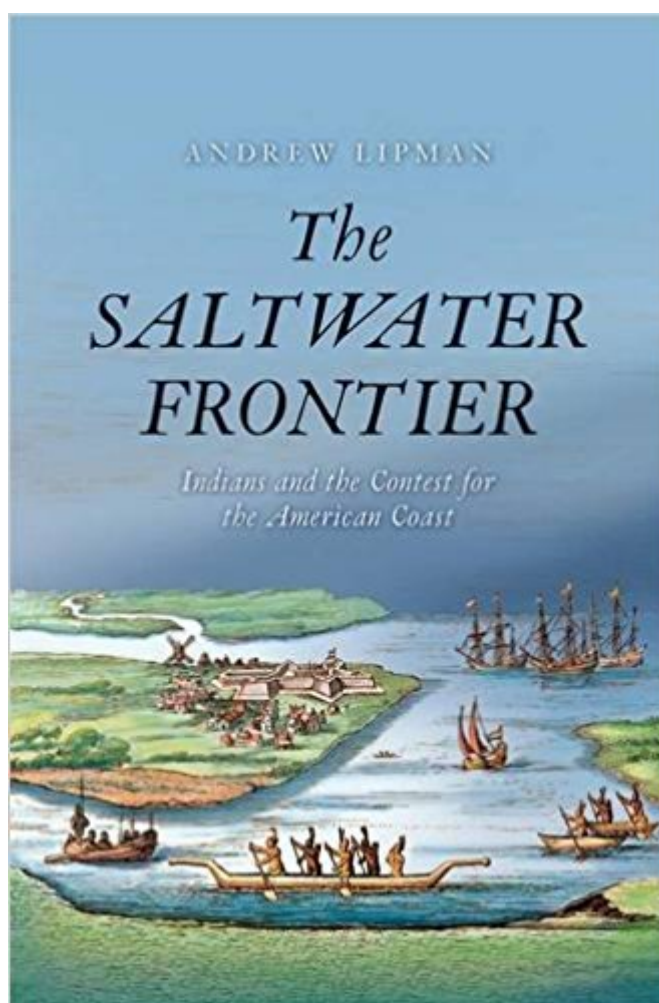


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# The Saltwater Frontier: Indians And The Contest For The American Coast (New Directions In Narrative History)



## Synopsis

A fascinating new perspective on Native seafaring and colonial violence in the seventeenth-century American Northeast Andrew Lipman's eye-opening first book is the previously untold story of how the ocean became a "frontier" between colonists and Indians. When the English and Dutch empires both tried to claim the same patch of coast between the Hudson River and Cape Cod, the sea itself became the arena of contact and conflict. During the violent European invasions, the region's Algonquian-speaking Natives were navigators, boatbuilders, fishermen, pirates, and merchants who became active players in the emergence of the Atlantic World. Drawing from a wide range of English, Dutch, and archeological sources, Lipman uncovers a new geography of Native America that incorporates seawater as well as soil. Looking past Europeans' arbitrary land boundaries, he reveals unseen links between local episodes and global events on distant shores. "Lipman's book "successfully redirects the way we look at a familiar history" (Neal Salisbury, Smith College). Extensively researched and elegantly written, this latest addition to Yale's seventeenth-century American history list brings the early years of New England and New York vividly to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"With *The Saltwater Frontier*, Andrew Lipman emerges as one of the greatest prose stylists among early American historians. Even more significantly, Lipman's water-centric approach to Indian-European interactions upends much that we thought we knew. This book is

simply superb. — Erik R. Seeman, author of *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492-1800* — “Most histories claim to be new; Andrew Lipman’s *The Saltwater Frontier* actually is. He tells how, facing invasion from the sea, Indian peoples responded by turning to the sea. — Richard White, author of *The Middle Ground* — “This cutting-edge study will draw much needed attention to the waters of seventeenth-century Long Island Sound as a zone of Indian-colonial contact and imperial rivalry. Lipman approaches his topic with uncommon intelligence, creativity, and literary grace. — David J. Silverman, George Washington University — “A vitally important book for its maritime and regional foci, for its array of stunning insights on the events discussed, and for its engaging writing style. — Neal Salisbury, Smith College

Andrew Lipman is assistant professor of history at Barnard College, Columbia University. He lives in New York City.

In the introduction the author states that he offers a new way of thinking and understanding the history of the region and a novel explanation of how the English would eventually dominate the area. These statements seem grandiose, however the author is in fact, far too modest. This book is not a mere synthesis of historical records and documents as others have done before. The author brings the reader closer to understanding the contact period and the seventeenth century in this region as no author has ever done before. Coastal New England, Long Island, New York City, the Hudson Valley, and northeastern New Jersey are treated as a single unit. This is the correct approach as the Natives, Dutch, and English were clearly in contact and contending with one another. He successfully shows the relatedness of the Pequot and Kieft’s war. These were not isolated events but interconnected through a complex series of provocations. The author regularly shows the Native American point of view and their reaction to various challenges. The occurrence of gruesome and bloody events are placed into proper perspective. Throughout the narration he uses the correct tone and disposition. He successfully argues that the seacoast played a major role in shaping the events that occurred in this region.

Fantastic new take on European/Native American relations. A brilliant book and fluid read!

