

Saybrook Settlement

On 19th March 1631/2, Lords Saye and Brooke with ten others including the Hon. Charles Fiennes, John Hampden, John Humphris, Richard Knightley, Herbert Pelham, John Pym, Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, Sir Nathaniel Rich, Sir Richard Saltonstall and Sir Harry Vane, obtained from Lord Warwick and his New England Company a patent to buy a tract of land stretching forty leagues (about 140 miles) from the Narragasset River in Massachusetts.

They appointed, as governor, John Winthrop, a member of a wealthy wool family, and, if possible, even more opposed to the established church than was Lord Saye. Winthrop, an experienced colonist, was bidden to establish a settlement and fort at the mouth of the river, to be known as Saybrook. Several shiploads of new colonists were sent over from England. In 1633 both Saye and Brooke purchased more land to create a plantation at Dover, New Hampshire. The Saybrook settlement was to be the insurance policy/bolt hole for Lords Saye and Brooke should things go, politically, badly wrong in the future.

Lord Saye insisted that the colony should have an aristocracy with himself at the head and the others to be selected by himself; the Massachusetts government would have none of it. In the meantime the political situation in England was rapidly deteriorating. The Lords Saye and Brooke lost interest in the venture and after much wrangling the land was sold and became a part of Connecticut. Lord Saye turned his interests south-westward and concentrated his efforts and finances on the Providence Island Company.

The Plotters and their Plotting

In 1625, within months of his accession to the throne, Charles I was experiencing opposition from Parliament to his money raising ventures. He quarrelled with three Parliaments in succession, dissolving the third in 1629, and then continuing to govern without them. The Puritan William Fiennes and his like-minded compatriots were not the only people deeply unhappy with the King's illegal tax raising activities,⁵ many monarchists were too. The Puritans were also much concerned about the way that the fledgling Church of England was edging towards Catholicism. These dissatisfactions and many others, some very minor, such as being fined if caught eating meat during Lent, all contributed to an unstoppable momentum that was gathering way, that would only end in a civil war.

By 1640, war clouds were beginning to gather over England. Political and potential military leaders representing both sides would almost certainly

⁵ See page 173.