

The 17th-Century Great Migration to New England and Beyond

Conventicles, Companies, Congregations, Dispersal

Class 5: Dispersal

Robert Charles Anderson, FASG

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Meet today's presenter



Robert Charles Anderson, FASG
Director of the Great Migration Study Project

OVERVIEW

- **Presentation (60 mins.)**
 - The 1640s and beyond
 - 1840s – Westward migration
- **Q&A (30 mins.)**

The 1640s

- Immigration much reduced.
- Relatively few new settlements.
- “Rise of the lesser gentry” [Walls].

Northampton, Massachusetts I

- Founded in 1654.
- Major contribution from Windsor, Hartford and Windsor, little from Wethersfield.
- Some direct from Dorchester.

Northampton, Massachusetts II

- 57 first settler families
 - Windsor 17
 - Hartford 12
 - Springfield 7
 - Dorchester 7
 - Others 6
 - Unknown 8

Lebanon, Connecticut

- Settled in 1690s, just north of Windham.
- Settlers came from
 - Neighboring towns in New London County, mostly Norwich [55]
 - Connecticut River Valley, mostly Northampton [61]
 - Northern Plymouth County [14]

Lebanon was active in the First Great Awakening of 1735, which originated in Northampton.

Canterbury, Connecticut

- Canterbury is a few miles northwest of Lebanon and was settled just a few years later.
- Three streams of settlement:
 - Woburn, Massachusetts
 - Dorchester, Massachusetts
 - Braintree, Massachusetts
- “The church they founded at Canterbury in 1711 was rigidly orthodox [i.e., traditional congregational]” [Jedrey 11].

