

# Massachusetts Historical Society

Founded 1791

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**For Immediate Release**

## **PETER J. GOMES MEMORIAL BOOK PRIZE AWARDED**

**Margaret Ellen Newell recognized for her revealing account of Indian slavery in colonial  
New England in her book *Brethren by Nature***

BOSTON, October 1, 2016—The Massachusetts Historical Society has announced that the Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize will go to Margaret Ellen Newell for her book *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery*, published in 2015 by Cornell University Press. The Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize is given to the best nonfiction work on the history of Massachusetts published during the preceding year. Newell will receive the award in an event at the Society on January 31.

In *Brethren by Nature*, Newell uses diaries, letters, court records, and newspapers to reveal the scope of Indian slavery in 17th- and 18th-century New England, where the English enslaved thousands of Native Americans and, in 1641, Massachusetts became the first colony to legalize slavery. The desire for slaves led to Indian wars and importation. Yet as Indians helped to raise English children and labored for colonial farmers and tradesmen, they practiced Native customs and foodways with varying degrees of agency and shaped colonial life. Newell's book describes this influence, the relationship between Indian and African slavery, and the ability of some Indians to pursue freedom while establishing legal precedents that would affect later generations of enslaved people.

The Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize selection committee received 16 submissions that interpret the history of Massachusetts through an exciting range of subjects, from colonial history to abolitionism to immigration. The submissions came from nearly a dozen academic, trade, and specialty publishers. "Rev. Peter Gomes was himself an accomplished scholar of colonial America, and a man with a strong and innate sense of social justice," commented MHS Worthington C. Ford Editor and Director of Research Conrad E. Wright. He continued, "Painstakingly researched and beautifully written, Margaret Newell's account of Indian slavery in colonial New England is a most worthy recipient of the Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize."

Margaret Ellen Newell is Professor of History and Vice Chair of the Department of History at the Ohio State University She is also the author of *From Dependency to Independence: Economic Revolution in Colonial New England*, published by Cornell University Press in 1998 and reissued in paperback in 2015, as well as numerous articles and book reviews. The National Endowment for

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the Humanities, American Council of Learned Societies, American Historical Association, Huntington Library, John Nicholas Brown Center, John Carter Brown Library, American Antiquarian Society, and Massachusetts Historical Society have all supported her research. *Brethren by Nature* also received the Organization of American Historians 2016 James A. Rawley prize for the best book on the history of race relations in the U.S.

## **About the Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize**

The Peter J. Gomes Memorial Book Prize, for the best nonfiction work on the history of Massachusetts published during the preceding year, honors the memory of a respected Harvard scholar and beloved Fellow of the MHS. Peter J. Gomes (1942-2011) was elected to the MHS in 1976 and joined the Board of Overseers in 2010. He was Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister in the Memorial Church at Harvard University.

## **About the Massachusetts Historical Society**

*The Massachusetts Historical Society is one of the nation's preeminent research centers, with library collections that provide an unparalleled record of the vibrant course of American history. Since its founding in 1791, the MHS has fostered research, scholarship, and education. With millions of pages of manuscript letters, diaries, and other documents, as well as early newspapers, broadsides, artifacts, works of art, maps, photographs, and prints, the MHS offers a wide-ranging perspective on the United States from the earliest beginnings of the nation to the present day. Exhibition galleries are open Monday to Saturday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.*

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