Was Dover a Puritan town?

The short answer is “no, then yes.” Dover was part of the Piscataqua Plantation, and the largest settlement in the northern part of the plantation. Like other New England towns originally founded to gather resources, trade, and export, Dover changed over time. The original settlers were likely Church of England, if anything, but Dover received an influx of puritans in the 1630s, which changed the religious composition of the town. Here is the timeline:

**1621-1622** In 1606, King James granted a patent dividing the dominion of Virginia into two parts, Northern and Southern. Northern Virginia came under the control of noblemen, knights, and wealthy merchants in Plymouth, Bristol, and Exeter.[[1]](#footnote-1) A council was established at Plymouth, Devonshire for the planting, ruling, and governing of New England in America. This was the foundation of all land grants in New England, but from the beginning there were conflicting interests, inaccurate land descriptions, and a general lack of understanding for how a business venture in New England should work. Little, if any, thought was given to plans for settlement or governance.

Two members of the Plymouth council, Sir Fernando Georges and John Mason, were particularly interested in northern New England.[[2]](#footnote-2) Georges had learned for himself about the rivers, fisheries, timber and other sources of wealth in New England. Mason became pro-active and was able to get appointed as secretary of the Plymouth Council. Georges became its president. In 1621, Mason procured a grant from the council for the land between the Naumkeag and Merrimack Rivers, extending upriver and beyond. The following year Mason and Georges received a joint grant of land called the Laconia, which covered the Merrimack to the Sagadehock and extended northward.

**1623** (approximately)-**1626** (approximately) Georges and Mason established a fishery and trading post on the Piscataqua and sent David Thompson to run it. Little Harbor, near what would become Dover, was the location chosen by Thompson.[[3]](#footnote-3) This was done with the backing of the Plymouth Council.[[4]](#footnote-4) Seven others came in support of Thompson’s efforts. This was intended to be a short-term business venture. Thompson, who was not pleased with the situation or location, moved farther south after just a year or two of effort. He may or may not have been fully conformist (Church of England), and it’s difficult to tell because the Piscataqua Plantation had no church or minister. There were no religious activities during this time mentioned in any history of Dover. This Dover area settlement did not fulfill its profit potential and was soon abandoned.

**1627-1629** Although William and Edward Hilton (fishmongers of London) were likely in the Dover area well before 1627 (which some historians dispute), it was about that time a concerted effort was made to renew Dover as a business venture.[[5]](#footnote-5) It should be noted that later historians are the only source of information on Dover’s early years as no contemporary records made by the settlement survive. There are chronological and geographic conflicts in some of their statements, but none mention religious activities. William Hilton, Edward’s brother, was in the Plymouth colony (Massachusetts) as early as 1621. In 1623 he disagreed with church matters there and he later moved north to be with his brother, Edward.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Interestingly, it appears the purchase of lands from the Native Americans was deemed the way to true ownership, rather than the patents obtained from governing bodies in England.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Natives were the true owners and the council and crown conveyed only permission to negotiate for the land. The early settlers of the Piscataqua obtained land from the Native Americans and parceled it out among themselves and later arrivals.

In 1629, Mason obtained a new patent from the council of Plymouth for land from the middle of the Piscataqua River to the headwaters and beyond.[[8]](#footnote-8) Theoretically this land had been granted to him and Georges earlier. It may be an example of the early mistakes and duplication of land grants and patents for geography that was not well understood in England. Additionally, settlers from Massachusetts ventured farther north from the boundary of Massachusetts Bay, though it appears they made no attempt at communal settlement or church building.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**1630-1632** In 1630, Edward Hilton, who had been in the Dover area, obtained a patent for himself specific to land on Dover Neck (upriver of Thompson’s effort), later known as Hilton Point.[[10]](#footnote-10) The Bristol merchants had been at a loss when Thompson pulled out of his grant, and were eager to recoup some of their financial loss. The patent was also an acknowledgement of Hilton’s ongoing efforts at settlement on which he had spent his own funds. The London merchants who had an interest in the lower Piscataqua obtained a separate patent from the council for what would later become Portsmouth. The grantees for that patent included Georges, Mason, and others. Thomas Wiggin was appointed agent for the upper Piscataqua area, encompassing Hilton Point and beyond, and Captain Walter Neal was named agent for the lower part.

