

ANNE HUTCHINSON 1591-1643

“So to me by an immediate revelation . . . by the voice of his own spirit to my soul.”

—Anne Hutchinson at her trial, expressing the belief that God had spoken directly to her.

At a Glance

Anne Hutchinson defended her beliefs against the Puritan leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, an early sign that in America there would be conflict over matters of religious belief between strong-willed individuals and the community majority. Though not a believer in religious liberty for all, Hutchinson was an important figure in the struggle for individual freedom in America.

Anne Hutchinson settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during the early 1630s, and for several years seemed an unlikely candidate for controversy, arrest, trial, conviction, banishment, and excommunication from the Puritan church. She was a woman in her 40s, a skilled nurse, the wife of a successful businessman, and the mother of 14 children. She and her husband William were active members of John Cotton’s congregation, having followed the Puritan minister from England after the Anglican church silenced him. Hutchinson began holding meetings during which she explained John Cotton’s sermons to her fellow parishioners. These meetings caused no problems until Anne began adding her own interpretations of the sermons.

Puritans believed that people could be saved only by grace, freely given by an all-powerful God. They also believed that humans could do nothing to earn God’s favor. Hutchinson’s interpretation of this

teaching was that, since a person could do nothing to win God’s favor or grace, a person therefore did not need to follow the laws of church or state. This absolute freedom from human authority appealed to many men and women in the colony, including some of its leaders. Hutchinson’s meetings were crowded with her followers, who called themselves Antinomians (people against the law).

Fearing that her views would lead to anarchy, Puritan authorities accused Hutchinson of undermining the authority of the colony’s ministers and brought her to trial. Defending herself so well that the charges were close to being dismissed, Hutchinson suddenly blurted out that God had spoken directly to her, and that her enemies would be destroyed. This was blasphemy, for Puritans believed that God spoke only through the Bible. The court promptly banished Hutchinson from the colony. Before she could depart, she was also accused of heresy. When she tried to recant, she was further accused of lying, for which crime the church denied her membership.

Expelled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Hutchinson family moved to Rhode Island, where William died in 1642. Hutchinson then took her six youngest children with her to the Dutch colony of New Netherland, later New York. In 1643 all of Hutchinson’s children, except the youngest, were killed in an attack by Native Americans—an event that the Puritans interpreted as a punishment from God.

Reviewing the Biography Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1. Remembering the Details** What qualities made Anne Hutchinson a respected Massachusetts Bay Colony member?
- 2. Understanding Information** How did Hutchinson lose her respected standing?

Thinking Critically

- 3. Making Inferences** Why did Puritan authorities fear that Hutchinson’s teaching would lead to anarchy?

Roger Williams

ROGER WILLIAMS was born in London, circa 1603, the son of James and Alice (Pemberton) Williams. James, the son of Mark and Agnes (Audley) Williams was a "merchant Tailor" (an importer and trader) and probably a man of some importance. His will, proved 19 November 1621, left, in addition to bequests to his "loving wife, Alice," to his sons, Sydrach, Roger and Robert, and to his daughter Catherine, money and bread to the poor in various sections of London.

The will of Alice (Pemberton) Williams was admitted to probate 26 January 1634. Among other bequests, she left the sum of Ten Pounds yearly for twenty years to her son, Roger Williams, "now beyond the seas." She further provided that if Roger predeceased her, "what remaineth thereof unpaid ... shall be paid to his wife and daughter...." Obviously, by the time of her death, Roger's mother was aware of the birth in America in 1633 of her grandchild, Mary Williams.

Roger's youth was spent in the parish of "St. Sepulchre's, without Newgate, London." While a young man, he must have been aware of the numerous burnings at the stake that had taken place at nearby Smithfield of so-called Puritans or heretics. This probably influenced his later strong beliefs in civic and religious liberty.

During his teens, Roger Williams came to the attention of Sir Edward Coke, a brilliant lawyer and one-time Chief Justice of England, through whose influence he was enrolled at Sutton's Hospital, a part of Charter House, a school in London. He next entered Pembroke College at Cambridge University from which he graduated in 1627. All of the literature currently available at Pembroke to prospective students mentions Roger Williams, his part in the Reformation, and his founding of the Colony of Rhode Island. At Pembroke, he was one of eight granted scholarships based on excellence in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Pembroke College in Providence, once the women's college of Brown University, was named after Pembroke at Cambridge in honor of Roger Williams.

In the years after he left Cambridge, Roger Williams was Chaplain to a wealthy family, and on 15 December 1629, he married MARY BARNARD at the Church of High Laver, Essex, England. Even at this time, he became a controversial figure because of his ideas on freedom of worship. And so, in 1630, ten years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, Roger thought it expedient to leave England. He arrived, with Mary, on 5 February 1631 at Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their passage was aboard the ship *Lyon* (Lion).

He preached first at Salem, then at Plymouth, then back to Salem, always at odds with the structured Puritans. When he was about to be deported back to England, Roger fled southwest out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was befriended by local Indians and eventually settled at the headwaters of what is now Narragansett Bay, after he learned that his first settlement on the east bank of the Seekonk River was within the boundaries of the Plymouth Colony. Roger purchased land from the Narragansett Chiefs, Canonikus and Miantonomi and named his settlement Providence in thanks to God. The original deed

remains in the Archives of the City of Providence.

Roger Williams made two trips back to England during his lifetime. The first in June or July 1643 was to obtain a Charter for his colony to forestall the attempt of neighboring colonies to take over Providence. He returned with a Charter for "the Providence Plantations in Narragansett Bay" which incorporated Providence, Newport and Portsmouth. During this voyage, he produced his best-known literary work -- *Key into the Languages of America*, which when published in London in 1643, made him the authority on American Indians.

On his return, Roger Williams started a trading post at Cocumscussoc (now North Kingstown) where he traded with the Indians and was known for his peacemaking between the neighboring colonists and the Indians. But again colony affairs interfered, and in 1651 he sold his trading post and returned to England with John Clarke (a Newport preacher) in order to have the Charter confirmed. Because of family responsibilities, he returned sometime before 1654. John Clarke finally obtained the Royal Charter from Charles II on 8 July 1663, thereby averting further trouble with William Coddington and some colonists at Newport, who had previously obtained a charter for a separate colony.

Roger Williams was Governor of the Colony 1654 through 1658. During the later years of his life, he saw almost all of Providence burned during King Philip's War, 1675-1676. He lived to see Providence rebuilt. He continued to preach, and the Colony grew through its acceptance of settlers of all religious persuasions. The two volumes of the correspondence of Roger Williams recently published by the Rhode Island Historical Society, Glenn W. LaFantasie, Editor, present an excellent picture of his philosophy and personality. Unfortunately, there was no known painting made of him during his lifetime, although many artists and sculptors have portrayed him as they envision him.

Roger and Mary (Barnard) Williams were the parents of six children, all born in America.

Roger Williams

Roger Williams was born in London, England the son of a tailor. He went to Cambridge University and graduated in 1627. His rising views of Puritanism alienated him from the Church of England and forced him to leave. Roger Williams arrived in Boston in 1631.

Banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony:

On October 7, 1635, Roger Williams was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for his beliefs in the freedom of religion and the need for separation of Church and State. He was supposed to return to England but instead fled to the wilderness where he lived amongst the Narragansett Indians.

Historical Significance of Roger Williams:

In 1636, Roger Williams founded the colony of Rhode Island on the premise of separation of church and state. This colony was the first to guarantee freedom of worship for all its citizens. Roger Williams views later became a part of the future United States prohibition against state sponsored religion.