

LANDHOLDING IN IPSWICH

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LANDHOLDING IN COLONIAL New England was often the determining factor of social, economic, and even political status in a community. The manner in which land was granted, the size of the grants, to whom they were granted, the division of types of land, and the effect of the land system on the inhabitants are crucial questions in the study and understanding of any colonial society.

A grant of 100 or more acres was a considerable amount of land as far as the New England colonies were concerned. The value of land per acre was much higher than in the other areas where much larger grants were more common. A study using 42 estates probated in the years 1635 to 1664 which were located in Essex County, Massachusetts, showed landholdings ranging from 1 to 234 acres but the average was 50 acres. Of the 42 estates investigated, over half were under 20 acres in size.¹ These figures appear to coincide with the land situation in Ipswich, Massachusetts, during the first thirty years of the town's settlement.²

When the first settlers were sent to Ipswich they were sent without having been granted a specific geographic area to settle. This was unusual but Ipswich was hastily settled to discourage French encroachment in the area. The town was so far from any other settlement that it was very unlikely that there would be any immediate boundary conflicts. The first entry in the town records, recorded in November of 1634, was that "the length of Ipswich should extend westward unto the buryinge place, and Eastward unto a Cove of the River, unto the planting ground of John Pirkings, the Elder."³ This did not mean that the town boundary would follow those lines but indicated that the grants of land would be within this area and the surrounding land would be held in common.

1. Percy Bidwell and John Falconer, *History of Agriculture in Northern United States, 1620-1860* (Washington, 1925), p. 37.

2. This paper is based on a study of the first-generation settlers in the town. For the purpose of this study the first generation has been defined as those adult males having lived in the town before 1660.

3. Ipswich Grants, Town Meeting, 1634 (manuscript in Town Clerk's Office, Ipswich, Massachusetts), p. 1 — hereafter cited as Ipswich Grants.

The compactness of the town was not accidental. Originally land was to be granted only within a four-mile radius of the center of town⁴ but an order was issued by the General Court in the fall of 1635 that "noe dwelling house shalbe builte above halfe myle from the meeting house, in any newe plantacon."⁵ The order was amended to include Ipswich.⁶ The basic motivation of establishing such compact communities was for protection against Indian attack and other dangers but was also effective for religious, political and social purposes.

Land Granting and Distribution

The method of granting and distributing the land to the initial group of settlers is important for a clear understanding of the political, economic, and social development of the town. There is, however, some confusion as to the process of granting land in early Ipswich. It appears that the earliest grants were made by a meeting of all the town's inhabitants and then a committee was appointed to lay out the grants. The first men mentioned as lot-layers, as this committee was called, were Henry Shorte, John Perkins, Robert Muzzey, and John Gage.⁷ These events were recorded in November of 1634.

The fact that the General Court established a committee to grant the land in Ipswich to the individual settlers on March 4, 1634/5, causes the confusion concerning the early land-granting process. The General Court ordered:

that John Winthrop, John Humfry, & John Endicott, Esq., or any two of them, shall have power to deuide ye lands att Ipswitch, within 4 myles of the towne, to pticular psons, as in equity they shall thinke meete.⁸

This committee was established almost two years after the original settlers arrived in Ipswich.

The difference in the date of settlement and the formal grant can be explained by the control exercised by the General Court in the granting of lands and the founding of towns. Grants were

4. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* (Boston, 1853), I, 136 — hereafter cited as *Mass. Records*.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Ipswich Grants, entry 12.

8. *Mass. Records*, I, 136.

usually made by the court in answer to petitions from the actual settlers.

If the petition was approved by the general court, a committee, consisting in most cases, though not in all, of residents and sometimes of the members of the court, was appointed to view the proposed location and to superintend the laying out of the plantation. This committee, after surveying and laying out the same, reported its proceeding to the court and the formal grant was made after the confirmation of the report.⁹

This seems to be the situation that existed in Ipswich. Only John Winthrop, Jr., was a resident of the town; the others were members of the General Court. Thus after 1635 and until 1637 the granting of the land was in the hands of the appointed committee.

The duty of land granting was assumed by the selectmen of the town when they came into being in the spring of 1637.¹⁰ The creation of the selectmen resulted from a decision by the General Court to give the towns power over matters which concerned only themselves. The Court gave the towns the power to:

dispose of their owne lands, and woods, with all the priviledges and appurtenances of the said townes, to graunt lotts, and make such orders as may concerne the well ordering of their owne townes, not repugnant to the lawes and orders here established by the General Court; as also to . . . chuse their owne particular officers, as constables, surveyors for the high wayes, and the like.¹¹

The town records, however, never specify that the selectmen granted so many acres to someone, or that the town granted it. All that the records stated was that land was "given and granted" to someone.

To summarize, the following was the sequence of events in regard to the initial granting and distribution of Ipswich land:

1. January 17, 1633: Governor John Winthrop, Sr., records the determination of the colony to make a "plantation" at Agawam (Ipswich) under leadership of John Winthrop, Jr.

9. Roy Akagi, *The Town Proprietors of the New England Colonies* (Philadelphia, 1924), p. 31.

10. Town Records and Land Grants, 1634-1757, Ipswich (manuscript, Town Clerk's Office, Ipswich, Massachusetts), p. 216 — hereafter cited as Town Records.

11. *Mass. Records*, I, 172.

2. Spring of 1633: John Winthrop, Jr., and twelve other original settlers settle at Agawam (Ipswich).
3. November, 1634: First lot-layers chosen to lay out lots according to grants made by meeting of Ipswich inhabitants.
4. March, 1635: General Court makes formal grant of Ipswich land in confirmation of prior settlement.
5. Spring, 1637: Selectmen take over granting of land.

