

ANGLAIS

Commenter en anglais le texte suivant et le traduire de « Oliver Cromwell believed... » à « ... the settlement in Dover. ».

John Wheelwright, who grew up in New Hampshire in the 1950s, is reminiscing about his youth.

Let me say at the outset that I was a Wheelwright – that was the family name that counted in our town: the Wheelwrights. And Wheelwrights were not inclined toward sympathy to Meanys. We were a matriarchal family because my grandfather died when he was a young man and left my grandmother to carry on, which she managed rather grandly. I am descended
5 from John Adams¹ on my grandmother's side (her maiden name was Bates, and her family came to America on the *Mayflower*); yet, in our town, it was my grandfather's name that had the clout, and my grandmother wielded her married name with such a sure sense of self-possession that she might as well have been a Wheelwright *and* an Adams *and* a Bates.

Her Christian name was Harriet, but she was Mrs Wheelwright to almost everyone –
10 certainly to everyone in Owen Meany's family. I think that Grandmother's final vision of anyone named Meany would have been George Meany² – the labor man, the cigar smoker. The combination of unions and cigars did not sit well with Harriet Wheelwright. (To my knowledge, George Meany is not related to the Meany family from my town.)

I grew up in Gravesend, New Hampshire; we didn't have any unions there – a few cigar
15 smokers, but no union men. The town where I was born was purchased from an Indian sagamore in 1638 by the Rev. John Wheelwright, after whom I was named. In New England, the Indian chiefs and higher-ups were called sagamores; although, by the time I was a boy, the only sagamore I knew was a neighbor's dog – a male Labrador retriever named Sagamore (*not*, I think, for his Indian ancestry, but because of his owner's ignorance). Sagamore's owner,
20 our neighbor, Mr Fish, always told me that his dog was named for a lake where he spent his summers swimming – “when I was a youth,” Mr Fish would say. Poor Mr Fish: he didn't know that the lake was named after Indian chiefs and higher-ups – and that naming a stupid Labrador retriever ‘Sagamore’ was certain to cause some unholy offense. As you shall see, it did.

But Americans are not great historians, and so, for years – educated by my neighbor –
25 I thought that sagamore was an Indian word for lake. The canine Sagamore was killed by a diaper truck, and I now believe that the gods of those troubled waters of that much-abused lake were responsible. It would be a better story, I think, if Mr Fish had been killed by the diaper truck – but every study of the gods, of everyone's gods, is a revelation of vengeance toward the innocent. (This is a part of my particular faith that meets with opposition from my
30 Congregationalist and Episcopalian and Anglican friends.)

As for my ancestor John Wheelwright, he landed in Boston in 1636, only two years before he bought our town. He was from Lincolnshire, England – the hamlet of Saleby – and nobody knows why he named our town Gravesend. He had no known contact with the British Gravesend, although that is surely where the name of our town came from. Wheelwright was a Cambridge graduate; he'd played football with Oliver Cromwell³ – whose estimation of Wheelwright (as a football player) was both worshipful and paranoid. Oliver Cromwell believed that Wheelwright was a vicious, even a dirty player, who had perfected the art of tripping his opponents and then falling on them. Gravesend (the British Gravesend) is in Kent – a fair distance from Wheelwright's stamping ground. Perhaps he had a friend from there – maybe it was a friend who had wanted to make the trip to America with Wheelwright, but who hadn't been able to leave England, or had died on the voyage.

According to Wall's *History of Gravesend, N.H.*, the Rev. John Wheelwright had been a good minister of the English church until he began to 'question the authority of certain dogmas'; he became a Puritan, and was thereafter 'silenced by the ecclesiastical powers, for nonconformity.' I feel that my own religious confusion, and stubbornness, owe much to my ancestor, who suffered not only the criticisms of the English church before he left for the new world; once he arrived, he ran afoul of his fellow Puritans in Boston. Together with the famous Mrs Hutchinson⁴, the Rev. Mr Wheelwright was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for disturbing 'the civil peace'; in truth, he did nothing more seditious than offer some heterodox opinions regarding the location of the Holy Ghost – but Massachusetts judged him harshly. He was deprived of his weapons; and with his family and several of his bravest adherents, he sailed north from Boston to Great Bay, where he must have passed by two earlier New Hampshire outposts – what was then called Strawberry Banke, at the mouth of the Pascataqua (now Portsmouth), and the settlement in Dover.

Wheelwright followed the Squamscott River out of Great Bay; he went as far as the falls where the freshwater river met the saltwater river. The forest would have been dense then; the Indians would have showed him how good the fishing was. According to Wall's *History of Gravesend*, there were 'tracts of natural meadow' and 'marshes bordering upon the tidewater.'

John IRVING (1942-), *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, 1989.

¹ President of the United States (1797-1801)

² (1894-1980) American Labor union leader

³ Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland (1653-1658)

⁴ Puritan religious leader