

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPT**

**EPISODE 188:
OLD ENGLAND AND NEW ENGLAND**

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 188: Old England and New England. This time, as we work our way through the story of English, we’re going to focus on events in the early 1630s – as we encounter the first mass migration from England to North America. During that period, about twenty thousand people boarded ships in England and headed to a brand-new colony called the Massachusetts Bay Colony. So we’ll look at that development – and we’ll explore the historical and linguistic connections between Old England and New England.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Also, let me quickly plug a couple of projects which you might find interesting. I haven’t mentioned this because the new episodes are so infrequent now, but a few months back, Gideon Ben-Ami invited me on his YouTube Channel called LetThemTalkTV, and we talked about Middle English and what it sounded like and how it compared to Modern English. It was a fun conversation. And in fact, Gideon’s entire channel focuses on the history of English and it has a lot of fascinating topics, so even if you don’t want to listen to me, I’m sure you’ll find lots of other interesting episodes there. Again, it’s called LetThemTalkTV – all one word.

And I also want to give a quick follow-up plug to a podcast I recommended a year or so ago. It’s produced by someone who has been a long-time listener of this podcast. And she is now presenting an introspective podcast about grief which is based around the writings of the Venerable Bede and other old works of literature. She has a wonderful voice and does a lot of readings from those old works, and it’s a great way to escape the craziness of the modern world for a few minutes if you need that. So if that sounds interesting to you, it’s called Gretel’s Grief with Bede presented by Gretel le Maitre.

So with that, let’s pick up the story of English where we left off last time, and that was in the year 1629 with the dissolution of Parliament by King Charles I and the beginning of his decade of personal rule with any parliament at all. As you might imagine, the king’s conflicts with Parliament and his ultimate dismissal of the assembly had far-reaching consequences. And it is directly connected to the founding of a new colony in North America. The dissolution of Parliament was especially concerning to the Puritans, whose religious views were at odds with those of the king, and whose prominent voice in Parliament had now been silenced.

But whether one identified as Puritan, Anglican, Catholic, or some other denomination, one thing that all Christians in England had in common was the Bible. And in this same year (1629), a new edition of the King James Version of the Bible was published. And I want to begin this episode with a brief discussion about that Bible because it was an important landmark in the history of English.

This edition of the Bible was published at Cambridge, and was in fact, the first edition published there. And this edition is important to the overall history of English because it is probably the first English book – and certainly the first widely-read English book – to distinguish the letter I from the letter J, and also to distinguish the letter U from the letter V. And as such, from the publication of this edition of the Bible in 1629, we can actually start to recognize the letters J and V as distinct English letters. Prior to this point, English had 24 letters. From this point forward, more and more scholars will begin to recognize the letters J and V as distinct letters, thereby giving us the full 26 letters that we have today.

Now all of that probably requires a bit of an explanation so you can understand what I mean when I say the letters J and V became distinct letters around this time. And if you have listened to the prior episodes, you already have an idea what I'm talking about. But in case, you don't know the background, let me explain.

Historically, the letter J was really just a variation of letter I. It wasn't a distinct letter. The letter I could be written with a straight line or with a little curvy tail or flourish at the bottom. But either way, they were both considered just different ways of writing the same letter. And similarly, letter V was really just a variation of letter U. Again, V wasn't a distinct letter. Some people wrote their U with a single curvy line like we do today, and some people wrote it or printed it with two straight lines with a modern V-shape. But again, it was just two different ways of writing the same letter.

Not only were there multiple ways to write those two letters, each of them also represented a lot of different sounds, and the result was frankly a bit of a mess, which is why there was a need to separate some of the shapes and give them specific sounds.

Now all of this confusion lies in the history of the letter I and the letter U. And I discussed the history of those letters back in Episode 161. Since you're probably not going to go back and listen to that whole episode at this point, let me summarize the key points.

In the overall history of the alphabet, some letters have been very conservative and have changed very little. For example, since the time of the Romans, letter P has had one basic shape and has represented one basic sound. But other letters have a much more complicated history. They have acquired different shapes over time, and have also acquired different sounds as the original sounds evolved and shifted into new sounds. And that was especially true for the letters I and U.

The letter I originally represented the /ee/ sound, and it still represents that sound in most languages in continental Europe, and it also represents that sound in some recent loanwords in English from those other languages like the words *police* and *piano* and *pizza*. But during the series of vowel changes in English known as the Great Vowel Shift, that long /ee/ sound evolved into the modern /ai/ sound that we associate with the letter today. So today, in English, we say that the 'long' sound of letter I is /ai/. And the letter also has a so-called 'short' sound that hasn't changed very much over time. That's the /i/ sound in words like *pig* and *bit*. But historically, those are not the only sounds associated with the letter I.

Back when the letter I was used in Latin – so back when it still had the /ee/ sound – that sound sometimes changed a bit when it appeared before another vowel sound. In that environment, it produced a /y/ sound – a sound that we associate with the letter Y today. And then, as Latin evolved into early French in parts of western Europe, that same /y/ sound evolved into a /j/ sound. In early episodes, I talked about how the name *Julius* as in Julius Caesar was originally spelled with an I and pronounced /ee-o-lius/ in Latin, and then became /yoo-lius/, and then in early French became /joo-lius/. And that’s how English acquired the name with its modern /j/ sound. So through that process, a couple of new sounds were added to the inventory of sounds represented with the letter I. And in earlier episodes, I also talked about how the Gothic script used in the Middle Ages tended to be very straight and blocky, and the letter I was often lost in the middle of a word, so scribes looked for ways to make it stand out. Sometimes they put a little dot above it, and sometimes that added a little flourish or tail at the bottom.

So by the early Modern period, the letter I represented all of those vowel and consonant sounds, and it could be written down in several different ways. It was a bit of a mess, so scribes and printers started to think about assigning some of those specific shapes to some of those specific sounds – thereby effectively separating the letter into two or more distinct letters. Specifically, the idea was to take the I with the little flourish or tail at the bottom and use it exclusively for the /j/ sound that the letter sometimes represented. The spelling reformer John Hart had recommended that approach in the mid-1500s. But it had never really been adopted within English until this 1629 edition of the King James Bible.

The letter U has a very similar history. It originally represented a long /u:/ sound and short /u/ sound. But when the letter appeared before another vowel, it sometimes produced a /w/ sound – a sound that we associate with letter W today. And then, within early French, that /w/ sound in a lot of words shifted to /v/ sound – a sound that we associate with the letter V today. But again, there was no letter V at the time. The letter U had to do all the work.

So just like the letter I, the letter U represented a lot of different sounds – some were vowels and some were consonants. And as I noted earlier, the letter U also had a couple of different shapes – one curvy and one angular.

