the economics of fishing.

[23]Lois Kimball Mathews, The Expansion of New England (Boston: 1909), pp. 43-138. On population growth in the counties, see Appendix III, i (this paper). In 1770, of a total of nearly 200 towns, only 13, including Boston, had more than 3,000 residents. See "Carrington Bowles" (London: 1772), cited in Dirk Hoerder, Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts (New York: 1977), endpapers. Only four towns — Boston, Salem, Gloucester, and Marblehead — contained more than 1,000 polls (adult white males) and the latter two only barely

over 1,000. See M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 130. On non-agricultural technology, location and organization, see V.S. Clark, History of Manufactures in the United States, 1607-1860 (Washington: 1916), pp. 159-64, 181. On farming "primitiveness" and persistence of methods see Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 84 ff.

[24]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 84 ff.; M. Arch MSS, "Valuations" for 1767, 1771, 1801; MHS MSS "Valuations for Counties, 1751"; Chapter II and Appendices III and IV (this paper).

[25]Mathews, Expansion of New England, pp. 43-138; Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 71-2.

[26]MHS Misc. Bound MSS, Dec., 1764, "Letter to Captain Falconer." The scheme attracted about sixty of an expected 500 families. G. Stewart and G. Rawlyk, A People Highly Favored of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution (Toronto: 1972), Chapter 1, estimate that some 12,000 New Englanders settled in Nova Scotia between 1758 and 1775. But not all were from Massachusetts and many were religious political dissidents and not agricultural migrants.

[27]Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 49-59; Lockridge, "Land, Population"; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 1, "Agriculture."

[28]Greven, Four Generations, found that even in "crowded" Essex county, light but steady emigration in the mid-provincial period, and the slow decrease in divisible inheritance (and more primogeniture) helped to sustain subsistence farming for a constant percentage of the population. On the continuing scale of farming as a part-time activity, Bidwell, History of Agriculture, pp. 84 ff. notes its appeal and repeats the words of General Warren of Massachusetts, writing in 1786: "One miserable team, a paltry plow and everything in the same proportion; three acres of Indian corn . . . as many acres of half-starved English grain . . . and a small yard of turnips complete the tillage, and the whole is conducted, perhaps, by a man and a boy, and performed in half their time" (p. 85, emphasis added). Warren, like most contemporaries, and most historians, laments the waste and crudeness of eighteenth century American farming, compared to the efficiency of English agriculture. Labor, much of it landless, and more advanced techniques, made English farming more "productive." It is my belief that farm operation and labor utilization in provincial Massachusetts were tied to the socio-economic exigencies of extensive popular land holding and not to criteria of intensive productivity and profit. For the early modern trends in English agriculture, see W.E. Minchinton, ed., Essays in Agrarian History (London: 1968).

[29]Sumner Chilton Powell, Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town (Wesleyan University: 1963), pp. 168-186. Also, see Chapter II, notes 12, 13, 14, in the present paper.

[30]The principal personalized manuscript workers' records, mostly in accounts but in some diaries, journals and daybooks, and with considerable commentary in some cases, are located in Baker, MSS; MHS Miscellaneous Bound MSS, 1652-1765 (unindexed); Mass. Archives MSS, especially Volumes 1, 8, 39-44, 59, 112-118, 244-254; Boston Public Library, Boston Town Papers. See Bibliography below.

[31]This particular stereotype is found, for example, in Edmund Morgan, Visible Saints. . . (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1963) and The Puritan Family (New York: 1966) and in Miller, Colony to Province and in Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought: The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800 (New York: 1927). Parrington notes the balance and conflict between the "traditional . . . prudential morality. . . , uncreative, conservative and conventional" and the "generous, kindly . . . embodiment of village, friendship," pp. 88-98. He sees Samuel Sewall as the paradigm for the self-interested but cooperative "Puritan Yankee."

[32]See the comments on the backgrounds and activities of these and other workers in Chapters III, IV and V in this paper.

