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# Interview of Elizabeth Hines

**Elizabeth Hines** 00:00

I'm here to look at relations between New England and New Netherland in the 17th century. This grew out of a larger project on Anglo-Dutch relations all around the world, including Europe, but also the East Indies, Africa, North and South America. I have always been interested in the Hartford Treaty of 1650 in which the New England Confederation and New Netherland determined the boundaries between them.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 00:26

[Intro music fades in] *Historians and Their Histories* is a podcast by the Massachusetts Historical Society. It introduces listeners to our community of researchers. We learn about the paths that they took to become a student of the past and the projects they're working on at the MHS. I'm Sam Hurwitz, Podcast Producer and Editor in the research department at the MHS. Today, we are sitting down with Elizabeth Hines, a post-doctoral fellow at John Hopkins University and a recipient of the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium from the MHS. So just to start off, can you just tell us your journey of why you became a historian? Were there any books, authors, teachers, or any other resources or individuals that really helped cultivate your interest in the past?

**Elizabeth Hines** 01:17

I was converted to history from a physics major back in undergrad. I thought that I wanted to study STEM and someone had to stop and tell me, actually, the fact that you always want to do your history reading and don't want to do your problem sets is meaningful. I took a history class called, 'Military History of the West 1500 to today,' taught by an amazing professor, Paul Kennedy, and I couldn't believe how interesting every single day of class was, and signed up for several more history classes after that, and that was the beginning of the journey. I did find out once I started graduate school, almost all of my female classmates had been really into *The Royal Diaries* and *Dear America* books when we were children. Everyone had been similarly traumatized by when one character died of cholera, and so we all realized we'd been inspired in the same way, and it probably led us all to the graduate program at the University of Chicago.

**Samuel Hurwitz 02:20**

So, when you were growing up, did you read a lot of history, or were you more into science growing up?

**Elizabeth Hines 02:25**

No, absolutely, history, historical fiction. I was obsessed with Laura Ingalls Wilder and *The Little House on the Prairie* books, and also with Louisa May Alcott. So actually, there's a Massachusetts history connection right there. No, it had not occurred to me again that one could really pursue a career where you get to read all day long, and I feel so lucky to get to do that.

**Samuel Hurwitz 02:49**

So why did you start off as a physics major then?

**Elizabeth Hines 02:53**

To be perfectly honest, I had loved *The Golden Compass* books as a child, and one of the heroes is a physicist who helps them save the world, and I'm pretty sure that's why.

**Samuel Hurwitz 03:08**

You went into history in college. Was there any desire to maybe do like the history of science or anything like that, or just go straight into history in of itself?

**Elizabeth Hines 03:21**

No, it was really military history that I got particularly interested in, and I worked for my university's International Security Studies. And in between undergraduate and graduate school, I found myself reading a lot of history in my spare time.

**Samuel Hurwitz 03:37**

Can you just tell us a little bit about yourself, where you grew up, and just how you think that maybe impacted you as a historian today?

**Elizabeth Hines** 03:49

I am a proud Michigander. I grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I do know that in the Michigan Public Schools, third grade is centered around the history of your town. Fourth grade is centered around the history of the state, and in fifth grade, you get US history. And that progression was very exciting.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 04:07

Was there anything from those grades that really stuck out to you that may have made a lasting impact regarding learning about the history of your state or town?

**Elizabeth Hines** 04:15

Actually, later on, in high school, we all did a project where we investigated the history of a building in our town, and that was really exciting. We, you know, went to the municipal office buildings and got blueprints and looked at previous ownership and what the different buildings had been used for. We picked the fanciest house in our neighborhood, a few friends and I and discovered it had been the only house in the neighborhood. Everything else had been the owner's fields. It sounds so small scale, but it was really exciting to look through those records. It was to fill time, actually, at the end of the school year after the AP exam.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 04:59

You said that you changed, you went from a physics major to a history major in college, right, your undergrad? Did you face any difficulties in that? Were there any surprises or to just feel really natural, to kind of go towards that?

**Elizabeth Hines** 05:14

I really can't emphasize enough how little I had thought about my major and career plans. It's truly embarrassing. I had always hoped that I could have a job where I got to read as much as possible. When I switched to more and more history classes, I got to spend more and more of my time reading, and I just thought it was wonderful. And then we got to do senior thesis projects. And that research project I really enjoyed. And I thought, I wonder what kind of job I could have where I could do something like this in the future. And it took two years to realize, oh, a history PhD.

**Samuel Hurwitz 05:52**

What was your senior thesis about? What made it so exciting or interesting?

**Elizabeth Hines 05:56**

It was about the Falklands Crisis of 1770 in which Britain, France and Spain almost went to war over the Falklands but did not do so.