In the Middle English period, scribes decided to put two U’s together to represent the /w/ sound of the letter, thereby giving us our modern letter W. So that was the first time that letter U gave birth to a new letter to represent one of its traditional sounds. But the letter U was still used to represent its various vowel sounds, as well as that /v/ sound. So once again, scholars suggested a solution to the overuse of the letter. The idea was to assign the curvy shape of the letter to the vowel sounds and the angular shape of the letter to the consonant /v/ sound. Italian scribes and printers had adopted that approach in the 1500s, and again, English scholars like John Hart had recommended that English adopt that same approach. But it wasn’t until this 1629 edition of the King James Bible that we see that technique being applied in English. And since that Bible was so widely read, it influenced the way people thought about that curvy I, which we call J today. And it also influenced how they thought about that angular U, which we call V today. And that’s why many people consider that edition of the Bible as the beginning of the letters J and V as distinct letters in English.

I should add that this new approach wasn't accepted overnight. It was gradually accepted over the course of the following century. It was still common during that period to find words like *judge* and *jury* listed under the letter I in dictionaries, even though they were spelled with what we would consider the letter J today. Similarly, words like *village* and *vessel* were still often listed under letter U, even when they were spelled with the V. It wasn't until the publishers of those dictionaries decided to separate the 'J' words from the 'I' words, and the 'V' words from the 'U' words, that those two new letters truly became distinct letters in English. And again, that process gradually occurred over the course of the 1700s.

So the bottom line here is that we can trace the beginning of those two new letters to this edition of the Bible in 1629 and the decades that followed. But we're not really done with letter U yet. As we'll see in an upcoming episode, even though some of the traditional sounds of U were now being allocated to new letters, the letter U wasn't done evolving yet. It was still developing new sounds during this period. Again, I'll touch on those developments when we have clear evidence of those changes in an upcoming episode.

As I noted, the spelling conventions adopted in this particular Bible were influential because the Bible was so widely read. Despite the religious divisions in England at the time, the Bible was something that every group valued and shared whether Puritan, Anglican, Catholic or other denomination. Though the various groups sometimes disagreed about the specific wording of the English translation, most of the important divisions concerned other matters like the structure of the church itself, control over individual congregations, the wording of the prayer book used for services, and the specific rituals to be used during those services. The Puritans opposed the hierarchy of the Anglican Church and wanted each congregation to choose its own leaders. They also opposed many of the formal rituals used in the official Church services. Instead, they wanted simple, plain services with a message that focused on the teachings of the Bible. In this regard, their approach differed from both the Anglicans and the Catholics, which the Puritans considered to be two sides of the same coin.

Of course, King Charles was technically the head of the Anglican Church, and as such, he strongly believed in the hierarchy of the Church, especially since it put him at the top. Not surprisingly, he strongly opposed the Puritan movement because, if they had their way, much of the power would be shifted down to the local congregations. And that opposition was further fueled by his conflicts with Parliament where the Puritans had a strong voice and a platform to challenge the king's religious and economic policies.

So when Charles dissolved Parliament in 1629, and tried to rule without the assembly, that raised the ire of the Puritans. But their real concern came from another figure. That figure was the Bishop of London named as William Laud. Laud was very close to the king, and he also strongly opposed the Puritan movement. He wanted to force the Puritan congregations to accept the Anglican hierarchy and rituals, and he wanted to stamp out any opposition from local Puritan leaders.

In this same year (1629), Laud composed a series of articles that were intended to impose uniformity in the Anglican Church, and every congregation was compelled to follow the new

rules. The articles prescribed the form of worship, and the specific wording of the prayers to be used. [SOURCE: *Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 154*] The clergy conducting the church services had to wear specific vestments and had to follow certain scripted procedures, all the way down to the specific gestures to be used during the service. [SOURCE: *The Barbarous Years, Bernard Bailyn, p. 382*] Altars and communion tables had to be placed in certain locations. Every part of the service was carefully choreographed. And to make sure that the rules were followed, Laud sent church officials to every part of the country to observe the services, and to remove anyone who refused to comply. These visitations were especially common in the Puritan strongholds like the region of East Anglia to the east of London. The coastal counties of Norfolk and Suffolk formed the heart of East Anglia, and opposition to the king's policies was especially strong there. And not surprisingly, that same region was the source of most of the settlers who soon made their way to New England. [SOURCE: *The Barbarous Years, Bernard Bailyn, p. 382*]

To be fair, the people of East Anglia were not just unhappy with the religious situation at the time. They were also struggling to make ends meet. The region was the heartland of the English textile industry with lots of wool and unfinished cloth shipped out to the Netherlands where it was finished. But those exports had collapsed in recent years. The collapse was due to several factors, including the raging war in Europe known today as the Thirty Years War, and also a series of government policies that promoted the finishing of cloth in England, rather than the Netherlands. The English cloth ended up being inferior to the Dutch cloth, and the Dutch refused to buy it. The whole venture interrupted the traditional trading network and led to an economic depression in East Anglia. [SOURCE: *The English People on the Eve of Colonization, Wallace Notestein, p. 261–2*] Those problems were made worse by a rapidly growing population, and a limited supply of land to support the growth, leading to higher rents and lower wages. Add in a series of bad harvests, which raised food prices and led to many people living on the brink of starvation. [SOURCE: *The Barbarous Years, Bernard Bailyn, p. 378*] So it wasn't just religious differences that motivated a lot of those people to leave. The economic situation was also a major factor.

For those people who sought to flee their troubles in England, there was a brand new option in North America near the settlement of Plymouth in the region already known as New England. As I noted a couple of episodes back, Plymouth had been settled in 1620 by the men, women and children who became known to history as the Pilgrims. By this point in 1629, that settlement had survived for nearly a decade, and was finally starting to show stability and growth.

In this same year, the region immediately north of the Plymouth settlement was chartered as a brand-new English colony called the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The origin of the colony can actually be traced back a few years earlier – a couple of years after the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth. A group of investors from the West Country of England wanted to send to a group of settlers to the region north of Plymouth to establish a fishing settlement. The initial plans were modest – just a small trading post where a handful of men could catch fish. The fishing was a disappointment though. Many of the men returned to England, but about thirty stayed behind at a settlement that became known as Salem. The head of that settlement wrote back home to the investors in England and suggested that the region around the settlement would be a good place for small colony to be established. That letter ultimately led to the organization of a new

company to oversee the venture, and in 1629, King Charles granted a charter to the newly created Massachusetts Bay Company. [*SOURCE: The English People on the Eve of Colonization, Wallace Notestein, p. 263*] The charter was issued just a week before Parliament was dissolved.

Interestingly, something very important was omitted from the charter, perhaps in the rush to get it in place with everything else going on at the time. These types of charters normally required the company to maintain its headquarters in England, but this charter left that provision out. And that omission would prove to be very important because it allowed the company to establish its headquarters in America and thereby have complete control over its administration.

