

# NEW HAVEN... umm, what about it?

New Haven has a long and interesting history as a town, this little bit of information is not meant to be an exhaustive history, but to give you a sense of the place you will be living for the next few years and to point out some places to start looking deeper if you happen to be interested in finding out more about New Haven.

The original inhabitants of New Haven were members of the Quinnipiac tribe of Native Americans, part of the larger Algonquin tribe which was spread throughout New England and Canada. The Quinnipiac lived in wigwams and long houses in fishing camps along the shore during the spring and summer and relocated to inland camps around present day Meridan for the winters. They grew corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, fruits, nuts, berries in a plantation-style setting, using a slash-and-burn technique to replenish the soil and rotating planting sites regularly. Shell and scalefish dried in the sun or on racks over a fire supplemented a mostly grain and vegetable diet.

Sleeping Giant state park, which is very close to New Haven and a great place to hike, is revered as the petrified body of one the Quinnipiac peoples' cultural heros, Hobbomock. He was a benevolent spirit who taught the people how to hunt, fish, and survive the Ice Age, earthquakes, and famines, and he was the one prayed to when assistance was needed.

In 1638 five hundred Puritans left the Massachusetts Bay colony and came to the area where the Quinnipiac lived. Under the leadership of Reverend John Davenport and a London merchant named Theophilus Eaton, the settlers were hoping to establish a better theological community and to take advantage of the local port capabilities.

The Quinnipiac tribe sold the land that is now New Haven to the arriving settlers and were subsequently displaced to what is considered to be the first reservation in the United States, set up by a treaty between the Quinnipiac tribe and the English settlers in 1638. Many members of the tribe, in many areas of Connecticut and surrounding states, were displaced and forced to adopt new ways of life and the new religion of the settlers as the English moved further into the Northeast. There were also many Quinnipiac who refused to give up their own culture for the new culture of the English and relocated to join other tribes farther north. Others stayed in the area and continued to live in the way they were used to, frequently to the dismay of the Puritans. There continues to be a significant Native American presence in Connecticut today.

The settlers renamed the area New Haven and founded a theocratic government. They also laid out the nine square grid plan for the city, which remains to this day. Economic disaster struck the colony in 1646, when the town sent its first fully loaded ship of local goods back to England. This ship never reached the Old World, and its disappearance stymied New Haven's development in the face of the rising trade power of Boston and New Amsterdam.

In 1661, the judges who had signed the death warrant of Charles I of England were pursued by Charles II. Two judges, Colonel Edward Whalley and Colonel William Goffe, fled to New Haven to seek refuge from the king's forces. John Davenport arranged for these "Regicides" to hide in the West Rock hills northwest of the town. A third judge, John Dixwell, joined the other regicides at a later time. There are streets in modern day New Haven named for all three of these men.

New Haven was made co-capital of Connecticut in 1701, a status it retained until 1873, and in 1716, the Collegiate School relocated from Old Saybrook to New Haven and established New Haven as a center of learning. In 1718, the name of the Collegiate School was changed to Yale College in response to a large donation from Welsh merchant Elihu Yale.

For over a century, New Haven citizens fought alongside British forces, as in the French and Indian War. As the American Revolution approached, General David Wooster and other influential residents hoped that the conflict with Britain could be resolved short of rebellion. But on April 23, 1775 (still celebrated in New Haven as Powder House Day), the Second Company, Governor's Foot Guard, of New Haven entered the struggle against the British. Under Captain Benedict Arnold, they broke into the powder house to arm themselves and began a three-day march to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Other New Haven militia members were on hand to escort George Washington from his overnight stay in New Haven on his way to Cambridge. British forces under General William Tryon raided the 3,500-person town in July 1779, but did not torch it as they had with Danbury in 1777, or Fairfield and Norwalk a week after the New Haven raid, leaving many of the town's colonial features preserved.

New Haven was incorporated as a city in 1784 and subsequently struck fortune in the late 18th century with the inventions and industrial activity of Eli Whitney, a Yale graduate who remained in New Haven to develop the cotton gin and establish a gun-manufacturing factory in the northern part of the city near the Hamden town line. It was in Whitney's gun-manufacturing plant that Samuel Colt invented the automatic revolver in 1836.

One of the most important events in New Haven's history, and the history of this area of the country, is the story of "La Amistad", a ship transporting African captives from Havana, Cuba to the United States. On July 2, 1839, Sengbe Pieh led 53 fellow Africans (49 adults and 4 children), the captives being transported aboard *La Amistad* from Havana, in a revolt against their captors. After gaining control of the ship, the Africans demanded to be returned home, but the ship's navigator, Don Pedro Montez, deceived them about which direction their course was on and actually sailed the ship north along the North American coast to Long Island, New York.

The schooner was taken into custody by the United States Navy and the Africans were taken to Connecticut to be sold as slaves. There ensued a widely publicized court case in New Haven, CT about the ship and the legal status of the African captives. At the time, the transport of slaves from Africa to the Americas was illegal, so the ship owners fraudulently described the Africans as having been born in Cuba. The court had to decide if the Africans were to be considered to be free.

These issues became the focus of the *Amistad* case, which figured prominently in abolitionism in the United States. In America, the African leader Sengbe Pieh became known as Joseph Cinqué. After two years of being held in jail, during which 17 of the original 35 people on the ship died, the Supreme Court ruled the Africans as illegally held, and they were allowed to return to Africa. The abolitionists that had assisted in the fight for the freedom of the captives during the trials raised enough money to buy passage to Africa for the remaining men, women, and children who arrived home in January of 1842.

Another significant event in the history of New Haven occurred in 1970 when residents witnessed the largest trial in Connecticut history. Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale and ten other Party members were tried for murdering an alleged informant. May Day, 1970 saw the beginning of the pretrial proceedings for the first of the two New Haven Black Panther trials; it was met with a demonstration by twelve thousand Black Panther supporters, including a large number of college students, who had come to New Haven individually and in organized groups and were housed and fed by community organizations and by Yale students in their dorms. Demonstrations continued through the spring with protestors assembling by day on the New Haven Green across the street from the Courthouse to hear speakers including Jean Genet, Benjamin Spock, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, and John Froines.

In the time between the 1970's and today New Haven has gone through some ups and downs in terms of economy and growth. The city continued to grow during the two World Wars, with most new inhabitants being African Americans from the South and Puerto Ricans. Both of these groups continue to make up a significant portion of New Haven's population. Today, roughly half the populations of East Haven, West Haven, and North Haven are Italian-American. Jewish immigration to New Haven has also left an enduring mark on the city. Westville was the center of Jewish life in New Haven, though today many people who originally lived there have fanned out to suburban communities such as Woodbridge and Cheshire.

Today, many areas of New Haven are in the process of revitalization, and the city continues to change and to grow. New Haven is a very diverse city that contains people from all walks of life and from many different cultural backgrounds. It is a wonderful place to come to school, I can't think of very many other cities in the country that provide so many different opportunities to learn about the world and the people around you. There are so many different opportunities here for interaction and so many interesting projects and programs that are run both by Yale and the City of New Haven. No matter what your interests you will be sure to find many things in New Haven that you can connect with, and will most likely discover new and interesting things you didn't know about before you came here.

- Morgan Schopen