Historian George Wadleigh noted the colonization of the Piscataqua region was never an attempt “to provide an asylum for discontented, disaffected or persecuted people, nor for any who were obnoxious to the laws of the realm.”[[11]](#footnote-11) No evidence was found that the earliest settlers were anything other than loyal to the Crown and Church of England. It should also be noted that Massachusetts Bay Colony could, by a small stretch of patent wording, have claimed the Piscataqua area, but made no attempt to do so.[[12]](#footnote-12) At that point in the history of Dover, many of the Piscataqua pioneers were bitterly hostile to Massachusetts Bay politically and religiously. An early group of Piscataqua residents had left the Bay Colony for the Piscataqua area specifically because they felt Massachusetts was not adhering with the discipline of the Church of England.[[13]](#footnote-13) However, Dover had yet to take on any outward appearance religious choice. No church had been constructed, and no minister, puritan or conformist, had been brought in.

Few of the Piscataqua area settlements were successful in their early years.[[14]](#footnote-14) Mason and Gorges had sunk a lot of funding into the project but had made some serious mistakes. Mason never went to oversee the settlements, there was no governance for justice or punishment of offenders, emphasis had been on trade, lumber, and fishing instead of building an agricultural base to support the settlers, making it necessary to obtain food at great expense. The adventurers had also tried to run the plantation like a manor, granting lands by lease rather than freehold. So far northward, where charges for obtaining basic supplies were greater than the profits needed to buy them, neither the residents nor their overseers were doing well, especially compared to the nearby Massachusetts settlements with their emphasis on husbandry and community.

The Bristol merchants who were the associates of Edward Hilton sold their interest to Lord Say, Lord Brook, Sir Richard Saltonstall, George Willys and William Whiting. The role of Thomas Makepeace who was also associated with the sale is less clear. Edward Holyoke who was also involved was the agent for Lord Say, but could also have been an investor.[[15]](#footnote-15) The new purchasers of the Piscataqua were puritan associates of John Winthrop, and had been encouraged by Winthrop to buy the patents held by the Bristol merchants because the Massachusetts Bay Colony feared some ill will from them, and those in the Piscataqua settlements.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Thomas Wiggin had been acting as agent for the upper Piscataqua region, and the new patentees retained his services.[[17]](#footnote-17) Wiggin was an acquaintance of John Winthrop and a puritan.[[18]](#footnote-18) Winthrop had put his name forward as someone Lord Say and Lord Brook could rely on, so Wiggin retained his position as governor or agent for that area. Winthrop also discouraged the lords and merchants from dictating the all the affairs of Dover. Massachusetts Bay also did not assert itself in the Dover area due to the hostility of the Privy Council toward the colony. The Privy Council could have used any aggression on the Bay Colony’s part to revoke their charter. However, that did not put a stop to the desires of Massachusetts Bay to bring the Piscataqua settlements under it's governance, it only resulted in the Bay leadership finding another way.

**1633-1636** In 1633, Neal and Wiggin surveyed the respective patents for which they were now agents and laid out plans for Portsmouth and Northam, which would later be known as Dover.[[19]](#footnote-19) Shortly afterwards, Neal returned to England. Focus was still on business and letters between the agents and the plantation backers in England were mostly about exploration, trade, fishing, needed improvements, expenses, wages and such. Little was written about the religious life in the Dover area, but land for houses was cleared and the first meetinghouse was erected in the settlement center which was used for all public and religious meetings.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Captain Wiggin had been doing his duties as governor in Dover for approximately a year when he decided to see what could be done to increase the settlement’s population.[[21]](#footnote-21) Several families from the west (and other areas) of England, “some of whom were of good estate and of some account for religion” were recruited to immigrate.[[22]](#footnote-22) The list included the names of twenty-two men, one of whom (William Leverich/Leveridge) was a well-known puritan minister. Lord Say would likely have known about William Leverich because his eldest son, James Fiennes, entered Emmanuel College in the same year as William. It is thus very likely that William was recruited by either Wiggin or Lord Say.[[23]](#footnote-23) Others who came at this time, including Hatevil Nutter and John Tuttle, are considered puritan by historians or came from puritan strongholds in England. There was no doubt Wiggin and his associates were molding Dover into a more puritan town.

Captain Wiggin and the “godly minister,” William Leverich, arrived at Salem on 10 October 1633.[[24]](#footnote-24) Shortly thereafter, Wiggin wrote to Winthrop offering Massachusetts Bay jurisdiction over crimes committed in the Piscataqua area. It was a step too far or too soon because Winthrop declined the offer, possibly because it would be seen by the Privy Council as an overt take-over of Piscataqua authority. What had essentially been an effort by Wiggin to turn Piscataqua Plantation over to Massachusetts Bay had failed, for now. The original settlers of Hilton Point did not take kindly to Wiggin’s plan. Edward Hilton was a royalist and loyal member of the Church of England and those who had come with him were of similar mind. One description of this time stated: “The Puritan element in the settlement, though strong, was not able to maintain itself against those of a different sentiment.”[[25]](#footnote-25) One source stated that during William Leverich’s time in Dover the first meeting house was erected on a spot south of the remnants of the fortification.[[26]](#footnote-26) This may have been a different building, or a description of the meetinghouse already in use, which Leverich now used to hold religious meetings. Leverich was not with the residents of Dover for long as his allowance from the investors was too small to sustain him, so he moved farther south to Sandwich in Plymouth Colony.[[27]](#footnote-27)

