

THE ADAMS FAMILY (& FRIENDS):
A BIOGRAPHICAL CASE STUDY OF MISS HANNAH ADAMS &
A HISTORY OF SINGLENESS & FAMILY
IN 18TH- AND EARLY 19TH-CENTURY NEW ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

Hannah Adams (1755–1831) boasts a long list of accolades: she was America’s first female professional writer, the first published American female historian, the first American author to appeal to an international audience, and the first woman to petition Congress for a national copyright law. According to Thomas Tweed, she was also the first American student of the religious “other.” Hannah was also among the first female American textbook writers (if not the first) and one of the first American women to sign her name to her work. Despite of all these firsts, the academy has largely ignored her. And despite an arguable enthusiasm among the American public for historical biographies of their venerable heroes, there is only one full-length publication devoted to Hannah, and it remains entirely academic in tone. This dissertation seeks to remedy this dilemma by telling her story in a more narrative, biographical way, making her accessible to a broader audience.

This study employs Tomoko Masuzawa’s approach to the history of world religion, blending deep readings of a few central sources with a broader comparative analysis of historical materials, to examine whether the neglect of Hannah’s contributions was a result of the stigma attached to her single status, as Sherry Schwartz has suggested. Through a close reading of her *Memoir*, this dissertation examines Hannah’s relationships with her family, friends, and mentors, including a few young bachelors. By tracing her life from her birth during the French and Indian War, through the American Revolution, to her death in 1831, this dissertation challenges the common feminist historical argument that female familial networks were crucial to a woman’s success. Instead, it demonstrates that Hannah relied, at least in her early and mid-adult life, primarily on male networks, complicating assumptions about gender, singleness, and intellectual mobility in early America.

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Introducing Miss Adams

Hannah Adams (1755-1831) boasts a long list of accolades.¹ She is generally acknowledged as America's first female professional writer.² She was also the first American female published historian.³ According to religious historian Thomas Tweed, Hannah was the first American student of the religious "other," including extensive commentary of non-Christian religions in her publications.⁴ She has been said to be the first American author read by people around the world.⁵ Hannah was the first woman to petition Congress for a national copyright law.⁶ She was among the first female American textbook writers.⁷ Hannah is notable as one of the first American women to sign their name to their work.⁸ Despite all these firsts, the academy has largely ignored her.⁹ In addition to her plethora of firsts, Hannah also had a number of significant popular publications.

¹ Gary D. Schmidt, *A Passionate Usefulness: the Life and Literary Labors of Hannah Adams* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 9. Throughout my dissertation, I use Hannah's first name for two reasons. First, because so many Adams are mentioned, using her first name adds clarity and emphasizes that Hannah is my central focus. The second reason is to create a more personal and softer connection between the reader and Hannah, counteracting the stigmatization around her status as a spinster and female scholar, which was looked at with suspicion at the time.

² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 9; Sherry A. Schwartz, "The Origins of History's Mission in Americas Schools: A Case Study of Hannah Adams," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 29, no.2 (2001): 229; Toni Wall Jaudon, "The Compilers Art: Hannah Adams, the Dictionary of All Religions, and the Religious World," *American Literary History* 26, no.1(2014): 35, 28; Michael W. Vella, "Theology, Genre, and Gender: The Precarious Place of Hannah Adams," *Early American Literature* 28, no.1(1993): 21; Thomas Tweed, "An American Pioneer in the Study of Religion: Hannah Adams and Her Dictionary of All Religion (1755-1831)," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no.3 (1992): 439; Charlene M. Longo, "Hannah Adams: A Biographical Study," MA diss., (Southern Connecticut State University, 1977): 1.

³ Hannah Adams, *A Summary History of New-England* (Boston, 1799). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 3, 74; Michael J. Everton, "The Courtesies of Authorship: Hannah Adams and Authorial Ethics in the Early Republic," *Legacy* 20, no. 1-2 (1993): 1.

⁴ Tweed, "American Pioneer," 441.

⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 3; Everton, "Hannah Adams," 3; Tweed, "American Pioneer," 438.

⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 8.

⁷ Sherry A. Schwartz, "Hannah Adams: The Pioneer Intellect," (PhD diss. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1999), 2 (ProQuest 9950069).

⁸ Vella, "Theology, Genre, and Gender," 22; Swartz, "Origins," 229.

⁹ Josiah Quincy Jr., *Figures of the Past From the Leaves of Old Journals*. 4th ed. (Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1883), 333-334; William Smith Tilden, *History of the Town Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886* (Boston: G.H. Ellis,

Hannah's publications

A Dictionary of All Religions

Hannah's breakthrough work, *A Dictionary of Religions*, was first published as *An Alphabetical Compendium* in 1784.¹⁰ Hannah changed the title three times before the fourth edition (*Dictionary*) was published in 1817. Under *A View of Religions*, a second and third edition were published in 1791 and 1801. Methodologically unique, Hannah outlined the approach to her research upfront in her "Advertisement." There, she promised to be impartial, to allow religions to depict their tenets in their own words, and to remove defamatory language and depictions of each denomination¹¹

This "impartial, comprehensive survey of world religions," according to Tweed, combined two genres popular since the early 17th-century: the philosophical dictionary and the religious compendium.¹² The first edition (*Alphabetical Compendium*) was in two parts. The first part

1887), 284; see also Tweed, "American Pioneer," 438; Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect", 1. The wording used by Quincy and Tilden says that Hannah is "the pioneer of feminine culture in America." Tweed claims that despite her ground-breaking comparative religion methodology (created a century before the field emerged), the discipline's historians do not remember Hannah. Though Louis Henry Jordan in *Comparative Religion: Its Genesis and Growth* (1905, Atlanta: Scholars Press, reprint 1986) hailed Hannah as a pioneer, most other field historians, including Jan DeVries, Morris Jastrow Jr., and Eric J. Sharpe, did not. Jan DeVries, *Perspectives in History of Religion*, trans. Kees W. Bolle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Morris Jastrow Jr., *The Study of Religion* (Chicago: Chicago Scholar Press, 1981); Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975) in their historical surveys of the field failed to mention her in their histories. For more on this, see Tweed, "American Pioneer," 438.

¹⁰ Hannah Adams, *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathen, Mahometan, and Christian, Ancient and Modern: with an Appendix, Containing a Sketch of the Present State of the World, as to Population, Religion, Toleration, Missions, Etc; and the Articles in Which All Christian Denominations Agree* (Boston: James Eastburn and Company and Cummings and Hillyard, 1817). Hannah Adams, *An Alphabetical Compendium of the Various Sects which have appeared in the world from the beginning of the Christian era to the present day: With an appendix, containing a brief account of the different schemes of religion now embraced among mankind: The whole collected from the best authors, ancient and modern* (Cornhill: B. Edes & Sons, 1784). See also Tweed, "American Pioneer," 441.

¹¹ Hannah Adams. *A View of Religions, in Two Parts ...*, (Boston: J.W. Folsom, 1791); Hannah Adams, *A View of Religions, in Two Parts ...*, (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1801); Adams, *Alphabetical Compendium*, "Advertisement"; Adams, *View of Religions*, "Advertisement"; Adams, *Dictionary*, "Advertisement." There was a third edition published in London, which was its first British edition published in 1805 without Hannah's permission and with generous edits, titled *A View of Religions, in Three Parts* (London: W. Button and Son, 1805), Ed. Andrew Fuller and Thomas Williams.

¹² Tweed, "American Pioneer," 437-438.

focused on Christian denominations and included 267 sects. The second part was relegated to an appendix that provided a geographical survey of the religious “other.”¹³ However, by the final edition, all religions were organized impartially through the employment of alphabetical order.¹⁴

The first edition drew from over 150 sources, for which Hannah gave due credit. Her sources included travel accounts, missionary magazines, ecclesiastical and historical dictionaries, histories, sermons, and periodicals.¹⁵ Though Christianity took up the bulk of the work (Tweed claims 85% of the over 700 entries focused on Christian groups), the final edition encompassed 35 plus entries on the religious “other.” It uniquely included entries on Indigenous cosmologies from “South,” “Central,” and “North America.”¹⁶

A Summary History of New England

Hannah commenced the research for her second book project, *A Summary History of New England*, in 1794 with the encouragement and backing of the newly founded Massachusetts Historical Society.¹⁷ A chronological narrative history, *A Summary History* began with early explorers and carried through to the federal period.¹⁸ Written during her 40s, Hannah took six years to research and write the history. At the time, there was no complete existing history of New England in publication.¹⁹

¹³ Hannah Adams, *A Summary History of New-England, from the first settlement at Plymouth, to the acceptance of the federal Constitution*. (Dedham: H. Mann and J.H. Adams, 1799). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 33; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 10; Tweed, “American Pioneer,” 448.

¹⁴ Hannah Adams, *A Dictionary*. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 294; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 48; Tweed, “American Pioneer,” 455.

¹⁵ Adams, *Alphabetical Compendium*. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 38, 199; Tweed, “American Pioneer,” 448.

¹⁶ Adams, *Alphabetical Compendium*. See also Tweed, “American Pioneer,” 448.

¹⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 22-27. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 68, 71.

¹⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 81; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 15.

¹⁹ Hannah Adams and Hannah Farnham Sawyer Lee, *A Memoir of Miss Hannah Adams*, (Boston, Gray and Bowden, 1832), 22-27. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 75; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 15.

Hannah openly admitted *A Summary History* was not as well researched or written as she would have liked.²⁰ During her original archival investigation in Rhode Island, poor conditions of the records seriously damaged her eyes to the point of near blindness. Consequently, Hannah was forced to pause the project and take many undesirable shortcuts.²¹

Hannah openly noted her key sources as Jeremy Belknap's *History of New Hampshire*, George R. Minot's *History of the Insurrection*, Jedidiah Morse's *Geography*, David Ramsey's *History of the American Revolution*, James Sullivan's *Dictionary of Maine*, Jonathan Trumbell's *History of Connecticut*, and Samuel William's *History of Vermont*.²² Though she employed her narrative voice to introduce and conclude each chapter, Hannah quite brazenly borrowed large swaths of sections from other sources.²³ To her credit, she did painstakingly take the time to write to all living historians and gain permission for her excessive borrowing.²⁴

Not published until 1799, subscribers to *Summary History* included John and Abigail Adams, John Quincy Adams, Jeremy Belknap, James Winthrop, and James Freeman.²⁵ The publication did not achieve its intended impact. A financial disaster, because of the two-year recovery from the failure of her sight, her publication was significantly delayed. Hannah was forced into an inimical publication contract in which she was almost entirely responsible for all of her printing costs, leaving her in substantial debt.²⁶ She hoped to recoup the costs by editing and abridging the history, to a schoolbook, a project strongly encouraged by Yale University president, Ezra Stiles.²⁷ In her eleven-page autobiography she wrote for William Shaw, Hannah claimed her

²⁰ Adams, *Summary History*, 1; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 26-27.

²¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 23-24. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 15.

²² Adams, *Summary History*, "To the Reader;" Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 22-23, 26. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 15.

²³ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 82, 110; Longo, "Hannah Adams," 15.

²⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 29. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 75.

²⁵ Adams, *Summary History*, "A List of Subscribers;" "Subscriber's Names." See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 15.

²⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 29. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 19.

²⁷ Hannah Adams, *Memoir*, 30. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 19; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 74.

Summary History was originally conceived as a textbook. As it was encouraged by Stiles, it was likely envisioned for a colligate audience.²⁸

An Abridgment of the History of New England for the Use of Young People

An Abridgement of the History of New England, for the Use of Young Persons was written mainly for profit.²⁹ Published twice in New England (once in 1805 and again in 1807) and once in Britain (1806), this textbook was written very specifically for New England schools.³⁰ Much shorter than *Summary History*, Hannah's *Abridgement* frequently addresses her young audience directly, amplifying her own voice far more than in all her previous works where she often openly strived for objectivity.³¹

²⁸ Hannah Adams, "Shaw Account," in *Memorials of William Smith Shaw* by Joseph B. Felt (Boston: S.K. Whipple & Co, 1852), 190-203. This is an 11-page autobiographical narrative, with a 2-page addition, that Hannah wrote for William Shaw upon his request during her squabbles with Jedidiah Morse, which will be addressed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation. The shorter narrative is found in Shaw's biography written by his brother-in-law Joseph Felt. Schmidt claims Hannah used this shorter version as the framework for her longer *Memoir*, which was published much later in 1832. Felt claims this shorter autobiographical account was sent in a letter to Shaw on August 28, 1803, and therefore was written almost 30 years before Hannah penned the *Memoir*, which is analyzed in depth in this dissertation, and therefore may be a more accurate, though perhaps a more passionate account. Hannah was, therefore, a much younger 48 and amid several financial, religious, and political crises. When she penned her final longer *Memoir*, she was well into her 70s.

²⁹ Hannah Adams, *An Abridgement of the History of New England, for the Use of Young Persons* (Boston: Newell, 1805); Hannah Adams, *An Abridgement of the History of New England, for the Use of Young Persons* (Charlestown, MA: Belcher and Armstrong, 1807); Hannah Adams, *An Abridgement of the History of New England, for the Use of Young Persons* (London: J. Burdett, 1806); Swartz, "Origins," 218.

³⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 30; Adams, *Abridgement History*, "Title;" "Preface." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 68; Swartz, *Origins*, 218. Was the book written for the Boston public schoolroom or for the young men at Yale and Harvard? In her title and preface, Hannah claims her intended audience was "young persons." According to the *OED*, from 1438, and therefore during the era when Hannah wrote the text, a "young person" was defined as "a person who is no longer considered a child, but has not yet reached the age of majority" https://www.oed.com/dictionary/young-person_n?tab=meaning_and_use#48763486 (accessed October 21, 2024). Who, then, was considered a child? The *OED* says the word "child" is usually connected to young people who have yet to go through puberty, but it could also be connected to students, especially those attending a charity school https://www.oed.com/dictionary/child_n?tab=meaning_and_use#9480466. (accessed October 21, 2024). As will be illustrated in Chapters 5 and 7, young men attended Harvard as early as 13, so they would qualify as young persons. But, that Shaw eventually garnered the contract for exclusive use of Hannah's schoolbook at Boston public and private schools, and that the project was encouraged by a college president, it is hard to completely untangle her whether her original intended audience was a public school or a college student. This confusion is partly exaggerated by the change in the public school system after the revolution.

³¹ Adams, *Abridgement History*, 16, 17, 27, 47-48; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 166. In Hannah's other early works (primarily *Alphabetical Compendium* and *Summary History*) she acted more as a compiler and even described herself as such, allowing the primary sources she collected to speak for themselves.

Frequent themes of *Abridgement* include divine providence and moral virtue.³² The *motif* which drives her central narrative, however, is religious tolerance. Still a conglomeration of previous historians' works, Hannah was far more liberal with the editing of her textbook. Gary D. Schmidt says she removed key historical accounts to drive and reinforce her central theme of religious tolerance, which she promoted as a civic virtue and posited as an impetus for the entirety of the American historical record.³³

The *Abridgement* includes Hannah's exhorting narrative voice while incorporating moral lessons, questions, and quotations to supplement the chapters.³⁴ Hannah places the American Revolution at the pinnacle of her textbook, and the subsequent centre of American history, devoting five chapters and over forty pages to this subject in a textbook that is only 184 pages in length.³⁵ The textbook succeeded, as evidenced by the second edition published in 1807. It was favoured by Boston Federalists, was edited by Hannah's friend Joseph S. Buckminster, and promoted by her friend William S. Shaw. It was used exclusively by Boston schools, both public and private.³⁶

The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion Exhibited

A single volume published in two parts in 1804, *The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion Exhibited*, was another book written for an audience of young readers.³⁷ Evangelical in nature, Part I is a chronological collection of biographies, perhaps better described as Christian testimonies. Applying late 18th-century rationalism to Christianity, Hannah sought empirical

³² Adams, *Abridgement History*, 15, 32. See also Swartz, "Origins," 220.

³³ Adams, *Abridgement History*, 10, 12, 13-15, 31, 36, 37-41, 45, 47-48, 57, 69-71, 77, 79, 93, 104, 127. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 166.

³⁴ Adams, *Abridgement History*, 180-188. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 168; Swartz, "Origins," 218.

³⁵ Adams, *Abridgement History*, 135-179. See also Swartz, "Origins," 223.

³⁶ Adams, *Abridgement History*, iii-iv. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 173.

³⁷ Hannah Adams, *The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion Exhibited* (Boston: John West, 1804). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 125.

evidence to support the validity of her faith.³⁸ Hannah used the sketches of some 56 distinguished Christian laymen as that empirical evidence. Amid the rising tides of secularism, and perhaps more specifically a concern around the perceived rampant spread of Deism, she compiled and adapted the biographies to convince herself and her audience that the character and excellent accomplishments of these prominent men, combined with their firm faith in Christianity, were proof of Christianity's legitimacy.³⁹

The biographical sketches included an all-male cast of scientists, physicians, statesmen, writers, poets, and philanthropists, who were selected because of their renown to her perceived audience.⁴⁰ Most were English. There were, however, a few American, as well as some Swiss, German, and French gentlemen.⁴¹ This work looked to general encyclopedias, biographies, and public eulogies as sources. Hannah's book included an all-star cast with names familiar today: Francis Bacon, Edmund Burke, Blaise Pascal, John Locke, John Milton, Isaac Newton, Sir Philip Sidney, and William Wilberforce to name just a few.⁴²

Part II consists of a collection of quotations organized under several religious sub-headings.⁴³ These quotations came mainly from the men featured in the first section's biographical sketches.⁴⁴ Hannah, however, took the liberty also to incorporate people outside that auspicious

³⁸ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, "Preface to Part I;" 13-212. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 126, 131.

³⁹ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, "Preface to Part I;" "Contents to Part I." Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 125-126, 128, 131.

⁴⁰ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, "Preface to Part I;" Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 127; Longo, "Hannah Adams," 24.

⁴¹ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, "Contents to Part I." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 127-128.

⁴² Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, "Contents to Part I;" 17-18, 19-21, 28-31, 46-50, 69-73, 64-68, 189-191, 209. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 127-128.

⁴³ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, 217-222. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 132; Longo, "Hannah Adams," 26.

⁴⁴ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, 217-222. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 132.

list. These “outsiders” included three women: Hannah Moore, Jane West, and the Comtesse de Genlis.⁴⁵

Truth and Excellence was, according to Schmidt, not written for profit, but for Hannah’s own spiritual interest, making it one of her most personal works.⁴⁶ It was a good thing that financial gain was not her aim. Hannah had difficulty procuring a publisher because the market was saturated with similar publications. Thus, the publication was not a huge financial success.⁴⁷

Though *Truth and Excellence* was no success in pecuniary terms, it was a marked success for Hannah in the scope of its reach. More than doubling the sales of *Summary History*, according to Schmidt, *Truth and Excellence* experienced a more diverse audience than any of Hannah’s works up to this point, finding itself in geographical regions where Hannah’s previous works had not yet traversed.⁴⁸ Subscribers included not only the usual John, Abigail, and John Quincy Adams, but also, new subscribers like Oliver and Samuel Wheelock, and Reverend Joseph Emmerson, along with many scholars and pastors from Congregationalist, Unitarian, and Baptist churches across New England, and even stretching into New York, demonstrating her influence over the pulpit, though as a Congregationalist, and even later a proto-Unitarian, due to her gender, she arguably could never be behind one.⁴⁹

The History of the Jews

Five years in the making, Hannah’s *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Nineteenth Century* is a two-volume compilation that covers Jewish world history from the

⁴⁵ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, 303-304, 305-307, 308-311. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 132; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 26.

⁴⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 125; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 28.

⁴⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 126; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 23.

⁴⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 135; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 28.

⁴⁹ Adams, *Truth and Excellence*, 378-384. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 137.

return of their 70-year captivity in Babylon in 538 BCE to the 19th century.⁵⁰ Not only historical, but also geographical in sequence, Hannah's chronological survey includes a Jewish history in several countries, including England, Germany, Poland, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, India, China, and America.⁵¹ Hannah's central *motifs* were suffering and wandering. She leverages these twin themes to elicit what she claims is her central purpose: to provoke empathy and stir up a spirit of evangelism amongst Christians toward Jews.⁵²

Schmidt argues that Hannah's motive was couched. He claims that like *Truth and Excellence*, Hannah's hidden purpose was to cull together empirical evidence to support the validity of her own, and presumably her reader's, faith. Whereas in *Truth and Excellence*, Hannah employs examples of the extraordinary life and achievements of a myriad of Christian laymen to authenticate her faith, in the *History of the Jews*, she utilizes what she read as fulfilled prophecy as her empirical evidence.⁵³ This purportedly fulfilled prophecy drew from both New and Old Testament scriptures which predicted the temple's destruction, the taking of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish peoples.⁵⁴

Though *History of the Jews* was not well received in America, it fared well in Europe. In 1819, *History of the Jews* became Hannah's first and only book to be translated into another language (German).⁵⁵ It was also a significant source for Bavarian scholar David Ottensosser's

⁵⁰ Hannah Adams, *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Present Time* (Boston: J. Elliot Jr., 1812); Hannah Adams, *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Present Time* (London: A. Macintosh., 1818); Hannah Adams, *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Present Time* (London: A. Macintosh, 1840), iii-viii; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 32-33. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 39; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 237.

⁵¹ Adams, *History of the Jews*, 328-335, 336-346, 347-359, 360-369, 370-382, 383-396, 397-412, 413-431, 432-438, 455-467. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 42-44.

⁵² Adams, *History of the Jews*, vi; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 32-33. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 238-239, 241, 244.

⁵³ Adams, *History of the Jews*, iii-viii; "Advertisement." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 245.

⁵⁴ Adams, *History of the Jews*, iii-viii; "Advertisement." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 246.

⁵⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 252.

Yiddish history *Di Geshikhte der Yehudim* (1821), and a source for David Ramsey's *Universal History Americanized* (1819).⁵⁶

Letters on the Gospels

In 1824, published when Hannah was 69 years old, the *Letters on the Gospels* was again written with a younger audience in mind. The composition was epistolary and was addressed directly to her nieces. It was nevertheless also intended for a wider audience. Like the *Abridgement of the History of New England*, the work is full of direct addresses to her young readers. Again, Hannah's narrative instructional voice is evident throughout.⁵⁷

Organized thematically, the text consists of 30 letters, each three to five pages, followed by a set of questions and answers at the end of the book, corresponding to each chapter.⁵⁸ Topics include a geographical survey of New Testament cities, the state of the “pagan” world, biographical sketches of Herod and Pilate, Jewish funeral rites, and customary salutations.⁵⁹

Originally intended to be a longer historical commentary on the New Testament, the work was cut short due to health issues. Hannah employed critical historical methodology to New Testament theology.⁶⁰ She uses travel accounts, archeological texts, books on oriental customs, and natural histories. In the text, Hannah illustrates how historical and cultural context imbues New Testament scriptures with fresh spiritual insights for her young readers.⁶¹ Schmidt claims that because the text was well reviewed and because in 1826 a second edition was published, *Letters of the Gospels* experienced a certain measure of success.⁶²

⁵⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 252-253.

⁵⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 328.

⁵⁸ Adams, *Letters on the Gospels*, 151-160. See also Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 49; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 324.

⁵⁹ Adams, *Letters on the Gospels*, 121-126, 127-131, 147-150. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 326-327; Longo, “Hannah Adams,” 51.

⁶⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 320-321.

⁶¹ Adams, *History of the Jews*, iv. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 321-322.

⁶² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 330.

Despite all her firsts and significant publications, Hannah has been overlooked. The question is why? In her dissertation, *Hannah Adams: A Pioneer Intellect*, Sherry Schwartz posits (but never really investigates) several reasons for this purported negligence. First and foremost, Schwartz, at least in part, blames the neglect of Hannah on the go-to and well-established colonial-misogynistic patriarchal argument: history was written by men, for men, and about men.⁶³ However, when feminist revisionists endeavored to (re)write women in the American historical narrative, Hannah *continued to be* overlooked. In this subsequent passing over of Miss Hannah Adams, perhaps even more problematic, and at the very least paradoxical, is the fact that at least two of Hannah's contemporaries (Josiah Quincy Jr. and William Smith Tilden), recognized her as the mother of feminine culture in America.⁶⁴ If this was the case, how could women's historians and foundational feminist scholars who covered her era ignore or, more sinisterly, erase Hannah from the historical record?

Though Tweed claims that not just religious historians but *all* historians, except women's historians, ignore Hannah, Schwartz does not afford historians of women that much credit.⁶⁵ Agreeing with Tweed in claiming Hannah's "legacy has suffered from historical amnesia," Schwartz asserts that women's historians are also complicit in forgetting Hannah. She points out how historians like Mary Beth Norton (*Liberty's Daughters*) and Nancy Woloch (*Women and the American Experience*) have left Hannah out of their women's histories that covered the periods that Hannah lived through.⁶⁶ According to Schwartz, one exception to said negligence is

⁶³ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 10-11; Thomas Tweed, *Retelling US Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3.

⁶⁴ Quincy, *Figures of the Past*, 333; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284. See also Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 1, 16, and Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 433.

⁶⁵ Tweed, "American Pioneer," 438; Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 1.

⁶⁶ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 17.

Hannah's brief appearance in Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic*.⁶⁷ However, according to Schwartz, Kerber downplays Hannah's accolades and perhaps even demonizes her by remembering her only as an "eccentric spinster."⁶⁸

Schwartz suggests two reasons for Hannah's neglect. First, she posits that women's history revisionists, perhaps hoping to cover lost ground more quickly, have tended to look at historical women more broadly, through female collectives rather than as individuals.⁶⁹ These foundational revisionists did not just look at historical women through female (mainly familial) networks but also went as far as to argue that said female networks were integral to a woman's survival in early modern America.⁷⁰ Though Hannah was early on nested in a kin-centred female network, she later pivoted to plant herself primarily within an elite and academic non-custodial matrix of men.

Schwartz further posits that Hannah has been ignored, even by feminist scholars, because of her life choice to remain single and never marry, which was at the time severely stigmatized.⁷¹ Although she does not say so directly, one can infer from Schwartz's dissertation that Schwartz assumed that the stigmatization of spinsterhood, which shrouded Hannah as a single woman, worked to discredit, at times demonize, and ultimately devalue both her and her publications to the point of near erasure. This dissertation explores, tests, and contextualizes the nexus of

⁶⁷ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 17.

⁶⁸ Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic* (New York: Norton, 1980), 227.

⁶⁹ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 10.

⁷⁰ Amy M. Froide, *Never Married Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51, 65; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 168, 189; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, no. 1, (1975): 8-10, 13-14, 17-18; Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband: Single Women in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 127.

⁷¹ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 11. On the stigmatization of spinsterhood, Schwartz only says "generally, a *spinster* neither was held in high esteem, nor had many rights" and suggests that Hannah's "decision to remain an unmarried woman who supported herself by writing, for instance, must have been considered by many of her male and female contemporaries to be "peculiar,"" mainly in the context of the low percentage of unmarried women in America in the 1830s (11).

Schwartz's two propositions, and in doing so, (re)writes Hannah into the grand American historical narrative as a never-married woman who, through the development of an extensive and almost exclusively male network, became a crucial writer, academic, and historian in the early American Republic.