The Puritans seized upon that omission because they realized that it would allow them to run their own colony in New England, which could be self-governing and could exist largely free of supervision or control by the king or the leaders of the Anglican Church. Control of the company quickly passed from the original commercial investors to a group of Puritan reformers. And an East Anglian lawyer named John Winthrop was soon elected to serve as Governor of the new colony. [*SOURCE: Old World New World, Kathleen Burk, p. 49*]

That spring about 200 colonists were sent to New England as an advanced guard to join with the handful of settlers that were already at Salem. They laid the groundwork for a large-scale migration to the colony which began in earnest the following year. [*SOURCE: Between Two Worlds, Malcolm Gaskill, p. 106*]

The territory granted to the new colony was located between the land of the Plymouth colony to the south and certain grants of land that had been made a few years earlier further north in the region that was called Maine. That land further north had been granted to two men named John Mason and Ferdinando Gorges in 1622. That land grant is the first document to refer to the region as *Maine*. It isn't entirely clear where that name came from. Some think it is derived from the French province of Maine since the French had been exploring the region for some time. Another suggestion is that it comes from the word *maine* in the sense of the mainland, as opposed to the many islands along the coast. So the mainland was occasionally referred to as the *maine*. Either way, that name was officially coined in the early 1600s in that land grant to Mason and Gorges. But nothing much came of that land grant.

So in the same year that the Massachusetts Bay Colony was formally established, Mason and Gorges decided to divide their lands in that territory known as Maine. Mason received the land to the south and west of the Piscataqua River. And Gorges received the land to the north and east of the river. Mason called his western portion *New Hampshire*. And Gorges called his eastern portion *New Somersetshire*. Of course, that name 'New Somersetshire' never really stuck. People kept referring to that region as *Maine*. And of course, that basic division of the territory in 1629 created the border between the modern states of Maine and New Hampshire. Well, it created the southern border where the river was. Over time, the border had to be defined further inland as English settlers moved into the region.

So at this early date in 1629, we have the Plymouth Colony at Plymouth, then immediately north of Plymouth, we have the new Massachusetts Bay Colony, and then immediately north of that

colony, we have the newly divided regions of New Hampshire and Maine. So much of modern New England took shape very early on. As we'll see a little later in the episode, there was a massive wave of migration into the Massachusetts colony over the course of the following decade, and it quickly became the most powerful colony in the region. And in fact, all of these various regions in New England soon came under the control of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Plymouth Colony to the south never received a formal royal charter, so it was soon consumed by Massachusetts. New Hampshire and Maine also came under the control of Massachusetts within a few years.

Over the next few decades, there was significant settlement in New Hampshire from people moving out of Massachusetts, and that allowed New Hampshire to secure its independence in 1679 when it received its own separate charter from the Crown. So New Hampshire was one of the original thirteen American colonies alongside Massachusetts at the time of the Revolutionary War in 1776. However, Maine was still under the control of Massachusetts at that time, so it wasn't one of the original thirteen colonies. Maine didn't secure its independence until it became a separate US state in 1820. [SOURCE: *Old World New World*, Kathleen Burk, p. 86]

So the main point here is the roots of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine can all be traced back to these developments in 1629 when a new colony was created in the region and the land to the north of that colony was divided.

With that, we can move the story ahead to the following year – 1630. And in that year, we find another notable linguistic development. That development was what may be the first recorded appearance of a very common term that we all use today. The term appeared in the second part of a play called 'The Honest Whore' by the English playwright Thomas Dekker. An edition published in this year contained the line, "It's a generous fellow." Now, the new term wasn't the word *generous* or the word *fellow*. Believe it or not, it was the term *it's* – the contracted form of 'it is.' This is the earliest use of that contraction that I could find in the Oxford English Dictionary, so if it isn't the oldest surviving use, it is certainly one of the oldest.

Now I mention this new contraction *it's* because it points to a larger development that was taking place in the language in the early 1600s, and that was the appearance of new contractions that never really existed before. As it turns out, English speakers had been contracting the phrase "it is" for centuries. They just had a different way of doing it. They said *'tis* instead of *it's*. In other words, they contracted the phrase by dropping the initial [i] in the pronoun *it*, rather than the initial [i] in the verb *is* like we do today. Of course, the older form *'tis* still survives, usually in older works and in poetic language like in the Christmas song Deck the Halls where we find the line, "'Tis the season to be jolly."

Speakers also contracted the phrase 'it was' the same way. Again, they dropped the initial [i] in the pronoun *it* and produced the contraction *'twas*, like in the line "Twas the night before Christmas" in the poem called 'A Visit from St. Nicholas.' But notice that we no longer have a contracted form of 'it was.' When people stopped dropping the initial [i] in the pronoun *it*, they couldn't do what they did with *it's* and drop the initial sound in the verb. The verb *was* begins

with a ‘w’ sound, which couldn’t really be dropped. So thanks to these changes in the 1600s, we largely lost the old contracted forms *’tis* and *’twas*, and we only got one in exchange – *it’s*.

Another contracted form that started to appear in the early 1600s was *don’t* – the contracted form of ‘do not.’ As I noted in an earlier episode, the old way of making a negative statement was to put the word *not* after the verb, as in “fear not” or the famous John F. Kennedy line, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” The more modern construction with the word *do* as in “do not fear” and “do not ask” only became common in the early modern period. So it was only then that we start to find a regular use of the phrase “do not,” which then became contracted into *don’t*. So again, we don’t really find the term *don’t* until the early 1600s. It was only at that point that the evolving English syntax allowed it to emerge in the language. And for the same reason, the related contractions *doesn’t* and *won’t* also appeared relatively late in the language during this same general time period.

And speaking of contractions from this period, there is another new one from the following year that I feel like I should note while we’re here. That new contraction appeared in a re-telling of an ancient history of Ethiopia that was published in 1631. The work was composed in the form of an extended poem called ‘The Faire Æthiopian’ by an named English scholar named William Lisle. In one passage, a military leader reminds his troops that he as always provided them with the best men from those he has kidnapped. He says:

“The captiue men of strength I gaue to you,
The weaker sold; and this y’all know is true . . .”

Of course, that newly contracted term is the term *y’all* – a contraction of ‘you all.’ This is the earliest recorded use of that contraction in the English language, predating the common usage of the term in the America South by a couple of centuries. Now that’s not to say that the Southern form of this contraction originated in England in the 1600s. It seems much more likely the term appeared independently in the South at a later date. But it is worth noting that the term *y’all* was used in England and occasionally preserved in some surviving documents well before the term became common in the Southern part of the United States.

Also, one other interesting note before we move on. I noted that the poem that I just mentioned which included that first recorded use of the term *y’all* was composed by a scholar named William Lisle. Well, Lisle studied and collected old Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. And one of the documents he acquired was the Peterborough Chronicle. If you listened to the earlier episodes about Old English, you might remember that I talked quite a bit about that version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle because it was one of the few English documents that survived the years after the Norman Conquest, and as a result, it was one of the few documents we have that chronicles the early changes from Old English into Middle English. And interestingly, when Lisle died in the later 1630s, that manuscript passed from Lisle’s estate to William Laud – the Bishop I mentioned earlier who was leading the effort to crack down on the Puritans. And Laud gave the manuscript to the Bodleian Library at Oxford, where it remains to this day.

And speaking of manuscript collectors, you might also remember from the early episodes of the podcast that I talked about Robert Cotton, who assembled an entire library of Old English and Middle English manuscripts in the early 1600s. Many of the important surviving manuscripts from those earlier periods of English come from his collection. In fact, had it not been for his efforts, it appears that many of the most important Old English documents would have been lost forever. So he is a very notable figure in the history of English. His collection included the only surviving copy of the Beowulf poem, as well as other copies of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Lindisfarne Gospels, an early copy of the Wycliffe Bible, and a variety of other manuscripts that I discussed in the early episodes of the podcast.