**Samuel Hurwitz 06:08**

Can you just first tell us about the project you're working at the MHS, what your book is, talk to us about your current scholarship, and could you elaborate how this idea developed and what drew you to it originally?

**Elizabeth Hines 06:21**

I'm here to look at relations between New England and New Netherland in the 17th century. This grew out of a larger project on Anglo-Dutch relations all around the world, including Europe, but also the East Indies, Africa, North and South America. I have always been interested in the Hartford Treaty of 1650 in which the New England Confederation and New Netherland determined the boundaries between them. They sent the treaty back to Europe, and in England, no one ever did anything official about it. But in the Netherlands, it went through various different rounds of validation, first an endorsement, then a resolution in its favor, eventually a ratification. And in tracing what happened there and why, it led me to a new understanding of relations in colonial North America in this very early period. In its current form, the book asks why, after decades of collaboration, both imperially and financially, England and the Netherlands went to war against each other in this first Anglo-Dutch war that I mentioned. The states were two Protestant republics at a time when they were surrounded by Catholic powers and various other kinds of states. As I also mentioned before, the old story is just that of competition. However, what I've found in my research is this wide variety of trans-imperial ventures, imperial projects that were both English and Dutch to different degrees, alongside enormous loans from the Netherlands to English borrowers. Both the colonial projects and the loans mostly involved the English royal family. So, what I found is that the Dutch merchants and regents involved had become deeply invested in the royal family in England. Now, in 1649, parliament executed the King of England, Charles the First. So, after that, the only way for these Dutch merchants to get any kind of return on their investment, whether that be

repayment with interest or imperial trading privileges, would be to restore the royal family to the English throne. So, I argue that that's why they wanted war with the English Commonwealth, and it was to prevent Dutch support of the English royal family that the Commonwealth wanted war with the Netherlands.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 09:02

And what exactly is the time range, again?

**Elizabeth Hines** 09:05

Really the first half of the 17th century, although this Hartford treaty and its afterlives is the 1650s.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 09:13

Can you give us context of like, what's going on in North America regarding like, Dutch colonies and the English colonies? To what extent are they kind of, really, truly colonizing, or they use it more as of like a trading a point to trade off with one another.

**Elizabeth Hines** 09:27

That's a debate among historians how much particularly New Netherland was about trade versus settlement. And actually, it reflects a debate among the people at the time. There were differences of opinion about what function New Netherland should serve. Honestly, I feel more confident speaking about New Netherland than about New England, because the community of New Netherland scholars is particularly welcoming, and I'd like to thank Deborah Hamer here, who's the director of the New Netherland Institute, who brings all of us together for things like the New Netherlands seminar, and in reading the works of all of the people who attend and all of the works they recommend, I feel like I have a better sense of New Netherland. New England, of course, is such a broad and deep field with centuries of history in this country. And while that's intimidating, I hope that what I can bring to it is the Anglo-Dutch perspective, bringing New Netherland into the story.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 10:32

And just so folks know, New Netherlands would be what is modern day, New York City, New Jersey, that that general area, correct? I mean, how deep inland did this Dutch settlement go? I mean, were they

pretty much just on what is now modern-day Manhattan and in Brooklyn and Queens, or were they kind of found everywhere throughout Southern New York and New Jersey?

**Elizabeth Hines** 10:59

So, Albany actually several cities that we might recognize the names of today, in New York were part of New Netherlands. Schenectady, famously and BJ Lillis, a post-doctoral fellow at the American Antiquarian Society, has just completed a really interesting dissertation about the manor system, which defined these areas both under the Dutch and then later under the English at the end of the 17th beginning of the 18th century.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 11:31

Can you tell us about the sources you're using here at the MHS?

**Elizabeth Hines** 11:38

The Massachusetts Historical Society is one of the places with the largest collections of early 17th century materials. I'm here for two weeks, and there's no way I'll be able to get through everything I'd like to. So, I've been looking, of course, at the Winthrop papers, the Endicott papers, Appleton, the Dana family, the Cushing family, the transcript of the John Hull diary was particularly fun because he talks about Anglo-Dutch relations quite a bit.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 12:07

So, can you elaborate more on the Anglo-Dutch relations that you're finding in these sources? I mean, are these just passing references that they're talking about, or are they saying, you know, I had business dealings with the Dutch down in what is now modern-day New York City?