An individual had to be accepted as an inhabitant within the town before he could receive any land. Admission to membership in the community was closely controlled in order to preserve the standards of the social order and to prevent beggars and vagabonds from wandering into the town and becoming town charges. The General Court authorized the towns to choose their inhabitants and decreed that in a case where persons entered a community and built a dwelling without permission of the town the inhabitants of the town had the power to demolish the dwelling and remove the persons.¹²

Nathaniel Ward¹³ wrote to John Winthrop, Jr., concerning the problem of the admission of inhabitants and the granting of lots. He explained that the freemen of the town were being extremely cautious concerning these matters because:

first, we conceive the lesse of Satan's kingdome we have in our towne, the more of Gods presence & blessinge we may expect. 2ly, we have respect to the credit of our Church & towne, from which we heare there are too many uniuert destractions in the bay, to serve their owne ends. 3ly, we consider our towne as a by or part towne of the land, remote from neighbours, & have neede to be strong & of a homogeneous spirit & people, as free from dangerous persons as we may. Lastly, our thoughts and feares growe very sodd to see such multitudes of idle & profane young men, . . . with whome we must leave our children . . . but I must confesse it sinks us almost to the grave to looke upon the next generation, to whome we must leave them & the fruits of our adventures, labours & counsellis.¹⁴

12. *Mass. Records*, I, 161, 168.

13. Ward, who is known for authoring the *Body of Liberties of 1641* and *The Simple Cobbler of Agawam* was an early minister and leader of Ipswich.

14. Ipswich Manuscript, 1633-1684, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass., p. 7, Dec. 24, 1635.

This letter is not the only evidence that the inhabitants of Ipswich were being select in accepting newcomers in the first years of settlement. The town records do note that in 1637 Humphrey Griffen was turned down as an inhabitant because the town was full.¹⁵ The control over admission of inhabitants became even tighter as the century progressed. It appears that at no time did anyone have real freedom of movement in Massachusetts Bay.

Acceptance as an inhabitant implied the privilege of receiving a grant of land. The body which was granting the land would indicate the amount and location of the land, and then it was the duty of the lot-layers to make certain that the land was available and laid out.

It is difficult to determine whether the granting body recorded in the town book the boundaries of the land before the lot-layers laid it out or if the original granting was enacted verbally to the lot-layers who distributed the land according to instructions and then entered the boundaries in the town records. The latter seems to be the more likely solution, but the written record does not really differentiate between the granting and the distributing. For example, the town records record the following rather vague grant.

Given and Granted unto John Gadge Fower Acres of meadowe & marshe lying on the towne syde of the River agaynst the plantinge ground of John Maninge & others . . .¹⁶

On the other hand at times the town records were rather exact as to the grant.

Granted to Willm Fuller foure acres of plantinge ground lying on the west end of Hartbrake Hill havinge Mr. Denisons lott on the South and the highway to Chebecko on the Southwest and a Swamp on the northwest. Also he hath a house lott which he bought of John Hassall havinge William White on the South, Alexander Knight on the northwest and John Jackson on the Southeast. Also another house lott he bought of John Saunders lyinge in Mill Streete havinge Mr. Seawalls house lott on the East and Mr. Saltonstalls garden at the Mill on the South. Likewise he had a house lott granted him of the towne joininge to halfe an acre wch he bought of Willm Symmos havinge John Proctor on the Southwest John Covington on the northeast and Hugh Sherratt on the west to enjoy to him his heirs or Assign forever.¹⁷

15. Ipswich Grants, entry 117.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

At one point the town records stated that anyone having his lot entered into the records of the town was required to bring a certificate "under the hands of Henry Shorte, John Pirkins, Roberte Muffry, John Gadarnox," requesting the town clerk to enter and record the grant.¹⁸ This entry was the only indication that a lot was laid out before being recorded.

For the first decade the only record of landownership was the entry made in the town records; however, a registry of deeds was begun in 1640 for the County of Essex. Deeds were recorded at the meeting of the Quarterly Court but evidently there was no law requiring immediate registration of landownership except with the town clerk. Grants made before 1640 were often not recorded for ten or twenty years or perhaps until the ownership of the land changed hands. In other words after 1640 there was a method of registering landownership similar to present-day methods, but it was not fully effective.

The lot-layers were given an important task and had to be men of honesty and integrity. They were carefully picked as was indicated by the men who held these positions. Table I clearly indicates that they were economic and political leaders who possessed a solid stake in the future of the town. These men had a very difficult task to perform and regardless of how careful they were, boundary disputes were inevitable. The lot-layers did make some mistakes due to the difficulty of measuring the barren wilderness surrounding the town with any great accuracy. They were allowed to work with the margin of error of 10 acres for every 100 — meaning that a 100-acre grant could consist of anything between 90 and 110 acres. In 1641 a particular grant of 150 acres was found to include 233 acres which was not within the margin of error allowed and thus the grant had to be laid out again.¹⁹ Nevertheless, there were very few serious land disputes in early Ipswich which spoke well for the services performed by the lot-layers.

The distribution of land in Ipswich was influenced by the many types of land available. For example, the area known as the "town" was entirely divided into house lots of varying sizes. The areas on top of the hills which had been cleared by the In-

18. Ipswich Grants, entry 12.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

dians and used by them for agricultural purposes were set aside as planting ground. The rest of the town was divided as marsh, which was used as a source of salt marsh hay for the livestock; meadow land, used for planting and haying; woodlots, which were extremely important since a family needed 15 cords of wood a winter which equalled $3/5$ acre of standing timber;²⁰ thatch lots which were the source of roofing material; and upland consisting of high, dry, and cleared land used for many purposes. The remaining land in the area was set aside as commons to be used and granted as needed. This division of land usage indicated that a different value was placed on land according to its use.

