

**A Summary of *The Hyghcock Chronicles***  
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Born in England in 1660 to working class parents, the young Maynard Hyghcock often accompanied his father on smuggling forays to bring untaxed spirits and wine into his home shire of York. Unhappy with in his father's illicit avocation, he dreams of getting an education and becoming a gentleman, a seemingly impossible goal for one born to such humble and common circumstances. But by a stroke of fortune, he comes to the attention of the Duke of York, who makes the lad his protégé. When the boy becomes a youth, the Duke pays for his education at Oxford, sees to his ordination as a priest, and appoints Maynard Parish Priest in one of the Duke's New World Holdings. In 1680, Maynard migrates to Bertrand's Landing in the three lower counties of New York (present day Delaware).

As the representative of the officially established religion, Reverend Hyghcock prospers as the recipient of mandated tithes from all who live in his parish (even though most are not Church of England members), and begins a budding romance with the young widow who owns the local tavern. But when the Duke of York cedes the three lower counties to Governor William Penn of Pennsylvania, Penn declares that all are free to belong to whatever church they please and Reverend Hyghcock loses most of his income when the non-Anglicans cease to pay the tithe.

Maynard fails at farming to support himself and his ministry, and facing starvation through a long winter, he contemplates suicide. Going to the river on a cold November night, he is about to throw himself into the water to end it all, but he pauses to pray for a sign from God that he should have hope and not kill himself. A barrel of whisky floats into view, which Maynard takes as his sign, for he recovers it from the waves and falling back on his childhood experiences with smuggling and bootlegging, sells the whisky and has a rather comfortable winter.

He begins smuggling with only his African servant Kwami for crew, but after a close call with the Royal Navy, he takes on accomplices and procures a more seaworthy boat.

Successful once again, his romance with Betsy (the widow who runs the Horn of Plenty tavern) re-blooms and she becomes one of his partners in crime.

When Betsy's brother is condemned to hang, she convinces Maynard and his crew to rescue him, but the brother is lost overboard (along with Maynard's friend and servant Kwami) during the escape and Betsy blames Maynard and they have a falling out.

Maynard missionary work has given him a famous rapport with the native tribes, so when he is offered a position as Pennsylvania's official emissary to tribes in Maryland, he accepts – as much to escape Betsy's wrath as for any other reason.

His mission is to talk tribes in the lower eastern shore of Maryland into switching their allegiance from Lord Baltimore to the Pennsylvania Provincial Council. He marries an Indian princess, whom he has to leave while he is away assisting other *agents provocateurs* to stir up trouble on the Chesapeake Bay as part of hostilities arising from border disputes between Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Maynard's path leads to murder and insurrection against Lord Baltimore.

Disgusted with himself for taking part in these events, he returns to his wife's village. There he is filled with joy as he finds that Kwami and Betsy's brother had miraculously survived and were there to greet him. His joy is short lived as they give him the news that his wife, Little Beaver, is dead of small pox.

With his mission complete and with no bond to hold him, he returns to Bertrand's Landing and seeks solace by reconciling with Betsy and reuniting her with her brother.