Well, at the current point in our overall story in 1630, all of those documents were located in Cotton's Library, which was a house located next to the Houses of Parliament. In fact, it was actually on the same grounds as the Houses of Parliament. And the library also contained a lot of old legal codes and government documents. So during the disputes between Parliament and the king over the prior few years, many of the members of parliament had used some of the books in Cotton's library as a resource to show the historical limitations on the king's authority, and to justify their opposition to the king. They also used the building as a meeting house. So perhaps it isn't surprising that when King Charles dissolved Parliament the previous year, he also ordered Cotton's library to be locked and sealed shut so that no one else could access it – including Cotton himself.

It was a devastating blow to Cotton – to be prevented from accessing the collection that had comprised much of his life's work. It apparently affected his health because he became sick and his health deteriorated over the following year or so. He specifically blamed his declining health on the loss of his library. [*SOURCE: Matt Kuhns, Cotton's Library: The Many Perils of Preserving History (p. 105). Lyon Hall Press. Kindle Edition.*] He died the following year without ever regaining access to the building.

But in 1630, during that period when he was locked out of the library, he did receive one bit of good news. A close friend and fellow member of Parliament from Dover sent Cotton a new manuscript to add to his collection. He included a note which read "I have heere ye charter of K. John dat. at Runninge Meade: By ye first safe and sure messenger itt is yours. So are ye Saxon Charters as fast as I can copy them: but in ye meane time I will close K. John in a box and send him." Of course, that enclosed charter of King John sealed at Runnymede is better known as Magna Carta. And Cotton was now able to add one of the few surviving copies of Magna Carta to his collection – even if he couldn't place it in the building with his other manuscripts. [*SOURCE: Matt Kuhns, Cotton's Library: The Many Perils of Preserving History (p. 104). Lyon Hall Press. Kindle Edition.*]

That copy of Magna Carta had special significance for those members of Parliament who opposed the king because that old charter had established the principle that the English king was not an absolute monarch. He was not above the law, and the barons had certain rights which could not be infringed by the king. At a time when King Charles had dissolved Parliament and was trying to rule as essentially an absolute monarch, Magna Carta provided a legal basis for

opposing the king's actions. And it was the type of document that Charles wanted to keep under wraps, which was why Cotton's library had been sealed shut in the first place.

But not everyone was sticking around to oppose the king. Some had made the decision to leave England altogether. And for many of them, the new Massachusetts colony in North America was their destination. During the spring and summer of 1630, seventeen ships left England for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The ships carried about 2,000 immigrants, including the new governor of the colony, John Winthrop. [SOURCE: *The Bold and Magnificent Dream*, Bruce Catton and William B. Catton, p.92, and *Colonial America*, Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr. and Hugh Talmage Lefler, p. 86] Over the following thirteen years, there was a steady flow of ships to the new colony. During that period, more than 200 ships took about 20,000 people to their new home in New England. This was the first large scale migration from England to North America. [SOURCE: *Colonial America*, Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr. and Hugh Talmage Lefler, p. 86]

To put those numbers into perspective, around the current point in our overall story in 1630, the Virginia Colony centered around Jamestown only had about 3,000 people, and would only grow to about 8,000 over the following decade or so. Bermuda had about 2,000 people, and would only grow to about 3,000 after another decade of migration. The Dutch settlement at New Netherland and New Amsterdam – later to become New York – only had about 300 people when this period of migration began. It would grow to about 2,000 by the early 1640s. So as the population of Massachusetts grew to exceed 20,000 during that same time period, it dwarfed the growth in those other colonies.

The population also grew very quickly because it faced fewer threats than those in Jamestown. The cold weather could be challenging, but it also meant there were fewer insects, and thus fewer insect-borne diseases like malaria and yellow fever. The cold weather also reduced water-borne diseases like typhoid fever and dysentery. While the New England settlers largely avoided those diseases, the southern colonies were plagued by those diseases for many years to come. So the cold weather actually helped the population of New England to grow very quickly in those early years. Also, as I noted a couple of episodes back about the Pilgrims, the indigenous population around Massachusetts Bay had largely died out a few years earlier, presumably due to exposure to European diseases. So the Massachusetts settlers didn't face a constant threat from indigenous tribes. All of that provided a degree of stability that the Jamestown settlement never had in Virginia. [SOURCE: *Albion's Seed*, David Hackett Fischer, p. 52]

Now that initial wave of migration to New England in the 1630s slowed down considerably in the decades that followed. Nevertheless, the population in the region continued to double in size every generation. By 1660, the population of New England was more than double that of the Virginia colony, even though the Virginia Colony had been around quite a bit longer. [SOURCE: *American Nations*, Colin Woodward, p. 59]

There was also a fundamental difference between the migration to New England compared to the earlier migration to Jamestown. Generally speaking, the people who migrated to Jamestown in the southern colony were looking to acquire farmland. Some acquired small farms, while others amassed large landholdings, which eventually became plantations. Since farmwork was very

labor intensive and required a lot of field workers, that meant that a lot of people who migrated to the Virginia Colony were indentured servants and slaves. This created a stratified society with wealthy landowners at the top and poor laborers and enslaved persons tied to the land at the bottom. So it was a type of landed aristocracy.

But the migration to New England was different. First of all, entire families came over on the ships, not just a few prominent men looking to acquire land or indentured servants. The New England settlements were often built around groups of families. The region also attracted a large number of tradesmen and skilled laborers like carpenters, blacksmiths, textile workers, teachers, farmers, and so. Together, these families and workers re-created English town life on the new continent. [SOURCE: *The Barbarous Years*, Bernard Bailyn, p. 412-3] As soon as they arrived, they went to work building new towns. By the end of 1630, there were already seven settlements stretching along the shore of Massachusetts Bay. [Ibid, p. 418] So from the very beginning, the southern colonies were built around agriculture and large farms, whereas the New England colonies were build around towns and villages.

To illustrate this process in action, we can look at what happened with that small group of English settlers who arrived in Massachusetts the previous year (1629). They arrived at a rough settlement that contained a few buildings and soon became known as Salem. Some of them then decided to head down the coast a bit to the Charles River where they founded a new town called Charlestown. Then, the following year, when the new governor John Winthrop arrived, he also traveled down to Charlestown, and then crossed over the river and was among the first settlers to establish a new town there on the other side of the Charles River. A man named Isaac Johnson was one of the main shareholders in the new Massachusetts Bay Colony, and he accompanied Winthrop on the journey to New England in 1630. And he decided to name that new town on the other side of the Charles River after his hometown on the eastern coast of England. His hometown in England was called Boston, so he gave the new settlement the same name. And of course, Boston eventually grew to be the largest city in the colony. [SOURCE: *Between Two Worlds*, Malcolm Gaskill, p. 112]

This process continued as new arrivals spread out and founded new towns over the following decade. By the end of that decade, about 22 separate towns had been established around the rim of the bay. [SOURCE: *Colonial America*, Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr. and Hugh Talmage Lefler, p. 86]

The towns were organized in congregations where a group of people, usually including families, would apply for a grant of land and a town charter. As part of the process, the settlers would make a commitment to create a community organized around Puritan principles. Each community had a meeting house where local town matters could be discussed and addressed. The meeting house could be used for religious services, but a separate church was usually constructed at some point. Most communities also had a school and public roads. [SOURCE: *Old World New World*, Kathleen Burk, p. 50]

The residents would meet on a regular basis and those meetings became a ritual that served to bind the community together. In fact, the term ‘*town meeting*’ is recorded for the first time in the

records of Salem in 1636. All of this was derived from the Puritan idea that local church congregations should elect their own leaders and manage their affairs. That was one of the fundamental beliefs that separated them from the Anglican authorities back in England. And that was one of the reasons why so many of those arrivals were Puritans looking to put their beliefs into action. Each town was self-governing and required the participation of the entire community. So town life became part of the culture of New England.

