
Everyday Life in Mr. Davenport's Town

Even before they undertook the organization of their civil and church institutions, the colonists' first task was to provide shelter, and this initially came in the form of cellars dug into the ground along West Creek. Michael Wigglesworth's family settled in Quinnipiac in its first years and lived in such a shelter. The future clergyman and poet described how his family "lived in a cellar partly underground, covered with earth the first winter. . . . I remember that one great rain broke in upon us and drenched me so in my bed, being asleep, that I fell sick upon it."¹ Such shelters continued to be used by newcomers over the following years, but on December 2, 1640, the town "ordered that all that live in cellars and have families shall have liberty for three months to provide for themselves, but all single persons are to betake themselves forthwith to some families, except the magistrates see cause to respite them for a time."²

Most settlers had been quick to erect more substantial structures, often one story with sharply pitched roofs. But because the New Haven settlers numbered among some of the wealthier immigrants to early New England, some homes were more than merely substantial. An estimate of the wealth of the townsmen in 1641 showed five individuals assessed at more than £1,000 each, a very large sum for that time. Within a few years such individuals had erected some of the finest homes to be found anywhere in New England.

Theophilus Eaton's home, on what is now the corner of Elm and Orange streets, was constructed like an English manor house, three stories tall with a number of chimneys to heat the interior. Those who visited it later in the century described an E-shaped structure with five chimneys feeding as many as twenty-one fireplaces. Inventories and recollections of those who saw the home decades after Eaton's death have allowed historical architects to