This entire period of the mid-1630s was a time of confusion with conflicting claims to the various New England patents, including the one that covered Dover.[[28]](#footnote-28) There was a lot of controversy over who would govern and infighting within the settlements of Piscataqua. Along with political controversy, there was also religious tension. The earliest settlers of the plantation were conformist for the most part, and the later ones had many puritans among them.

The year 1635 did not start well for Mason and Georges.[[29]](#footnote-29) The Virginia company wanted the charter for the Plymouth council and their jurisdiction over New England revoked. Gorges was summoned before Parliament. Displeasure had been expressed concerning the Plymouth group’s handling of the New England patents and many in the high-church were displeased puritans had been allowed to flee England for Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies. The council effectively gave up their charter for New England to the king, though Mason retained his specific patents from Naumkeag to Piscataqua and farther north. In September 1635, Mason bought out Gorges’ tract of land on the northeast of the Piscataqua. Shortly thereafter Mason died leaving some of his interests in New Hampshire to Lynn Regis. His lands and manor were divided amongst his Tufton grandchildren. He left his brother, Wallason, one thousand acres in trust for the maintenance of an “honest, godly, and religious preacher of God’s word.” Given Mason’s conformity, it was presumably for a Church of England minister for his lands in New Hampshire.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Those in Massachusetts had viewed Captain Mason as an enemy due because he encouraged Massachusetts Bay exiles to petition to the English government against those in power in the Bay Colony.[[31]](#footnote-31) Moreover, Mason had tried to get the Massachusetts charter revoked, which would have paved the way for one general governor over of all New England. Such controversies kept tensions high throughout the New England colonies and plantations.

The mid-1630s were a time of religious confusion as well, mostly about who would be the minister in Dover as well as who would be governor. After Leverich left in 1634, George Burdet, a minister who had originally come over from Yarmouth, England appeared. He had recently come from preaching in Salem. Puritan Salem had approved of his preaching, but he’d found the town too strict in its puritan discipline. He appeared to be a godly minister, complaining about the extravagancies of the Church of England bishops and their courts. Apparently, Dover was puritan enough to embrace him and his statements. He was artful enough to depose Wiggin, who was acting as governor, within a year or two of his arrival.[[32]](#footnote-32) Those in opposition to Wiggin set George Burdet up as their new governor. He was secretly a staunch Church of England supporter and a spy for Archbishop Laud.[[33]](#footnote-33) That was later revealed after letters he wrote to Laud, an enemy of the puritans, were discovered which was triggered by an intercepted reply from Laud. His true intent was revealed, fueling local interest in replacing him as governor with the newly arrived John Underhill.

The issue with Burdet was not the only controversy involving Dover and Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Antinomian controversy at Boston resulted in the expulsion of its adherents, who then moved to Dover, which was, at that point, outside the jurisdiction of Massachusetts Bay.[[34]](#footnote-34)

It should be noted that during most of the controversies, Massachusetts Bay remained hesitant to step in, most likely due to heavy local opposition, possibly from Church of England supporters and those banished from the Bay who had moved to the Piscataqua area. However, Massachusetts Bay did not stay entirely out of the fray. Beginning as early as a 1636 letter sent to Dover, Massachusetts Bay had started asserting some authority by declaring if anyone banished by the Bay Colony was taken in by Dover it would be taken ill.[[35]](#footnote-35) The letter was a thinly veiled threat that Massachusetts Bay would use their utmost limits of retaliation if that happened.

**1637-1639** John Underhill had come to Dover about 1636-37.[[36]](#footnote-36) He was a former soldier and had lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony before moving to Dover. He’d had serious differences with Bay authorities due to his Antinomianism and other issues as well, so he was expelled. Though Winthrop wrote to Hilton warning him about Underhill, that letter was intercepted by Underhill himself who wrote back a bitter answer to John Cotton and a placating letter to Winthrop. Edward Hilton eventually received those letters, but by then Underhill was settled into Dover. Given his leadership experiences, it wasn’t long before the residents looked to him as their governor.