TABLE I
LOT-LAYERS: OFFICES AND LANDHOLDINGS²¹

Name	Offices Held	Avg. Maximum Acreage
Mr. William Bartholomew	Town Clerk, Selectman	120
John Gage	Selectman	20
George Giddings	Selectman, Deputy	160
Thomas Howlett	Selectman, Deputy	100
Robert Lord	Selectman, Deputy, Town Clerk	150
John Perkins, Sr.	Selectman, Deputy	160
John Tuttle	Selectman, Constable	300
John Whipple	Selectman, Deputy	460
Giles Firmin	Selectman, Constable	120
Daniel Denison	Selectman, Deputy Assistant	1200
William Hubbard	Selectman, Deputy	1600
Thomas Scott	Selectman, Constable	110
Moses Pengry	Selectman, Deacon, Deputy	75
Simon Thomson	Selectman, Constable	100

An average individual would ordinarily procure a small grant of each type of land. His holdings therefore would be scattered all over the town since it was unlikely that a small parcel of land in any one place would contain the entire variety. As a result of the division of land Ipswich resembled a small English agricultural village because the land was doled out in strips. The system was similar to the open field system of old England but was not as rigidly maintained. Before many years men began to consolidate their holdings.

20. Ralph H. Brown, *Historical Geography of the United States* (New York, 1948), p. 108.

21. Compiled from Ipswich Grants, Town Records, and deeds. All of the tables included in this study were constructed from the extensive statistical appendices in Edward S. Perzel, "The First Generation of Settlement in Colonial Ipswich, Massachusetts: 1633-1660" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers - The State University, 1967).

Features of Land Granting and Distribution

An interesting aspect of land granting and distribution related to the order issued by the General Court giving power to John Winthrop, Jr., John Humphrey, and John Endecott to grant land "in equity they shall thinke meete."²² What criteria were the three proprietors supposed to use in determining the size of the grant? The social status of the prospective grantee was a deciding factor; thus the original landholdings portray to some extent the structure of society.

The individuals who arrived in Ipswich carrying their reputations with them acquired above average-size grants. These larger grants carried the designation "farm" and were usually located in one large block of land. The following list of men received grants from the town which were called or could be described as "farms."

Samuel Appleton
Simon Bradstreet
John Cogswell
Daniel Denison
Thomas Dudley
George Giddings
Richard Haffield
John Hassalle
John Norton

William Paine
John Shatswell
Samuel Symonds
John Tuttle
John Whipple
Matthew Whipple
William White
John Whittingham
Thomas Whittingham

The town expected these men to be leaders in the community. They were not typical settlers. Most of them rated the title of "Mister." A majority of them held the more important elected offices of the town. Indeed two of them served as Governor of the colony,²³ one was the head of the colony's military affairs,²⁴ and another, John Whittingham, was related to John Calvin.²⁵ All in all, the town's expectations in regard to these 18 farm-grantees was met by their subsequent achievements. Twelve of them (Appleton, Bradstreet, Cogswell, Paine, Symonds, Denison, Dudley, Giddings, Norton, John Whipple, and the two Whittinghams)

22. *Mass. Records*, I, 136.

23. Simon Bradstreet and Thomas Dudley.

24. Daniel Denison.

25. James Savage, *A Genealogical Dictionary* (Boston, 1860), IV, 536. His grandfather was William Whittingham who married John Calvin's daughter and became a leading Calvinist. He was exiled under Queen Mary.

became leading men of the first-generation society and the remaining six (Shatswell, Haffield, Hassalle, Tuttle, Matthew Whipple, and White) gained upper-level social status.

An excellent example of the type of individual given special consideration concerning land grants because of his wealth and stature acquired in England was Samuel Symonds. Symonds was descended from an ancient family of Yieldham, Essex, England.²⁶ He was granted by the town of Ipswich in 1637 the following land:²⁷

500 acre farm
 6 acre planting lot
 40 acres marsh and upland
 320 acres called Argilla Farm
 6 acre lot
 1½ acres
 3 acres upon Meeting House Green

Samuel Symonds was one of the leading figures in the community. He held the highest public offices in both the town and the colony.

The holdings granted to John Perkins, Jr., were typical for the average settler arriving in Ipswich who was neither extremely wealthy nor poor. Perkins eventually became a leader in the town, but this had little bearing on the land originally granted to him. He received 6 acres of planting ground, 6 acres of marsh, and a 1-acre house lot in town.²⁸ This was the average amount and type of land granted to most of the new settlers. Such a grant allowed a man to grow his grain crops, have a small garden and orchard by his house, and have access to a supply of the marsh hay for his livestock. Most settlers did, however, expand their holdings beyond this original average of 13 acres if they had any initiative. Thomas Howlett received an original grant of a 6-acre planting lot, 2 acres of meadow, and 2½ acres of marsh.²⁹ Within the next two years Howlett received another 70-odd acres in land grants. Perhaps he showed his potential as a leader which raised his stature in the eyes of the land grantors. The fact that he served

26. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

27. Records of the Court Holden at Ipswich 1639 (manuscript located in office of Registry of Deeds, Essex County Court House, Salem, Mass.), I, 45-49.

28. Ipswich Grants, entry 63.

29. Town Records, p. 246.

as a Deputy to the General Court in 1635 probably helped him acquire new landholdings.

Indentured servants were sometimes given a grant of land after serving their contract. For example, Edward Bragg was listed as a servant of Samuel Symonds in 1642, but within one year Bragg owned his own land and right to commonage. Soon thereafter he became the owner of a 100-acre farm.³⁰

The largest landholders in Ipswich received their land as a reward for service. If a man became an important asset to the colony or the town the gratitude of the people was usually expressed by the presentation of a large land grant. Land was the only stable commodity in the colony and therefore was the best payment anyone could receive. As well as being used as a reward it was also used as a bribe to retain certain inhabitants who became indispensable to the town.

An early example of the above use of land was the case of John Winthrop, Jr., when the rumor spread that he was going to become the captain of the fort on Castle Island. Winthrop was a great asset to the town and the town's development. The townspeople had benefited by the close relationship of the younger Winthrop with his father, the Governor. Thus it was a great blow to the people when the possibility of Winthrop's departure from the town came to light.

