

# [Economics of seventeenth-century new england flashcard](https://assignbuster.com/economics-of-seventeenth-century-new-england-flashcard/)

During the seventeenth-century, New England went through many social, religious and economic changes. In Salem Possessed, Boyer and Nissenbaum focused primarily on how Salem’s economy caused factionalism within the village. As a result, they neglected to examine the larger New England economy and the origins of its transformation. In order to fully understand the effects of the diversifying New England economy, one must learn about how Puritans felt about materialism and private ownership. From these fundamental Puritan ideologies, one can understand that as more people became entrepreneurial, problems within society were inevitable.

Thus, the transforming Puritan economy caused social and religious factionalism in seventeenth-century New England. Economic ideologies of Puritans were fundamental to the rise of factionalism. Aboard the Arbella, off the coast of Massachusetts, Governor John Winthrop said, “ The care of the public must oversway all private respects… for it is a true rule that particular estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public. [1] From the beginning, colonial leaders expected all the new immigrants to put the greater good of the community over their own self-interests. Furthermore, these leaders told those who wanted to go to New England for the prospect of making money to do so elsewhere as they did not embrace providentialism. [2] This is the belief that God’s will is evident in all occurrences including commerce.

Because of this principle, churches set up standards for business practices in the name of God. 3] In the beginning of colonization, people shared the ownership of land because John Winthrop hoped “ that shared ownership of property and other resources would reinforce the covenants that bound their perspective communities together and prevent the scattering of the tiny initial settlements, a process that they viewed as detrimental to church and community cohesion. ”[4] Despite his hope, as the seventeenth-century progressed, collectivism became increasingly unpopular. As a result of this change, Winthrop’s fear came true as more towns spread apart, increasing social and religious factionalism within New England.

In the early seventeenth-century, trade between New England colonies and the mother country was somewhat one sided. Because of the scarcity of fertile land in New England, colonists from this region lacked a lucrative export crop. Sir Francis Brewster showed imbalanced trade when he said, “ That unprofitable Plantation, which now brings nothing to this Nation, but to the contrary buries Numbers of industrious People in a Wilderness, that produceth nothing but Provisions to feed them. ”[5] This quote shows that if one wanted to become prosperous in New England, farming was not the ideal profession. This eventually led more people to pursue other businesses, which caused social and religious factionalism. When the Atlantic triangle slave trade began, New England’s economy went through many revolutionary changes.

From this trade, New Englanders realized that rum and slaves were lucrative commodities. [6] In order to make profit, New England merchants traded rum for slaves off the west coast of Africa. Afterwards, in the West Indies they traded slaves for molasses. Finally, they sold molasses to local New England rum producers. As a result of more trade, the demand for ships increased making shipbuilding businesses very prosperous.

Because of the diversifying economy, those living on the coast of New England became more affluent than inland farmers who became less prevalent in the expanding economy. Also, economic changes within the agriculture industry caused factionalism in New England. In the beginning, town residents worked on shared farmland called the commons. The common storehouse stored everything that grew on this land. From here, each family received a ration of food depending on the amount of family members. In theory, this economic system seems fair and makes sense.

Looking back at the history of the Plymouth Colony, one can see the faults with this system. In the first year, a fire in the common storehouse destroyed a large portion of food and supplies. Soon after, thirty-six more people immigrated to Plymouth Colony. Because of this, rations became smaller for each family as everyone had to share from the common storehouse. [7] This quote shows that collectivism failed.

After these unfortunate events, many people petitioned the government for private ownership of land. In 1623, private land ownership became a reality. With this new system, people became more productive as they provided for themselves. As a result, the next harvest was plentiful.

As the years passed, private ownership also became popular in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Just ten years after the settlement of Boston, towns allowed people to fence off certain portions of land for themselves so they could grow what they wanted. Also, with continued disputes over the common lands between neighbors, government officials often bided off excess land for private ownership. [8] As the transition to private land ownership continued, more people bought land farther away from the town center in order to expand their potential profits.