**Elizabeth Hines** 12:22

Some of all of the above. Of course, it's fun to find glancing references where someone in, say, a diary, mentions just how much they hate the Dutch. But actually, it's even more interesting to see trading records and diplomatic negotiations. The Endicott papers have some letters regarding commissions sent to try to keep the peace during what was the first Anglo-Dutch war at home. So, the letters are talking

about all of these terrible Dutch provocations, but how out of the goodness and bigness of their hearts they might try to come to terms with them anyway.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 13:05

So, there is some tension between New Englanders and the Dutch. Does it ever really escalate into full blown like war or violence? Are these more skirmishes?

**Elizabeth Hines** 13:16

It's so interesting to hear you say this because the usual story of Anglo-Dutch relations in the whole first half of the 17th century is escalating tension and trade competition in all colonial spaces around the world. My work has been partly saying there's a lot of collaboration as well as competition. But it sounds like from the North American perspective, actually, that may be more clear than perhaps in the histories of the East Indies. Now the first Anglo-Dutch war was fought between 1652 and 1654 in Europe at sea. During these years, parliament was in charge in England, and they sent instructions to the New England Confederation, asking them to gather forces for an attack on New Netherland. And as John Hull writes in his diary, they had trouble collecting enough men. They had to press some of them into service. And once they had finally filled their ships and provisioned them and gotten everything ready, a ship arrived from England with a letter saying that the war was over.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 14:25

So essentially prevented really much bloodshed or fighting in this region of the world, right?

**Elizabeth Hines** 14:32

Oh, absolutely. So, the real story of these decades is a lot of trade and a lot of interaction between the two places. Famously, several people who got kicked out of New England, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but also Rhode Island, ended up moving to New Netherland, which was known for toleration, the same way that the Netherlands in Europe were. But there may be more to the story.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 15:02

Have there been any challenging issues that you faced as a historian doing this scholarly work, or issues you've faced with the archives here at the MHS?

**Elizabeth Hines** 15:14

The biggest issue is always when you discover that you are wrong, and this happens to all of us, I hope. When I was looking at relations between New Netherland and New England, I was particularly focused on some people who crossed imperial boundaries between the two, and in tracing their stories, I was so hung up on the cooperation that a friend had to point me toward some of these issues in the 1650s. On a larger scale, while writing the dissertation, I was following the money, as they say, and I was looking at Dutch loans to various sides of the English civil wars. And I started from the assumption that I would find loans of similar sizes going to what would become the Royalists and the Parliamentarians because I had that unspoken expectation, I spent weeks digging and digging for the loans I was just sure were making their way to parliament. But actually, the point was that money a whole order of magnitude larger was going to the royal family and the Royalists from the Netherlands. Discovering that helped me figure out what the actual argument of the dissertation and now book was but recognizing that I had been wrong and changing my thinking was very difficult in the moment. One other challenge is paleography, which I struggled with when I started out, and has slowly improved. And I'd like to thank Julie van den Hout here, who runs a Dutch paleography group that meets on Zoom, which has been extremely helpful for me.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 16:57

Have there been any unexpected finds? Is there a particular smoking gun that you would like to find here at the archives that would really make the research worth it?

**Elizabeth Hines** 17:12

The research is definitely already worth it. In terms of an article that I've been working on, I'm not sure if it will be part of the book project or not. Part of what I've been interested in is the relationship between not just New England and New Netherland, but also New Sweden. The Swedish colony on the Delaware River that lasted from 1638 to 1655 and just yesterday, in some of the Winthrop papers, I found some materials related to New Sweden that I think will be particularly helpful. One small fun example, also that I really did not expect was a mention of the fact that the water froze between Connecticut and Long Island in the winter of 1654 and people walked between the two of them.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 17:59

So, the big question is, how do you think your research will help audiences better understand the past?

**Elizabeth Hines** 18:05

It's so easy when we think about the origins of what is now the United States, to think about early New England. I hope to contribute to helping people think more expansively, not just about English colonies elsewhere in the Americas, but also Dutch colonies, Swedish, French. The beginnings of empire in the Americas were not only multi-imperial, but trans-imperial. Part of what I work on is projects that involve more than one empire at a time, collaborating in various different ways. This is a huge part of empire in the first half of the 17th century, particularly Anglo-Dutch empire. What it means is that these early years of European expansion looked very different from what we think of when we hear colonialism or imperialism today. And we need to include all of these different kinds of empire in order to understand the origins of our country now.

**Samuel Hurwitz** 19:10

[Outro music fades in] *Historians and Their Histories* is a podcast by the research department at the Massachusetts Historical Society. We would like to thank Elizabeth Hines of John Hopkins University and I've been Sam Hurwitz, your Podcast Producer at the MHS. Music in this episode is by Podington Bear. Please see our show notes for details. Thank you for listening, and please rate, review, and subscribe to both the MHS produced shows wherever you listen to podcasts.