The inhabitants of Ipswich vigorously opposed the suggested removal of the younger Winthrop from Ipswich. They sent a petition to the Governor protesting this move, pleading that the Governor

not deprive our Church & town of one whose presence is so gratefull & usefull to us. It was for his sake that many of us came to this place & without him we should not have come. . . . Mr. Dudley's leaving us hath made us much more desolate & weake than we were, & if we should loose anoth^r magistrate only but our Lieutenant Colonell so beloved of our Soldiours & military men that this remote corner would be left destitute & desolate.³¹

The petition concluded that John, Jr., would not be happy "to live upon others maintenace" and that the maintenance of that

30. Charles H. Pope, *The Pioneers of Massachusetts* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1965), p. 65; Essex County Deeds (deeds filed with Probate Court, Essex County Court House, Salem, Mass.), XI, 93, 149.

31. Ipswich Manuscript, 1633-1684, p. 4.

fort was already a burden under which the country had groaned.³² The success of the petition, signed by freemen and non-freemen alike, was aided by a bribe consisting of a land grant of 300 acres known as Castle Hill.³³ The Castle Hill plot was one of the choicest in town, but it only delayed his departure temporarily for he soon left to lead the development of the New Haven colony in Connecticut.

Another instance where land was granted as a bribe was the case of Daniel Denison, one of the leading military men of the colony. He was granted a 200-acre farm on the Salem line "for his better encouragement to settle amongst us."³⁴

The ministers often received land as payment of a grateful colony for warding off or rectifying some evil infection. John Norton was granted 200 acres by the General Court for writing a pamphlet to counteract seditious remarks written by an unknowing person.³⁵ Nathaniel Ward was well rewarded for his efforts concerning the Body of Liberties. He received no less than 600 acres from the colony in the vicinity of Haverhill in 1643.³⁶

Several men who possessed crucial skills were given grants on the condition that they practice their trade for a given period of time in the town. Giles Firmin, a physician and son-in-law of Nathaniel Ward, received such a grant. The town gave him 100 acres upon the condition that he would stay in town three years and practice medicine. However, after remaining in town only one year he decided he wanted to move to Haverhill with his brother-in-law, Nathaniel Ward's son, James. Firmin wrote a long letter to Governor Winthrop "requestinge your worships counsell and favour." He explained to the Governor the conditions under which he settled, pleading that "it is more than they cann doe to binde mee so when as others have note beene so, but range from place to place on purpose to live upon the country."³⁷ Matters were complicated by the fact that Firmin was becoming "strongely sett upon to study Divinitie" and give up medicine which

32. *Ibid.*

33. Town Records, p. 216.

34. Ipswich Grants, p. 108.

35. *Mass. Records*, I, 278.

36. "Records of the Company of the Massachusetts Bay to the Embarkation of Winthrop and his Associates for New England," *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society*, III (1857), cxli.

37. *Winthrop Papers* (Boston, 1929-1947), IV, 163, Dec. 26, 1639.

was not a prosperous enough occupation.³⁸ Exactly what kind of counsel he received from the Governor is not certain, but in 1644 Firmin did return to England and was later ordained a minister.³⁹

Migration from Ipswich

There is evidence that the land system as it developed in Ipswich was a factor in causing a high percentage of migration from Ipswich. This is a very difficult problem to analyze, since it is hard to determine exactly who left town, where they went, and, above all, why they left. There are, on the other hand, enough records to obtain some idea as to the character of this migration. Many of the settlers drifted into the towns bordering Ipswich, some were asked to leave because of religious differences, some returned to England, and others moved to the Boston area as they gained wealth and influence.

Many men left Ipswich to establish new towns along the Massachusetts Bay Colony's frontier. Ipswich men played roles in the settling of Newbury, Rowley, Topsfield, Haverhill, Salisbury, Hampton, Brookfield, and several smaller settlements in the Maine area. As Ipswich reached the upper limit of its size and became too populous it tended either to split or to produce an offshoot town as an escape valve for the population pressure. Often a group of homogeneous settlers decided that their living conditions could be improved and thus made their stay in Ipswich a temporary one.

During the early 1630's, the peak period of settlement in the town, the Reverend Thomas Parker who was first called to Ipswich to preach, decided to accompany his fellow countrymen from Wiltshire, England, in establishing a new plantation rather "than to be engaged with such as he had not been acquainted withall before."⁴⁰ Parker left with a large group and established Newbury. There was some indication that Parker and his group possessed religious views which conflicted with the established views in Ipswich. Edward Johnson mentioned Mr. Thomas Parker's

38. *Winthrop Papers*.

39. Savage, *Dictionary*, II, 160.

40. William Hubbard, *A General History of New England from the Discovery to MDCLXXX* (Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society), 2nd series, V (1848), 192-193.

church as being somewhat different "in the preheminance of their Presbytery."⁴¹ The mass migration of this group, reputedly to have numbered approximately one hundred persons,⁴² made room for more colonists in the town of Ipswich.

Another town developed between Ipswich and Salem when several Ipswich men were given liberty in 1643 to settle a village.⁴³ The result was the splitting away of a portion of settled Ipswich citizens who were closer to the church at the village which became Topsfield than the church at Ipswich. In such a case Ipswich jealously hoarded anyone within its bounds because all settlers were sources of revenue from local and colonial taxes. Thus Ipswich balked at relieving those citizens attending the Topsfield church from the public charges of Ipswich, but a petition to the General Court brought an order reluctantly recognized by the inhabitants of Ipswich relieving the people in the Topsfield area of the public charges of Ipswich.⁴⁴

The problems raised by the settlement of a new town which conceivably conflicted with another town caused the General Court to issue a policy statement that endangered local power and authority. Winthrop noted in his *Journal* that

At the last general court it was ordered, that divers farmers belonging to Ipswich and Salem (but so far distant from either town as they could not duly repair to the public ordinances there) should erect a village and have liberty to gather a church. This was much opposed by those of the town of Ipswich, pleading their interest in the land, etc. But it was answered, that, when the land was granted to the town, it was not intended only for the benefit of the near inhabitants, or for the maintenance of the officers of that one church only, but of all the inhabitants and of any other church which should be there gathered; and a principal motive which led the court to grant them and other towns such vast bounds was, that (when the towns should be increased by their children and servants growing up, etc.) they might have place

41. J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence 1628-1651* (New York, 1910), pp. 98-99.

42. James Kendall Hosmer, ed., [John] *Winthrop's Journal "History of New England," 1630-1649* (New York, 1953), I, 125-126—hereafter cited as *Winthrop's Journal*.