Rule of Three

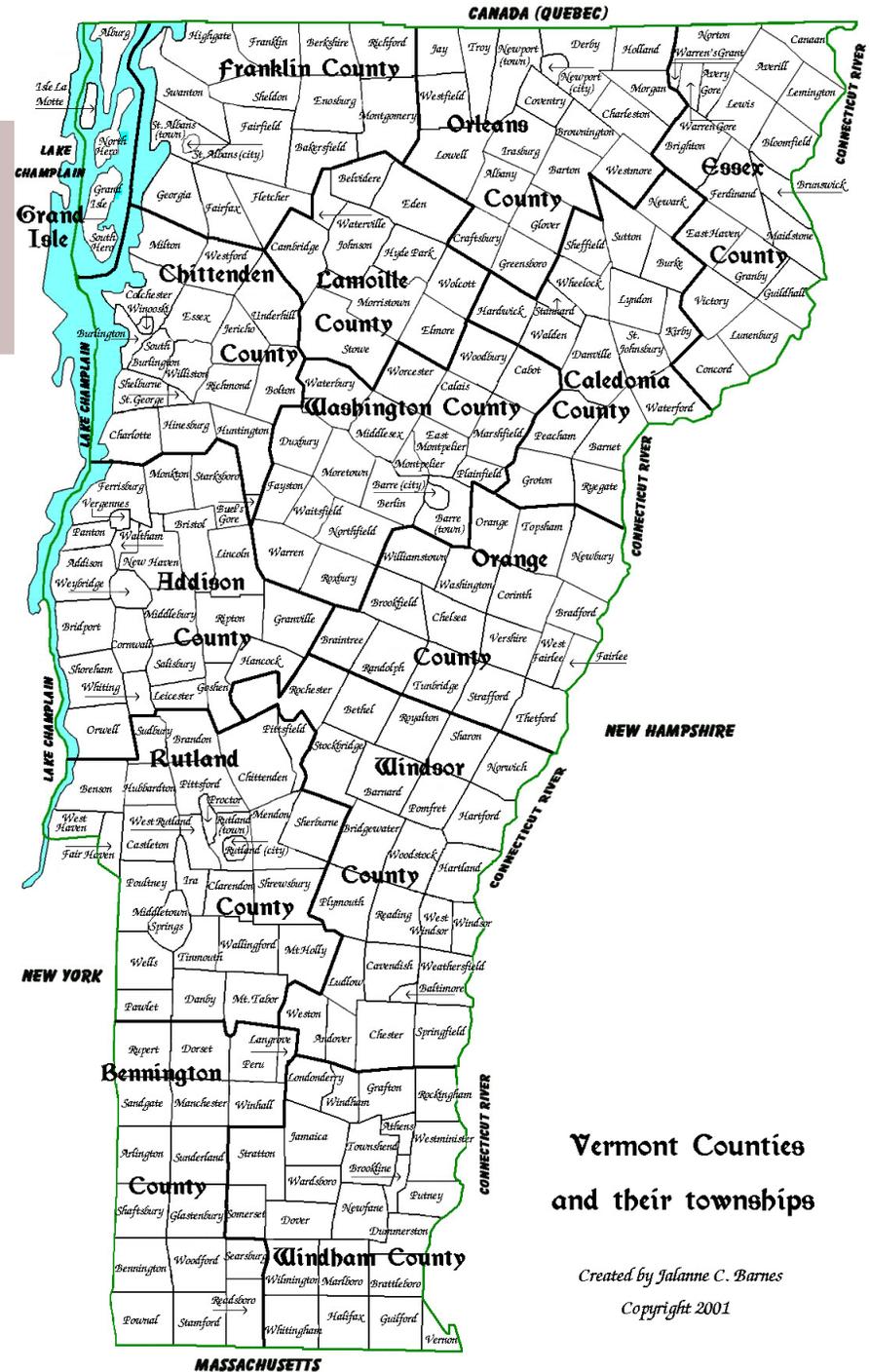
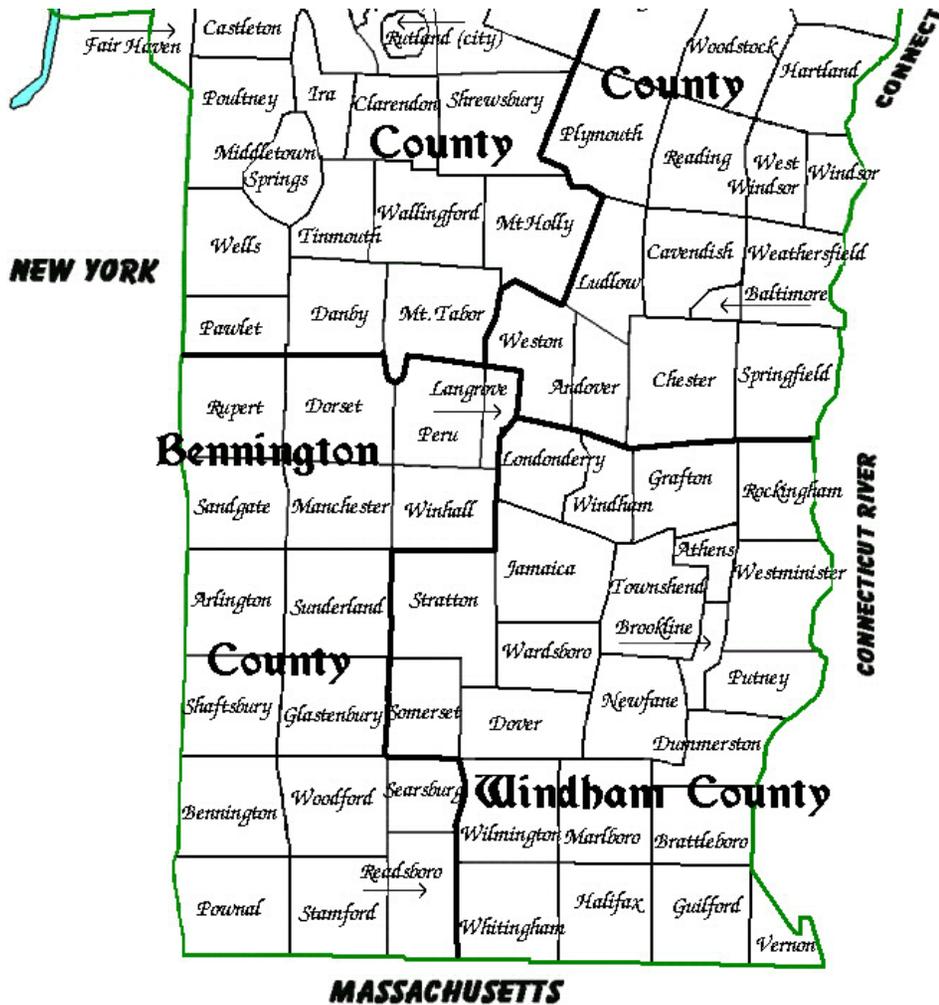
- Many examples in seventeenth century New England of newly settled towns receiving streams of immigration from three older towns.
- Is this a real phenomenon?
- If so, how much longer does it persist?
- And if so, does it result only from kinship connections, or does it also reflect religious and political affinities?