John Underhill’s selection as governor may have been based on what many residents supposed was his opposition to being under Massachusetts Bay’s authority. Either they were mistaken in that, or during his time as governor his views underwent a change. In 1638, Hansard Knollys was brought to Dover by Underhill to become the settlement’s new spiritual leader.[[37]](#footnote-37) He was a puritan or separatist at this point (opinions differ) and was later called a “godly anabaptist” by Cotton Mather.[[38]](#footnote-38) He was also labeled an “Anabaptist of the Antinomian cast.” He was not well received in Massachusetts when he tried preaching there.[[39]](#footnote-39) Burdet was still minister when Knollys first arrived and he forbade Knollys’ preaching, but Underhill prevailed, and Knollys began teaching the local population. About this time Burdet’s character was revealed to also be morally disreputable and he left Dover in disgrace, having broken what some viewed as his oath of fidelity as a freeman which he’d taken in Salem.[[40]](#footnote-40)

More controversy followed, with letters from Knollys to Governor Winthrop, first in Underhill’s favor but later on with unflattering comments.[[41]](#footnote-41) Underhill tried to ask forgiveness for his actions, but instead of being viewed as humble, he presented himself in such as way as to cause the Massachusetts Bay leaders to excommunicate him. To prove his puritan loyalty, Underhill “rescued” a man in Exeter accused of speaking against the king. The people of Dover wanted nothing to do with the incident, nor with Underhill’s handling of their court. Underhill was deposed and the prisoner was sent back to Exeter. It was eventually discovered that Underhill had been trying to plot with Winthrop to bring Piscataqua under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts Bay, though it appears most of the plotting was on Underhill’s part to get back into Winthrop’s good graces.

Knollys soon had his own issues and opposition. Another churchman, Thomas Larkham (who may have been more conformist) arrived in Dover.[[42]](#footnote-42) Some historians describe him as “not favoring the doctrine” of Massachusetts Bay, yet after his return to England he got into trouble for puritan beliefs so it is difficult to tell exactly where on the puritan spectrum he fell.[[43]](#footnote-43) He was well received in Dover and some in the town chose him to be their minister instead of Knollys. Like Burdet, Larkham assumed both political and religious leadership for the town. Afterwards, Dover fell into a state of even more confusion with some still supporting Knollys and others Larkham. There were puritan and conformist factions in the town, and those may also have been divided within themselves.

Although a meeting house had been built several years previously, in December 1638 the church was officially “organized,” according to the *First Church Manual*.[[44]](#footnote-44) The organizing was done by Hansard Knollys and was a sign of Dover’s shift from conformity to puritan. That did not mean everyone in town suddenly changed allegiance, but rather that the puritan faction was sufficiently strong to declare they had “organized” the church. Edward Starbuck was identified as one of the first elders, called as early as 1638, and was likely present at the organization of the church.[[45]](#footnote-45) Hubbard’s *History of New England* stated those in Dover had followed the example of Massachusetts Bay “in gathering themselves into a church estate and had officers ordained over them for that end.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

Though Dover had shifted decidedly towards puritanism, not everyone was ready to become part of Massachusetts Bay. In a letter to John Winthrop dated 22 February 1639/40, Underhill stated it had been reported to him by a Mr. Elms, Mr. Calcard, and Edward Starbuck that Mr. Knollys had written disparaging remarks about the Massachusetts Bay Colony to England.[[47]](#footnote-47) The letters may even have been written at Underhill’s instigation. Knollys went to Boston to apologize. He also wrote retractions to his correspondents in England. Underhill further stated in his letter to Winthrop that “we” (possibly Elms, Calcard and Edward) had called Knollys to account for his offense. Underhill added that he had been appointed by the court (Dover/Piscataqua), to send a copy of Knollys’ letter to Winthrop so Piscataqua could more thoroughly deal with the issue. At this point, Underhill was claiming jurisdiction in judgement because the offence happened in Piscataqua, but he also acknowledged Massachusetts Bay’s authority by keeping Winthrop informed. Though Underhill theoretically wanted Dover to be part of Massachusetts Bay, it was apparent he was not ready yet to give up all of his own power.

**1640-1642** According to the Winthrop Papers, sometime after February 1639/40, Edward wrote his own letter to John Winthrop.[[48]](#footnote-48) The negotiations for the absorption of Dover into Massachusetts Bay had begun in September 1639, according to a transcript of John Winthrop’s papers. Given Edward’s statement that he had neglected to write for some time, his letter might have been authored well after February 1639/40, the calculated date given in Winthrop’s papers. However, the letter could also fit into what happened later in 1640, so it’s difficult to be certain exactly when it was written.