43. *Mass. Records*, II, 48; Massachusetts Archives (manuscripts in State House, Boston), XL, 150-151.

44. *Mass. Records*, II, 47; *Mass. Archives*, X, 73; and *Ipswich Grants*, p. 127.

to erect villages, where they might be planted, and so the land improved to the more common benefit.⁴⁵

Not all individuals who migrated from Ipswich left to settle other towns. The majority of those leaving had other reasons. Of the 397 men who fall into the first-generation category, 146 left Ipswich. This amounts to 37 per cent of the settlers moving on to other locations. A large proportion of this migration can be explained by lack of attachment to the town as shown by the following chart. For example, 66 of the known migrants have left no record of having held any land in the town. This number may be somewhat inflated because it seems certain that some men listed as having no land probably did own land but left no record. However, it can be seen clearly from the table that most of the men who left Ipswich did not own a great amount of land. Can it be assumed that those who left the town without leaving any record of landholdings were motivated by the desire to obtain land? Probably, although this cannot be said with certainty. For those who are in the last two lines of the table the reason for departing is probably not land, and one must look elsewhere to find their reasons for departing.

TABLE II
LANDHOLDINGS OF MIGRATING SETTLERS⁴⁶

62	no record of landholding
33	held 10 or less acres
22	held 11 to 99 acres
25	held 100 or more acres
4	miscellaneous

Three of the largest landholders among the migrants were merchants who moved to Boston —William Hubbard, William Paine, and William Bartholomew. It is possible that these men moved to Boston for business reasons. The three men all moved after a long period of residency in the town of Ipswich during which they became prosperous. They perhaps felt that increased prosperity could only be attained by expanding their working base to the port of Boston.

45. *Winthrop's Journal*, II, 262-263. This statement was issued in 1645 and was probably made in relation to the establishment of Danvers but Winthrop does not state which town was involved.

46. Compiled from various town records and deeds concerning the period (n. 21).

Since the majority of the migrants from Ipswich were absorbed by new surrounding towns, some of the larger landholders probably became residents of the new towns because their land was located within the new boundaries. Several other men listed as major landholders probably migrated because they received larger land grants in other areas as a result of their political activities on the colony level. For example, Thomas Dudley, Simon Bradstreet, John Winthrop, Jr., William Symonds and possibly others would be included in this group.

While land was probably one of the major reasons why some settlers moved out of Ipswich, religious differences can be described as an extremely important factor. It has already been mentioned that the Reverend Thomas Parker and his followers removed to establish the town of Newbury because of a religious conflict. A more serious conflict of a religious nature which caused some members of the town of Ipswich to depart was the antinomian controversy. Anne Hutchinson had at least seven supporters in Ipswich and John Wheelwright had one supporter. These supporters of supposedly heretical viewpoints were asked to leave the colony. Most of them went to Rhode Island where one of them, Nicholas Easton, the Wheelwright advocate, eventually became governor.⁴⁷ Of the seven Hutchinson supporters only six removed from Ipswich to Rhode Island. They were William Foster, Job Hawkins, John Layton, Thomas Savorie, Thomas Waite, and Michael Williamson.⁴⁸ John Clarke was the other man who expressed his sympathy for the antinomian views but he remained in the town.⁴⁹ Of the six men who migrated only one of them, William Foster, a shipmaster, was on record as holding any land in Ipswich. He was ordered to leave the town in 1638 because of his religious opinions.⁵⁰ The other men were much lesser figures in the town; two of them, Hawkins and Williamson, were servants.

47. Savage, *Dictionary*, II, 94.

48. Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries* (Chapel Hill, 1962), pp. 305, 324, 325, 327, 328.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

50. Joseph B. Felt, *History of Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton* (Cambridge, 1834), p. 72.

Trends in Ipswich Land Policy and Practice

The land granting and distribution process in early Ipswich manifested certain trends in the first decade of the town's existence. Some of these trends were the exchanging of grants in an effort to consolidate one's holdings, the issuing of larger grants as time passed, the lack of speculation and absentee ownership, and the movement toward conservation of certain types of land. All of these were developments resulting from early methods of granting and distributing the vast wilderness which became Ipswich.

Land was an important commodity in Ipswich, and the high value of land was a great influence on the land system. Most men in Ipswich realized that "in an economy lacking both coin and a reliable and unfluctuating system of paper property, real estate was the best form of investment."⁵¹ Land was esteemed far above the true worth or proportion of rent it would collect and one group in particular realized this fact — the merchants. Merchants had very little transferable wealth and thus sought solid investments in real estate since landed property was the best kind to hand down to their sons. The Ipswich merchants were the largest landholders in the town. For example, Jonathan Wade, one of the most prominent of the Ipswich merchants, amassed real estate holdings valued at approximately £6000.⁵² To illustrate the relative value of his estate it was noted as late as 1680 that an individual "is accounted a rich man in the Country that is worth one Thousand or Fifteen hundred pounds."⁵³ Other prominent merchants in town, Jeremy Belcher, William Paine, and William Goodhue, held blocks of land ranging in size from 500 acres to 900 acres.

As the town matured the town's officials became less occupied with the problems of distribution and granting of land; however, other problems concerning land developed. Town officials were bothered by the constant exchange of land in one part of town for land in another part. This problem became so pressing that the selectmen voted that if people were not satisfied with the land

51. Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Paperback edition, New York, 1964), p. 101.