[33]The social and psychological subtleties of this difficult question are dealt with in some depth in J.E. Crowley, This Sheba Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth Century America (Baltimore: 1974).

[34]For a broader and more technical treatment of the restraints on capital accumulation, labor exploitation and personal economic independence, see J.R.T. Hughes, Social Control in the Colonial Economy (Charlottesville, Va.: 1976). Hughes lays more emphasis on "non-market control" (i.e., laws, customs, policies) than on the natural social and economic restraints of the limited and personalized Massachusetts economy. Clark, History of Manufactures, is more concerned with the size (small) and unique components (many small competitive "units") of the economy, pp. 144-158, especially. For a different view, and exceptions, see Bushman, Puritan to Yankee.

[35]Ibid. On the economic philosphies and the influences of merchants, see, for example, Bernard Bailyn, New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: 1955); Charles McLean Andrews, Boston Merchants and the Non-Importation Movement (reprint, Boston: 1968); Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth (New York: 1965), Chapter 3.

[36]Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness . . . 1625-1742 (reprint, New York: 1966), pp. 364-481 and Cities in Revolt . . . 1743-1776 (reprint, New York: 1971), pp. 250-292; G.B. Warden, Boston, 1689-1776 (Boston: 1970), Chapter 4. On the physical impediments to Boston's growth in the eighteenth century, see Walter Muir Whitehill, Boston, A Topographical History (second edition, Cambridge: 1968).

[37]MHS MSS, "Ezekial Price Papers, 1754-85," sheets 141-322; W.R. Bagnall, The Textile Industries of the United States (Cambridge: 1893), pp. 28-40; M. Arch. MSS, Vol. 59, pp. 381-84, 391-94, 427-29, 290-94; BCR, Vol. 14, pp. 230 ff.

[38]Possibly, socio-economic conditions did begin to change during and after the Revolution, see Alan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," WMQ 28 (1971), pp. 375-412. But earlier vocational practices appear to have survived this period, see the occupational census in BCR, Vol. 10, pp. 171 ff.

[39]Still, the importance to labor practices of the province's commercial economy, both as an alternative and as a contrast to agrarianism, cannot be denied. Though it remained a principal economic mode for a minority of provincial workers, that minority was numerically large. And its presence and permanence in the provincial period would have important ramifications in the later economic development of Massachusetts. See Clark, History of Manufactures, pp. 233 ff. In the early nineteenth century, when the State was becoming more industrialized and less agrarian, the early factories (mostly textile and footwear) were first manned by the sons and grandsons of provincial commercial workers, along with displaced farm workers. Later, this industrialization was bolstered by the availability of large numbers of European immigrants.

[40]Bruchey, Roots of American Economic Growth, pp. 60, 63.

APPENDIX I

ACCOUNT SAMPLE

The following samples are taken from the "John Reed Account Book, 1740-69" (Baker, MSS 641 R 324) and are intended to illustrate the extensiveness of the barter system in rural towns. Reed was a shoemaker-farmer in Weymouth in coastal southern Suffolk county, about twelve miles from Boston. His example is quite typical of other artisans practicing other crafts and trades in other parts of Massachusetts throughout the 1690-1765 period. Reed's farm was close to the average provincial size and contained twenty acres of combined tillage, cultivated grass, pasture and orchard.

The first list deals with the variety of goods which Reed received for shoe manufacture and repair. It involves some thirty separate customers for the twelve months following February, 1742/3. All entries have attached monetary values but none are given here; little money changed hands and the purpose here is to denote the varieties of exchange and not "income". Among the items Reed received as credit were: hides, milk, rye, calf-skins, a pound of fat, cash, turnips, flax, honey, meat, earthenware, an almanac, dry fish, two pigs, wool, salt, hay, molasses, oil, plums, biscuits, cider, casks, fish. Reed built (or had built) a house in 1742-43, and he received the following construction materials in barter: posts, clay, rails, 1,000 shingles, 1,000 bricks, pavements, lime, clapboards, planks. For his shop, Reed received from local suppliers, in barter: four dozen heels, a side of cured leather, tacks. Reed received the following farm and related labor: from a client's slave, Sambo, splitting rails, plowing, driving plow for two acres, sliding six loads of wood. From