The letter laid out what happened after Edward returned from a Massachusetts Bay court session where Articles had been discussed for merging Dover into Massachusetts Bay.[[49]](#footnote-49) Those conditions were to be reported to Underhill and other Dover citizens. The merger was discussed by the town, even if the specific Articles were not distributed, because Edward reported to Winthrop that twenty-nine residents of Dover consented to the merger, and a Mr. Broadstreet was to carry that information with Mr. Knollys to Ipswich in compliance to Winthrop’s order to report back after conferring with the Elders of the church and others. Underhill delayed that report by stating he was troubled about the journey. Underhill also gave orders that no one was to write to Winthrop. The town meeting discussing the Articles (which may not have been distributed) had resulted in two pro-Massachusetts Bay determinations anyway. One was that it was fine to merge with Massachusetts Bay because Dover residents considered themselves the king’s subjects as did the Bay colony. Second, the king had never gotten back to Dover about its own request for authorization for their government, and more governance was needed. There was, however, a faction headed by Underhill which said it was “concerned” about the double allegiance to king and to Massachusetts and wanted to delay before answering Winthrop.

Underhill, according to Edward, was supposed to send a Mr. Broadstreet and Hansard Knollys to pass on Dover’s decision.[[50]](#footnote-50) Underhill instituted an intentional delay and told the town he was “troubled” about the journey and wanted the messengers to wait. He also made an order that no one should write to authorities in Massachusetts Bay. Underhill then made a brief trip to Agamenticus (Maine), and upon his return he reported he’d been told a letter had come from England authorizing Dover to organize its own government. Underhill reported this to Dover residents without possessing the letter. He then proposed six freemen be chosen as his assistants. Two refused and four were elected magistrates. It was after that meeting that Edward took it upon himself to inform Winthrop about the state of things in Dover. He mentioned no further meeting was held concerning the Massachusetts Bay Articles, nor where they directly given to the citizens of Dover. Edward stated he believed the people of Dover needed reassurance they would be granted liberty of conscience and that he hoped to facilitate Dover coming under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts Bay. He also hoped to be “an instrument” of bringing this to pass.

As a footnote on Edward’s letter, a commentator wrote that Edward’s letter influenced John Winthrop to put the blame of not bringing Dover under the leadership of Massachusetts Bay on Underhill. Edward’s letter was instrumental evidence for Winthrop deposing Underhill a few years later. The footnote referenced Winthrop’s Journal as its source. Neither of the two versions of that Journal (printed 1825 & 1908) supported the footnote’s assertion, so it may be in another version.[[51]](#footnote-51)

From the pre-merger drama it’s apparent Dover had plenty of political controversy and religious opposition on both sides, Church of England and puritan, not just to annexation by Massachusetts Bay. The issues deepened as some supported the more recently arrived clergyman, Thomas Larkham. He raised what Jenness called “another rebellion” in the interest of independence.[[52]](#footnote-52) Knollys (allied with the Underhill faction) excommunicated Larkham (possibly less puritan, and whose immoral behavior had been uncovered). Larkham knocked off Knollys’ hat in public, and Knollys retaliated. Underhill and Knollys expected support from Massachusetts Bay and marched out to meet Larkham. Larkham saw Knollys carrying a pistol and withdrew his party but sent to Strawberry Bank (Portsmouth) for backup. Backup came for Larkham, and Knollys and Underhill were put under house arrest and then found guilty of riot, heavily fined, and banished from Piscataqua, though that punishment was rescinded.

The Rev. Dr. Spalding wrote a general description about this controversy for his 250th anniversary sermon of the Settlement of Dover and the organization of the First Church.[[53]](#footnote-53) He stated:

*“The early settlers of Dover and Portsmouth were attached to the Church of England, and had little connection with the Puritans of Massachusetts, though there were those in Dover whose sympathies were with the Bay Company and the independent ideas, both civil and religious, which the Puritans represented. These, for the most part, were the men who came over with the Puritan minister, Mr. Leveridge. The fact that there existed here in Dover these two parties, representing principles and politics thus antagonistic, is the true key for our solution of the strange events which occurred during this turbulent period of the town's history. The conflict which was fought out within the walls of the old church and along the single street of Dover, was the same in character with that which had been raging for half a century in England, and which was yet to soak with the blood of its noblest citizens many of its fair fields. Hanserd Knollys was a Puritan. Hatred of the English established church had been generated in him by the persecu-*

*tions which began to be brought against him from that quarter from the day when he renounced the ordination which he had received from its hands. Thomas Larkham had been an Episcopal minister at Northam, England. Finding the Massachusetts Puritanism uncongenial to him,*

*he came to Dover. He was a man of considerable wealth and buying some of the shares of the plantation company, he became greatly influential. This is seen in the fact that he persuaded the people here to change the name of their town to Northam, this last being the name of his English home. He was a man of brilliant speech and popular address, and having supplanted Knollys, manifested his church notions at once and in a very marked way, and which led to the contentions which have been related.”* Spalding’s assessment of Dover’s turmoil as mostly religious in origin may well have been correct.