52. This figure based on inventory of his estate, deeds, and wills (n. 21).

53. James Savage, "Gleanings for New England History," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd series, VIII (1843), 337-338.

granted them the town was under no obligation to provide land for them elsewhere.⁵⁴ The problem of exchanging land grants became so confusing that the selectmen also had to order that all exchanges between individuals be recorded in the Town Book within one month or those involved would be fined 13 shillings 4 pence.⁵⁵ This exchange problem was evidence that the inhabitants began to consolidate their landholdings and also attempt to exchange what they considered worthless land for something better.

There was a definite trend by the end of the first decade of settlement to grant larger amounts of land and also to add on to existing grants. For example, Joseph Medcalfe was granted a house lot and 4 acres when he first settled in 1634. In 1639 he was granted another house lot, a 7-acre planting lot, 12 acres of meadow, 25 acres of upland, and 10 acres of miscellaneous land.⁵⁶ A grant was given to Thomas Scott in 1639 under similar conditions.⁵⁷ Both of these men had arrived in the town in 1634 but were given no special consideration for more than a minimum grant of a house lot. By 1639 both of them had served as a selectman or deputy of the General Court for at least one year before the additional grant was issued. Thus it seems apparent that men who arrived in the town without previous social, political, or economic status were rewarded or reconsidered after having shown themselves to be potential community leaders. The proprietors appear to have placed many of the citizens on trial. If these citizens stayed in the town and contributed to the general welfare of the town they would eventually receive additional grants of land as was the case of Joseph Medcalfe, Thomas Scott, and many others.

As far as can be determined Ipswich was not plagued with the problem of absentee landownership in the town, at least not in the seventeenth century. Occasionally a prominent citizen, usually a merchant, would move to Boston and in moving he would maintain possession of land in Ipswich, but this did not cause any serious problems. If the original proprietors did have the problem of absenteeism on their minds it could have been reflect-

54. Ipswich Grants, p. 99.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

56. *Ibid.*, entry 105.

57. *Ibid.*, entry 110.

ed by the fact that the earlier grants were purposely made small unless the grantors were positive of the background and future of the grantee.

There seemed to be a direct relationship between the relative size of the grant and the number of settlers arriving in Ipswich. By the year 1639 (Table III) the influx of settlers began to fall off. This could have caused the grantors to realize that they were not in danger of running out of land and that the grants could be enlarged.

TABLE III
INFLUX OF SETTLERS⁵⁸

Year	Number of New Settlers
1634	27
1635	50
1636	19
1637	43
1638	45
1639	34
1640	5
1641	8

Competition with other towns played a part. Many new towns were established in the late 1630's in the vicinity of Ipswich (Salisbury, Andover, Haverhill, Newbury, Rowley, etc.) forcing the town to compete for settlers. The town with the most liberal land granting policy would be the most attractive. On this account, if some of the original grants were not enlarged a citizen of Ipswich might decide to look for greener pastures in one of the nearby towns.

Near the end of the first-generation period an unquestionable attempt was made at conserving land resources. Ipswich was well populated by the 1650's, and no doubt some land had been abused. In 1658 the selectmen were given liberty to grant land "for hayseed as they shall thinke fitt for the good of the Townes commons & to order the soweing of it."⁵⁹ The idea was to grant 6 acres of land for a period of seven years to anyone who would

58. Table compiled from numerous sources concerning first-generation settlers in Ipswich (n. 21).

59. Ipswich Grants, p. 195.

pay the town 15 bushels of hayseed each year for the use of the land. Soon after the town decided to give the selectmen liberty to issue similar grants of land. This policy was changed in 1660 when grants were given with the stipulation that the receiver would clear the land, fence it, and plant at least 4 bushels of English hay per acre. At the end of six years the land would become common field.⁶⁰

The lack of forest reserves in old England caused the New World settlers to be over-possessive and conservation-minded in regard to their woodlands. All trees and any products extracted from the trees were to be the possession of the town and were not to be used elsewhere without the express permission of the town. As early as 1635 the town decided that "if any timber of clapboard shall at [any] tyme hereafter be carried out of this towne without the consent of ye towne, all [such] timber or clapboards shall be forth with forfeited to the Towne."⁶¹ It was also ordered that no one could "sell, lend, give or convey" any timber out of Ipswich.⁶²

It became necessary to control specifically the cutting of white oaks in the town. No man was allowed to cut any white oaks growing upon the common without the permission of a majority of the selectmen.⁶³ There were penalties ranging from 10 shillings to £20 for cutting wood contrary to the law. This must have been an important matter to the town since it was discussed at every town meeting and the law was constantly being revamped. By the year 1649 the law had been changed to read that no timber or wood could be cut without license of the selectmen.⁶⁴ With the passage of this regulation the inevitable happened. The selectmen pleaded that it was impossible to keep up with the signing of all requests to cut trees and decided that all commoners were granted permission to cut timber as needed as long as they abided by the rules.⁶⁵

A discussion of land policy would not be complete without some comment on speculation. Ipswich qualified as a model for Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker's view that:

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 220; and Town Records, p. 9.

61. Ipswich Grants, p. 10.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

65. Town Records, p. 12.

The New England town system, under which land was granted to the town as a corporation, and by it conveyed to members for personal improvement, took that commodity largely out of the domain of speculation and prevented, at least during the seventeenth century, the building up of large land fortunes such as characterized New York.⁶⁶

Ipswich does lack, at least until 1660, the building up of large land fortunes. But this does not mean that large holdings were non-existent. It has already been pointed out that a few prominent citizens amassed sizeable real estate holdings. However, they did not use these lands for speculative purposes or, if they did, they did so in a manner which is not revealed in the records.

Ipswich Landholders

The inhabitants of Ipswich can be divided into definite groups on the basis of landholding. These divisions were: the larger landholders, defined as those men who held 100 or more acres; the small landholders, defined as those holding less than 100 acres; the commoners which included most men in both of the above groups and others not within those two groups; the house lot owners, defined as those who owned only a house lot but no additional acreage; and finally, the non-landowners which consisted mainly of servants and were easily the smallest group.