As the English settled in Massachusetts throughout the 1630s, they founded towns and villages and, as we've seen, they tended to name those settlements after places they came from back in England. Boston was one such example. And those place names – most of which have survived to this day – point to where most of those early settlers came from. They mostly came from East Anglia and the surrounding counties in the southeast of England.

As I noted earlier, the two counties at the heart of East Anglia are Norfolk and Suffolk. The region also extends into part of the neighboring counties of Essex and Cambridgeshire. So Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. Well, guess what the first counties established in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were called? They were called Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Middlesex. So three of the four were named after the counties that comprised East Anglia. And the fourth – Middlesex – was the name of a neighboring county between East Anglia and London. Those county names survive to this day in Massachusetts.

As I noted, many of the town names were also drawn from East Anglia and the counties that immediately surround it – so basically the southeast corner of England. These include towns and cities like Ipswich, Springfield, Cambridge, Malden, Braintree, Lynn, Hingham, Haverhill (/HAY-ver-hill/), England or Haverhill (/HAY-ver-ill/), Massachusetts, Groton (/GROW-tun/), England or Groton (/GRAH'un/), Massachusetts, and as I noted earlier, the city of Boston itself – named for a town in Lincolnshire, England, just north of East Anglia. Of all the towns founded in Massachusetts in the 1600s, it is estimated that about 60% have place names that can be traced back to towns in East Anglia or the immediately surrounding counties of England. [SOURCE: *Albion's Seed*, David Hackett Fischer, p. 38]

And that points to the home of a large portion of the settlers who made their way to New England in the 1630s during that initial mass migration. Based on research into the home towns and home counties of the settlers for which information is available, it appears that about 60% of the settlers came from East Anglia and the surrounding counties. And about half of those came from the East Anglian heartland in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The rest came from other parts of Britain. Of course, the settlers were overwhelmingly Puritan. There were Puritans throughout England, but as we've seen, the Puritan stronghold was that same region of East Anglia and the surrounding counties. So it isn't really surprising that the majority of the settlers came from that region. [*Albion's Seed*, David Hackett Fischer, p. 33, 35; and *Old World New World*, Kathleen Burk, p. 50; and *The Barbarous Years*, Bernard Bailyn, p. 373]

The fact that such a large percentage of the settlers came from East Anglia explains why so many place names in Massachusetts were named after towns in southeastern England. In fact, there was a strong linguistic connection between the people of New England and those of East Anglia.

Some of that connection has eroded over the centuries, but some of it still survives to this day. So in the remainder of this episode, I want to explore that linguistic connection, and I want to dig a little deeper into the traditional dialects of New England and East Anglia.

And let's begin with the most obvious connection between the two regions and that's the lack of the 'r' sound in many words in the traditional New England accent and its presumed origin in East Anglia. I've alluded to this connection in earlier episodes of the podcast, but it is probably the most obvious linguistic link between East Anglia and New England.

What I'm referring to here is what linguists call 'rhoticity.' Again, if you've listened to the earlier episodes, this explanation will be very familiar to you, but 'rhoticity' refers to whether or not the 'r' sound is pronounced after vowels. That's a bit of an oversimplification, but it'll do for purposes of this episode. If you pronounce the 'r' sound in words like *here*, and *car*, and *carpenter*, you have what is called a 'rhotic' English accent. That includes most of the English accents in North America, Scotland and Ireland. But if you tend to drop those 'r' sounds – so if you say /hɪə/ and /ca/ and /ca-pen-tə/ – you have what is called a 'non-rhotic' accent. And that's the case for most of the accents of England, Wales, Australia and New Zealand.

But despite those broad and general statements about this particular pronunciation, there is quite a bit of variation around the world. There are accents in the United States that are non-rhotic, and there are accents in England that are rhotic. And one of the most well-known non-rhotic accents in North America is the accent associated with Boston and other parts of New England. It's where we get that common phrase that mimics this accent 'Paak yuh cah in Haavaad Yaad.' And it appears that this well-known feature of the traditional New England accent can be traced back to East Anglia in England.

As I noted in earlier episodes, the English spoken during the Old and Middle English periods was rhotic. Most everyone in England pronounced their R's after a vowel at the time. The erosion of that 'r' sound appears to have originated in one particular part of the country during the late Middle English period. And as you might have guessed, that region was East Anglia.

That area is believed to be the place where this non-rhotic feature began based on surviving documents from the region. In Episode 138, we looked at the letters written by various members of the Paston family who lived in the county of Norfolk in East Anglia. Those letters reveal the way the writers pronounced their words since spelling had not been standardized yet, so people tended to spell words like they pronounced them. And the Pastons occasionally omitted the letter R when they spelled words which normally have an 'r' sound. For example, the letters often concerned property disputes, and the word *parcel* appears as 'passel' spelled [passel]. And a word like *cardinal* appears as *cadenall* spelled [cadenall]. Those types of spellings appear on many occasions throughout the letters, and also in other documents written in East Anglia during the late 1400s and 1500s. But it wasn't really common in other parts of England at the time.

It appears that this non-rhotic feature gradually spread westward reaching London by the early 1700s. And from there, it continued to spread westward and northward, though parts of the West County have remained rhotic to this day. So this common feature of most modern accents in

England apparently originated in East Anglia during the Middle English period. And that means that many of the East Anglians who migrated to New England also dropped the ‘r’ sound after vowels.

Now again, it appears that at the time of the mass migration to New England, this ‘non-rhotic’ feature was mostly confined to East Anglia. It still hadn’t spread very far beyond that region yet. So most of the English settlers from other parts of the country still pronounced the ‘r’ sound after vowels. But since the East Anglians made up such a large percentage of the settlers, their accent had the greatest influence on the new dialect that emerged in New England. And most linguists agree the non-rhotic feature found in older New England accents comes from the original East Anglians who arrived in the 1630s.