A letter was sent from Underhill to Boston asking for assistance with the conflict.[[54]](#footnote-54) Larkham’s group accused Underhill of secretly endeavoring to bring Dover under the government of Massachusetts Bay Colony and this was added proof for them. In this instance, the Bay governor, Winthrop, sent Simon Bradstreet, Hugh Peters (minister of Salem), and Timothy Dalton of Hampton to investigate the matter. They found both sides at fault and declared each had to revoke their actions. Not long after, Knollys was accused of a moral failure and dismissed as minister, but did not yet leave Dover.

By the fall of 1640, tensions in Dover had simmered to the point that the inhabitants knew they needed a more organized form of government, even if they had to do it on their own. The town was part of the plantation of Piscataqua, technically still under the control of the patent holders (the group which had bought out the Bristol merchants, but were still partnered with the Shrewsbury men). However, there was no specific local or plantation-wide government in place with a system of justice and leadership other than the swift-changing governors who had been appointed by the plantation’s patent holders or self-appointed. The residents of Dover likely had enough of that. On the 22nd of October 1640, forty-two men signed a document that became known as “The Combination of the People of Dover to Establish a Form of Government.[[55]](#footnote-55) This document set out the plan Dover would follow which was to use the laws of England until the king might give another order concerning the town. The area was in something of a quandary because the colony/planation was not technically a royal one, nor was there much oversight or support from the merchants and lords. The king, who had his hands full with governance problems in England, did not acknowledge the document or approve it.

Despite his advocacy for a union with Massachusetts, John Underhill signed the combination as did Edward Starbuck and other adult, male residents.[[56]](#footnote-56) It was the prudent thing to do, but Underhill’s duplicity in this became apparent soon enough when he went from house to house “flattering and threatening” the residents to push for annexation by Massachusetts Bay.

Winthrop and Massachusetts Bay now had the opportunity they had been waiting for. Dover was embroiled in various squabbles.[[57]](#footnote-57) The Laconia Company had broken up and others had either withdrawn their interest or (like John Mason) had passed away. Dissentions in England had minimized oversight. But now a new threat arose. John Mason’s heir, Robert Tufton, was raising claims to vast areas of both the northern reaches (Dover) and southern areas (Strawberry Bank/Portsmouth) of the Piscataqua Plantation. It was enough to send both Dover and Portsmouth in search of help from Massachusetts Bay, the strongest legal arm in New England.

A representative from Massachusetts Bay visited and declared the area ready to be governed by the Bay Colony, and what Jenness called the “Puritan annexation,” followed.[[58]](#footnote-58) It was, however, an invited annexation taken a step at a time.

On the fourth of March 1640/41, less than five months after the Dover Combination had been signed, a letter was sent from the town to John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.[[59]](#footnote-59) It was signed by Edward Starbuck and twenty-four others, but notably not John Underhill which the letter mentioned specifically was trying to “Undermyne us.” Contrary to his oath and fidelity, Underhill had used threats and flattery not only on the citizens of Dover but on others who weren’t. The letter essentially asked Massachusetts Bay to deal with Underhill even though he had been promoting their interests. The letter signers felt Underhill’s actions were not in the best interests of Dover, it’s promises to the patentees, or even Massachusetts Bay. Underhill left Dover not long afterwards, reconciled with authorities in Boston, but then moved on to the Dutch settlements on the Hudson River.

While the letter was not an act of union, it did not take long for local dissatisfaction to combine with questions on exactly where the northern limit of Massachusetts Bay truly lay, which might serve to vacate both Mason’s and George’s early patents.[[60]](#footnote-60) On the fourteenth of April 1641, Massachusetts Bay entered into an agreement in the general court with the principals of Piscataqua plantation, namely George Willys, Robert Saltonstall, William Whiting, Edward Holyoke and Thomas Makepeace who acted on their own and in behalf of the other partners of the patent, Lord Say and Lord Brook. The patentees agreed to resign their jurisdiction and turn it over to Massachusetts Bay on the conditions the inhabitants of Piscataqua Plantation would retain their liberties and have a court of justice among them. The court consented and Dover and Portsmouth received the same privileges as the rest of the colony. They had the same administration of justice, were guaranteed they would be exempted from public charges other than their own, could continue their current fishing, planting, and selling timber arrangements, and could send two deputies to the general court. Their local governance would stand as it was until new commissioners were named. Not long after that, the commissioners or magistrates were confirmed, specifically Francis Williams, Thomas Warnerton and Ambrose Gibbons for Portsmouth plus Edward Hilton, Thomas Wiggin and William Waldron for Dover. In addition, a very unique allowance was given, likely to keep those in Dover and Portsmouth who were not puritans satisfied. The concession was that any adult male, church member or not, could vote in town affairs and serve in both town offices and the general court. That was not the case in the rest of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