This dissertation has three main goals. The first is to provide a relational, social, and historical biography of Miss Hannah Adams, one which is based on her relationships rather than her books. The other two goals will explore and build upon Schwartz's dual contentions for Hannah's erasure: female networks and spinsterhood. By employing a case study of Miss Hannah Adams, this dissertation will create a case study of the social history of never-married women (or spinsterhood) in early America by exploring the relationships Hannah earmarked as vital to her development both as a never-married woman and as a writer in her *Memoir*.

A third goal is to examine how Hannah Adams, as an 18th-century never-married American woman residing in New England, metamorphosed from a mainly female network in her youth to actively cultivating a system of powerful elite-male associations throughout her adulthood. This action imbued her with agency, propelling her to become a vanguard of feminine culture in America by confronting stereotypical gender norms rooted in bifurcated Puritan values. Breaking barriers, through leveraging these atypical male networks, Hannah retained rare and extraordinary influence and impact in the overlapping spheres of education and religion, ultimately embodying how divergent support structures informed her contributions and inveigled theological scholarship, which resulted in her influencing the American political arena, especially in religious plurality.

Setting the Historical and Geographical Scope

Despite a lengthy struggle with an undefined illness, Hannah survived much of her family and lived to the ripe old age of 76. Because Hannah lived a long and accomplished life from 1755 to 1831, she witnessed at least three major wars fought on American soil and close to her New England home: the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years' War), the American Revolution, and the War of 1812. Though this is not a historical study of these wars, the wars do offer approximate bookends to frame the study and help set up some biographical and historical context to Hannah's relational experiences. Therefore, this dissertation will cover the breadth of this period (1755-1832).

To establish the cultural and religious context, it will sometimes be necessary to return to the Puritan arrival and colonization of New England in the 17th century (called the Great Migration). On a few occasions, it will also reach even further back to the Protestant Reformation in 16th-century Europe. However, the period covered in this dissertation will not extend past Hannah's death and will, therefore, not wander past the early 19th century. This dissertation will thus broadly cover the early modern era.

Because she spent her life in Massachusetts (leaving only once to perform research in Rhode Island), the scope of this dissertation will geographically focus on colonial and early antebellum New England. For comparative reasons, specific chapters will sometimes explore religious and cultural occurrences in other colonies (later states), most often Virginia and Pennsylvania. Because much print material flooded the colonies, often from Britain, some research material from England will be included within this project's scope.

It is worth noting here that due to its hyper-focus on the case study of Hannah Adams, the historical narrative offered within the framework of this dissertation is almost exclusively northern, white, and almost always upper-class. It is important to acknowledge that women's

experiences varied greatly by class, race, and status. The never-married women I am discussing in this dissertation are from an elite class who managed to keep their status despite experiences of economic crises primarily due to the American Revolution. I want to acknowledge here, also like John Gilbert McCurdy in his book on bachelorhood, *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation in the United States*, that “thousands of African Americans were kept single by the cruelties of slavery and white indentured servants were legally prohibited from marriage by their contracts.”⁷² Susan Mosher Stuard points out that “women slaves negotiated no decision about remaining single—custom and law dictated a single state—nor were they able to exert control over their sexual activity. As a result, they bore offspring who suffered under the same “‘error of condition’ (church law’s grimly descriptive phrase for a slave’s legal state) as did their mothers.”⁷³ As such, work on the history of singleness in these communities is seriously warranted. Nevertheless, because the focus of my research is very specifically on one woman, who is white, colonial, and a member of the New England upper-class elite (despite her family suffering a substantial financial loss during the American Revolution), never-married women in this dissertation, unfortunately, are limited in scope, and are most often presumed to be, as depicted by McCurdy “free and white,” as well as upper-class.⁷⁴

Definitions & Terminology

Defining Spinster and Old Maid

⁷² John Gilbert McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation in the United States*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 11.

⁷³ Susan Mosher Stuard, “Single by Law and Custom,” in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, eds. Judith M. Bennet and Amy M Froide (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 106. In the same collection, Maryanne Kowaleski provides an excellent chapter on the historical demography of never-married women who were servants in medieval and early modern Europe “Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective.”

⁷⁴ McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors*, 11.

Much stigma has been attached to the derogatory terms of “spinster” and “old maid.” According to Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller in her book *Liberty, A Better Husband*, “the view of spinsterhood was a fate worse than death.”⁷⁵ Similarly, Susan S. Lanser, in “Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid,” claims that in early modern England, those considered “spinsters” were not just framed as unwanted and desperate, but also as dangerous, and especially to men. The print culture cast “spinsters” as “amazon cannibals,” “forbearers of disease and death,” “Lumps of diseases,” and even “sources of acrimonious liquids” who “spewed poisonous venom.”⁷⁶ Thus, “spinsters” were a severely stigmatized group in early America.

The word spinster did not always carry negative connotations. It did not always refer to a single, never-married woman. In mid-14th-century England, spinster referred only to a young woman's occupation: spinning. It was in the 17th century that the word spinster came to denote an unmarried female. However, the spinster could still connote a female waiting to be married. At that time, it had no natural derogatory sense. However, in the 18th century, a negative tone came to mark the word spinster as it became analogous with a woman beyond the age of marriage, often due to some physical, social, or economic defect. The word also became congruent with the derogatory term “old maid” during Hannah’s lifetime.⁷⁷ How did the pejorative terms and

⁷⁵ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 10.

⁷⁶ Susan S. Lanser, “Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid” in *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800*, eds. Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 299-302.

⁷⁷ Micaela Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins and Boston Marriages: Spinsterhood in History and Culture,” *Feminist Issues* 5, no.2 (1985): 48. Di Leonardo is a professor at Northwestern University in the department of Gender and Sexuality Studies as well as the department of Anthropology. Though it is notable that out of 20 significant works, including those exploring Protestant monasteries, I read and analyzed in detail in connection with the theme of never-married women from 1600 to 1785, the first time I saw the term “old maid” used was not until 1673 with Richard Allestree in *A Ladies Calling* (confirmed by *OED* one of the earliest times used). After that, it was not used until 1688 in the poem “A Virgin's Life” by Jane Parker. I did not see “spinster” employed until Hayley's massive three-volume work (*A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*) in 1785. Though it was apparently used in Frances Brooke’s periodical *Old Maid*, it did not appear in her published collection under the same name

caricatures of spinster and old maid come about? Why were they so negative and even xenophobic?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth *OED*) claims that the term “old maid” emerged first in the literature in 1530 when it defined as “a single woman regarded as being too old for marriage.” The term was, according to the *OED*, “frequently derogatory.”⁷⁸ However, the term “spinster” was not in common usage until much later. First used as a legal term in the early 17th century, “spinster” was defined by Edward Phillips in his *The New World of English Words* in 1658 as: “a law term, being appropriate to unmarried women in all deeds, bonds, and evidences.”⁷⁹ According to the *OED*, “spinster” was not popularized until the early 18th century, when it was defined as “A woman who has never married and is considered unlikely ever to do so, especially one who has remained single beyond the typical age for marriage, often stereotypically characterized as prim and fussy or as lonely, childless, and resentful.” Also, the term was “usually derogatory.”⁸⁰

Building upon the *OED* definition of spinster, Di Leonardo puts forth a western definition of “folk spinsterhood” that includes six characteristics. First, there must be a distinction between

(the only time spinning was mentioned was connected to a married woman, a minister's wife who was trying to help support their impoverished family).

⁷⁸ “Old Maid,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*,

<https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=old+maid> (accessed May 29, 2024). According to *OED*, the term “Oulde mayde,” was first used in John Palsgrave’s *Lesclarcissement de la Langue Francoyse* (1530), 250.

⁷⁹ Edward Phillips, “Spinster,” *The new world of English words, or, A general dictionary containing the interpretations of such hard words as are derived from other languages ... together with all those terms that relate to the arts and sciences ... : to which are added the significations of proper names, mythology, and poetical fictions, historical relations, geographical descriptions of most countries and cities of the world ... / collected and published by E.P.* (London, 1658). In the digital collection Early English Books Online.

<https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A54746.0001.001>. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 16, 2024).

⁸⁰ “Spinster,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*,

https://www.oed.com/dictionary/spinster_n?tab=meaning_and_use#21453009 (accessed May 29, 2024). According to the *OED*, the term “spinster” was first used in the way we understand it, as a derogatory slur towards a never-married woman, in 1714 by Thomas Tickell in the *Spectator* (No. 614). Tickell used the term as such: “It is common...for a stale Virgin to set up Shop in a Place where she is not known; where the large Thumb-Ring, supposed to be given her by her Husband, quickly recommends her to some wealthy Neighbour, who takes a Liking to the jolly Widow, that would have over-looked the venerable Spinster.”

singles and spinsters; spinsters must never have married. Single people could be waiting to be married. They could also be widows and widowers. Spinsters, however, could be neither widows nor women waiting to be wed.⁸¹

Next, the “spinster,” according to Di Leonardo, had to be celibate.⁸² Single women who worked in sex industries, like prostitutes and courtesans, were therefore excluded from Di Leonardo’s folk definition of spinsterhood.⁸³ The remaining four folk characteristics of a spinster are as follows: the “spinster” could not be a biological mother; she had to be heterosexual; she lacked kinship by marriage; and, she could not reside in a communal religious context (though she was thought to be more religiously inclined). The folk definition of “spinster” would, therefore, also bar the inclusion of nuns.

Di Leonardo is not off base here in her conflation of singleness and celibacy. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in 1659, the word celibate was defined: “to restrain from marriage, to compel to celibacy.”⁸⁴ This definition that connected singleness and celibacy did not see much change over the lengthy period Hannah lived. As late as 1827, the *OED* still posits that the word celibate, as both an adjective and a noun, meant to be “Unmarried, single; bound not to marry.”⁸⁵ Thus, for the sake of continuity and focus, this dissertation will employ di Leonardo’s folk definition of spinsterhood, as well as the definition the *OED* claims were relevant throughout Hannah’s life (not to mention the life of her also never-married aunt Mary), when

⁸¹ Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 48.

⁸² Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 48.

⁸³ Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 48.

⁸⁴ Celibate,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=celibate> (accessed October 18, 2024). See also Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 47.

⁸⁵ “Celibate,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=celibate> (accessed October 18, 2024).

examining never-married women who would have been termed spinsters and old maids, that assumed that the spinster status was directly connected to sexual abstinence.⁸⁶

Though I by no means believe, nor am I implying that because a single person, male or female, in New England was not married, they were not sexually active in any or all cases. However, because the working definitions at the time equated celibacy and singleness, and thus, spinsterhood with celibacy in the early modern period discussed in this dissertation, as demonstrated both by the *OED* definitions as well as folk definition put forth by Di Leonard, in the main, but particularly in Chapter 2 which discusses the history of the stigma connected to spinsterhood, this dissertation will discuss celibacy, spinsterhood, and singleness as strongly correlated, if not analogous. Due to the derogatory connotations of the terms “spinster” and its common co-term “old maid” within the framework of this research, rather than employ the terms “spinster” or “old maid,” like Amy Froide in her monograph *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, this dissertation will use the term “never-married” when discussing women who remained single throughout their life-cycles.⁸⁷

At what age was an unwed woman considered a spinster or old maid? In his 1522 sermon “The Estate of Marriage,” Protestant reformer Martin Luther advocated for young ladies to marry between 15 and 18, a time he believed they would be most healthy. This recommendation reflected those societal expectations that placed significant pressure on women to marry at a young age.⁸⁸ Consequently, during Luther's era, a woman of 20 could have been considered an

⁸⁶ Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 48.

⁸⁷ Froide, *Never Married*, 9.

⁸⁸ Martin Luther (1522), in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vol. 45 (Philadelphia, Muhlenberg Press, 1962), ed. Walther I. Brandt, 18-19, Internet archive, <https://archive.org/details/luthersworkschri0045helm/page/20/mode/2up> (accessed June 9, 2024); 48.

old maid had the "old maid" existed (as I have illustrated, the term had not yet appeared in popular literature).

When the pamphlet *The Virgins Complaint* was published in London in 1642, the term's employment was in full swing. This pamphlet suggested that at the age of 30, a "Miss" would be required to alter her title to "Matron" – implying that maids, virgins, and damsels were under 30, and therefore "old maids" were over 30.⁸⁹ However, in *Now Or Never: Or, A New Parliament of Women* (London, 1656), an "ancient maid" petitioned for single young men to be forced to marry by age 24 or pay a tax of three pounds yearly.⁹⁰ Thus, assuming that men of 24 would likely marry younger women, the age to avoid still being unmarried here seems to be 25. Similarly, "The Petition of the ladies of London" (London, 1693), a group of unmarried women requested that men marry before 21 or be fined. Therefore, it could be argued here that, at least in this pamphlet, the assumed age of an "old maid" was over 20.⁹¹

Like "The Petition," in the poem "A Virgin Life" (1688), 25 was the age dreaded by poetess Jane Barker: "Fearless of Twenty five and all its train/Of slights or scorns, or being call'd Old Maid."⁹² The anonymous writer of *The Love Lottery: or, A Woman the Prize* (London 1709) agrees with Barker-- only female virgins under 25 were permitted to participate in a lottery to provide dowries to women of good character who had no or little fortune. Thus, unmarried women 25 and older were likely deemed "old maids."⁹³ On the other hand, in *A Practical Essay Upon Old Maids* (London 1768) the age to become an "old maid" jumped dramatically when

⁸⁹ *The Virgins Complaint for the losse of their Sweet-Hearts, by these present Wars, And their owne long solitude, and keeping their VIRGINITIES against their wills: Presented in the names and behalves of all the Damsels both of Country and City, January 29, by sundry Virgins of the City of London.* Whereunto us added a mournfull Dittie, written by some of the wittiest wenches among them. (London, Printed for Henry Wilson, 1642), Internet archive. https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1641-1700_the-virgins-complaint_1642; 3.