QUESTIONS?

Vermont

- Major settlement began in 1760 at the close of the French and Indian War.
- “The eastern people came from Tolland and Windham counties, and especially from the upland area in the vicinity of Lebanon [and four other nearby towns].... They were for the most part orthodox Calvinists and adherents of the ‘standing order.’”
- “The people west of the mountains were distinctly less conservative. They came from the newer parts of Connecticut ... the ... hill towns of Litchfield County. They were sectarians and Doubters in religious matters.”

Southern Vermont



Vermont Counties and their townships

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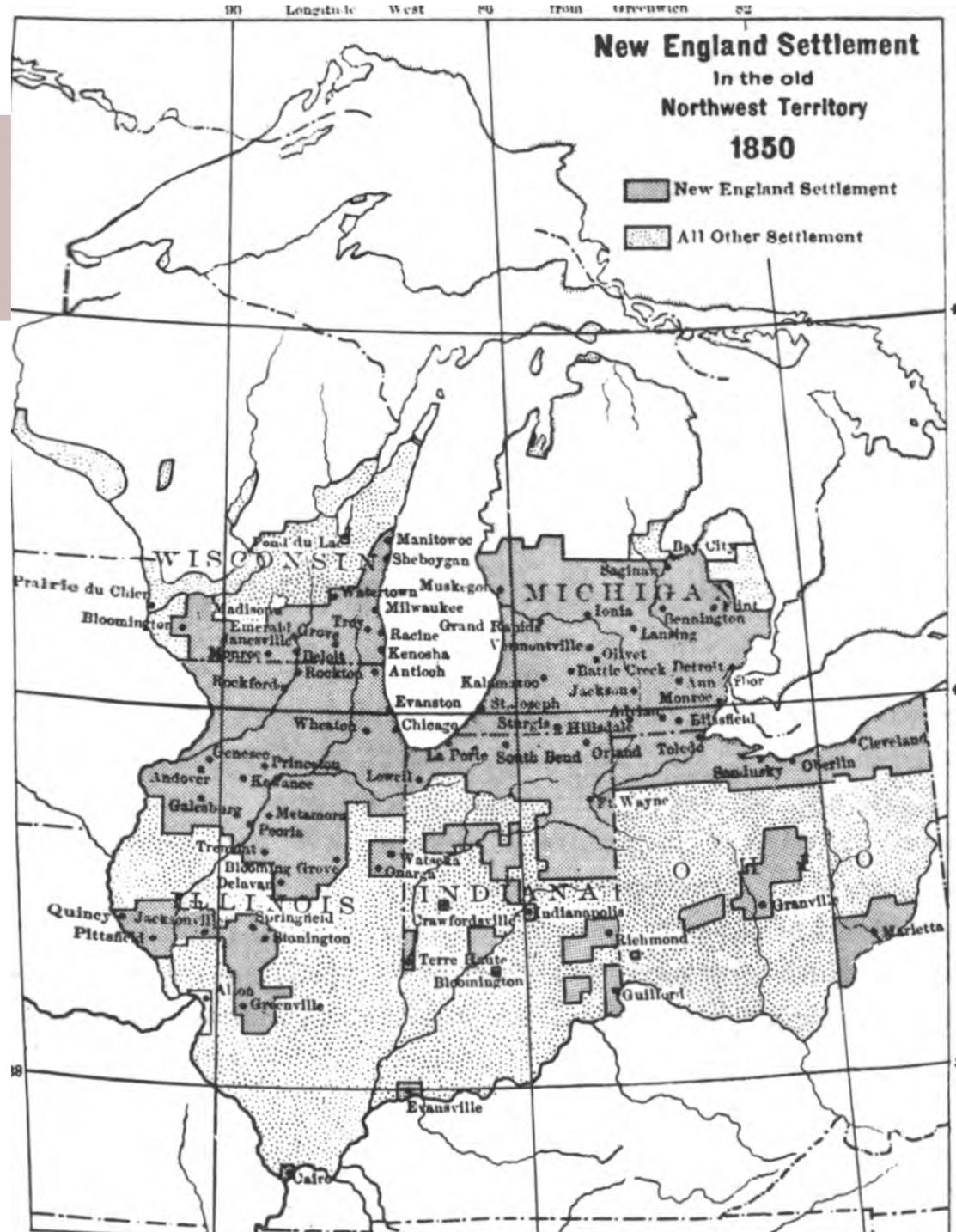
Western New York