During this time, Edward had one run-in with Hansard Knollys, though it may not be indicative of religious differences. During the Knollys/Larkham turmoil and shortly before Knollys left Dover, a document in the Rockingham County deeds (dated 8 March 1640/41), shows Knollys accused Edward Starbuck of slander and “Case.”[[61]](#footnote-61) The document states both actions were entered into the court record the same day. In this instance, “Case” may have been an accusation of injury to a person or property indirectly resulting from the conduct of another.[[62]](#footnote-62)

No further details of the action could be found in any source so why Knollys felt Edward had slandered him remains unknown, though it might have had something to do with the 1640 letter Underhill had written to John Winthrop in which he stated Edward Starbuck and two other men told him Knollys had maligned Massachusetts Bay Colony. It’s impossible to tell how much of Underhill’s report is true and how much is his own exaggeration.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The union with Massachusetts Bay moved forward and Dover became part of Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Norfolk County. While the arrangement Dover had with Massachusetts Bay might be seen to infringe on modern religious freedom, government in the 1600s was not just for civil order and defense, it was also seen as a bulwark for order and defense, designed to keep individuals in the security of Christian life.

By the end of 1642, both Knollys and Larkham had left Dover. The town wrote to Massachusetts Bay for help finding another minister. Daniel Maud, who had been a minister in England, was sent to the town.[[64]](#footnote-64) He was well thought of in Massachusetts Bay, having lived there for a few years as a schoolteacher.

Although Daniel Maud was described as, “… an honest man, and of a quiet and peaceable disposition, qualities much wanting in all his predecessors,” there is no question he was a puritan.[[65]](#footnote-65) Daniel Maud had immigrated to Boston in 1635, where he became a schoolmaster and was admitted as a freeman. At that point in Massachusetts Bay Colony history, only church members became freemen and to be a member of the governing church, one had to be a puritan. The fact that Dover wrote to Massachusetts Bay to send them a minister speaks volumes for how far the puritans had come in gaining the upper hand in town. No record was found of anyone objecting to Daniel Maud or how he was supported by the inhabitants. Though Dover had started out conformist, or possibly non-religious, small changes over a period of twenty years had turned Dover into a puritan town.

**1643-1646** Edward Starbuck was not only witness to the events in Dover and beyond, but participant as well. Dover and the upper reaches of the Piscataqua Plantation were fully part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony by 1643. Edward was chosen as the second Dover representative to the general court held in Salem that year.[[66]](#footnote-66) He would serve again in that position three years later, possibly filling in for part of the year for William Walderen, who had died. In May of 1643 he was a deputy at the Court of Elections held in Boston.[[67]](#footnote-67)

In joining with Massachusetts Bay, Dover became part of a much bigger combination which grew to include locations which would eventually come under the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. Dover’s voluntary merger with Massachusetts Bay Colony, acceptance of the court system which placed Dover’s citizens under the judgement of various court levels in Massachusetts, and the town’s gradual shift toward more a more puritan way of worship, all add up to Dover becoming a puritan town by the early 1640s.

1. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1 (Dover, New Hampshire: S. C. Stevens & Ela & Wadleigh, 1831), 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.* (Dover, NH: No printer named, 1913), 2-3, 6.

John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents* (Portsmouth, Maine: Lewis W. Brewster, 1878), 1-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1 (Dover, N. H.: S. C. Stevens & Ela & Wadleigh, 1831), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Scales, *History of Dover, New Hampshire* (Manchester, New Hampshire: John B. Clarke Co, 1923), 1-2; digital image, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 12 January 2023).

Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 6-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 8, 11.

John Scales, *Colonial Era History of Dover, New Hampshire* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc, 1977; a reprint of the 1923 edition with index added by Marlene Towle), 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Wilbur Daniel Spencer, Pioneers on Maine Rivers (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1973), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 16-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 17.

Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, Vol. 1, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 12-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. John Scales, *Colonial Era History of Dover, New Hampshire,* 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 13. Note, although Wadleigh specified only “west of England” and appeared to be quoting from Belknap’s *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, p. 18. Later research found some early settlers were from other parts of England. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Michael E. Leveridge with Thomas V. Leverich, *A Godly Minister, The Reverend William Leverich of Great Britain, New England and New York* (Cambridge, England: Altone, Ltd and Michael E. Leveridge, 2008), 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 42.