⁹⁰ *Now Or Never: Or, A New Parliament of Women* (London, 1656), 6.

⁹¹ "The Petition of the Ladies of London" (London, 1693), 3.

⁹² Jane Barker, "A Virgin Life," 1.6-1.7.

⁹³ *The Love Lottery: or, A Woman the Prize* (London, 1709), 4, 6.

another anonymous writer claimed that 45 was the “dreaded period” that was “fatal to females” because it was when they transition in “appellation from miss to mistress.”⁹⁴

William Hayley, writing in 1785, seemed to spend the most effort deliberating over the specific age a *maid* would become an *old maid*. Hayley claimed that 20-year-old women considered their friends over 30 old maids, while those who were 45 believed the age of an old maid to be 50. This disparity, or shifting benchmark that depended on the age of the women making the judgement, led Hayley to conclude that it would be impossible to land on an accurate age by consulting women. Even his consultation with what he considered 'male experts' proved futile. In the end, he settled on 40. Frances Brooke's periodical turned compilation *Old Maid*, however, agreed with the assessment of the 20-year-old-women in Hayley's work and earmarked 30 as the age one would be considered an old maid.⁹⁵ Drawing from the mean of this literary consensus, this dissertation will consider unmarried women who have not married by the age of 30 as “never-married women” or “old maids.”⁹⁶

Theological terminology and boundaries

Hannah and her parents grew up in Puritan-Congregationalist New England. Thus, it is imperative to clarify what I mean by Puritan and how I define Congregationalist within the context of this dissertation. By Puritan I mean a group of religious people (mainly from England) who were Christian, Protestant, and Calvinist, who after the Protestant Reformation eventually separated from the Church of England because they did not believe the reforms under Elizabeth I went far enough to remove what they perceived as Catholic superstition and pomp from its

⁹⁴ *A Practical Essay Upon Old Maids* (London, 1768), 3, 5. It is unclear if this was a widespread conception or just that of the author.

⁹⁵ Frances Brooke, *The Old Maid* (London, 1755), 104.

⁹⁶ William Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids, volume I*, (London, 1785), 2-4.

practices.⁹⁷ When Queen Elizabeth I (the head of the Church of England/Anglican church) issued 39 articles of change to break from the Catholic tradition and its practices not found plainly in the Bible, these Puritans demanded 91 further reforms. The main two “further reformatations” were voluntary membership and church discipline.⁹⁸

This new Puritan church model was to rest primarily on a covenant made between its voluntary members. These covenantal voluntary members would be responsible for electing and ordaining their own officers which included only a pastor, a teacher, elders, and deacons (not bishops or popes, etc.).⁹⁹ These individual churches, which were comprised of voluntary members, were also solely responsible for approving and expelling their members, establishing the order of their services, and conducting their own administrative duties.¹⁰⁰ Voluntary members could obtain membership only through having “a saving faith experience.” This saving faith experience was essentially Calvinist.

When I speak of Calvinism, I mean the Protestant denomination founded in the 16th century by Swiss theologian John Calvin, which “held sway over much of New England in the 18th century.”¹⁰¹ Calvinist theology delineates that all men are born sinful, and because of this sinful nature, they require salvation (from total depravity). Further, Calvinists maintain that one could only be saved through receiving a free gift of faith from God alone and not by human knowledge or effort (unconditional election). Calvinists further believe that God, being selective, gives this gift to only an elect few, and that he chooses these “elect few” before they do anything

⁹⁷ Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints the History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), 5; John Demos, *Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press: 2000), 3.

⁹⁸ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 5; Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 3.

⁹⁹ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 11, 64.

¹⁰⁰ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 11, 64; Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 8-9.

¹⁰¹ Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 6.

right or wrong (predestination/limited atonement).¹⁰² Calvinists also believe that once given the gift by God, the gift was so good that it could and would not be rejected (irresistible grace). Similarly, once given, the free irresistible gift could not be taken away (perseverance of the saints). Edmund Morgan puts it more perfectly in *The Puritan Family*: “Fallen man, incapable of perfecting obedience, was doomed to eternal damnation until God, out of mercy, offered him a ‘covenant of grace.’ In this covenant, God promised salvation not for obedience, since that was now impossible, but for faith.” Moreover, “God himself performed both parts of his new covenant.”¹⁰³

According to the Puritan worldview, the person who received this free gift would know they had received it by having a series of religious experiences. Once having this series of religious experiences, the free gift would be witnessed by others in the form of outer signs, such as moral behavior and faithful church attendance.¹⁰⁴ Once a person had received this free gift of grace through faith from God alone, they could obtain church membership by making an oral public profession of faith and sharing the narrative of their salvation experience, first to the elected church elders and later before the entire congregation.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 34, 45.

¹⁰³ Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1966), 3.

¹⁰⁴ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 34, 45, 68-69. What was this series of religious experiences? Because the Puritan church believed salvation came by grace through faith which was a free gift from God, only to a few elect, one needed to prove their election via personal testimony to a series of signs which proved one had experienced “saving faith,” which eventually, to some degree became codified (Morgan claims these were eventually broken down “into a succession of recognizable stages” that were delivered through sermons and tracts). These signs consisted of some personal traumatic event or crises, followed by a sudden conviction that came from God, (called “legal fear”) which led one to “perceive their hapless and hopeless position” and dire need of salvation. This moment of fear mingled with crises and desperation was followed by a benevolent gift of faith from God and a period of wrestling with sin and unbelief. Though this wrestling stage never ended, the next sign was that the elect was given another gift—called the “assurance,” essentially the assurance of mercy. After the Puritan elect had experienced the “assurance,” the next sign was a season of intense grieving over the inescapable sinful nature. This grieving led to the final sign, Sanctification- a grace or supernatural empowerment to obey God’s commandments (Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 68-69).

¹⁰⁵ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 62.

There are two types of Puritan churches: Presbyterian and Congregational. The Presbyterians believed that, in the words of Morgan, “the ministers of the churches should be organized into presbyteries, consociations, and synods in order to enforce orthodoxy among themselves.”¹⁰⁶ The Congregationalists, on the other hand, were churches where every individual church remained independent of all outside control, including hiring and paying its leaders and appointing and expelling its members.¹⁰⁷

Some Puritan people remained loyal to the Church of England and wanted to see reformation from within. Others separated and started their own churches. Some Puritans from both these parties left England and came to New England to create a new society, hoping to set an example for the Church of England and inspire them to reform further from within. These New England colonizers were primarily of the Congregational type, and they were the heritage from which Hannah Adams sprung. When I speak of Puritan-Congregationalists, I mean those who received this free gift of grace and gathered together under a covenant of voluntary membership and who agreed to submit to church discipline by said church. Because they believed that their covenant extended (at least in part) to their entire households, I am also speaking of those who resided within the context of their broader households.¹⁰⁸

The label "Puritan" was initially defined for these individuals upon their arrival in America. As time progressed in New England, the designation for this community evolved into "Congregationalists," specifically delineating the nature of Puritanism they embraced. Therefore, when referring to these communities and their household members, the term "Congregationalists" is employed interchangeably with "Puritans," reflecting the fusion of these

¹⁰⁶ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 7-8.

descriptors. In my dissertation, I strategically utilize the term "Puritan" predominantly in sections recounting the early colonial history of New England. However, as the narrative approaches the American Revolution, a deliberate shift occurs, with an increasing emphasis on the term "Congregationalist."

When I am discussing the Church of England, I also mean the Anglican church (later the Episcopalian in America), which is the Protestant church founded by Henry VIII during the Protestant Reformation and carried forth by his son Edward VI in 1534, in which many Roman ceremonies were eliminated.¹⁰⁹ After a time under the leadership of Mary (1553-1558), who submitted religious England back to the theological leadership of Rome, the Church of England was reestablished by Henry's protestant daughter, Elizabeth I, who carried forth another 39 articles of reformation from its Catholic practices.¹¹⁰ The Church of England has the monarch at its head; unlike the Puritan church, the monarch appoints and pays its church offices, including bishops and ministers. It is the established national church of England, and unlike the Puritan church, its members are not voluntary. However, all its citizens were (at least at the time Hannah and her parents were alive) "automatically transformed by government decree" at birth (or citizenship) into membership.¹¹¹ After the American Revolution, the Church of England or Anglican Church reestablished or rebranded itself under the name Episcopalian in America.

Method & Theory

In his 2006 monograph *Crossings and Dwellings*, while looking for a method to apply to his research concerning Cuban Catholics in Miami in the 1990s, chair of American Studies at Notre Dame, Thomas A. Tweed, posits that religions are not stagnant but fluid movements, or in

¹⁰⁹ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 5.

¹¹⁰ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 5.

¹¹¹ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 25.

his words, dynamic, relational, organic culture flows.¹¹² Because of this fluid movement, Tweed sees positioning as pivotal. Tweed also envisions “theory as travel” and “as purposeful wanderings.”¹¹³ He positions himself within a locative stance that “theorists in motion offer partial views of shifting terrain” and subsequently will always have “blind spots.”¹¹⁴ Tweed calls for researchers, whom he calls interpreters, to inform their audience of their standing, or in other words, to socially locate themselves in their academic work.

Tweed, seeing theory as travel, calls theories “sightings” and suggests that “theories ” are sightings from geographical and historical sites. These sightings are positioned representations of changing terrain by an itinerant cartographer.”¹¹⁵ Tweed argues that “the theorist’s built environment, personal location, social status, and professional community all shape the theoretical work, and those theories are sightings from these shifting sights that answer questions about what the itinerant theorist sees along the way.”¹¹⁶ This dissertation will employ Tweed’s sighting theory using Hannah Adams as a case study. It will offer Hannah as our “itinerant cartographer,” who offers a unique sighting, or window, to a historical reading of an early modern never-married American woman, who was potentially overlooked as the mother of feminine culture in America.

Answering Tweed’s call for self-location, I will position myself and Hannah for our audience. Hannah and I, though living centuries apart, have much in common. Beyond being both historians of early America and early American religious history, we are both white-colonial English-speaking settlers from the middle to upper class. Hannah and I both would

¹¹² Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossings and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 166.

¹¹³ Tweed, *Crossings and Dwellings*, 13.

¹¹⁴ Tweed, *Crossings and Dwellings*, 13-14.

¹¹⁵ Tweed, *Crossings and Dwellings*, 13.

¹¹⁶ Tweed, *Crossings and Dwellings*, 27.

(have) consider(ed) ourselves Christian. I, like Hannah, consider myself to be a single woman, though I am divorced and not never-married like Hannah. Unlike Hannah, I am a mother of five. Finally, while Hannah's sighting is compelling and unique for a woman of her time, I suppose I am also an itinerant cartographer offering my own sighting of Hannah, therefore, perhaps offering a double-visioning.

In his 1997 anthology *Retelling U.S. History*, Tweed and his co-authors argue that "textbooks narratives that attempt to tell 'the whole story' of U.S. religious history have focused disproportionately on male, northeastern, Anglo-Saxon, mainline Protestants and their beliefs, institutions, and power."¹¹⁷ The planning for his collection began in 1991 with several U.S. religious history professors who, like Tweed, imagined a revisioning of the discipline. To present a more accurate narrative, he and his colleagues argue that the discipline of U.S. religious history requires realignment to include those in the margins. Tweed and his co-editors claim that new stories are needed.¹¹⁸ Hannah Adams and those she included in her *Memoir* are among the tellers of these stories. Though Hannah is both northeastern and Anglo-Saxon, as an early modern never-married American female, who dared to venture outside of mainline Protestantism, Hannah is one of these marginal people. At the same time, perhaps much like Nikola Tesla and Hedy Lamarr, she is a trailblazing maverick who transcends both the mainline and the margin when she pushes the boundaries by including and giving a voice to those in the margins in almost all her writings. This dissertation uses Hannah and those earmarked as marginal voices she included in her *Memoir* (like her mother, sister, and aunt) to expand upon the work initiated by Tweed and his fellow scholars to broaden our understanding of early modern American religion.

¹¹⁷ Tweed, *Retelling*, 3.

¹¹⁸ Tweed, *Retelling*, 3.

Responding to Tweed's initiative to reshape the narrative of U.S. religious history by incorporating overlooked stories, Catherine Brekus, a professor of religious studies at Harvard Divinity School, offers a critical examination. In her anthology, *The Religious History of American Women*, Brekus not only addresses the absence of religion in women's history textbooks but also highlights the underrepresentation of women in religious history textbooks. In her introductory chapter, she complains that "more than thirty years after the rise of women's history alongside the feminist movement, it is still difficult to 'find' women in many books and articles about American Religion."¹¹⁹ More importantly, in the vein of Joan Scott, she is critical of women's studies historians who, in haste, were so eager to recover women's stories and experiences that they failed to answer the "so what" question.¹²⁰ She calls upon scholars in women's history to delve beyond mere biographical accounts, urging them to not only illuminate the significance of a biography but also to articulate its critical relevance, its potential to challenge prevailing academic discourse, and its contribution to broader historical issues. The essence of this dissertation will revolve around this profound call to "dig deeper." Beyond the restoration of Hannah's biographical narrative within the realms of American history and religious studies, this research will delve into the substantive ways in which Hannah's experiences shed light on broader historical complexities. The focus extends beyond a singular biography, exploring how Hannah's story intersects with contemporary religious history and women's history discourses, enriching our understanding of historical dynamics.

Tomoko Masuzawa calls for her religious history *The Invention of World Religions* to be read as historical artifact. Masuzawa also argues for the study of the form of language and

¹¹⁹ Catherine A. Brekus, *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1.