If that is the case, we would expect most of the early settlers in New England to have non-rhotic accents as well. And there is evidence that that was the case. The spellings contained in the early town records in the region show that same tendency to drop the R. We find the R missing in names like Parson and Barsham, with spellings that suggest they were pronounced as ‘Passon’ and ‘Bassum.’ [*SOURCE: Made in America, Bill Bryson, p. 15*] We find words like **forth** spelled as [fouth] and **bird** spelled as [bud]. But interestingly, this feature of New England speech has actually been declining over the past century. And this is a good reminder that what I’m describing in this episode are the features of New England English and East Anglian English that existed two or three centuries ago, not necessarily the accents and dialects of those regions today. The lack of rhoticity has survived to a degree in both regions, but most of the other features I’ll explore in this episode have declined or completely disappeared over time.

I want to give you a few speech samples to illustrate the features I’m describing, so I have tried to locate samples from older speakers, especially those who were born in the 1800s or early 1900s. Their speech tends to preserve some of the older and more traditional features.

So I want to begin with a speaker who was born and raised in Massachusetts. As you will hear her say, she was born in 1920. And I want you to notice that her accent contains a blend of rhotic and non-rhotic features. So sometimes she pronounces the ‘r’ sound after vowels, and sometimes she doesn’t – especially in words like ‘yeas’ for **years**, ‘wi’as’ for **wires**, ‘cella’ for **cellar**, ‘pahla’ for **parlor**, ‘wahn’ for **warm** and ‘coluh’ for **color**.

[AUDIO CLIP]

Now again, you will notice that even for a speaker who was born over a century ago, the speaker’s accent contained a blend of rhotic and non-rhotic features. Studies show that the overall influence of Standard American English has caused younger generations to pronounce the ‘r’ sound more than their parents’ and grandparents’ generations. The accent of the region was also influenced by Irish English in the 1800s and 1900s due to a large migration of people from Ireland to New England. And Irish English is rhotic. So that has also altered the dialects of the region. Again, that’s why I’m not really discussing a modern Boston accent here. It has a lot of features that developed in later centuries that aren’t tied to East Anglia or even to England for that matter. I’ll discuss the Boston accent in more detail in a future episode. For now, I just want

to focus on some of the features of the older New England accent – which lingers on in some rural areas.

Another vocal feature that passed from East Anglia to that older New England accent was a unique pronunciation of the long /o:/ sound in words like **home**, **boat**, **goat**, and **over**. It was once common in East Anglia for people to pronounce that /o:/ sound with a short /u/ sound and sometimes a short /ʌ/ sound. These are the sounds we hear in the words **put** and **putt**. Those two sounds are closely related and reflect a split in the pronunciation of many words in the south of England during the 1600s. I'm actually going to discuss that development in the next episode because we have tangible evidence of the change taking place in the 1630s and 1640s. But for now, the main point is that speakers in East Anglia often pronounced the long /o:/ sound as a shorter vowel – usually the /u/ sound. So **home** became /hum/, **goat** became /gut/, and **stone** became /stun/, and so on. And again, this feature was transported across the Atlantic and was once common the traditional accent of New England.

Now this is one of those features that has sharply declined in both East Anglia and New England. In fact, it apparently died out in New England in the 1800s. I wasn't able to track down any voice samples from the region that preserved that pronunciation. However, I did locate a couple of samples from East Anglia where that older pronunciation pops up. Again, this feature has also sharply declined there as well, so we have to look for older speakers. A study from the 1950s showed that speakers who retained the pronunciation only did so in certain words like **both**, **broke**, **spoke**, **comb**, **road**, **stone**, **throat** and **whole** as in the 'whole thing' spelled [whole], but interestingly, not in the word **hole** as in a 'hole in the ground' spelled [hole].

So the first sample here comes from a speaker from Norfolk in East Anglia who was born in 1883. You'll hear him talking about a vole, which is a type of rodent. And you'll hear him pronounce that word **vole**, and the word **bloke**, with that short /u/ sound.

[AUDIO CLIP]

And here's another example of that pronunciation of the long /o:/ sound in East Anglia. This sample comes from another Norfolk speaker, but this one comes from a woman born in 1932. So she was a bit younger than the first speaker. She was also a factory worker in Norwich, and this confirms later studies that show that this pronunciation lingered a bit longer among the working class in cities than it did in the countryside. By the late 1960s, it was mostly confined to those areas. [SOURCE: *East Anglian English*, Peter Trudgill, p. 64] In this sample, you'll hear the speaker use the word **both** at the very end of the clip when she refers to herself and her friend, and you'll hear the pronunciation as /buth/.

[AUDIO CLIP]

Now again, that pronunciation of the long /o:/ sound as /u/ or /ʌ/ was also once common in New England, and is documented and referred to in writing. Again, I don't have a voice sample from that region to illustrate it because it had largely disappeared by the mid-1900s when voice recordings became common. A survey from the early 1960s found that it had largely disappeared

in Massachusetts, but it lingered on in parts of New Hampshire and Maine. [*SOURCE: Accents of English 3: Beyond the British Isles, J.C. Wells, p. 525-6*] And more recent studies have found no evidence of it at all in the region today. [*SOURCE: New England English, James N. Stanford, p. 51*] So that traditional feature of New England speech apparently disappeared over the course of the 1800s and 1900s. Again, the influence of Standard American English probably encouraged that decline and loss.

Another linguistic feature that was common in both East Anglia and New England was the pronunciation of words spelled with [er]. Instead of pronouncing that sound as /er/ like today, or /ɛr/ as it would have been pronounced in earlier periods, it was instead sometimes pronounced as /ar/. So *servant* was pronounced as /sarvant/, *search* was pronounced as /sarch/, *virtue* was pronounced as /vartue/, *girl* as /garl/, *merchant* as /marchant/, and so on. Those pronunciations are reflected in the spellings where [ar] was commonly used in place of [er]. We've seen this feature before. It occurred throughout England in the 1500s, but it was apparently very common in East Anglia, and it lingered there even as it was declining in the rest of England. So perhaps it isn't surprising that those types of pronunciations also became very common in New England. Of course, some of those alternate pronunciations still survive in the UK, where the word spelled [clerk] is pronounced as /clark/ instead of /clerk/. But in America, this type of pronunciation became stigmatized and was rejected by educated speakers over time. We know that from comments made in surviving documents, as well as from plays and novels where the dialogue of uneducated characters often contain these types of words spelled with [ar] instead of the normal [er]. So that alternate pronunciation declined over the course of the 1700s. [*SOURCE: Legacies of Colonial English, Raymond Hickey, Ed., p. 134-5; and Early American Pronunciation and Syntax, Henry Alexander, p. 144*]

It seems that it had largely died out by the mid-1800s, but sometimes that /ar/ pronunciation was incorporated into certain words in American English, and those words were re-spelled with [ar], which hides the linguistic history of the word. For example, consider the capital of Connecticut, which is Hartford. It was named by settlers who arrived there from Massachusetts in the 1630s. And it was named for the hometown of one of the settlers, which was Hertford, England. But Hertford, England is spelled [Hertford], whereas Hartford, Connecticut is spelled [Hartford]. The English town name is spelled with an [e] because it was once pronounced as /Hɛrtford/, but it had come to be pronounced as /Hartford/ due to this alternate pronunciation. So the English settlers in Connecticut kept that alternate pronunciation as /Hartford/, but they re-spelled the town name with an [a] to better represent the way the name was pronounced.

