
From Town to Colony

The colonists who had gathered in Robert Newman's barn in 1638 had created a structure of town government. Yet they expected that other communities would be established near them in the western portion of the land that had been granted to the Saybrook proprietors. Davenport's influence can be detected in the establishment of a number of these towns, which, over the following five years, would evolve into a colony.

Before the first election of New Haven magistrates the followers of Peter Prudden had made clear their intent to form their own town outside of Quinnipiac. Five members of that group had purchased land from the natives lying to the west of Quinnipiac toward the Housatonic River. They soon settled Wepowaug, later called Milford. A church was formed according to the same process as at New Haven, and it was formally organized on the same day as the New Haven church or within a day of that event. Reflecting Prudden's disagreement with Davenport on the nature of the franchise, the new town allowed all of its free planters the right to vote.¹

The ship that carried the Davenports' son John to New Haven in September 1639 also carried Davenport's friend Henry Whitfield along with members of his Ockley, Surrey, congregation. Another passenger on that vessel was George Fenwick, the only one of the Saybrook proprietors who had actually settled in New England. Fenwick was returning to Saybrook after briefly journeying to England to bring his wife to the colonies. Whitefield and his followers had come to the region to "settle and uphold the ordinances of God . . . with the most purity, peace, and liberty for the benefit of ourselves and our posterity after us."² They took up temporary residence in New Haven while they looked for land that resembled their former homeland in Kent and Surrey, finally purchasing a tract of land east of Quinnipiac