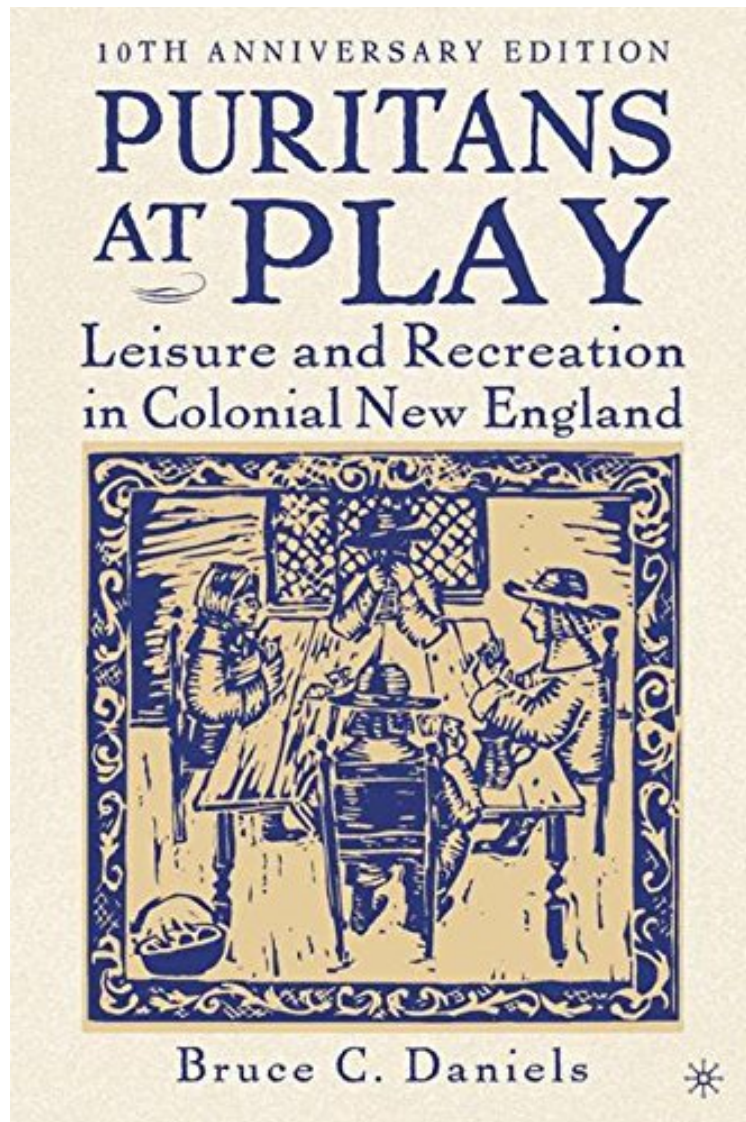


(Download pdf ebook) Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England

Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England

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NA NA : **Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent BookBy KatThroughout the span of time, humans have consistently found ways to have fun. No matter how rough the circumstances, or scarce the amenities, somehow humankind has survived with bouts of laughter, games, and socialization. In his book Puritans at Play, Bruce C.

