

King philips war essay sample

War



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King Philip's War (1675-76) is an event that has been largely ignored by the American Public and popular historians. " However, the almost two-year conflict between the colonists and the Native Americans in New England stands as perhaps the most devastating war in this country's history" (Giersbach, 1). Native American warriors and the opposing English troops fought viciously destroying everything and everyone in their sight. Women and children on both sides were purposely targeted, and many settlements were destroyed. After a year of bloody fighting, Captain Benjamin Church brought a small party of English troops to a swamp at Mount Hope where Metacom was hiding. A Native American ally fighting alongside Benjamin Church named John Alderman killed Metacom for money, thus ending the bitter war. This was the last chance for Indians to control the losses of their native lands in New England vs. the colonists. On a per capita basis, King Philip's War is one of the bloodiest conflicts in American history.

Vicious arguments ignite and fighting began for the next 200 years between the Indians and Colonists. European fishermen carried infectious diseases such as smallpox, typhoid, measles, and spotted fever which causes many deaths to Native Americans around 1618. Massasoit was the sachem, or leader, of the Wampanoag Tribe. Months after the Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth in 1620, Massasoit went to the new colony and offered friendship. He would sign a peace treaty with the English saying that if either side were attacked, that they would show nonaggression and mutual defense. Massasoit helped the colonists in their first winter by giving them food and shelter. This uneasy alliance that the Wampanoag had with the English became harder and harder as the colonists pressured the Indians to sell land.

The somewhat friendly peace between the Colonists and Indians would soon end after Massasoit dies in 1662 and Metacom takes over. Metacom was Massasoit's son and was known by the English as King Philip because of his haughty mannerisms.

Metacom felt like he wasn't treated with the respect he deserved like his father was. As the relationship between he and the Colonists got worse, he began to plan an attack on them. Colonists had successfully converted and educated some of the Indians and these people lived in separate settlements called " Praying Towns." John Sassamon, a Native American Christian convert and advisor to Metacom, told Plymouth Colony officials about Metacom's attempts to arrange Native American attacks on widely dispersed colonial settlements. Before these officials could investigate, John was murdered on January 29, 1675. Three Wampanoag Indians were arrested for Sassamon's death, including one of them being King Philip's counselor. They were all sentenced to death. " On June 20, possibly without Metacom's approval, a group of Wampanoags attacked the village of Swansea. Responding to this raid, Puritan leaders in Boston and Plymouth immediately dispatched as force which burned the Wampanoag town at Mount Hope, RI" (Giersbach, 2).

Although Indians planned the first attacks, the war was not begun by Indians. Some Wampanoag Indians killed English-owned cattle causing the farmers to become very angry. " A farmer then retaliated by killing an Indian, setting in motion a native uprising that would eventually threaten to wipe

Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Bay Colonies out of existence" (Tougas, 1). As the Summer continued, the conflict between the Colonists and Indians escalated creating many tribes to join each side in battles. King Philip's War
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officially began on June 24, 1675. “ King Philip’s War began as a feud between the Wampanoags and Plymouth Colony. It quickly spread, as Indians throughout New England sympathized with the Wampanoags cause” (Cwiklik, 131). The Native American tribes’ allies during this war fighting against the English Colonists were the Nipmuck, the Podunk, the Narragansett, and the Nashaway people. The Nipmuck people joined Metacom’s side because they did not like the increasing amount of land being lost to the English settlers.

They were major participants in the siege of Lancaster, Brookfield, Sudbury, and Bloody Brook, all in Massachusetts. The Podunk felt like they were being too restricted by the English settlers and had a peaceful relationship with them until King Philip’s War. The Narragansett Tribe’s arch rival is the Uncas and they were fighting alongside Metacom. Narragansett tribe finally joined Metacom’s side after the Great Swamp Fight against the Colonists. The Nashaway people were often associated with the Nipmuck people who also fought on Metacom’s side. The Colonists became allies with the New England Confederation, the Pequot Tribe, and the Mohegan Tribe. The New England Confederation was a military alliance of the English colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth, and New Haven and declared war on Metacom on September 9, 1675. The Mohegan Tribe is an Algonquian-speaking tribe who helped the English against the Pequots in the Pequot War of 1637.

The Pequot Tribe worked together with the English and Mohegan people to defeat the Metacom and his allies, especially the Narragansett people. There were many neutral tribes that had been friendly with the Colonists were

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drawn into war when the Colonists would take precautions against them. “ This sometimes included taking children from the tribes for ransom, or forcing the Indians to spend nights in the settlers’ locked barns” (Giersbach, 1). Some tribes tried to look past these occurrences to avoid entering such a bitter war, but found themselves entering on Metacom’s side because of this. An example is the Agawam Tribe, who was peaceful until the English settlers abducted its children as hostages. The Narragansett Tribe avoided entering for a long time also. Their arch rival, Uncas, were fighting alongside Metacom but they also did not want to side with the English settlers. Both the colonists and the Indians wanted the Narragansett Tribe to join them because they were estimated 1, 000 to 2, 000 warriors strong.