a client's white servant, carting hides to Braintree, a day's work planting, one day thatching a barn, a day's work hoeing, mortising eight posts. From customers themselves, Reed received, carting dung and hay, helping in carrying hay, carting corn, carting stones, gathering corn and picking apples, hoeing, mowing, butchering. For the construction of his dwelling, Reed credited a mason with chimney work, laying paths, plastering, making mortar, underpinning, "you and Nathaniel's work." From a blacksmith he received, ax sharpening, a hoe, a spindle. From a tailor, a frock, doublet, jacket and britches, and also "driving my plow" and "your wife for work." He also had a deed written and "borrowed horses."

Reed balanced all of these services and goods with shoe-making. The following is a debit and credit account of John Reed's dealings with John Porter who was a carter, farmer, weaver and general handyman. The two conducted similar transactions from about 1751 until 1775. The account was usually balanced annually.

DEBIT (Reed to Porter)	CREDIT (Porter to Reed)
1763: milk, barley and eight pairs of shoes for Porter, his wife and two others.	1763: nine entries for cartage (hay, dung, stones, grain), making six barrels of cider," cash, "dressing my hogs," "weaving fifteen yards," "for Solomon (a son) one-half day's mowing."
1764: "Two hands (Reed and his son) one-half day's planting," "three-quarters of leather for Ben" (a creditor of Porter's), "work at your cave (quarry)," eighteen entries for shoes or repairs.	1764: twelve entries for cartage (dung, stones, rye, lime, boards), "reaping," "killing beef," "dressing hogs," "making four barrels of cider."

DEBIT (Reed to Porter)	CREDIT (Porter to Reed)
1765: "five and one-half pounds of veal," "helped unload boat (hay cart) and stack hay," "barley," "400 (?) of salt, hay," fourteen entries for shoes and repairs.	1765: nine entries for cartage, "parsnips," "mowing and raking for one-half day," "dressing a calf," "twenty-one barrels cider."
1766 to 1769: a total of sixty-one shoes and shoe-repair transactions and nothing else.	1766 to 1769: fifteen entries for cartage. In 1767, "weaving thirty-eight yards of cloth." In 1768, fifty yards. And throughout, occasional work (as above) in the fields, butchering, and cider supply.

It can be seen that both men exchanged certain specialties: Reed his craft and Porter his labor and his ability to cart, make cider and weave. These kinds of relationships were repeated several times between Reed and others and between Porter and others. Of special note is the occasional exchange of labor between the two men and their families; this was done often to balance any disparity in the monetary value in the accounts. In most years no money changed hands between the two men.

APPENDIX II

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bibliographical note on currency, wages, prices, property and commodity values and their meanings.

Among the best general studies are:

BRUCHEY, STUART. The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1860 (New York: 1965).

COLE, A.H. Wholesale Commodity Prices in the United States, 1700-1861 (Cambridge: 1938).

DANIELS, BRUCE. "Defining Economic Classes in Colonial Massachusetts," AAS Proceedings 83 (1973), 251-59.

DAVIS, ANDREW. Tracts Relating to the Currency of Massachusetts Bay, 1682-1720 (Boston: 1902).

_____. Currency and Banking in the Province of Massachusetts Bay (New York: 1901).

FELT, JACOB. An Historical Account of Massachusetts Currency (Boston: 1839).

MAIN, J.T. The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: 1965), especially pp. 68-163.

WEEDON, W.B. Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789 (New York: 1890).

For wage and price regulation in provincial Massachusetts, see R.B. MORRIS, Government and Labor in Early America (New York: 1946).

For official sources of regulation and of taxing rates and procedures, see Mass. Bay Recs. Vols. 1-5; Acts and Resolves, Vols. 1-5; BCR, Vols. 7-20; Boston Town Papers, Vols. 1-7. The latter two and G.B. WARDEN, "The Distribution of Property in Boston, 1692-1775" in Perspectives in American History 10 (1976), 81-128, contain useful information, data and reference to property values and the sources for further data.

