



Editorial

AS is proper and desirable, the essays *NEQ* receives and publishes reflect current scholarly trends, and so it should come as no surprise that our recent issues have tended to fall into groupings. The working title I have had in mind for the present issue is “Natives, Immigrants, and Nativists.” I have not arranged the articles chronologically, preferring instead to mix disciplines, time periods, and approaches.

In the issue’s opening essay, Elizabeth Ammons deftly exposes the racist subtext of Edith Wharton’s *Ethan Frome*, a classic 1911 work that is widely published and taught throughout the United States. Reading the novel against the period’s nativist literature and posing its rural Berkshires’ homestead against the reality of Wharton’s fictionalized North Adams, Ammons shows that the novel’s frigid whiteness conveys the era’s fears that white New England was disappearing, its farms withering, and that swarthy foreigners were increasingly dominating the newly industrialized landscape. In laying out her case, Ammons treats many of the themes that run throughout *NEQ*’s March issue: to name a few, white privilege; poverty in rural and industrialized New England; nativist fears of people of color; the ongoing construction of New England’s identity.

As Puritan settlers went about creating their version of an ideal England in the Americas, they defined themselves against Native inhabitants. As the region, and the nation, matured and gained independence from the motherland, Indians were, under law, accorded rights equal to those of the white settlers’ descendants. Richard D. Brown tests the limits of those rights in his microhistory. In December 1813, four white men were indicted for murdering an Indian. Over the course of the next five years—as trials, convictions, pleas for clemency, and punishments (or lack thereof) proceeded—the Massachusetts judiciary and executive attempted to define equal justice in the face of shifting public and political opinion.

Soon after the new nation was established, proud citizens looked for ways to entrench the memory of the nation’s origins. They—which is to say, men—founded historical societies and archives to collect, store, and preserve the nation’s treasures and to herald its commercial successes. In the late nineteenth century, as J. Samaine Lockwood demonstrates, women discovered a way to participate in such patriotic activities.

Scouring rural New England, they identified, purchased, and saved precious ceramics whose owners failed to appreciate them. Although such acts appear purely domestic, in fact they were embedded in a number of the period's reigning concerns, including the Arts and Crafts movement, the Colonial Revival, and, not least, nativism.

Walter W. Woodward trails the intrepid Captain John Smith as he engaged in an unrelenting promotional campaign to stamp northeast North America with the image of England. Brandishing tracts and a cleverly crafted map, Smith called on elites, guilds, and royalty to gather the wherewithal to lead a party of settlers to the land that fascinated him. Although, in personal terms, his project failed, Smith's construction of New England would prove remarkably prescient, influential, and long lasting (as, indeed, the other essays in the issue suggest).

In the early nineteenth century, Englishman Edward Augustus Kendall commented that "'immigrant' is perhaps the only new word, of which the circumstances of the United States *has* [*sic*] in any degree demanded the addition to the English language." Although the word has been traced to Jeremy Belknap, Neil Larry Shumsky explains that it was Noah Webster, in his *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), who established the definition that has shaped how Americans have conceived of the phenomenon to this day.



With this issue, we welcome two new members to our editorial board and, by their request and with our undying gratitude, move others to an emeritus category. Michael Kammen, Newton C. Farr Professor of American History and Culture at Cornell University, will share his interests in art and in American social and cultural history. Richard D. Brown, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of History and Director of the Humanities Institute at the University of Connecticut, will offer his expertise in the periods of the Revolution and early republic and his current engagement with microhistory as a means of understanding racial, ethnic, and religious rights in America.



In our next issue, we will reintroduce a practice that was initiated in *NEQ*'s inaugural issue of March 1928. All those individuals who have contributed one hundred dollars or more to *NEQ* will be listed by name in our pages. We deeply appreciate this crucial source of support—a measure, we believe, of how *NEQ* is regarded in the intellectual community of which it is a part.

—LINDA SMITH RHOADS