

We Shall Remain – After the Mayflower

Excerpts from a PBS documentary compiled by the Very Rev. Bob Scott

This is the second in my series of articles on racial history and stories. It is about the relationships between the colonists and the indigenous people in the area that is now Southern New England in the years after the arrival of the Mayflower.

The PBS documentary, **We Shall Remain: After the Mayflower**, tells the story of the Wampanoag people and their encounter with English colonists at Plymouth in the early 1600s. When the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, they were weakened by disease and unprepared for survival. The Wampanoag, already devastated by epidemics brought by earlier European contact, saw both danger and opportunity in the newcomers. Their leader, Massasoit, forged an alliance with the English, hoping it would strengthen his people against rival tribes. Out of this fragile partnership came the first Thanksgiving feast—a moment often remembered as pure harmony.

However, the episode reminds us that the deeper story is far more complex. The partnership initially proved beneficial: the Wampanoag taught the settlers farming techniques, and the famous 1621 harvest feast symbolized cooperation. Yet beneath the surface, differences in culture, land use, and worldviews created tension. As more English colonists poured into New England, their demands for land and resources grew, steadily eroding Wampanoag sovereignty. Wampanoag land was taken, and their culture was steadily eroded.

After Massasoit's death, his son Metacom—known to the English as King Philip—rose to leadership. Frustrated by broken promises, encroachment on native lands, and the erosion of Wampanoag

independence, he led a coalition of tribes in a desperate war against the English in 1675. Known as King Philip's War, it was one of the bloodiest conflicts in American history. Though the Native resistance was fierce, the English prevailed. Metacom was killed, and surviving Wampanoag were enslaved, executed, or displaced.

The episode portrays the Wampanoag story not as a simple tale of Pilgrim gratitude but as a tragic narrative of survival, alliance, betrayal, and loss. It challenges the traditional Thanksgiving myth by revealing how Native peoples sought to protect their homelands and cultures in the face of overwhelming colonization. We are invited to look honestly at our nation's beginnings and the painful costs of colonization for Native peoples.

If you would like to view the entire PBS documentary, it can be viewed using this link: [**PBS Documentary - We Shall Remain**](#)