

King Philip's Club

Fruitlands Museums, Harvard, MA

King Philip's War 1675-6 was the last major campaign by the Native Americans against the English colonists in southern New England. Philip (Metecom) was the son of Massasoit (Oussamequin) of the Pokanoket Wampanoag, the Native people who traditionally lived in the area we know today as southeastern Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

When Philip became sachem in 1662, he renewed the treaties his father made with the English. The colonists however, continually encroached on Native rights so much so that by 1675 there was a general uprising of many Native peoples in the region, known as King Philip's War. During the war, Philip called on his allies in the Nipmuck country west of Boston, the Pocumtuck of the middle Connecticut River valley, and others to rally against English settlements throughout the region. During this conflict a higher percentage of the English colonial population were wounded or killed than in any subsequent American War. Estimates place the English losses at 100,000 British pounds with 600 English dead, 3000 Indian people dead, 1200 houses destroyed, along with 8000 cattle.

When and where the club came from is something of a mystery. By the 1820s it was known as 'King Philip's War Club'. As the story goes, the club was handed down from person to person to Mrs. Laura Anne Daniels (maiden name Fuller) of Union, Maine. Miss Clara Endicott Sears purchased the club for the Indian Museum at Fruitlands in 1930.



The club is made from the ball root of a maple tree. It is inlaid with white and purple wampum. White wampum is made from the central column of a whelk shell. Purple wampum is made from quahog shell. There are also several triangular horn pieces inlaid along one side of the club. The holes were made to fit individual beads. There are two lines of wampum along the top width of the club, most of which are missing. Also, there are two bands of wampum along the adjacent surfaces of the handle, 44 beads to a side. Then on one side there are 15 triangular inlaid horn pieces, two of which are still there. There are also three rectangular sections engraved into the club near the ball, perhaps for a brass inlay. This club is a fine example of seventeenth century Native American craftsmanship. One clear sign of its antiquity is the Wampum and the method of its manufacture. Another is the condition of the wood and style of manufacture.