Daniel Gookin Biography

Daniel Gookin

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Biography

Daniel Gookin of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is the author of two narratives about the Indians, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* ..., first published in Massachusetts Historical Society *Collections* in 1792, and *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England in the Years 1675, 1676, 1677*, first published in American Antiquarian Society *Transactions* in 1836.

Gookin, whose place of birth is unknown, spent his childhood in Country Cork, Ireland. In 1621, he moved to Newport News, Virginia, where his father, Daniel, a merchant adventurer originally from Canterbury, Kent, had established a plantation. A committed Puritan, the younger Gookin left Virginia in 1643, shortly after the General Assembly began to persecute Nonconformists. In May 1644, following a year's residence in Annapolis, Maryland, he settled in Massachusetts and became a prominent figure in that state's affairs, serving as a deputy (1649, 1651-1652) and as an assistant (1653-1675, 1677-1687) in the General Court; as sergeant major (1676-1680) and as major general (1680-1687) in the militia; and as Indian Superintendent (1656-1657, 1661-1687) in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

During his long tenure as Indian Superintendent, Gookin acquired considerable knowledge about the Indians. His *Historical Collections of the Indians* ..., which he completed in 1674, is the best source of information written by a Massachusetts Puritan about traditional Indian religion, political organization, dress, agriculture, commerce, and domestic relations. It also contains an important account of the efforts of John Eliot and other New England missionaries to convert the natives to the Christian faith. *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians* ..., written in 1677, focuses on the shameful treatment that Eliot's converts received during King Philip's War at the hands of an Indian-hating populace. Gookin wrote this poignant narrative in reaction to Increase Mather and William Hubbard, whose histories of the war had slighted the Christian Indians.

Gookin wrote about the New England Indians with a sensitivity rare among Massachusetts Puritans. His writings are characterized by their careful organization and lucid syntax. "I have endeavoured all plainness that I can, that the most vulgar capacity might understand," he explained. Two unpublished works, a history of New England and an account of the Mohawk Indians of New York, are not extant.