The tribe was forced to side with Metacom when the English colonists attacked their winter camp. This was known as the Great Swamp Fight. The Great Swamp Fight of December 19, 1675, was a Colonist attack on the neutral Narragansett Tribe’s winter camp, following failed attempts to get them to join the war on their side. The Colonists distrusted the tribe due to the fact that they were sheltering Wampanoag women and children. During the war, many wigwams in which women and children were hiding were burned. The main Narragansett fort was attacked by about 1, 000 colonial militia including 150 Pequot and Mohegan warriors. In the end as many as 1, 000 women and children, 100 warriors, and 1 fort were killed and destroyed in the attack. “...more than 20 percent of the English soldiers had been either killed or wounded—double the casualty rate of the American forces at D-day” (Philbrick, 278). This battle was considered a massacre on the Narragansett Tribe and the tribe never fully recovered from it. The few

survivors of the attack joined Metacom and his allies during the war to get payback against the English colonists.

This was not the only massacre during the war because the Narragansett Indians got the English back during the Cumberland Massacre. The Cumberland Massacre, or Nine Men's misery, on March 26, 1676 was one of the bloodiest and most disturbing conflicts of the war. This massacre truly showed the brutality and hatred these two forces had against each other. On the morning of March 26, 1676, Captain Michael Pierce led 63 English and 20 friendly Wampanoag Indians to Cumberland where there was word of the enemy hiding out. " Upon reaching a ravine near Attleborough Gore on the Blackstone River above Pawtucket Falls, his company was ambushed by about 500 to 700 Narragansett led by chief sachem Canonchet" (Giersbach, 1). When they retreated, Pierce and his fighters were attacked by a blocking force of about 300 Indians. Even though Pierce was killed early on, the fighting continued for around 2 hours until few remained alive. " Nine English were captured and taken to a spot in Cumberland, now called Nine Men's Misery, where they were tortured to death" (Giersbach, 1). This action by the Narragansett Tribe towards the English was payback from the Great Swamp Fight Massacre where the Narragansett were the ones being killed in great numbers.

There were many other battles besides Nine Men's Misery and the Great Swamp Fight, but some of the most important include the Brookfield Attack, Battle of Bloody Brook, Attack on Springfield, the Lancaster Raid, the Attack on Sudbury, and the Battle of Turner's Falls. These battles all occurred from February 1675 to May 1676. These conflicts made huge impacts on the

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result of the war and really showed who had the strongest force. The Lancaster Raid was the first of all these battles occurring on February 10, 1675. It was an attack on the community of Lancaster, Massachusetts by Metacom's 1,500 Wampanoag, Nipmuck/Nashaway, and Narragansett Indians. They attacked 5 houses including one being Reverend Joseph Rowlandson's, with more than 30 people being killed inside. The Indians took prisoners for ransom when they raided settlers' villages like this one. In this case, they took in Mrs. Mary Rowlandson for 11 months and 5 days who, in captivity, wrote her famous book, "A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson." In her book, Mary writes about events she has witnessed or been a part of and how she must survive the captivity of the Indians.

Many people read this book after King Philip's War because it gave everyone an insight of what it was like to be a captive of the Indians. The Brookfield Attack occurred on August 2-4, 1675. It was an English surprise attack on a small group of Indians in which the English won. The battle consisted of at least 100 Nipmuck Indians surprising and whipping out a group of about 35-40 men and besieging 70 civilian colonists. The besieging soon became unsuccessful due to the 350 English soldiers and many Mohegan Indians coming to the rescue. Neither side could dislodge the other, then Muttawmp (Nipmuck leader) decided to withdraw him and his warriors from the war. In the end, it was a win by the Nipmuck Indians because they obtained crucial supplies from the looting of Brookfield. The Battle of Bloody Brook occurred on September 12, 1675. It was battle between the English Colonial militia of

Massachusetts Bay Colony and a band of Nipmuck Indians. This was another successful Nipmuck ambush killing around 60 people.

The Nipmuck Indians ambushed the Colonists train of wagons carrying the harvest from Deerfield to Hadley. The harvest was for the Colonists who were abandoned from their homes in recent attacks. Historians believe that the soldiers on the wagons were inexperienced and laid down their weapons when stopping to eat and rest. “ While the Colonial troops rested, the Native Americans attacked. As many as ninety colonial soldiers and teamsters were killed” (Kembold, 1). The Attack on Springfield occurred on October 1675. It was an Indian attack on the settlement of Springfield, Massachusetts. This battle is considered to be one of the Native Americans greatest successes during King Philip’s War because they burnt down a major settlement to the Colonists. Springfield was the second major settlement that was burned to the ground by Native Americans during the war, the first being Providence, Rhode Island. King Philip persuaded the Agawam Indians to rebel against the English settlers of Springfield. He wanted them to help him burn the Springfield settlement to the ground. Out of the 60 houses built in Springfield, 45 of them were burned to the ground.