The best manuscript collections for wages, prices, property and commodity values are the various local and county Probate and Deed records and MHS Misc. Bd. MSS, passim, MHS "Merchants" catalogue, "Thwing Catalogue"; M. Arch. MSS, "Commercial," "Pecuniary," "Trade," "Treasury," "Valuations of Towns"; Baker MSS "Account Books." The Essex Institute at Salem contains a great many merchant account books and ledgers including values of ships, cargoes and seamen's wages.

Also, see U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 499 "Wages in the Colonial Period"; Bulletin 604 "History of Wages"; "The Colonial Worker in Boston, 1775" (1976).

APPENDIX III (i)

Population Data

Year	No. of Towns	Population of Massachusetts		Percent Increase	Population of Boston		Boston Total
		White	Black	Total	White	Black	
1700	84	55,941	800*	13.0	6,300	400	6,700
1710	c94	62,390	1,300	11.5	-	-	9,000
1720	c100	91,008	2,150	45.8	-	-	11,000
1730	128	114,116	2,780	25.4	11,900	1,100	13,000
1740	c151	151,613	3,035	32.8	15,008	1,374	16,382 (1742)
1750	173	188,000	4,075	24.0	14,190	1,544	15,734 (1752)
1760	192 (1765)	222,600	4,866	18.4	14,390	1,241	15,631
1770	212 (1775)	235,308	4,744	5.4	14,672	848	15,520 (1765)

*The Black population figures include: adults, children, free and slaves.

Sources:

Historical Data; Historical Statistics; Shattuck, Census, pp. 2-6, 42-65; Boston Town Papers, Vol. 7, p. 24; BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369.

Number of adult black slaves by county in 1754 (number of towns in brackets).

Suffolk (18) 1,270 adult slaves, including 989 in Boston; Essex (20) 439; Middlesex (36) 361; Worcester (27) 88; Bristol (11) 122; Hampshire (21) 74; Barnstable (9) 76; Plymouth (14) 133; York (13) 147; Dukes (3) 7; Nantucket (1) 0.
Total Slave Population: 2,717. Average Per Town: 10 (excl. Boston).

Source:

"Government Census, 1754-55" in MHS Misc. Bd. MSS.

APPENDIX III (ii)

Details of Massachusetts Population (1750-1):

Total Population (Black and White):	192,075
Adult White Males:	41,126
Number of Houses:	25,263
Numbers per Household:	7.60 (average)
Number of Blacks:	4,075
Number of Adult Slaves:	2,841

Sources:

"Valuations for the Counties, 1751," MHS Misc. Bd. MSS.
"Government Slave Census, 1754," in MHS Misc. Bd. MSS.
Historical Statistics.

Details of Boston Population (1742):

Total Population:	16,382
Number of Houses:	1,719
Numbers per Household:	9.52 (average)
Number of "Families":	2,000
Adult White Males:	2,972

Details of Boston Population (1765):

Total Population:	15,520
Number of Houses:	1,676
Numbers per Household:	9.26 (average)
Number of "Families":	2,069
Adult White Males:	2,941
All Whites above 16 Years:	6,553
All Whites under 16 Years:	8,119
All Males:	7,041
All Females:	7,622

Sources:

Boston Town Papers, Vol. 7, p. 24.
BCR, Vol. 15, p. 369.

APPENDIX III (iii)

Estimated Population (White and Black) of Counties
In 1751 and 1765

County	1751*	1765	Percent Increase
Essex	35,325	43,735	23.80
Suffolk	30,235	36,338	20.18
Middlesex	30,097	33,687	11.92
Worcester	20,900	30,378	45.35
Plymouth	18,028	22,033	22.21
Bristol	15,225	17,976	18.06
Hampshire	15,125	17,245	33.92[1]
York	12,847	10,644	69.23[2]
Barnstable	9,592	11,948	24.56
Nantucket	2,433	3,377	38.79
Dukes	1,967	2,406	22.31
Berkshire (from part of Hampshire in 1761)		3,029	-
Cumberland (from part of York in 1761)		7,454	-
Lincoln (from part of York in 1761)		3,644	-
Massachusetts TOTAL	192,075	243,894	26.97

*Estimated on the basis of 4.67 population per poll for the total population (the ratio for the actual census of 1765) and the relevant ratios from the census for the counties.