- Migration from Vermont into upstate New York began very soon after Vermont itself began heavy settlement.
- Especially heavy migration to far western upstate New York counties.
- Especially active in the Second Great Awakening.

Old Northwest

- “But the part of the West which really beckoned, consisted of three almost virgin regions – southern Michigan, northern Illinois, and southeastern Wisconsin” [Stilwell 188].
- “A colony from Windsor [Vermont] was settling Prairie Ronde in Kalamazoo County in 1830” [Stilwell 165].

Westward Spread

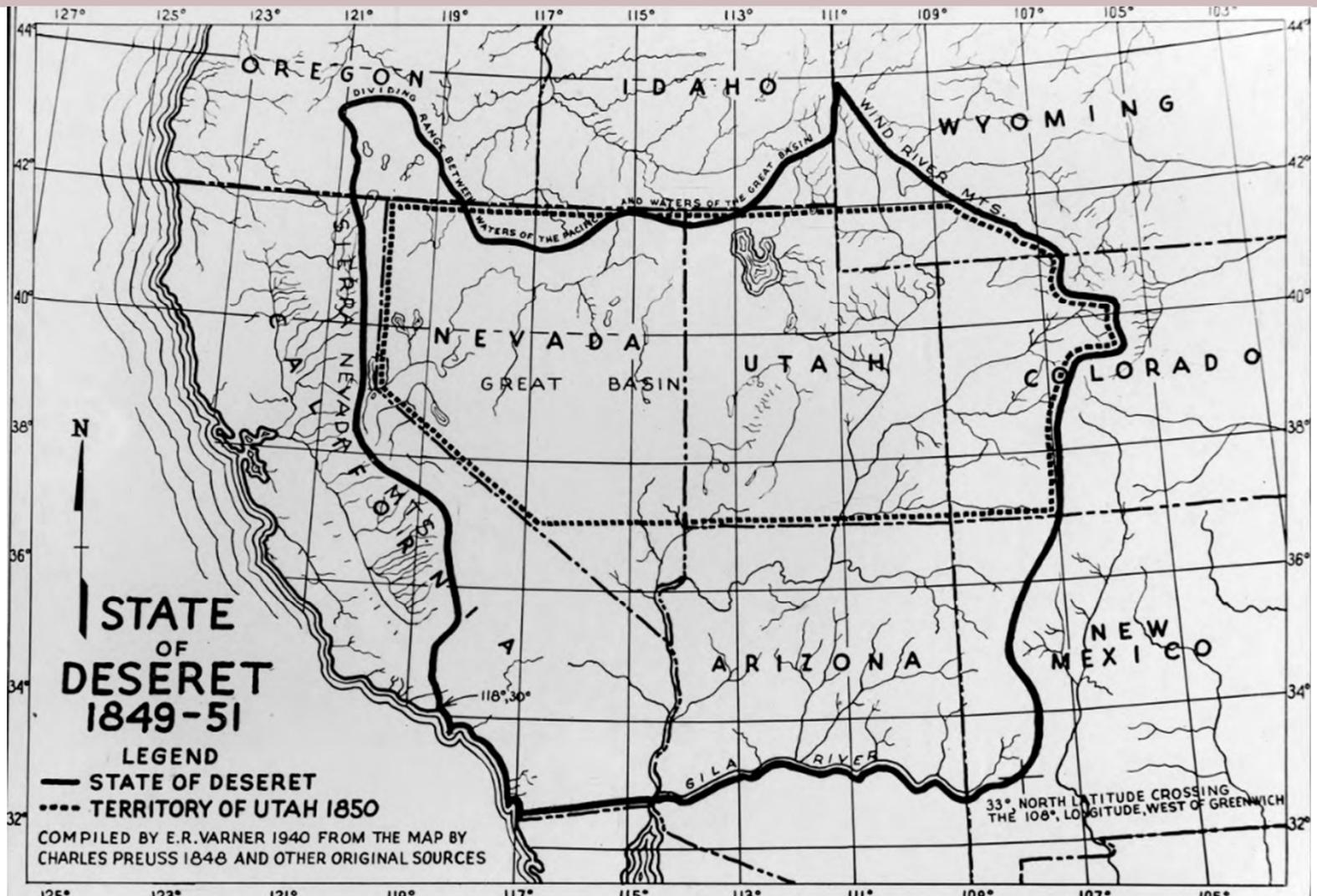


The expansion of New England: The Spread of New England Settlement and Institutions to the Mississippi River, 1620-1865 by Lois Kimball Matthews; Map "New England Settlement 1637" post page 246

1840s and the Far West

- Oregon Trail
- Gold Rush
- Deseret

Deseret



Overview I

- The Great Migration to New England was largely religiously motivated by those who wanted to reform the Church of England.
- Reform-minded ministers and laymen and laywomen frequently gathered in illegal conventicles.
- When pressure from state and church became too great, they moved to New England as migrating companies.
- Upon arrival they founded new settlements and churches, largely based on these conventicles and companies, but also with a steady rearrangement through “ideological sorting out.”

Overview II

- As New England grew through the remainder of the seventeenth century, the strands of connection maintained some coherence, as exemplified by the Rule of Three, but with continuing reassortment.
- How far did this pattern persist after 1700, as New Englanders migrated west?

QUESTIONS?

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The 17th-Century Great Migration to New England and Beyond 2024

Thank you for registering for the online seminar, *The 17th-Century Great Migration to New England and Beyond: Conventicles, Companies, Congregations, Dispersal!*

The participants in the 17th-century Great Migration to New England were drawn from the most committed English protestant reformers, those who most wanted the Church of England to make a full break with the Church of Rome. In this five-week course, Director of the Great Migration Study Project Robert Charles Anderson will explain the who, what, and why of the mass movement of people to New England from Old England in the 1620s and 1630s and the subsequent migrations in the generations to follow.

The colonists to New England in the early 17th century were largely men and women who began to form networks across England as early as the 1530s, meeting together in conventicles and godly households. As the decades passed, many of these reformers became more and more frustrated as one monarch after another refused to make the desired reforms. A breaking point was reached in the 1620s and a small stream of English men, women and children began to move to the New World. The pace of migration increased in the later 1630s, when thousands of migrants crossed the Atlantic each year. They were organized in companies, led by a minister or an affluent layman, based on the existing conventicles. Initially, many of the members of these migrating companies settled together in one New England town, but they soon began a process of sorting themselves out in different ways. Traces of the old English connections may still be seen decades later, even so late as the settlement of the American West two centuries on. Don't miss this opportunity to explore the 300-year sweep of history and the context surrounding your early immigrant ancestors' movements!

AmericanAncestors.org/17th-century-great-migration-new-england-and-beyond-2024



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