



370 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06824
www.fairfieldhistory.org

Learn More About Fairfield County History

Native American Settlements and Contact with English Colonists

Fairfield's coastal geography and plentiful natural resources attracted humans for thousands of years before European settlers stumbled upon the "fair fields" that Native Americans called Uncoway. This area provided indigenous peoples with game, fish, abundant sweet water, and fertile land to cultivate. During the Late Woodland Period (1500-1650), Uncowas, Sasquas, Maxumux, and Pequonnocks—subdivisions of the Paugussett Indians—inhabited the coastal areas, locating their villages of wigwams along the inland waterways. Another clan of Paugussetts called the Aspetucks occupied land several miles further inland, in the area that is now Weston and Easton.

The Native American population of southern New England was probably quite large before contact with European explorers. However, in the early 1600s epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other diseases to which the natives had no immunity decimated their populations, possibly by ninety-five percent in this area. By the time English colonists arrived as settlers in the 1630s, the Paugussett villages in the lower Housatonic River Valley were small and scattered. The Paugussetts were not an aggressive people, and they did not resist the English moving onto their land as the Pequots of southeastern Connecticut had done.

The Great Swamp Fight

Ironically, a swamp along Fairfield's coast became the setting for the final, violent episode in the saga of the Pequot Indians, who fled their home territory in Mystic (Missituck), Connecticut, after the English massacred hundreds of women, children and older men by setting a village ablaze. The warriors were preparing to defend a fortification at another location on that fateful night of May 26, 1637. When they discovered the atrocity that had taken place in their village, shock and disbelief overwhelmed them and they fled westward, away from the territory of enemy Narragansetts and Mohegans, allies of the English.



Fairfield Museum AND HISTORY CENTER

370 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06824
www.fairfieldhistory.org

Eventually the English found the Pequot survivors in an area inhabited by the Sasqua Indians, now part of Fairfield. Among the English who fought in “The Great Swamp Fight” in July of 1637 was Captain John Mason, the man responsible for the massacre in Mystic, and the strong-willed, arrogant Roger Ludlow from Windsor, Connecticut. Although the exact location of the battle is not known, it took place in the vicinity of Southport. Eighty to one hundred Pequots, along with their “hosts,” about two hundred Sasqua Indians, took refuge in the swampland and were surrounded by the English. The Sasquas and the Pequot women and children were allowed to leave the swamp, but the Pequot warriors remained, and most or all were killed in the battle that followed. Sassacus, a Pequot sachem (leader), and some of his followers had eluded the English, but met a gruesome fate at the hands of the Mohawks in upstate New York. The surviving Pequot women and children were captured and given to Indian allies of the English and to the Massachusetts Bay Colony settlers to become their servants or slaves.