[1]Includes Berkshire.

[2]Includes Cumberland and Lincoln.

Sources: MHS MSS "Valuations of the Counties, 1751" (see Appendix IV in the present paper); for the 1765 census, see Josiah Henry Benton, Early Census Making in Massachusetts . . . with a reproduction of the lost Census of 1765. . . (Boston: 1905).

APPENDIX IV

Valuation of the Several Counties in the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1751 (Taken Verbatim from MS at MHS)

County	Total Acreage In Cultivation	Number of Rateable Polls	Dwelling Houses	Grist, Fulling and Saw Mills	Bloomery and Forges	Acres of of Orchard	Barrels of Cider	Acres of Tillage	Bushels of Grain	Pounds of Flax and Hemp
Massachusetts	580,200	41,126	25,263	814	50	14,286	150,665	104,774	1,413,470	349,092
Suffolk	68,252	6,518	4,200	88	7	2,121	21,851	7,804	121,379	28,746
Essex	117,548	7,622	4,778	115	1	2,684	39,635	7,360	246,249	67,627
Middlesex	100,325	6,488	4,175	129	2	3,120	40,717	20,187	292,263	75,819
Hampshire	37,243	3,243	1,468	64	2	902	10,878	20,490	190,713	51,941
Worcester	55,013	4,493	2,696	115	2	1,482	13,523	12,077	177,220	53,841
Plymouth	56,266	3,870	2,416	107	23	1,490	8,031	11,624	124,326	31,188
Barnstable	35,212	2,040	1,282	38	13	46	38	8,343	49,119	13,240
Bristol	57,188	3,262	2,326	94	-	2,000	12,012	11,842	106,713	18,980
York	35,302	2,746	1,410	59	-	436	3,960	3,569	86,742	6,042
Dukes	13,682	386	246	7	-	5	20	977	11,950	1,668
Nantucket	4,169	487	266	3	-	-	-	501	6,796	-

APPENDIX IV (continued)

County	Acres of Mowing	Tons of English Hay	Tons of Meadow and Salt Hay	Acres of Pasture	Slaves From 12 to 50 Years	Horses and Mares 3 Years Old - Up	Cows (Cattle) 3 Years Old - Up	Goats 1 Year Old - Up	Swine 1 Year Old - Up	Sheep 1 Year Old - Up
Massachusetts	212,279	51,927	127,550	248,861	2,930	22,061	79,614	3,091	18,732	233,502
Suffolk	23,735	6,816	12,574	34,592	1,274	2,362	8,853	490	1,473	22,700
Essex	39,553	9,947	23,925	67,951	405	3,265	13,674	46	2,348	21,743
Middlesex	43,906	9,184	29,611	33,112	503	4,265	15,960	20	2,724	28,386
Hampshire	13,815	4,911	9,331	2,036	88	2,736	4,826	137	1,296	14,051
Worcester	29,279	1,134	14,563	12,175	69	2,907	10,503	525	2,029	26,691
Plymouth	19,388	5,785	11,427	23,764	172	1,901	7,754	391	2,726	26,124
Barnstable	6,651	182	9,113	20,172	80	868	3,909	117	1,094	19,639
Bristol	19,176	7,467	7,580	24,170	189	2,250	6,866	454	2,608	33,717
York	15,095	5,947	8,540	16,202	129	1,142	5,997	101	2,199	11,162
Dukes	1,129	307	746	11,571	16	206	800	808	233	12,551
Nantucket	552	207	140	3,116	5	159	472	2	2	6,738

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