William Leverich was in Dover for only one to two years because the settlement did not give Leverich adequate support, which likely meant adequate financial support. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. No author credited, *Manual of the First Church, Dover, N. H. organized December 1638,* No. 6 (Dover, New Hampshire: N. H. Stiles, 1893), 2.

Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 16-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 43-45.

Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Explanation from Wikipedia: [Antinomianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomianism) literally means being "against or opposed to the law"[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomian_Controversy#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHall19903-1) and was a term used by critics of those Massachusetts colonists who advocated the preaching of "free grace". The term implied behavior that was immoral and [heterodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heterodoxy), being beyond the limits of religious orthodoxy.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomian_Controversy#cite_note-FOOTNOTEHall19903-1) The free grace advocates were also called [Anabaptists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptists) and [Familists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Familia_Caritatis%22%20%5Co%20%22Familia%20Caritatis), groups that were considered heretical. All three of these terms were used by magistrate [John Winthrop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Winthrop) in his account of the Antinomian Controversy called the *Short Story*. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 24-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia.org : accessed 12 January 2023), “Hansard Knollys,” rev. 14:50, 11 October 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. No historian stated specifically where Larkham was on the conformity scale, but one detail is telling. Larkham returned to England in 1642, but according to the *Manual of the First Church of Dover* (p. 5), he was ejected from his living there by the Uniformity Act of 1662. The *Manual* also stated he “lived in great persecution from the established church and had to be concealed by his son-in-law until his death in 1669. Whatever the state of his conformity, his piety may be called into question due to his actions resulting in his ejection from Dover. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. No author credited, *Manual of the First Church, Dover, N. H.*, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. No author credited, *Manual of the First Church, Dover, N. H.*, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Rev. William Hubbard, A General History of New England (Boston, Massachusetts: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1848), 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. “Winthrop Papers,” database with images, *American Ancestors (*www.americanancestors.org : accessed 10 August 2021), Edward Starbuck (vol 4, p. 179). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. “Winthrop Papers,” database with images, *American Ancestors* (www.americanancestors.org : accessed 10 August 2021), Edward Starbuck (vol 4, p. 185-188). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. “Winthrop Papers,” database with images, *American Ancestors* (www.americanancestors.org : accessed 10 August 2021), Edward Starbuck (vol 4, p. 185-188). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. “Winthrop Papers,” database with images, *American Ancestors* (www.americanancestors.org : accessed 10 August 2021), Edward Starbuck (vol 4, p. 185-188). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The 1908 version had information on Dover on the pages indicated by the footnotes on Edward’s letter to Winthrop, but it had nothing on Edward being instrumental in helping Winthrop decide on a take over. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 45-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Alton Loveless, George B. Spalding, *A Discourse Delivered in the First Church of Dover, May 18,1873 : Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary Settlement of Dover, N. H.* (Scotts Valley, California: [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. George Wadleigh, *Notable Events in the History of Dover, N. H.,* 18.

It should be noted that Edward Starbuck’s name appears as Edward Starr: on the only copy of the original ever found. It was in the PRO in London and not located until decades after the Combination was made. Historians agree that the Edward Starr: on the document can only be Edward Starbuck. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. John S. Jenness, *Notes on the First Planting of New Hampshire and on the Piscataqua Patents*, 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Nathaniel Bouton, editor, *New Hampshire State Papers* vol 1, (Concord, New Hampshire: George E Jenks, state printer, 1867), 126-128; digital images, *New Hampshire Secretary of State* (www.sos.nh.gov : accessed 3 March 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. “Rockingham County, NH deeds,” database, *Ava* (www.ava.fidlar.com : accessed 15 August 2022), Edward Starbuck.

Nathaniel Bouton, editor, *New Hampshire State Papers* vol 40, (Concord, New Hampshire: George E Jenks, state printer, 1867), 3; digital images, *New Hampshire Secretary of State* (www.sos.nh.gov : accessed 3 March 2022.) [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Steven H. Gifis, Barron’s Dictionary of Legal Terms (New York, New York: Kaplan Inc, 2016), 595-596. See Trespass on the Case. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. “Winthrop Papers,” database with images, *American Ancestors (*www.americanancestors.org : accessed 10 August 2021), Edward Starbuck (vol 4, p. 179). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 332-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* vol 1, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. D. Hamilton Hurd, *History of Rockingham & Strafford Counties* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882), 823; digital image, *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 31 March 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, editor, *Records of the Governor and company of the Massachusetts bay in New England*: *printed by order of the legislature vol 2* (Boston, Massachusetts: Press of William White, 1853), 33; *Internet Archive* (archive.org : accessed 8 April 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)