¹²⁰ Brekus, *Religious History*, 12.

rhetorical moves made at certain historical epochs to disclose significant historical insights, positing that “analysis of such forms and moves be enlisted and incorporated to produce historical knowledge, or even historical narrative.”¹²¹ Masuzawa recognizes that the validity of the critique of employing such literary analysis is “in the eyes of some historians schooled in another method, who may see their professional practice precisely as a powerful antidote against pseudohistorical pronouncements, including those proffered by the overly literary, language-obsessed, rhetorical analysts who are predisposed to the kind of intellectual activities described as ‘close reading,’ the kind of neoformalist interpretation carried out, so it is charged, hermetically sealed off from everything outside ‘the text.’” Nevertheless, she insists that because “disputes, supplications, intellectual courtships, or apologia, these dealings are carried out over language and by means of language,” literary historical analysis offers a treasure trove of historical artifacts neglected and, therefore, yet to be mined.¹²² In her survey history of the development of what we know today as the study of world religion, taught in most universities, Masuzawa employs a “work of history fundamentally driven and animated by the logic and rhetorical forces of the primary sources.”¹²³

In her research, Masuzawa uses a two-part methodology: first, she performs a comprehensive but “speed-reading” of a “large quantity” of the field, choosing some of the most “prominent, exemplary, exceptional, or otherwise significant texts, in particular, those written in the vernacular for lay audiences, published between the early seventeenth and the early twentieth centuries, whose subject matter can be broadly described as ‘religions of the world.’” Next,

¹²¹ Tomoko Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions: Or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 30. Here she is calling for the historiographical conversations through published texts to be studied and interrogated as a collection of artifacts.

¹²² Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 30-31.

¹²³ Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 31.

Masuzawa also includes a “detailed, slow reading of selected texts with heightened rhetorical sensitivity. Expending more time and effort on the primary sources in this fashion, rather than following the lead of existing scholarship that might partially or tangentially be related to my own concern.”¹²⁴ I did the same, using Hannah Adam’s *Memoir* (the longer second version written and published at the end of her life in 1832) as my main artifact.¹²⁵ However, I determined to reverse Masuzawa’s process, performing this deep reading first.

For this slow and deep-read section, I used the *Memoir* of never-married woman Hannah Adams to query whether the language in fact “mirrors reality, with minimum refraction.”¹²⁶ Though Hannah never mentions her lifelong single status, Hannah’s *Memoir* is full of narrative recollections relating to family, religion, community, education, and friendship, and offers a distinct window into the history of never-married women from early modern America.

For the second “speed reading” part of my “Masuzawa methodology,” I used the relationships Hannah identified as significant in my deep read of Hannah’s *Memoir*. These relationships often revealed a theme that connected and cemented her relationships. I also performed a deep analytical, and sometimes comparative read of several other primary sources, depending on the chapter.¹²⁷ From there I created a comprehensive primary source “speed read” list of all the popular historical literature, including memoirs, sermons, advice literature, essays, and almanacs on both the topic and the person Hannah earmarked as significant to create both a

¹²⁴ Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 31. Here I reverse Masuzawa’s approach because I was trained in my undergraduate work as a literary scholar and not as a historian. As a scholar of comparative literature, I was directed to interrogate the text first and let the text speak for itself, and only after that could we learn about the text through historical context. I am reading Hannah’s *Memoir* as my primary literary analysis, and looking to other secondary sources, even if they are primary in nature, to add context to what Hannah is saying in the *Memoir*. My approach is in the Humanities as opposed to History or English.

¹²⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*.

¹²⁶ Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 31.

¹²⁷ Though Hannah’s *Memoir* written at the end of her life and the autobiographical letter to William Shaw are the overarching primary sources I analyze throughout the dissertation, some chapters also offer a deep read, and at time comparative analysis of other primary sources such as in Chapter Five, Pitt Clarke’s *Harvard Diary*.

biographical sketch of the individual and a social history around the theme. Topics explored through Hannah's relationships with family and friends read through the lens of her never-married status constitute *motifs* of family, religion, education, friendships, as well as the role of print media in propagating the stigma surrounding the never-married (spinster) status in early modern America. Where Masuzawa's comprehensive survey of the genre consisted of "two to three hundred titles," mine consists of between one hundred to two hundred.¹²⁸

Sources

Given such neglect and degradation of Hannah, as well as her litany of accolades, this dissertation provides a deep reading and analysis of Hannah's *Memoir*, a memoir "written by herself."¹²⁹ This dissertation will focus on pivotal relationships that Hannah highlights as formative figures along her academic and authorial journey in her *Memoir*. It will follow a loose chronological timeline, beginning with Hannah's relationships with key female family members and moving on successively to her mainly male networks.

A Memoir of Hannah Adams, Written by Herself with Additional Notices by a Friend, was the final of seven publications. *The Memoir* was written retrospectively in 1830 when Hannah was 75. Several friends, including William Ellery Channing, encouraged the publication's writing.¹³⁰ Prevalent themes in Hannah's *Memoir* include illness, poverty, education, and social awkwardness.¹³¹ However, Schmidt insists that the *Memoir's* central themes were the challenges Hannah faced as a female writer.¹³²

¹²⁸ Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 32.

¹²⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, "Title Page."

¹³⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, "Introductory Note;" 1-2. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 348-349. Schmidt in his notes does not include how he knows Channing encouraged her to write the *Memoir*, just that he is one exemplary friend of many who encouraged her mentioned in the opening of the *Memoir* on page 1. He did, however, rave about her after her death in his "Christmas Day Discourse" sermon on December 25, 1831 which can be found in *Memoir of William Ellery Channing* 2 (London: G. Routledge, 1870): 419-420.

¹³¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 6-7, 24-26, 27-29, 42. See also Longo, "Hannah Adams," 59.

¹³² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15, 33, 35. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 350.

Crisp and humble, and at times somewhat self-effacing, this 46-page circular narrative sketch of Hannah's life from childhood to her Boston years was based loosely on an earlier eleven-page biography she wrote for William Shaw during her court case with Jedidiah Morse.¹³³ The *Memoir* was so 'crisp' that editors added a 50-page biography written anonymously by Hannah's friend and protégé Hannah Sawyer Lee.¹³⁴ Despite the addition, critics like Sarah Josepha Hale (*Ladies' Magazine*), who enjoyed the work, complained of its brevity.¹³⁵

The *Memoir* was published in 1832, just a few months after Hannah's death, by Andrew Norton (Harvard librarian) and Joseph Tuckerman.¹³⁶ The pair wrote the book's two-page preface.¹³⁷ Scholars have had little to say about Hannah's *Memoir*. To date, no independent scholarship has focused solely on it. This dissertation will provide a deep reading and literary analysis of Hannah's final work, paired with social history to reconstruct an intimate biography of Miss Hannah Adams, inspired by "none other than herself."¹³⁸

Hannah never spoke directly of her singlehood. Nevertheless, the *topos* is couched throughout her *Memoir*, embedded in every relationship, and arguably ultimately connected to her success as a writer. It is little wonder Hannah buried the topic. The topic of singleness still seems to be taboo today, even amongst scholars. Singleness and spinsterhood are topics that have been neglected by both family and women's historians, especially in 18th- and 19th-century colonial America.¹³⁹ Because Hannah's household of eleven members had four single, never-

¹³³ Adams, "Shaw Account," 190-203. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 350 and Katherine Wolff, *Culture Club: The Curious History of the Boston Athenaeum* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 21.

¹³⁴ The *Memoir* was so 'crisp,' in fact, that editors added a 50-page biography written anonymously by Hannah's friend and protégé Hannah Sawyer Lee. Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 353.

¹³⁵ Sarah Josepha Hale, "Review of *A Memoir of Miss Hannah Adams written by Herself*," *Ladies Magazine and Literary Gazette* 5(May 1832): 238-240. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 349.

¹³⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, "Introductory Note." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 349.

¹³⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, "frontispiece." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 354.

¹³⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, "Title page."

¹³⁹ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 12; Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 6; Froide, *Never Married*, 2-5.

married individuals, Hannah and her family make an ideal case study on spinsterhood and singleness in early modern America.

This is the first time anyone has worked solely on Hannah's relationships or her *Memoir*. No one has written about her single, never-married (spinster) state either. Because Hannah's *Memoir* is short, it requires supplementation with primary source texts, especially for the chapters on her family members (chapters one through four). Thus, in these early chapters where I develop a social history around Hannah and her family members, looking to texts like William S. Tilden's *History of Medfield* (1887), Hannah's *Summary History of New England* (1799), Hannah F. Sawyer Lee's *Notices* (1784) (attached to the end of Hannah's *Memoir*), Josiah Quincy Jr.'s *Figures of the Past From the Leaves of Old Journals* (1883), and Lydia Maria Child's *Letters From New York* (1841) to supplement and fill in elusive details not included in her *Memoir*. Other key primary sources I examine in the context of this dissertation include the *Memorial of Rev. Pitt Clarke, Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Norton, Mass. And of Mary Jones Clarke (His Wife)* (1866), *A History of the Town of Norton, Bristol County, Massachusetts, From 1669 to 1859* (1866) by George Clark, *Memoirs of Rev. Joseph Buckminster D.D. And Of His Son, Rev. Joseph Stevens Buckminster* (1849), written by his sister, Eliza (Buckminster) Lee, and *Memorials of William Smith Shaw* (1852) by his brother-in-law, Joseph B. Felt. Key primary sources for which I do original literary and comparative analysis, aside from Hannah's *Memoir*, include the recently discovered *Harvard Diary of Pitt Clarke* (in Chapter Five, I comparatively analyze it alongside Hannah's *Memoir*).

Historiography

Hannah Adams Scholarship

Most of the current scholarship related to Hannah is not biographical but instead offers an analysis of one or more of her publications. Thomas A. Tweed's article "An American Pioneer in the Study of Religion: Hannah Adams and Her Dictionary of All Religions," published in 1992, and his introduction to a reprint of the *Dictionary*, published in the same year, analyzes Hannah's final world religion compendium, *A Dictionary of All Religions*.¹⁴⁰ A year later, in his paper "Theology, Genre, and Gender: The Precarious Place of Hannah Adams" (1993), American literature scholar Michael W. Vella also studies Hannah's world religion dictionary to review Hannah's ecumenical treatment of Armenians and Calvinists.¹⁴¹

In his 2011 book chapter "Hannah Adams and the Courtesies of Authorship" in *The Grand Chorus of Complaint: Author and the Business of American Publishing*, Michael J. Everton explores the 1804-1805 pamphlet wars between Jedidiah Morse and Hannah over the copyright of their history of New England textbooks.¹⁴² Most recently, assistant professor of English at Hendrix College, Toni Wall Jaudon (2014), in "The Compilers Art: Hannah Adams, the Dictionary of All Religions, and the Religious World," like Tweed, focuses on analyzing Hannah's *Dictionary*.¹⁴³

The three actual biographies written about Hannah (two of which are unpublished dissertations), also centre primarily on her publications. In 1977, Charlene M. Longo's M.A. thesis, *Hannah Adams: A Biographical Study*, was the first of the three biographies. A short sixty-four pages, Longo's work consists of seven chronological chapters, each focusing on one

¹⁴⁰ Tweed, "American Pioneer." Thomas Tweed, "Introduction: Hannah Adams's Survey of the Religious Landscape." Thomas A. Tweed, "Introduction: Hannah Adams's Survey of the Religious Landscape," in *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations, Jewish, Heathen, Mahometan, and Christian, Ancient and Modern: With an Appendix, Containing a Sketch of the Present State of the World, as to Population, Religion, Toleration, Missions, Etc.; and the Articles in Which All Christian Denominations Agree*, by Hannah Adams, ed. Carl A. Raschke, reprint (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), xvii-xxxiv. Originally published in 1817.

¹⁴¹ Vella, "Theology, Genre, and Gender," 25-26.

¹⁴² Everton, "Hannah Adams."

¹⁴³ Jaudon, "The Compilers Art," 35.

of Hannah's publications. In terse chapters, each literary analysis is sprinkled with biographical filler.

In a similar suit, Sherry A. Schwartz's Ph.D. dissertation "Hannah Adams: The Pioneer Intellect" (1999), explores Hannah as a case study example of how those who founded pre-collegiate American education in the new Republic manipulated history textbooks to disseminate values they believed would create ideal American citizens.¹⁴⁴ Schwartz's biography focuses on Hannah's twin complementary careers of writer and educator. Like Longo, Schwartz follows the chronological framework of Hannah's publications in each chapter. Much longer than Longo's work, far more recent, and much more biographical, Schwartz uses a history of education lens to analyze at least three of Hannah's seven publications. The second chapter examines Hannah's experience in America's burgeoning publishing industry and highlights her first publication, *An Alphabetical Compendium*. The third chapter, like Everton, reviews the Morse-Adams copyright controversy and analyzes Hannah's two histories of New England: *Summary History of New England* and *An Abridgement of the History of New England*.¹⁴⁵

The only published scholarly monograph devoted to Hannah is professor of English at Calvin College Gary D. Schmidt's *A Passionate Usefulness: The Life and Literary Labors of Hannah Adams*. Published relatively recently in 2004 and thoroughly researched, this author offers several archival gems, such as subscription lists of Hannah's second edition of her *compendia*, which included many prominent men and several founding fathers.¹⁴⁶ Hannah published thirteen editions of seven books while she was alive. Schmidt covers all her texts (including every edition) in just 355 pages. Encompassing the entirety of Hannah's body of work

¹⁴⁴ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 2.

¹⁴⁵ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 92-139.

¹⁴⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 51-53.

inevitably permits only a partial exploration of her biography, given its expansive scope. Hannah simply gets lost in the facts (along with her never-married status). Nevertheless, this book was an encyclopedic source for my research.