I also have another example of this alternate pronunciation surviving in American English in a peculiar term which is found in some colloquial speech. Have you ever heard someone use the word *tarnation*? It might be used as an interjection meaning 'damnable' as in 'Tarnation!' Sometimes it might be used to express frustration or exasperation – as in 'What in the tarnation is going on over there?' In a statement like that, it's basically a polite way of saying 'Hell.' It's a term that is associated with certain older forms of speech in rural parts of the US, especially in the South or Midwest. But it was once common in New England, and it probably has its ultimate origins in East Anglia. And it is the product of this alternate pronunciation where words spelled with [er] were sometimes pronounced as /ar/ instead of /er/. Specifically, it derives from the

words *eternal* and *eternity*. With this common sound change, those words were sometimes pronounced as /etarnal/ and /etarnity/. Sometimes, *etarnal* was shortened to simply ‘tarnal.’ And in a list of New England dialect words compiled in the 1800s, both *tarnal* and *etarnity* are included as common dialect words. And it appears that that word *tarnal* was combined with the word *damnation* to produce the word *tarnation*. ‘Tarnal damnation’ was literally ‘eternal damnation.’ So by blending them together, it produced the word *tarnation*, which was a more polite way of saying ‘damn’ or ‘damnation.’ Though some sources assume that *tarnation* was coined in North America since it is usually found here, it is in fact also found in Suffolk in East Anglia – or at least it was at one time. In a list of old Suffolk dialect words compiled in 1823, it appears as *tahnation* (with a non-rhotic spelling). So this is a word that has a direct connection back to East Anglia and that tendency to pronounce the /er/ or /ɛr/ sound as /ar/ in many words.

Another linguistic feature shared by East Anglia and New England was a confusion of the short ‘e’ and ‘i’ sounds in many words. These are the vowel sounds we hear in words like *pet* and *pit*, and *left* and *lift*. Documents from East Anglia reveal that it was once common for people to reverse those sounds in many words. So *get* was pronounced /git/, *head* was /hid/ and *ready* was /ridy/. [SOURCE: *East Anglian English*, Peter Trudgill, p. 63] And sometimes the reverse is found. The word *middle* is sometimes rendered as ‘medyll,’ *witness* is rendered as ‘wettness,’ and *swift* is rendered as ‘sweffte.’ [SOURCE: *Early American Pronunciation and Syntax*, Henry Alexander, p. 144]

And we see these same features in early documents from New England where the spellings indicate that a word like *yet* were sometimes pronounced /yit/, *steady* was sometimes pronounced /stidi/, *yesterday* was /yistidy/, and *kettle* was /kitl/. Those types of spellings are also common in the surviving transcripts of the Salem Witch Trials from the late 1600s. In those records we find ‘ficht’ for *fetched*, ‘divell’ for *devil*, ‘blised’ for *blessed*, and ‘tistimony’ for *testimony*. In those cases, we see a short ‘e’ sound replaced with a short ‘i’ sound. But sometimes, the records contain the opposite where a short ‘i’ sound is replaced with a short ‘e’ sound. So for example, we sometimes find the word *ill* is rendered as ‘elle,’ *fit* is rendered as ‘fete,’ *little* as ‘lettlet,’ and *spirit* is ‘speritt.’ [SOURCE: *Legacies of Colonial English*, Raymond Hickey, Ed., p. 134] We find more evidence of this short vowel confusion in the writings of Benjamin Franklin, who was born and raised in Boston. One of his surviving letters contains a short passage which he wrote out phonetically to represent his natural accent. In it, he spelled the word *get* [g-i-t], and he spelled the word *friend* [f-r-i-n-d]. [The Language of the Salem Witchcraft Trials, Henry Alexander, in *American Speech*, June 1928, Vol. 3, No. 5 (Jun., 1928), p. 393] So this pronunciation feature was common well into the 1700s. But like so many of the other features we have looked at, it has declined over time.

Now, having looked at some common pronunciation features between East Anglia and New England, let’s now look at an interesting grammatical feature. At one time, it was common in rural parts of East Anglia to hear people use the word *do* [d-o] in a way where it essentially meant ‘otherwise.’ So you might hear someone say something like, “Don’t go near that hole, do you might fall in.” Or “Don’t make him angry, do he might hit you.” In those types of sentences, the word *do* is being used to mean ‘otherwise.’ While the origin of this usage is unclear, it might simply be a shortened version of the phrase “if you do.” So perhaps the original wording was

more like “Don’t make him angry, if you do, he might hit you.” And then over time, it was reduced down to simply “do he might hit you.” But again, there is some debate about that development. At any rate, this was once a feature of rural dialects in East Anglia. [*SOURCE: East Anglian English, Peter Trudgill, p. 144-5*] But it is also a usage that you sometimes hear today in some dialects of American English.

While this feature can be heard in some American dialects, it isn’t really found in New England. It is mostly found in the American South. It can also be heard in African American English, which is itself largely derived from the dialects of the South. So why would this feature survive in the Southern US instead of New England?

Well, the British dialect expert Peter Trudgill suggests an answer. Trudgill is a linguist who has researched and written extensively about the various dialects of English, and he happens to be from Norfolk in East Anglia. So he has a close connection to the history and the various features of that dialect. And he believes that this particular American use of the word *do* to mean ‘otherwise’ came from East Anglians who migrated to the Virginia colony and other areas in the South. In this episode, I have focused in the massive migration from East Anglia to Massachusetts, but it is important to keep in mind that some of them also traveled south and settled in the Virginia colony. Their overall numbers were smaller, and their influence on the local dialect was therefore smaller, but this particular feature apparently took hold and lingered among some rural speakers. It never really became part of the ‘standard’ accepted speech of the South. It was more of a colloquial expression. But again, it survived in rural areas and lingered into the modern era. [*SOURCE: East Anglian English, Peter Trudgill, p. 144-6*]

Now having looked at certain aspects of pronunciation and grammar derived from East Anglian English, let’s look at some of the shared vocabulary as well. In the 1600s and 1700s, New England preserved many dialect words that were also common at the time in East Anglia. Now these words are not as common today as they once were, and many of them may have disappeared altogether from one or both dialects. But it is interesting to observe the older links between these dialects.

For example, the word *orts* was an East Anglian term for scraps or garbage. It was also common in New England in the 1600s and 1700s, but it has largely disappeared in both regions. The great English scholar Samuel Johnson reported that the word was obsolete in England in the mid-1700s. In New England, it also largely fell out of use, but a survey in the 1960s found a resident in Maine and a resident in New Bedford, Massachusetts who still recognized the word, specifically in the term ‘orts bag’ which meant ‘garbage sack.’ [*SOURCE: American Regional Dialects, Craig M. Carver, p. 25*]

And speaking of *orts* or trash, New England also had the word *culch*, which meant ‘trash.’ This word also existed in East Anglia, as did an apparently related word *gulsh*, which specifically referred to sediment in wine or beer, but also has a sense of refuse or trash.

In both New England and East Anglia, a pantry was sometimes referred to as a *buttry*. That word is a modified version of the older English word *butlery*.