This new capitalistic system would soon cause social and religious factionalism as John Winthrop warned. By examining the histories of Salem Village and Salem Town, one can understand how underlying tensions contributed to social and religious factionalism. Since the founding of Salem Town, commercialism existed. The reason this happened, is seen when Boyer and Nissenbaum stated, “ The fine natural harbor, with its network of rivers providing access to the interior, was selected in 1626 by Roger Conant as a likely spot to found a fishing station and trading post. ”[9] This geographical description of the area shows that Salem Town began as a commercial venture.

As the population grew, the town expanded to the interior because of insufficient resources. This area eventually became Salem Village. Because of the distance between Salem Village and the main town center, many farmers wanted to separate from the town. Also, they wanted to separate because of the different economic interests between the town and the village. [10] After numerous petitions, Salem Town granted Salem Village the right to hire their own minister. This decision would eventually lead to even more social and religious factionalism within Salem.

After going through three ministers, Salem Village eventually hiredReverend Samuel Parris. As a minister, Parris often attacked his enemies, commercialists who aligned themselves with Salem Town, in his sermons. In Parris first sermon, he stated: Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully. When persons attend any duty, any service or ordinance … buy yet aim at some private and carnal interest, some by-end of their own; if that be the principal weight that moves them, not the honor, service and glory of God … then these … are to be ranked among such as do the work of the Lord deceitfully. [11] This sermon showed Parris’s mistrust of those who cared solely about their own self-interests.

Parris’s harsh rhetoric toward his enemies created factionalism within Salem Village. The largest factions in Salem Village were the Putnam and Porter families. The Putnam family, one of Parris’s biggest supporters, did not align themselves with Salem Town as they dissented their mercantilist prosperity. [12] The Porter family and their supporters, who lived mostly on the east side, included farmers who benefited from the commercial links with Salem Town.

These factions became extremely apparent when the Putnam family instigated many of the witch accusations during the infamous Salem witchcraft trials. Understandably, many of those accused supported the Porter family and lived on the eastern side of Salem Village. From the witchcraft trials, it is clear that the changing economy in seventeenth-century New England caused social and religious factionalism. In addition, seventeenth-century social and religious factionalism existed in Boston Massachusetts. Firstly, from the trials of the successful businessman Robert Keayne, one can see the conflicting morals between traditional Puritans and entrepreneurs. In 1639, other merchants in Boston accused Keayne of overcharging on products.

During this time, law required profit margins on common goods be between ten and thirty percent. However, people complained that Keayne sometimes made fifty to one hundred percent profit margin on the products he sold. These complaints eventually went to trial and the court found Keayne guilty. [13]After his trial, Keayne rationalized his behavior when he argued that merchants in London frequently raised the prices of products in order to recoup losses from disasters at sea, miscalculations in the worth of goods, or bad deals. 14] If one looks at modern business economics, Keayne had fair business practices.

Keayne’s persecution showed the commercialist resistance from traditional Puritans deepened social factionalism. Finally, from looking at the religious views of entrepreneurs in Boston, one can see factionalism. Mark Valeri showed this when he stated in Heavenly Merchandise, “ Many merchants set themselves apart from other New Englanders not only by their social and political agendas but also by a distinct religious ethos. They shared an affinity for radical versions of puritan teaching on deviations. English critics branded them with names such as Antinomians.

”[15] Antinomianism argued that if predestination existed, then it did not matter if you followed religious laws. It made sense business owners would adopt this sect of Christianity as their morals conflicted with mainstream Puritanism. For commercialists, Antinomianism allowed them to justify their business practices with religion. The existence of this division of Christianity showed that religious factionalism existed in seventeenth-century New England. Seventeenth-century New England proved that transforming economies have a direct effect on religion and society as a whole. In order to appreciate how economics caused social and religious factionalism, one must have a deep understanding of Puritan commercialist ideologies.

By looking at major New England ports such as Salem and Boston, it was evident that factionalism existed as a result of the rapidly changing economy. Therefore, the transforming Puritan economy caused social and religious factionalism in seventeenth-century New England.