The trio of somewhat biographical works, authored by Longo, Schwartz, and Schmidt, rely on Hannah's publications to establish a coherent chronological framework. While this approach structurally aligns with the evolution of her literary output, it inadvertently steers the reader's attention back to her books, diverting the focus away from Hannah herself and her enduring single status. This injustice is particularly problematic because her biographer and friend Hannah Sawyer Lee almost prophetically warned that “those who viewed her merely concerning her literary works knew her but imperfectly.”¹⁴⁷ Lee's words should warn us: if we, as scholars and readers, approach Hannah only through the lens of her books, we are in danger of not knowing her at all.

Historiography of Singleness and Celibacy

Neither the biographies nor the literary analyses about the potential pioneer of feminine culture in America, not to mention the first American professional female writer, explore Hannah through the frame of her singleness. This should be no surprise since the history of singleness in North America has been as neglected as Hannah: only three published monographs are dedicated to studying the history of never-married women in America, and there is only one unpublished dissertation on the history of celibacy in North America.

Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller's work *Liberty, a Better Husband*, published in the late 1980s, is one of the three monographs dedicated to historical single women in America. In this work, Chambers-Schiller casts a net wide when she examines the lives and diaries of hundreds of

¹⁴⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 50.

white, middle-class, and elite spinsters living in New England from 1780-1840. Her study concerns the emergence of the “The Cult of Single Blessedness”¹⁴⁸ and calls the steady rise of “spinsters” in New England a “cultural phenomenon.”¹⁴⁹ Chambers-Schiller's research aligns geographically with mine, creating overlap in the early 17th to early 19th centuries. Notably, her work extends into a later timeframe. Though Chambers-Schiller did capture Hannah in her widely cast net, the main difference between this dissertation and Chambers-Schiller's is my close read of Hannah as an individual case study rather than the wide lens of many never-married women provided by Chambers-Schiller. Nevertheless, Chambers-Schiller furnishes valuable context for constructing the social history around Hannah's single status, particularly in the exploration of her relationship with her sister Betty and the concept of the “Cult of Single Blessedness” (examined further in Chapter Three).

Karin Wulf's *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (2000), like Chambers-Schiller's work, offers another historical, wide-angle read of single women in colonial America. Wulf's work is a regional study concentrating on Pennsylvania and, more specifically, on Philadelphia in the second half of the 18th century.¹⁵⁰ Wulf's work is broad in that it concerns *all* single women. Where my study on Hannah looks only at never-married women within its scope, in her research, Wulf includes never-married women (spinsters), as well as women who were separated, divorced, and widowed.¹⁵¹ Each chapter in Wulf's monograph offered a case study of six single women connected to *topos* like work, politics, and law.¹⁵² My project will take a

¹⁴⁸ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 18-19, 21. *The Cult of Single Blessedness* according to Chambers-Schiller arose between 1810 and 1860 and is where never-married women could escape the stigmatism around “spinsterhood” and even garner societal approval through choosing singleness as a vocation if “they assumed noble work in a good cause at the inspiration and command of their God.”

¹⁴⁹ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 2, 12.

¹⁵⁰ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 2.

¹⁵¹ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 2.

¹⁵² Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 22-23.

similar approach. Where Wulf emphasized the Quaker's influence on the single woman, I focus on Congregationalist and later, to some extent, the Unitarian influence.¹⁵³ Wulf's research was invaluable in writing this dissertation for comparative purposes in regional and religious capacities.

Marla R. Miller's *Rebecca Dickinson: Independence for a New England Woman* (2014) is a biography of a never-married artisan living in Massachusetts through the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, based on her spiritual diary.¹⁵⁴ The publication is part of the *Lives of American Women* series edited by Carol Berkin. Dickinson was born just a few decades before Hannah and died nearly a half-century before Hannah, and they share similar historic contexts. Though they resided in different towns, Rebecca in Hatfield and Hannah in Medfield, these never-married women shared the same geographical region (Massachusetts, New England).¹⁵⁵ However, Hannah spent her twilight years in post-Revolutionary Boston, which was the epicentre of New England. Miller's work is exactly what Brekus (and Scott) critiqued in her *The Religious History of American Women*: simply a biography.¹⁵⁶ Lacking a thesis, Miller's biography never really explains why Dickinson's story matters; she never explains where Dickinson's narrative challenges or disrupts the current scholarly historical discourse. This dissertation, on the other hand, argues that Hannah's life serves as a significant model of unmarried women who flourished outside of female kin networks and found success in male worlds of scholarship and religiosity. And, almost everywhere Hannah turns, she challenges historical and scholarly narrative, both in her day and in ours.

¹⁵³ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 12.

¹⁵⁴ Marla R. Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson: Independence for a New England Woman* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014), xviii.

¹⁵⁵ Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, xvi.

¹⁵⁶ Brekus, *Religious History*, 12.

An unpublished dissertation on the history of celibacy in North America, Devon Elizabeth Van Dyne's 2015 dissertation "Celibacy in the British North American Colonies, c 1600-1750," offers an expansive history of celibacy in colonial America where she argues that colonists reinvented "within Protestantism itself the celibate practices that the Reformation had tried to root out."¹⁵⁷ Unlike my work here, Van Dyne's research includes both genders and incorporates several religious experimental communities. It is a comprehensive study of male and female Protestant experiences with celibacy in North America. Van Dyne maps this Protestant experimentation with reintegrating celibacy in Anglican, Quaker, Pietist, and Great Awakening movements, focusing geographically on Maryland and Virginia, but mainly, like Wulf, on Pennsylvania.¹⁵⁸ Van Dyne looks at religious communities where celibacy was practiced voluntarily. In addition to never-married people of both genders, she studies married people who, after a religious experience, chose to live henceforth in a celibate state. Her study includes those who chose celibacy for religious purposes and gathered to live in religious communities.¹⁵⁹ Van Dyne's research is a rich and invaluable source of the theological roots of the stigmatization surrounding singleness and celibacy in North America. I am indebted to her theological framework, and I rely heavily on her theological work in several of my chapters, especially in Chapter One, which is on Hannah's Aunt Mary and explores the history of singleness, celibacy, and the never-married woman in North America.

Though not specifically on colonial New England per se, Amy Froide's *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* has been a catalyst for this dissertation. If Schmidt was my Hannah Adams "bible," Froide was its "never-married woman" counterpart. Froide insists

¹⁵⁷ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 3.

¹⁵⁸ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 10-11.

¹⁵⁹ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 10-11.

we need more studies on never-married women, especially in the early modern era. My work on Hannah seeks to answer her call. Froide takes a wide-lens approach and covers never-married women primarily from provincial towns in England (Southampton, Bristol, Oxford, and York) from 1550 to 1750.¹⁶⁰ She argues that focusing on the overlooked topic of historical never-married women will “change the way in which we view the nuclear family and kinship in early modern England.” Froide posits that “once we cease to view married adults as the norm and realize that a great proportion of people in early modern England were unmarried, we find that spouses and children did not always form the most important connections in people's lives.” I argue that reading the case study of never-married Hannah Adams will do the same for early modern New England. More importantly, it will call into question the women's history axiom that female networks were central to the early modern woman in New England.

Historiography of Female Networks in Colonial and Early America

In 18th- and 19th-century America, historians widely agree on the importance of women's relationships and networks. The consensus is that women, particularly those who remained single, were highly dependent, almost exclusively, on other women, especially their kin.¹⁶¹ For example, in *Bonds of Womanhood*, Nancy Cott says, “The identification of women with the heart also implied that they would find truly reciprocal interpersonal relationships only with other women.”¹⁶² Cott claims that in the 18th century, sex-role divisions “compelled women towards friendship and sisterhood with one another.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 6, 7, 10-11.

¹⁶¹ Froide, *Never Married*, 51, 65; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168, 189; Smith-Rosenberg “Female World,” 8-10, 13-14, 17-18; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

¹⁶² Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168.

¹⁶³ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168.

In a similar vein, Smith-Rosenberg in “The Female World of Love and Ritual” asserts that in the 19th century, a “specifically female world did indeed develop, a world built around a generic and unself-conscious pattern of single-sex or homosocial networks.”¹⁶⁴ She claims, “These supportive networks were institutionalized in social conventions or rituals which accompanied virtually every important event in a woman’s life, from birth to death. Such female relationships were frequently supported and paralleled by severe social restrictions on intimacy between young men and women.”¹⁶⁵ Smith-Rosenberg further emphasizes a woman’s relationship with her female kin when she posits that “central to this female world was an inner core of kin. Ties between sisters, first cousins, aunts, and nieces provided the underlying structure upon which groups of friends and their network of female relatives clustered.”¹⁶⁶

Froide, in *Never Married*, extends Cott’s and Smith-Rosenberg’s claims from women in general to never-married females when she says, “for never-married women in particular, the most important bonds were the ones they forged with their mothers, sister, nieces and to a lesser extent more distant female kin.”¹⁶⁷ Using bequeathments to support her contentions, Froide posits that according to the wills of early modern English never-married women, “single women’s social relationships were also significantly female.”¹⁶⁸ She further claims that tensions with male networks, consisting mainly of relatives, were often fraught due to financial and authoritative pressures.¹⁶⁹

Looking at single, never-married women in antebellum Northeastern America, Chambers-Schiller in *Liberty, a Better Husband* agrees with Froide. She claims that “antebellum

¹⁶⁴ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 9.

¹⁶⁵ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 9.

¹⁶⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 11.

¹⁶⁷ Froide, *Never Married*, 44.

¹⁶⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 48.

¹⁶⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 61.

women were educated, grew into adulthood, and passed through the major turning points of their lives in a largely female world, solidly rooted in the domestic sphere.”¹⁷⁰ Chambers-Schiller continues to echo the stream of females thriving embedded solidly in female networks, primarily consisting of kin, when she posits that “female kin played a crucial role, for it was in the family that women formed their gender identity and established their primary relationships. The strength of these relationships enabled a small group of women to assert themselves personally, socially, and culturally significantly.”¹⁷¹

Nevertheless, Hannah Adams, who was an early modern American single female straddling both the centuries covered by Cott, Smith-Rosenberg, Froide, and Chambers-Schiller embeds herself in her autobiographical narrative firmly and solidly within a supportive matrix of men. Hannah’s thriving within a male network is wildly counterintuitive given that the time was particularly marked by, in the words of Smith-Rosenberg, “severe social restrictions on intimacy between young men and women.”¹⁷² However, Hannah thrived educationally, religiously, financially, politically, and intimately snuggled in the nexus of a network of early modern and antebellum men (of which only one could be loosely considered her “kin”).

Was Hannah an anomaly? Was she an exception to the rule? Did this exception occur because three critical females in her kin network died when she was young (two before the age of twelve and one when she was 35)? No! She had other female kin: two sisters, a stepmother, a paternal grandmother living in her home, and several maternal aunts, cousins, and sisters-in-law living in her small rural community. What, then, can be the explanation? The overarching thesis of this dissertation will use the case study of Hannah Adams to call into question Cott’s and

¹⁷⁰ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

¹⁷¹ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

¹⁷² Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 9, 20-21.

Smith-Rosenberg's contentions of the importance of, and almost exclusive reliance on a predominately female, primarily kin network to the early modern American female, or at least, and especially Froide's and Chamber-Schiller's extension of this theory to include the single never-married ones.

Structure and Chapter Divisions

This dissertation will offer an intimate biographical sketch of Hannah Adams, the first professional female writer in America, through the lens of her singleness. It will examine Hannah and her relationships as case studies of the history of singleness in early modern America. Through the case study of Hannah Adams and her relationships, this dissertation will ask questions about the mythology of singleness and spinsterhood, such as: why did never-married women like Hannah remain single? What sort of stigma was attached to a single status? From where did this stigma come? Did a never-married status bring shame to the family? Did it burden the family (both physically and financially)? Did singleness result in a life of isolation and loneliness? Was singleness, in fact, a rarity in colonial America? Did single women live on the periphery of both family and society? Was, in fact, the role of the never-married woman not recast until the 19th century with the rise of *The Cult of Single Blessedness*? What were the relationships like between never-married women and men?

Each chapter will provide a deep read into Hannah's *Memoir*, exploring relationships Hannah chose to highlight. This dissertation will combine a literary analysis of Hannah's *Memoir* with a social and religious history to create an intimate biography of Hannah based on her closest relationships with family and friends. Each chapter will connect her relationships to a theme concerning singleness and spinsterhood, using Hannah's case study to answer questions and dispel myths around singleness and spinsterhood.

The structure of the dissertation will focus on Hannah's familial relationships she considers pivotal in her *Memoir*. The conclusion will deal with missing people, those Hannah took the liberty, for one reason or another, to edit out of her personal history. The five chapters of this dissertation will construct a social history of never-married women in early modern America. The first three chapters focus on Hannah's earliest relationships with key female family members: her mother Elizabeth, her Maiden Aunt Mary, and her sister Betty.

Chapter One focuses on Hannah's relationship with her mother, Elizabeth. Elizabeth died when Hannah was relatively young, and Hannah grieved not only the death of a mother but also the loss of a proper "female education." Hannah felt this lack of a "female education" was at least partly to blame for her never-married status. What was a female education? This chapter will seek to answer this question by providing a historical survey of the history of "female" education in early modern New England. It will also dive deeper into one of the central reasons women might never have married in 18th-century New England: sickness. This chapter explores the connection between singleness and contagion in colonial America.

Chapter Two explores Hannah's relationship with her Aunt Mary. The chapter builds the foundation of the dissertation by covering the history of the stigmatization around singleness and spinsterhood, tracing its roots through print, church, and state. This chapter illustrates the struggles the never-married Adams women would have faced, and in doing so, it will argue that never-married women were not financial drains on their families but instead held families together emotionally and financially, especially in times of crises.