In New England, a covered walkway was called a *dingle*. That word may have been derived from an older East Anglian word *dingle*, which referred to a narrow, steep-sided valley or ravine, especially one shaded or surrounded by trees. So that sense of a covered or shaded passageway may have been extended to covered walkways in New England.

Now in American English, if someone becomes angry or agitated, we might say that they were *riled* or *riled up*. This is generally considered to be an Americanism today, but it can actually be traced back to East Anglia. The word *rile* meaning ‘to disturb or anger’ appears in local dialect word lists prepared in Suffolk and Essex in the early 1800s. I mentioned the Suffolk word list a moment ago. It was compiled by a man named Edward Moor in 1823. And under his entry for the word *rile*, he wrote that the word seemed to have been transplanted to America. And in fact, the word appears in a list of local New England dialect words compiled in 1893. And the Oxford English Dictionary includes this note about the word, “Regarded as an American usage during the 19th and much of the 20th century, although surviving in English regional use at least until the late 19th.” So again, it appears that *rile* or *riled* or *to rile up* is another term that migrated from East Anglia to New England, and then from there, it passed on to broader American English.

East Anglia also held onto some old-fashioned plural forms that had largely disappeared in most other English dialects. For example, people there still used the word *housen* for houses and *mousen* for mice. These also survived into the early New England dialect, especially the word *housen* which is well-documented and lingered for quite some time in the region.

Now let me give you a couple of examples from Charlie Haylock, who is another English dialect expert, who happens to be from Suffolk in East Anglia. Here is an excerpt from a YouTube clip where he discusses Suffolk dialect terms. There first is *tittymatawter*, which he links to a common slang term found in New England and other parts of North America.

[AUDIO CLIP]

And here’s another example from Haylock. In this clip, he tells us about the *pollywiggles*, a Suffolk term for a tad pole.

[AUDIO CLIP]

So from those clips, we can identify the possible origins of the American slang terms *teeter-totter* for a see-saw and *pollywog* for a tadpole.

Moving beyond East Anglia, the original settlers in New England maintained other terms that were in more widespread use in England at the time. For example, in an earlier episode, I noted that New England speakers traditionally referred to a creek or small stream as a *brook*. This is an older English term which became the common term in New England. Meanwhile, in other parts of North America, other terms were adopted – like the term *creek* or the Dutch word *kill* in and around New York. The word *brook* is an Old English word, but it became a regional term in North America since it was mostly confined to New England. However, its use in books and

other literature allowed it to spread to other parts of North America, but it is still a bit more common in New England.

We also find a similar example in the words *pail* and *bucket*. Both words were borrowed from French in the Middle English period, and both were common in England in the 1600s. But *pail* became the more common term in New England, while *bucket* became the more common term in other areas. A study in the mid-1900s confirmed the regional preference for *pail* in New England, though that preference may have eroded a bit since then. [SOURCE: *Linguistic Fingerprints*, Roger Kreuz, Ph.D., p. 8]

And I should note that as the original English settlers in New England spread outward, they did encounter indigenous people, and they did borrow some of those Native American words as well. For example, the word *skunk* comes from a local New England Algonquian word for the animal, which was *seganku*. It is recorded for the first time in 1634, shortly after those original settlers arrived in Massachusetts. The word *woodchuck* is also derived from a local Algonquin word. The indigenous people of the region called the animal a *wuchak*. So the name doesn't actually have anything to do with wood. English speakers just anglicized the name by converting the first part of the name into the more familiar English word *wood*. When something like that happens, it's called a folk etymology.

Now I've talked quite a bit about the old New England dialect, and I've tried to show some connections to the older speech of East Anglia in England. And I've also made the point that this early New England dialect was quite different from the dialect that one would encounter in the region today. In fact, I've alluded to something that might seem a bit surprising today. If we were to travel back in time and speak with someone who lived in New England in the 1700s or early 1800s, we might think we were in the American South or rural Midwest or the southern Appalachians. We would probably think that those people spoke a bit like hillbillies, and I can say that because I am one and I live in the heart of Appalachia.

I've already mentioned that people in rural New England once said 'git' instead of *get*. Even Ben Franklin confirmed that he spoke that way. And people used expressions like *tarnation*. Well, in the late 1800s, a writer named J. Bailey Moore wrote a history of New Hampshire, and he confirmed this older form of speech. He wrote, "For many years after the settlement of New England, the majority of the people who were not well educated were in the habit of pronouncing many of the common words in use in a very peculiar manner, and words which cannot be found in an English dictionary were frequently introduced. The typical Yankee or country Jonathan always talked in this dialect. As schools have been multiplied, this form of speech is now seldom heard." [SOURCE: *History of the Town of Candia, Rockingham County, N.H.*, J. Bailey Moore, p. 324]

By the way, the word Jonathan was a slang term for a New Englander. So when he referred to a "typical Yankee or country Jonathan," he meant someone who lived in a rural part of New England, which was still most of New England at the time.

He then included a list of words to illustrate this form of speech, including his phonetic rendering of the pronunciation. He said that people said *ain't* instead of 'is not,' and 'fur' instead of *far*, and 'gal' instead of *girl*. If someone was troubled, they were 'put out.' They might look 'somers out the winder' instead of 'somewhere out the window.' That ate 'taters' and 'puddn' instead of *potatoes* and *pudding*. [SOURCE: *History of the Town of Candia, Rockingham County, N.H., J. Bailey Moore, p. 324*]

To add to this style of speech that we associate with rural areas in other parts of the country today, I should note that the words *grits* was once a common word in parts of England, as was the word *chitterlings*, which was later shortened to *chitlins* in the US. Both of those words appear in that list of Suffolk dialect words composed in the early 1800s that I mentioned earlier. But both words were in decline in England as they were becoming more common in North America. In fact, under the entry for chitterlings – or chitlins – the author included the following definition and description. "The mesentery [which meant 'abdominal organs'] of a pig; which fried and eaten with sugar, mustard and vinegar used to be reckoned a good dish." So some of these words that we associate with rural America – especially the rural South – are much older than we might expect. And some of the speech patterns that we associate with the rural South or rural Midwest were once common in New England as well.

And to drive that point home, I want to play another audio clip for you. This clip features a speaker who lived in Rockland, Massachusetts in the 1800s. This audio was recorded in 1930. It's an interview with a couple who had been married for 75 years. You're mainly going to hear from the wife who was 93 years old at the time, so she was born in or around 1837. That means her dialect is from the mid-1800s, and it would have been the type found roughly halfway between the arrival of the first settlers in the 1630s and today. And it illustrates how different the speech in some parts of rural New England was at the time.

[AUDIO CLIP]

So I hope you found that interesting. It's a good illustration of how accents and dialects change over time, and we can't assume that older forms of speech are just slight variations of modern speech. Sometimes they were very different. Again, we'll explore the modern dialects of New England in a future episode, but for now, I'm going to wrap up this episode with that look at the dialect as it was spoken in the past.

Next time, we'll continue to move the story forward, and we'll complete our look at the 1630s as we take the story to the eve of civil war in England.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.