An outstandingly creative way to look at colonial history. The title is a little misleading in that it is only a small portion of the possible range, focusing almost entirely on the coastal area from Cape

Cod to the Hudson River (such a concept could apply to the French efforts on the Gulf Coast or the Spanish say from Panama to Venezuela). This allows a comparison between the Dutch in New Amsterdam and the English in southern New England. The book also closely examines Indian (the term I'll use here, although carrying a lot of cultural baggage) peoples as sea-oriented--natives had a fairly extensive maritime technology including sizable dugout canoes, even occasional sails, and traded at some distance, fished and traveled considerable distances on a regular basis (for example, crossing from what is now Connecticut to Long Island). In other words, the book looks at the colonial encounter as a contact between two maritime cultures. Or three, actually: Dutch, English and coastal native peoples. There's some fascinating material in the book. Natives made and sold dugout canoes to colonists, both Dutch and English, and harvested extra corn for market sales, as well. The book has an excellent discussion of wampum, and an interesting mention of how these multicultural coastal communities were linked to the growing world market. There's also coexistence and alas, quite deadly wars; the decade from about 1634 saw about 2,000 Indians and more than a hundred settlers killed--and the later King Phillip's war saw a thousand settlers killed. Lipman notes a practice of the New Englanders in war, one that has gotten no mention in patriotic American histories, of demanding heads from Indian allies as proof of loyalty, the heads from enemies like the Pequots. The heads were apparently set on spikes as was done with Irish rebels and English rebels on the other side of the Atlantic. Indian captives (captured primarily by the English settlers) were used as personal servants or sold as slaves, in considerable numbers; the Indian slaves developed a bad reputation for resistance and were hard to sell. There's a parenthetical mention of enslavement of Indians, 2 to 4 million with 600,000 taken over blue water to the islands and to Spain. There's an intriguing section on shore whaling, which lasted into the 1700s with Indians as the whalers and the fishery resulting from a kind of merger of the two maritime cultures. Apparently Indians were often in a kind of debt peonage not differing so much from slavery. The Indian presence in the American whaling industry was considerable, with natives forming members of very many whaling crews. This discussion segues into the continued existence of Native American communities throughout the area lasting into the present; a complication is that free black people (and presumably some escapees from slavery) married into Indian groups to produce distinctive mixed-ethnicity communities. Keep in mind that this book is more or less exploratory, and if as the author hopes, more historians do this kind of history, things will become better understood. The book is very well written, and has a certain verve not common among historians. It has a few illustrations, all useful, and some good maps.

Worthwhile coverage of a part of colonial American history long neglected. This book answers several questions along the line of "I wonder why that happened? It doesn't make sense to me."

The central goal of Andrew Lipman's *The Saltwater Frontier* is to have readers reassess their understanding of the term frontier. Rather than land, Lipman argues that the first frontier between Europeans and Native Americans was the waters along the Atlantic coast. The decisions and opinions of Natives, Lipman contends, were important factors in the development of European colonies. Above all, Lipman claims that three things shaped this saltwater frontier: seafaring, violence, and Atlantic geopolitics. In *The Saltwater Frontier*, readers will discover that the coastal waters of New England were of vast importance to both arriving European colonists and the indigenous peoples who lived there. Because of the abundance of wealth in the form of fish, whales, and shells, "the shape and character of [Algonquian] politics were tied to the spaces where the continent met the ocean" (35). When the English and Dutch arrived, they recognized the effectiveness of the skills and techniques used by Native mariners, and adopted the canoe as an "essential part of their daily lives" (84). Trade relationships between Natives and Europeans blossomed, and a trade network, that involved colonists trading European goods for wampum beads and fur, developed. Yet, whenever two such diverse cultures meet, misunderstandings are unavoidable, and violence was often the tool used to resolve disputes. According to Lipman, for thirty years a pattern of offshore violence occurred between different groups of Natives, the Dutch, and the English. The Pequot War started after Natives attacked European traders who wished to free kidnapped kin, to drain the European vessels of material wealth, and to avenge the death of a murdered leader. On these coastal waters, Europeans were at a distinct disadvantage as Indian vessels were more maneuverable, and held more men. In response, the English took their fighting inland. As the slaughter of Mystic Fort illustrates, "the Pequots, so accustomed to facing seaward to deal with colonists, never saw the English soldiers coming" (137). When Philip's War began, the English so feared the fighting capabilities of Indian mariners that they banned canoes, and had soldiers destroy every enemy craft they came across. As a result, Philip was stripped of his navy, and the damage inflicted by Indians on the colonists was greatly reduced. But these wars also had a geopolitical aspect. At the end of Philip's War, many of the captured Indians were sold into the Slave trade; their fate bound to the Atlantic. When the English chose to go to war with the Pequots, it was not in order to secure justice for the slain tradesmen, but "to protect an important sea passage that

connected English plantations together (134). But Native contributions to geopolitics was not limited to warfare: Europeans traders also depended on Native mariners for fur, corn, ferrying, and sending messages. Without Indians, the social and political worlds of Europeans would have been far less pronounced. The Saltwater Frontier is an excellent monograph that helps portray the importance of the coastal waters during the colonization process of the New England territory. However, when compared with Michael Oberg's *Native America: A History* (2010), an inconsistency reveals itself. According to Oberg, trade was intertwined with concepts of alliances for Native Americans. However, Lipman writes about the Dutch staying at arm's length with Natives, being too "hesitant to make binding alliances beyond the level of simple trading partnerships" (104). Another critique is that Lipman portrays the coastal region as being abundant in food. However, Katherine Grandjean (2015) argues that hunger served as a motivational factor for the Pequot War. Lipman does mention that the English burned corn fields and split the spoils of war in this case, with their Indian allies. However, Lipman never considers hunger as a motivational force.

Other Works Cited: Grandjean, Katherine A. "The New England Encounter: The Pequot War." In *Major Problems in American Indian History*, edited by Albert Hurtado, Peter Iverson, William Bauer, and Stephen Amerman, 154-65. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth Publishing, 2015. Oberg, Michael Leroy. *Native America: A History*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

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