The large landholders were the most important group in the town. They were the leading politicians and business men of the community. There was definitely some connection between landholding and political, economic, and social status in the town. These men clearly dominated town affairs. There were 71 men who qualified, on the basis of owning 100 or more acres, as large landholders. Out of these 71, 15 owned 400 or more acres. They were:⁶⁷

Richard Saltonstall	2100 acres
Samuel Symonds	1700 acres
William Hubbard	1600 acres
Daniel Denison	1200 acres

66. Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, *The First Americans 1607-1690* (New York, 1929), p. 59.

67. This list and the ones to follow were compiled from a study of deeds and land grant records. Acreage is based upon the maximum amount of land held at any one time (n. 21).

Jonathan Wade	1000 acres — real estate valued £6000
Jeremy Belcher	900 acres
William Symonds	700 acres
Daniel Epps	700 acres
John Winthrop, Jr.	600 acres
William Paine	600 acres
Samuel Appleton	500 acres
John Whipple	460 acres
William Goodhue	425 acres
Thomas Kimball	422 acres
John Perkins, Jr.	400 acres

All but two of these men (Thomas Kimball and William Symonds) held a major political position in the town at one time or another before 1660. Six of them ranked among the top 11 officeholders in the town.⁶⁸

The remaining large landholders and the acreage they owned were:

John Shatswell	330	William White	240
Nicholas Easton	320	Humphrey Bradstreet	230
John Cogswell	320	James Howe	225
John Spencer	320	Matthew Whipple	225
John Whittingham	300	William Knight	200
Thomas Whittingham	300	William Fellows	200
John Symonds	300	Thomas Emerson	200
John Tuttle	300	Robert Coles	200
William Whitred	260	Simon Bradstreet	200
Thomas Dudley	250	John Norton	180
Thomas Knowlton	170	John Emerson	120
Robert Paine	170	Edward Bragg	120
John Perkins, Sr.	160	Henry Archer	120
George Giddings	160	William Bartholomew	120
Robert Lord	150	William Warner	120
Philip Fowler	150	Robert Muzzey	116
Richard Brabrooke	150	Thomas Scott	110
Thomas Bishop	150	Richard Kimball	110
Corp. John Andrews	150	Samuel Dudley	110
Edward Harinden	150	Thomas Howlett	100
Daniel Ringe	150	Thomas Howlett, Jr.	100
Thomas Firmin	140	Reginald Foster	100
Thomas Boarman, Sr.	140	John Andrews, Sr.	100
John Cross	130	John Dillingham	100
Robert Andrews	130	Robert Cross	100

68. The six men were: Symonds, Hubbard, Denison, Wade, Whipple, and Perkins.

John Hassale	125	Theophilus Wilson	100
Richard Haffield	125	William Story	100
Giles Firmin	120	Simon Thomson	100

These men were a major political force since more than half of them were freemen and almost half of them were major office-holders.

The small landholder made up the bulk of the population. This group varied from Thomas Wells who owned 90 acres to John Muzzey who was granted a house lot and a parcel of land 20 rods wide.⁶⁹ The men in this group included approximately 75 per cent of the total population. The small landholder was able to hold political offices and often did, but with minor exceptions very few of the small landholders served as major officials for any great length of time.

The men who owned only a house lot either quickly obtained more land, migrated to another town, or became a town charge. The only non-landholders on record in the town were servants and slaves. Servants, as noted earlier, often obtained a grant of their own when they were given their freedom.

The one term which applied to all of the landholding groups, at least in part, was "commoner." The term "commoner" had many implications. Commoners were often referred to as proprietors, but originally proprietors were the men to whom the original town grant had been given. Later the term "proprietor" meant anyone having a share in the common fields of the town.⁷⁰

There has been a great controversy in colonial history concerning the role of the New England town proprietors. Supposedly the original proprietors and their heirs "retained a monopoly of the common lands for many years until finally compelled by force or public opinion to cede their claims to the town."⁷¹ This was not the situation in Ipswich, at least not in the seventeenth century. The original men empowered to grant the land — John Winthrop Jr., John Humfry, and John Endecott — did not, from all evidence, retain the ungranted land. As a matter of fact only one

69. Ipswich Grants, p. 7.

70. Anne Bush MacLear, "Early New England Towns," *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* (New York: Columbia University, 1908), XXIX, 101-102.

71. Herbert B. Adams, *The Germanic Origin of New England Towns* (Baltimore, 1882), p. 35.

of them, John Winthrop, Jr., showed any real interest in the town for any length of time. Nor were the owners, proprietors, commoners, or whatever they might have been, overly attached to the common lands in their possession. It is difficult to find anyone to fit the role of the villainous proprietor in Ipswich.

The common fields and rights were an important part of the developing land system of Ipswich. Unfortunately, most of the early commoner records for the town have been lost, and the only thing that remains is an occasional reference to the commons in the regular town records. Therefore it is difficult to define a commoner until 1660 when the town made it compulsory for new inhabitants to formally petition for common rights.

In the beginning acceptance as an inhabitant of the town followed by the granting of at least a house lot appeared to imply right to one's share and use of common land. By 1641 the town began to list those inhabitants who had a right to commonage. Table IV consists of those who were listed in 1641. There must have been some new criteria established by that date because the list contains only 111 names but there were 250 adult male inhabitants at the time.⁷² Unfortunately the town records do not contain any effort to define or limit commoners before 1641. However, by the late 1650's it was decided that the common lands of the town were overburdened "by the multiplying of dwelling houses contrary to the intent of the first Inhabitants in granting of houselots."⁷³ The town therefore voted that in order to end inconveniences caused by this situation and to prevent future problems, no house erected after 1659 would have any right to common lands. Furthermore, no person living in such houses would be allowed to make use of any "pasture, timber, or wood growing upon any the say'd comon lands" without the express consent of the town.⁷⁴ This action was confirmed by the General Court in 1660.⁷⁵

72. This figure of 250 was reached by studying the personal statistics of the first-generation males such as date of death or migration from Ipswich, date of arrival etc. (n. 21).