By the end of the war, 82% of the Native American warriors and 23% of the European settlers in Springfield died. The Attack on Sudbury occurred on April 21, 1676. The town of Sudbury, Massachusetts was surprised by Indian raiders, destroying and stealing most of the homes, barns, farm animals, tools, and other property. Some of the residents in the city were killed in the attack, but most of the residents escaped with food and weapons to fortified houses where they held off the Native Americans for many hours. The Native
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Americans tactically won the fight killing many Colonial settlers and almost destroying the town, but did not accomplish what they came to do. “

However, some historians have speculated that the primary mission of the hostile Native American forces in their attack on the original Town of Sudbury was to acquire much needed supplies of food, weapons, ammunition, and gunpowder and to totally destroy the Town so that they could more easily attack coastal Towns where even larger stores of these items could be acquired” (Tougias, 432). The Battle of Turner’s Falls, or the Peskeompscut Massacre, occurred on May 19, 1676.

Led by Captain William Turner, the English Colonists from Massachusetts Bay Colony snuck up to the Indians wigwams killing Native American men, women, children, the elderly, and ruthlessly killing anyone in their sight. Even though it was an easy win for the English Colonists, William Turner was killed in action along with 40 other colonists. The warriors of about 150 strong killed around 200 Native Americans being mainly women, children, and the elderly. From *The History of Deerfield, Vol. 1*, George Sheldon wrote, “ Leaving his horses under a small guard, Turner led his men through Fall river, up a steep ascent, and came out on a slope in the rear of the Indian camp. He had reached his objective point undiscovered. Silence like that of death brooded over the encampment by the river, save for the sullen roar of the cataract beyond. With ears strained to catch any note of alarm, the English waited impatiently the laggard light, and with the dawn, stole silently down among the sleeping foe; even putting their guns into the wigwams undiscovered. At a given signal the crash of a hundred shots aroused the stupefied sleepers. Many were killed at the first fire.

The astonished survivors, supposing their old enemy to be upon them, cried out "Mohawks! Mohawks!" rushed to the river, and jumped pell-mell into the canoes which lay along the shore. Many pushed off without paddles; in other cases the paddlers were shot, and falling overboard, upset the canoe; many in the confusion plunged into the torrent, attempting to escape by swimming. Nearly all of these were swept over the cataract and drowned. Others, hiding about the banks of the river, were hunted out and cut down, "Captain Holyoke killing five, young and old, with his own Hands from under a bank." A very slight resistance was made, and but one of the assailants wounded; another "was killed in the action by his friends, who, taking him for an Indian as he came out of the wigwam shot him dead." The wigwams were burned, and the camp dismantled" (Sheldon, 1).

The damage from this war had already been done even with the death of Turner. The major war camps of the Wampanoags and Nipmucks were completely wiped out, and the few warriors that were still left with King Philip went to their main headquarters at Mount Hope to hide from the English. King Philip made many hit and run attacks on isolated colonists' farms, but Benjamin Church, using Indian guides, finally tracked him down. By the time Captain Church and the English got to King Philip, Philip's allies were nearly all gone and it was an easy win for the English. An Indian by the name of John Alderman fired his musket and shot King Philip in the head twice. John received cash, the hand, and the head of Metacom. The death of Philip effectively ended Native American resistance in New England. But true to his word Philip had gone down fighting "determined not to live until I have no country" (Touigas, 1). The destruction King Philip's War caused was

on many Indian towns, Indian tribes, and even to the English Colonists. Of the ninety Puritan towns established before the time of the war, fifty-two were attacked, and twelve of that fifty-two were completely destroyed. As many as 1, 000 English Colonists died from the war, but about 3, 000 Native Americans died whipping out many Indian tribes.

“ The per capita death rate of Native Americans was ten times higher than that of the English Colonial immigrants” (Tougas, 1). A large amount of Native Americans were sold into slavery in the West Indies by the English. The Narragansett, Nipmuck, Podunk, Wampanoag, and several other small Indian tribes were eliminated as organized tribes. “ From the end of King Philip’s War until today, the Wampanoag have struggled to maintain their identity as an American Indian Tribe” (Doherty, 20). The way the war started with the Native Americans not wanting to give up their land to the English is the plight to many cultures throughout history that went through the same thing. Nearly every time, the natives are forced to give up their land and culture to the westerners.

For about 2 years, Metacom fought a bloody battle targeting English women, children, and even the elderly, mostly. In this case, the Indians that did survive from the war and weren’t sent off for slavery had to adapt certain aspects of their culture in order to survive. This war was the last real stand the Indians could pose to the westernization of their culture and the loss of their native lands. “ King Philip’s War was a terribly violent and destructive conflict, which was sparked by the desires of maintaining cultural identity and preserving power and authority, both in societal and religious capacities upon what one believed to be his land” (Leach 21).

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