Daniels debunks myths about one of the most criticized groups of people: the Puritans. Bruce Daniels' purpose is to reveal to his audience that the Puritans not only knew how to have fun, but they also set forth the master pattern of entertainment that Americans would follow for the rest of history. Considering that Daniels spent eight years compiling information and then writing the book, as well as working alongside historians from institutions such as William and Mary, Johns Hopkins University, and Yale, it goes without saying that his work is comprehensive, respected, and truthful. Undoubtedly, Daniels presents a clear and accurate summary of the joys and pleasures experienced by Puritans, and how - despite the hum-drum, modern stereotypes attributed to them - they truly knew how to have fun. Daniels begins the book with an overview of Puritan fun, and then develops further into intellectual and cultural entertainment, civic socialization, multi-gender socialization, segregated socialization, and finally concludes with a comparison of Puritans, Revolutionaries, and Americans. One of the most interesting points that Daniels develops through the whole book regards the seemingly double-standard presented by Puritans. On many occasions, the Puritans condemned alcohol, sex, and dancing; and yet, various history sources infer that the Puritans were actually quite liberal with their lifestyles, despite the strictness which modernists have accused them of possessing. In fact, historians now argue that Puritans were more free-spirited about many things, than even some Americans today (8). On this note, Daniels' book brings up the fact that social settings such as political carnivals often ended in "rioting, fighting, and vandalism" (102). Weddings, too, were celebratory affairs that showed no shame in unbridled partying. Certainly, this debunks the vision of demure, quiet, contained people that many have conjured up. As well, activities such as reading, and not just religious reading, were encouraged, so as to expand the mind and senses. Daniels uses a thread of intellectual propaganda, and then weaves that outward to describe how the mind affected the actions, and then the social life, of a Puritan. Literature was intricately connected to music and theatre, which brought on a whole new host of temptations, not all of which were denied by participating Puritans. Attending theatre performances became a way of socialization for many individuals, and thus truly set the stage for our modern-day, entertainment industry. Dinners and dances allowed men and women to come together for mixed socializing, and the main goal of any gathering was simply to have fun. As well, such times also allowed for the growth of a budding romance, or the initial spark of interest between couples. Often, men got together by themselves to play sports or hunt, while women were more apt to hold sewing parties. Whatever else they were, the Puritans - according to Daniels - were not shy, prohibited people. They knew how to love and live life, and love and live it they did. The overall organization of *Puritans at Play* begins with generalized information and ends with a more in-depth look at how Puritans affected our modern-day play. While Daniels does not write with much humor at all, his depictions of Puritan life are lively, captivating, and enlightening. Daniels uses simple vocabulary to allow easy reader understanding, and also engages his audience by quoting statements of irony as spoken by men such as Cotton Mather, and including interesting tidbits about commonplace Puritans who had recorded their enjoyment of life (116). The overall length of the book - eleven chapters and 221 pages - is not overbearing, but rather necessary in order to accurately develop the thesis of the book, and portray the Puritans in a positive and informed light. Daniels doesn't use any visual aids, but his descriptions are poignant enough to create a mental picture, and thus enhance the effect of his persuasiveness. In summary then, *Puritans at Play* is informative, easy to follow, and extremely successful in maintaining and proving its point, that the Puritan life was one of excitement, enjoyment, and, at times, exhilaration. The essence of *Puritans at Play* is summed up near the conclusion: the age of the Puritans should not be viewed with criticism, but rather an attitude of exploration, because the Puritan code was truly the foundation of early America, which then "became considerably relaxed over the course of the colonial period" (221). The book itself answers a very important question, that of the moral relevance of early America. Because the Puritan code did relax over time, we are offered a glimpse of historical data, such as can help us understand our present circumstances and predict future events. We are left with the understanding that fun is a versatile word, relevant to the immediate culture, and open to interpretation based on personal values. *Puritans at Play* debunks the myth of hum-drum Puritanism and in its place erects a monument of accurate information, as well as a deep appreciation for the pattern of fun set forth for the rest of America to follow. For anyone interested in what uninhibited fun truly looks like, *Puritans at Play* is a definite read.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A warm portrait of a people misunderstood. By Katherine M. Osborne I'd not known much about the Puritans before, but this book really opened my heart to them. Here we have a hard working, disciplined people, whose major fault seemed to be how unforgiving their strict lifestyle seemed. Daniels puts to bed (for the most part) many misconceptions about drinking, sex, music, dancing, gambling, gaming etc., without destroying much of what makes Puritanism admirable. His style is accomplished considering that the subject matter is not always easy to deal with (theater proved a dry subject), and his analysis is deep yet conversational, inviting the reader to consider each matter on several different levels. There is even humor to be found within, albeit observational: Michael Wigglesworth's reaction to a flapping barn door is priceless. I would recommend this book heartily to any person doing research on the subject, as it will bring the living, breathing people themselves into far more familiar territory, and to any layman merely curious about "the Puritan who stopped off at the tavern for a glass of beer after work, made love that night, and went to church the next day with a clear conscience..."

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An excellent guide to the inner workings of Puritan society By History Major This book gives

alot of information about the Puritan mindset and how Puritans spent their time. It clears up alot of myths and common misconceptions about the people and the time period. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in learning more about the founders of the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth settlements, as well as though who are seeking further understanding to what may seem confusing and mundane. This book gives an entertaining look at an otherwise bland subject.

For over four centuries, "Puritan" has been a synonym for dour, joyless, and repressed. In the tenth anniversary edition of *Puritans at Play*, Bruce Daniels reappraises the accuracy of this grim portrait by examining leisure and recreation in Colonial and Revolutionary New England. Chapters on music, dinner parties, dancing, sex, alcohol, taverns, and sports are presented in a lively style that makes this book as entertaining as it is illuminating.

"Daniels' account is a serious contribution to Puritan scholarship, serving to recharacterize our Puritan fathers in their full human dimensions."--Kirkus s "It is rare for a book to be both erudite and amusing at the same time, and this book has succeeded. It has changes the common but unacceptable image of the Puritans as dull, solemn, melancholy misanthropes."--Horton Davies, author of *The Worship of the American Puritans* "Daniels succeeds admirably in providing a fuller and better understanding of the changing everyday experiences of New England Puritans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."--Maris A. Vinovskis, University of Michigan, *American Historical*