73. Ipswich Grants, p. 214.

74. *Ibid.*; see also Felt, *History*, p. 16; and Melville Egleston, *The Land System of the New England Colonies*, vols. XI-XII, 4th series, *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science* (Baltimore, 1886), p. 39.

75. Mass. Archives, CXII, 127 (n. 43).

TABLE IV
LIST OF COMMONERS, 1641, IPSWICH
MASSACHUSETTS*

William Adams	William Knight
John Annable	John Knowlton
Samuel Appleton	Thomas Knowlton
William Averill	William Knowlton
Henry Bachellor	William Lampson
Robert Beacham	Roger Lancton
Thomas Beery	John Lee
Jeremy Belcher	Thomas Lee
Richard Bisgood	Edward Lumas
Thomas Bishop	Richard Lumkin
Thomas Boarman, Sr.	Thomas Manning
Thomas Bracey	Joseph Medcalfe
Humphrey Bradstreet	Joseph Morse
Simon Bradstreet	Robert Muzzey
Thomas Brewer	Thomas Newman
John Brown	John Norton
Mathias Button	Christopher Osgood
Lionel Chute	William Paine
John Clark, Jr.	Moses Pengry
John Clark, Sr.	John Perkins
Thomas Clark	John Perkins, Jr.
Isaac Comings	John Perkins, Sr.
John Cowley	Allen Perley
Robert Cross	John Pettis
Francis Dane	Henry Pindarr
John Dane, Jr.	Samuel Podd
John Dane, Sr.	John Proctor
John Davis	Mark Quilter
Robert Day	Thomas Rawlinsome, Sr.
Thomas Dorman	Joseph Redding
William Douglas	Nathaniel Rogers
Thomas Emerson	Thomas Safford
William Fellows	Richard Saltonstall
Giles Firmin	Richard Schofield
Thomas Firmin	Thomas Scott
Reginald Foster	John Shatswell
Thomas French	Theophilus Shatswell
John Gage	Richard Smith
Edmund Gardner	Thomas Smith
George Giddings	Simon Stace
William Goodhue	Mark Symonds
Henry Greene	Samuel Symonds
Thomas Hart	John Tuttle
Richard Hatley	Jonathan Wade
Andrew Hodges	Daniel Warner

James Howe
 Thomas Howlett
 William Hubbard
 John Jackson
 Richard Jacob
 Francis Jordan
 Richard Kimball
 Henry Kingsbury
 Robert Kinsman
 Alexander Knight

Richard Wattles
 Thomas Wells
 John Whipple
 Matthew Whipple
 William White
 Robert Whitman
 John Whittingham
 Theophilus Wilson
 Robert Woodmansee
 John Wyatt
 Samuel Younglove

*Ipswich Grants, p. 84.

Within five years need arose for more commonage. The commoners voted in 1665 to divide 800 acres which included Plum Island, Hogg Island, and Castle Neck. It was to be divided among those with common rights according to the proportion of 4, 6, and 8 based on the amount of taxes paid as follows:⁷⁶

- 4 - those not exceeding 6s. 8d. in a county rate
- 6 - those not exceeding 16s.
- 8 - those exceeding 16s. together with magistrates, and elders

It was decided that a single share would be 3 acres—that is to say that those under the “4” proportion would receive 3 acres; under the “6” proportion 4½ acres; under the “8” proportion 6 acres.⁷⁷ This manner of dividing resulted in the creation of 28 double shares, 70 divisions of 1½ shares, and 105 single-share lots. That meant a total of 203 commoners in the town in 1665, although some of the commoners were not persons. For example, the meetinghouse was given a double share.

The most significant thing about the dividing of the commons in 1665 was the manner in which it was done. By basing it on taxation these records fill the gap caused by the lack of early tax lists. The list of commoners made in 1665 also served as a ranking of material wealth and to some extent social standing. It might be said that the double shareholders were the wealthy and leading citizens. The next group, those receiving 1½ shares, could be considered to be those of upper or middle status. Listed in the first group were the Symonds, the Hubbards, the Appletons, the Paines, the Cogswells, and most of the other names which constantly occur in any discussion of public life in the town.

76. Town Records, p. 16.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

A comparison of the lists of commoners for 1641 and 1665 indicate that the number of commoners almost doubled during the 24 years. This fact explains the urgency of the town to limit the number of commoners.

In summary, the granting and distribution of land in Ipswich did not create any great problems. The system was a modification of the open field system which most of the settlers had been previously exposed to in England. The size of the grant depended upon one's previous social standing which could be improved by illustrating leadership potential. The larger shares went to the upper levels of society, but many settlers received larger farm-type grants as rewards for outstanding service. As the migration rate lessened, apparently the size of the grants increased. Caution was shown in relation to wasting land and other natural resources. Land definitely was a valuable commodity, but speculation was lacking perhaps because there was no reason for it in the early half of the seventeenth century.

There were no new land grants to speak of after 1660 except for an occasional 10 acres granted to entice a needed tradesman or a new minister. If any large grants - 100 acres or more - were granted, they were done so by the General Court in remote areas of the colony and usually as payment for military service. Such grants became more prevalent after 1700 as the Indian wars became longer and more frequent. It might be added that many Ipswich men did receive military grants and that these grants became the basis for the eighteenth-century land bank idea which found several prominent leaders among the inhabitants of Ipswich.

The land system and policies which evolved in Ipswich in the seventeenth century were similar to those in other New England towns. The most basic similarity was that the town meeting controlled the granting and distribution of land in most cases. This fact has been illustrated by Darrett Rutman in his recent study of Boston, by Sumner Chilton Powell in his study of Sudbury, Massachusetts, and by John Sly and Roy Akagi in their earlier studies of New England town government.⁷⁸

78. Darrett B. Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town 1630-1649* (Chapel Hill, 1965), pp. 43-44, 141-142; John Sly, *Town Government in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 36; Sumner C. Powell, *Puritan Village: The Formation of a New England Town* (Middletown, Conn., 1963), pp. 108, 109, 113; and Roy Akagi, *The Town Proprietors*, pp. 21, 31.