Chapter Three will explore Hannah's relationship with her sister Betty, whom she curiously identifies as a friend more than a sister. Because of this emphasis on friendship, this chapter will examine the history of *The Cult of Friendship*. The chapter will also investigate

Hannah's homosocial relationship with her sister, Betty. It will argue that single women were not lonely, nor did they necessarily lack affection, as argued both in pulpits and in print. Instead, this chapter will demonstrate how never-married women, especially sisters, lived together, worked together, and were even affectionate towards each other.

Chapter Four focuses on Hannah's relationship with her father, Thomas "Book" Adams, one of the only family members who did not pass away early in Hannah's life. Though a disappointment in many ways, Thomas was a consistent presence in Hannah's life and career. Because this chapter explores Hannah's relationship with her father, it will examine the history of fatherhood in early modern America, specifically the relationships between fathers and never-married daughters. Again, due to the focus of this case study, this historical examination of the father-daughter relationship will only be explored in the narrow context of white, colonial, upper-class Christians. Nevertheless, it will refute current scholarship, which argues that early modern fathers had tenuous, unsupportive relationships with their never-married daughters.¹⁷³ It will also refute arguments that female relationships were the central nexus of daughters' lives, especially never-married ones. Instead, this chapter will argue that at least in the case of Thomas and Hannah, the father-daughter relationship (rather than the female kin connection) proved paramount in that Thomas supported and even arguably spearheaded Hannah's educational and vocational endeavours.¹⁷⁴

Chapter Five explores Hannah's education comparatively with that of her student and lifelong friend, Reverend Pitt Clarke. This chapter investigates the history of education in colonial America. Being "too educated" was one of the reasons Karin Wulf argues that women

¹⁷³ Froide, *Never Married*, 51.

¹⁷⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, 48-51; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 68; Smith Rosenberg, "Female World," 9, 20-21; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

remained single.¹⁷⁵ Nancy Cott likewise argues that women who were too educated were deemed dangerous pariahs.¹⁷⁶ However, an untraditional, classically educated Hannah Adams forged a lifelong friendship with her student Pitt Clarke and several Harvard-bound young men. Rather than encountering resistance from male educators and clergymen, Hannah was nurtured in the supportive nexus of several academic male mentors, including Yale president Ezra Stiles, founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society Jeremy Belknap, and her hometown Congregational minister Reverend Thomas Prentiss. It will also briefly discuss other important young Harvard scholars in her life, who became catalysts to her career, and ultimately her independence such as Joseph S. Buckminster, and William S. Shaw.

This dissertation will illustrate how in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Hannah Adams, as a never-married woman was both forced to and chose to embed herself within the context of an elite male-network after losing her mother, aunt, and sister at an early age, which ultimately resulted in the severing her primary female kin-network. This severing of female familial ties exemplifies the nuanced intricacies of social systems and structures that underpinned lived realities in early modern New England, illustrating how never-married women could demonstrate agency by creatively negotiating and traversing a sundry, or manifold framework of support and succor that could, for never-married women, uniquely be both male and female. In an era where kin-based female communities for women (and especially never-married women) were emphasized, Hannah's ability to both forge and maintain reciprocal relationships within the context of a primarily non-familial elite-male matrix, propelled her into the centre-stage of otherwise male-dominated realms of politics, religion, and academe, thus reflecting Hannah's revolutionary role in resisting, and ultimately transcending conventional Puritan-inspired gender

¹⁷⁵ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 110.

conscriptations that dominated her day, accentuating and marking her impact of overcoming gender-based obstacles and impediments through her atypical, anomalous education in both history and religion which enabled her popularity in publishing, thus positioning her to be crowned by contemporaries as the mother of feminine culture in America.

Chapter One: Elizabeth Clark Adams: “My Excellent Mother”

A year after George Washington led his first battle in the Ohio Valley, 600 miles away in Medfield, Massachusetts, 19-year-old Elizabeth Clark Adams was about to give birth to her third child, Hannah.¹ Much closer to Elizabeth’s New England home, Indigenous forces attacked poorly defended forts in western Massachusetts. As Elizabeth gave birth to Hannah in October 1755, Britain’s General Braddock sailed from Ireland to Virginia with 2200 English soldiers to reinforce colonial militia. Meanwhile, in Massachusetts, troops numbering upwards of 8000 men were being raised under commanding officer Israel Williams of Hatfield. Several of Elizabeth’s relatives, including her cousins, and eventually her younger brother Dryer, would be among them.² Elizabeth’s daughter, Hannah Adams, spent much of her childhood living through what would come to be known in America as the French and Indian War (also called the Seven Years’ War), which lasted from 1756 to 1763.³ Though most of the aggression took place in other colonies, this war between England, France, and Spain would have been felt very close to home by the Adams family. It touched everyone. Friends, neighbours, and loved ones were part of those conscripted to fight in Elizabeth’s hometown of Medfield. At least 44 men from a population of 622 served.⁴

When the French Fort Louisbourg in present-day Nova Scotia was taken by the British in 1745, and again in 1758, British troops began expelling local French settlers called Acadians from Nova Scotia because they refused to pledge allegiance to the British Crown. Following the

¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 34.

² Adams, *Summary History*, 216; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 146. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 35.

³ Adams, *Summary History*, 218-232. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 39.

⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 146.

second siege of Louisbourg in 1758, another wave of Acadian expulsions commenced. Acadian refugees poured into New England. Several sought refuge in Medfield.⁵

In addition to the parade of Acadian refugees flooding into New England and Elizabeth's hometown, town members boarded and cared for sick and injured soldiers.⁶ This war should have left an early imprint on the lives of Elizabeth's children. Elizabeth's daughter Hannah's *Memoir*, however, makes no mention of the French and Indian War.

A memory from her early childhood that Hannah does share in her *Memoir* is the premature death of her mother, Elizabeth. In fact, Hannah would earmark Elizabeth's premature death as one of several traumatic events which became catalysts to her writing career. Hannah also subtly implied that Elizabeth's untimely departure was a contributor to her perpetual state of singlehood.

Born in 1723 to Solomon Clark (the younger) and Mary Lovell, Elizabeth descended from one of the thirteen founders of Medfield, New England: Joseph Clark.⁷ She grew up in the southside of Medfield, Massachusetts, just 17 miles from Boston.⁸ Her childhood Medfield homestead was sprinkled with lilac gardens and grape vines where she would have played and performed chores with her eight living brothers and sisters: Solomon, Dryer, Stephen, Cephas, Mary, Thankful, and Sybil. Twins Marah and Silence did not survive their birth.⁹

Despite being the third daughter and fourth child, Elizabeth married before her older sisters at the young age of 15. Her husband, Thomas, was a decade older.¹⁰ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, in *Goodwives: Imagined Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-*

⁵ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 143.

⁶ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 142, 146.

⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 354.

⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 354.

⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 354.

¹⁰ Tilden, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

1750, has illustrated that the average age for a female to marry in 18th-century New England was between 20 and 22.¹¹ The age disparity between Thomas and Elizabeth was therefore uncommon.

Elizabeth's new domain as a young New England goodwife was known as the "town's showpiece."¹² Her new homestead, still in the hands of her father-in-law, Thomas Adams (senior), was equipped with an extensive library and all the frills, whistles, and trimmings a young colonial woman could desire.¹³ It was furnished by her father-in-law, a successful businessman and town selectman for decades.¹⁴ A two-story addition was erected for the new family, with its own chimney, at the back of the homestead in 1750, the year of their marriage.¹⁵ Elizabeth joined the family in February of that year.¹⁶

Elizabeth's first child was born in this new addition later that year and was named for Thomas's sister, Hannah, who had died in her thirties.¹⁷ Elizabeth's first daughter, Hannah, unfortunately died in infancy. Sorrow turned to joy two years later when Betty was born. Our Hannah followed two years later. Elizabeth eventually gave birth to three other children: Lucy, Louis, and Newton.¹⁸

Of Elizabeth's five children, three never married. Two of Elizabeth's three living daughters remained single throughout their entire lives. This high number of unmarried children was an anomaly in 18th-century New England, where communities close to Medfield reported less than 3% of their population were unmarried females, and even into the 19th century, nine of

¹¹ Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 6.

¹² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

¹³ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

¹⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

¹⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

¹⁶ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

¹⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

¹⁸ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17.

ten women married.¹⁹ According to Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller in *Liberty, A Better Husband*, remaining single throughout one's lifetime was considered "a fate worse than death."²⁰ Why then would so many of Elizabeth Adams's children remain single? Why did women in 18th-century New England remain single? Why did the Adams sisters (and their brother) do so?

In *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, Amy Froide looked at the writings of several early modern never-married women, including a few women who wrote in the mid-18th century to examine why, in their own words, they remained single.²¹ Her research provides four reasons that early modern single women indicated that they never married. These reasons included finances, religion, illness, and family responsibilities.²² Hannah offered a fifth reason which was not included in Froide's list: the lack of what Hannah referred to as "a female education," which could be more clearly defined as a deficit in the "training in the arts of womanhood." Because Hannah defined "educational ideology" in this manner, I will refer to the "art, or arts of womanhood" as "a daughter's education."²³

Though not included on Froide's list, Hannah's reason for not marrying is legitimate. A daughter's education was required to find an adequate mate. And, though Hannah never wrote openly about the fact that she never married, she did offer a couched explanation for her singleness in her *Memoir*.²⁴ This couched explanation was connected to her lament over the

¹⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Kelley, "Woman Alone," 209-210; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood* 14; Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 3; Gordon, "Mary Penry," 236, 277; di Leonardo, "Warrior Virgins," 50.

²⁰ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 10.

²¹ Froide, *Never Married*, 184.

²² Froide, *Never Married*, 183.

²³ Vives, *Education*, 1-5. This education of a daughter, or female education, was codified just prior to the Protestant Reformation by Juan Luis Vives, Spanish humanist scholar and educational reformer, friend of Thomas More and Erasmus at the court of King Henry VIII and his wife Catherine of Aragon. Vives's book is dedicated to Queen Catherine for a systematic education for raising her daughter and future queen of England Mary. It was written also for a wider audience and received by both Protestants and Catholics alike, and became the standard for over a century (like Castiglione's *The Courtier*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and more recently, his friend Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince*).

²⁴ Swartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 35.

death of her mother, and a subsequent lack of a proper daughter's education due to that death. Hannah pinned this negligence, at least in part, on both her mother's coddling and her early demise. According to Edmund S. Morgan in *The Puritan Family*, Puritan parents, like Elizabeth, could only call their duties complete when they saw their children married with families of their own.²⁵ Thus, the parenting obligation of providing their female wards with a daughter's education was paramount. What exactly was "a daughter's education"? Had Elizabeth neglected her duty of which Hannah accused her? This chapter will seek to answer these questions.

This chapter first examines the role Elizabeth played in moving Hannah from being, as a child, a typical early modern New England female who was neatly nested in a nurturing female familial network to Hannah's atypical reliance on elite non-familial male friendships as an adult. Next, the chapter focuses on Hannah's couched explanation for her never-married status- the lack of a daughter's or female education. It argues that though Hannah does not outrightly mention the reason for her singleness, she does embed it in her discussion of the death of her mother. Finally, this chapter explains and assesses Elizabeth's parenting skills, which were perfectly in step with Puritan protocols.²⁶

Part I discusses Hannah's representation of Elizabeth in her *Memoir*. Part II describes the expectations of a "proper" female or a daughter's education. Part III defends Elizabeth's parenting style by comparing how she educated Hannah with how she educated her eldest daughter, Betty. In doing so, this section explores two other reasons never-married women gave for their singleness: sickness and family responsibilities. Finally, the concluding section ties

²⁵ Vives, *Education*, 155, 157-158; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 247, 293, 380; Cotton Mather, *A Family Well-Ordered*, (Boston, 1699), 47; Benjamin Wadsworth, *The Well-ordered Family: Or Related Duties, ...* (Boston, 1712), 42-43, 58. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 87.

²⁶ Erasmus, *Institutio*, 326, 436-437; Vives, *Education*, 159, 416-417; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18, 19; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 48-49. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 103.

Hannah's relationship (or lack thereof) with her mother, Elizabeth, to the overarching thesis, which examines Hannah's flourishing within a male matrix rather than surrounded by a supportive female kin network.

Part I: Hannah on Elizabeth

In her *Memoir*, Hannah's portrayal of her mother's character appears somewhat one-dimensional, lacking the depth that would bring it to life. Elizabeth, Hannah's mother, is not explicitly named; rather, she is affectionately referred to as "my excellent mother."²⁷

Remarkably, Hannah allocates less than a paragraph to explore the pivotal role her mother played in her life. Despite being a formative female figure, Elizabeth is confined to a mere three sentences, regardless of her primary involvement in a series of traumatic events that served as catalysts for Hannah's writing career and, concurrently, influenced her lifelong single status.

These events, intricately woven into Hannah's narrative, are pivotal junctures that simultaneously expose what she might refer to as her most significant flaws and catapult her to her greatest triumphs. The initial catalyst among these traumatic events is the death of her mother.²⁸

Hannah explained how the loss of her mother affected her: "the loss of my excellent mother, which happened when I had reached my tenth year, was the first severe trial I was called to suffer. When her death took place, I was at an age when maternal direction is of the greatest importance, particularly in the education of daughters."²⁹ In similar fashion, in a much shorter autobiographical sketch prepared for William S. Shaw and written much earlier than her *Memoir*, Hannah said the following of her mother's passing: "The death of my mother was the first capital misfortune of my life. I lost that indulgent parent when about ten years old, an age in which

²⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 5; Adams, "Shaw Account," 201-201.

²⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

²⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 5-6.

daughters have the greatest need of maternal direction and assistance.”³⁰ In this earlier account, Hannah allots two sentences to her mother, the first of which foreshadows her later claims made in her *Memoir* written 30 years later: “My mother was an excellent woman, but as she possessed great tenderness and sensibility, I was educated in all the habits of debilitating softness.”³¹ Did she mourn her mother or the loss of a daughter’s education? From her tone, the answer is unclear.

Scholars disagree on how old Hannah was when Elizabeth died. Where Hannah said she was ten, Schmidt claims she was twelve. Lee and Swartz, on the other hand, say she was eleven.³² Regardless of her age, Hannah did not seem concerned with leaving a memorable sketch of Elizabeth. Nor did she leave behind any fond childhood memories shared between them. Hannah simply complained about what she missed most when she lost her mother at such an impactful age: a daughter’s education.³³ Who could blame her? In 18th-century New England, providing an education for her daughters was arguably a mother's foremost function. Hannah felt that this lack of a daughter’s education left her with a lifelong limp, one she lamented throughout her entire lifetime, and which became a consistent *motif* throughout her *Memoir*.³⁴ What exactly was this paramount pedagogy? What comprised its curriculum?

Part II: A “Daughter’s Education”

What exactly do we mean when we say a "female" or a "daughter's education"? According to Charles Fantazzi, translator and editor of Juan Luis Vives’s pedagogical manual *The Education of a Christian Woman: a sixteenth-century manual* (1542), though Vives himself

³⁰ Adams, “Shaw Account,” 202.

³¹ Adams, “Shaw Account,” 201-202.

³² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 55. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 27; Swartz, “Pioneer Intellect,” 35.

³³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

³⁴ Vives, *Education*, 53-54, 263, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316, 380; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

looked to Xenophon's *Oeconomics* as the first educational instruction manual for females, Fanatazzi claims that Vives's publication was the first systematic pedagogy that focused explicitly on the "universal" education of daughters.³⁵

Dedicated to Catherine of Aragon while she was married to Henry VIII, Vives, a Spanish humanist and member of the English court, not only prepared the work for Queen Catherine to direct her daughter Mary (who would later become queen of England) but also for a wider public audience.³⁶ Vives developed three educational streams in this work: a daughter's apprenticeship in household management, her social or behavioral education—that is, how to properly act in public and private—and finally, what we would consider education today, formal book-learning. Since this last stream will be discussed in greater depth as it relates to Hannah in Chapter Five, it will be touched on only briefly here.

Vives argued that education should commence in infancy.³⁷ Once weaned, during playtime, Vives recommended that daughters only socialize with other girls of the same age under the watchful eye of their mother or nurse. In other words, they should be no male playmates.³⁸ Vives also recommended that she have no dolls. In his estimation, dolls, with all their finery, encouraged idolatry. Instead, Vives recommended tin toys that mimicked housekeeping tools for very young daughters, likely to prepare a daughter early for her future vocation as a household manager.³⁹

To Vives, it was essential, even for the daughter of a queen, to learn to work with wool or flax (and thus become spinsters) because, he reasoned, all good classical women of old had set

³⁵ Fanatazzi, "Introduction," of Juan Louis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth Century manual*, Ed. and Trans. by Charles Fantazzi (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1.

³⁶ Vives, *Education*, 30.

³⁷ Vives, *Education*, 53.

³⁸ Vives, *Education*, 55.

³⁹ Vives, *Education*, 57-58.

this precedent.⁴⁰ In Vives's eyes, the wife's responsibility was to apprentice their daughters “in the skills proper to their sex,” which included “how to work wool and flax, to spin, to weave, to sew, and the care and administration of domestic affairs.”⁴¹ A daughter would learn how to make cloth and clothing for her household under her mother's tutelage.⁴² As such, Vives prescribed that daughters start learning spinning and household management around the very early age of four to five, though he conceded that some suggested waiting until age seven. He left a daughter's readiness up “to the discretion of the parents.”

Vital to this apprenticeship was that a daughter learn and become proficient in cooking.⁴³ Vives interpreted cooking as a healing art form that was essential to the prevention of illness.⁴⁴ According to Vives, a daughter would also need to learn and have ready tinctures and remedies for basic household illnesses like “coughs, catarrhs, colic, loose bowels or constipation, intestinal worms, headache or aching eyes, slight fevers, dislocations, burns, slight cuts, and similar ailments that occur almost daily for trivial reasons.”⁴⁵ But she was not to study medicine—instead, she was to learn from matrons, handbooks, or the doctor when he was visiting so as not to have to run to the doctor regularly or pay for an apothecary.⁴⁶

In her apprenticeship into the vocation of household management, a daughter (even of a queen) was to be also educated in “the art of frugality.”⁴⁷ She should become proficient in household accounting, budgets, and inventories.⁴⁸ As a wife, she would be expected to prepare

⁴⁰ Vives, *Education*, 58-60.

⁴¹ Vives, *Education*, 270.

⁴² Vives, *Education*, 260.

⁴³ Vives, *Education*, 60-61.

⁴⁴ Vives, *Education*, 61-62.

⁴⁵ Vives, *Education*, 263.

⁴⁶ Vives, *Education*, 263.

⁴⁷ Vives, *Education*, 61.

⁴⁸ Vives, *Education*, 262.

dinner for the household, supervise the staff, cook, spin, and clean. As a wife, a daughter would also need to learn how to care for children, learn the intricacies of nursing, and be able and prepared to teach small children.⁴⁹ According to Vives, a daughter should learn her domestic duties from her mother, little by little, while occupying herself with spinning.⁵⁰ Like many educators of his day, Vives emphasized that women should be educated not for themselves but rather so they would be better partners for their husbands.⁵¹ Under her mother's leadership, she would also learn how to behave in public and private.

This social or behavioural education, for Vives, consisted of a long list of "do's and don'ts." In his work, Vives discussed how daughters should treat their bodies, or self-care.⁵² He made a case for clean but modest clothing.⁵³ Daughters were not to oversleep. They were to avoid idleness, cards, dice, and makeup.⁵⁴ Like in childhood, he argued for no male contact until after puberty.⁵⁵ According to Vives, a daughter was to appear in public only rarely. She was to stay in the country when possible and be accompanied by her mother (or an "upright woman") anytime she had to leave home.⁵⁶ If a mother was required to leave for any reason, Vives insisted the bring her daughter.⁵⁷

Vives posited that a mother was to teach her daughter to control her facial expressions, not to walk too fast or too slow, not to cast her eyes down in public, not to stare. She was to be taught to refrain from laughter, and not be too talkative—not even with female companions.⁵⁸ A

⁴⁹ Vives, *Education*, 269.

⁵⁰ Vives, *Education*, 113.

⁵¹ Vives, *Education*, 45.

⁵² Vives, *Education*, 87.

⁵³ Vives, *Education*, 91.

⁵⁴ Vives, *Education*, 91-94, 100.

⁵⁵ Vives, *Education*, 87.

⁵⁶ Vives, *Education*, 110-111.

⁵⁷ Vives, *Education*, 110.

⁵⁸ Vives, *Education*, 111, 127-128, 130.

mother was to teach her daughter not to talk to men alone- not even her brothers- and not to gossip or be concerned about other households.⁵⁹ Vives advised mothers not to allow their daughters to attend celebrations, even religious ones. He considered fast days and religious banquets worse than pagan celebrations.⁶⁰ A daughter was also encouraged by Vives to avoid masks.⁶¹ She was not to learn to dance, which, though popular among young people at this time, Vives deemed dancing “silly.”⁶² What was she supposed to learn, aside from household and behavior management, if not dancing?

Vives actually advocated for the formal education of daughters, although not with the goal of becoming sage scholars, but to keep them chaste. According to Vives, daughters should learn to both read and write.⁶³ What types of reading? A daughter was to study wisdom and morals.⁶⁴ This time, the mother was not to take the lead. Instead, Vives suggested hiring an older “happily married” male tutor be appointed to the task.⁶⁵ This male tutor was to lead the daughter in learning to read and write using scriptures and philosophers by writing out passages.⁶⁶

The object of this moral education was not only to keep her chaste but also to learn morals so that she could one day pass them along to her children.⁶⁷ However, she should never have aimed to be a teacher—a female teacher was undignified in Vives’s estimation.⁶⁸ Unlike a son, a daughter was to study at home and be unknown by others. She was not to indulge in romance literature or “books of war” (which included knights and chivalry).⁶⁹ Vives produced a

⁵⁹ Vives, *Education*, 131, 136.

⁶⁰ Vives, *Education*, 136.

⁶¹ Vives, *Education*, 142.

⁶² Vives, *Education*, 139-141.

⁶³ Vives, *Education*, 58.

⁶⁴ Vives, *Education*, 71.

⁶⁵ Vives, *Education*, 71.

⁶⁶ Vives, *Education*, 71.

⁶⁷ Vives, *Education*, 72.

⁶⁸ Vives, *Education*, 72.

⁶⁹ Vives, *Education*, 72-74.

list of banned material, including Boccaccio's *Decameron*, *Lancelot du Lac*, and *Tristan and Isolde*.⁷⁰ In tandem, Vives provided his audience with an alternate required reading list, which included the Gospels, the Old Testament, and the Epistles. Vives also approved authors, including Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Hilary, Gregory, Boethus, Fulgentius, Tertullian, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca.⁷¹ Were Vives's suggestions the exception or the norm?

Vives's close friend and fellow man of Henry's court, Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, better known as Erasmus, agreed with him on many grounds. Erasmus's *Institutio Chrsitiani Matrimonii*, published about a decade earlier than Vives's work in 1529, though not a specific manual for female education per se, echoes much of Vives's philosophies. Erasmus saw the wife as the protector and manager of the household property.⁷² According to Erasmus, a husband was "to yield to his wife" in matters of cooking, shopping, looking after small children, and supervising maids.⁷³ Thus, Erasmus claimed, "A girl whose parents have taught her to manage the household has acquired a skill that is by no means to be disdained. She will never find any shortage of jobs to do in the home and will get enough exercise to keep her healthy if she visits various parts of the house regularly—the kitchen, the men's and women's quarters, the bedroom, the attics—and does the housework herself or tells others what needs to be done."⁷⁴ Erasmus emphasized the importance of a daughter learning to spin, arguing that the "Spindle and distaff" kept her from idleness and her thoughts from evil.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Vives, *Education*, 74-75.

⁷¹ Vives, *Education*, 78.

⁷² Erasmus, *Institutio*, 239.

⁷³ Erasmus, *Institutio*, 370.

⁷⁴ Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319.

⁷⁵ Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319.

As for formal education, Erasmus pushed the envelope farther than Vives. Erasmus wanted daughters to be versed in liberal arts, including rhetoric, law, arithmetic, and geography.⁷⁶ He claimed that even better than having daughters learn spinning was to have them instructed in the humanities! Erasmus argued, like Vives, that book learning was essential for a daughter's moral health and claimed, "A girl intent on her books has no time for anything else."⁷⁷ This book-learning was to commence, like Vives's household management apprenticeship, in seclusion, and again, like Vives, between the ages of five and seven. Like Vives, Erasmus's pedagogical plan for daughters included an education in "temperament."⁷⁸ She was to avoid romance novels, bawdy songs, and dancing.⁷⁹ But Vives and his friend Erasmus lived and were writing on another continent from where Hannah resided, and over 150 years before she was born! They were also both Catholic, whereas Hannah and her family were Protestant reformers. How did time, distance, and religion factor into a "female's" or "daughter's education?"

Though Vives's *The Education of a Christian Woman* was published on the cusp of the Protestant Reformation, it was well-received by both Catholics and Protestants alike and remained the go-to system for educating upper—and middle-class daughters for decades, if not centuries.⁸⁰ However, Vives's and Erasmus's pitch for a thorough formal education for daughters either quickly fell off or never took hold. Several other publications, though not necessarily systematic manuals for female education per se, touched on female education in passing. Despite indicating that behavioural education and apprenticeship in household management for daughters

⁷⁶Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316.

⁷⁷Erasmus, *Institutio*, 326,

⁷⁸Erasmus, *Institutio*, 416-17, 438.

⁷⁹Erasmus, *Institutio*, 436-438.

⁸⁰Fantazzi, "Introduction," 3.

was or had become the norm, Vives's suggested formal education, which he claimed was good for the state, seemed to have been ignored.⁸¹

Daniel Defoe, writing in London 150 years after Vives had published his manual, in *An Essay Upon Projects* (1679), described the present state of female education: "Their youth is spent to teach them to Stitch and Sow, or make Bawbles." Defoe also complained that daughters were "taught to Read indeed, and perhaps to Write their Names, or so; and that is the heighth [sic] of a Woman's Education."⁸² Likewise, across the ocean in late 17th-century colonial New England (1699), Cotton Mather, in his *A Family Well-Ordered*, recommended that "not only our sons, but our daughters also should be taught such things as will afterwards make them useful in their places." Again, here, Mather is discussing vocations as household managers.⁸³

Jumping forward two decades (1712), also writing from Boston, Benjamin Wadsworth echoes Mather. Daughters were explicitly to be instructed on how to be "goodwives." How? Wadsworth recommends that "both boys and girls should be brought up diligently in such business as they are capable of, and is proper for them."⁸⁴ Hannah was a youthful seven-year-old when, in 1762, Isaac Ambrose published his *The Well-Ordered Family* in Boston. His plan for a daughter's education? She should "learn and labour to for recast, contrive and manage Household Affairs, & Business within Doors, as they say: for which see right noble glorious Pattern in

⁸¹ Fantazzi, "Introduction," 1. It should be noted here that close friend of both Erasmus and Vives, Sir Thomas More also advocated for female education in his *Utopia*.

⁸² Daniel Defoe, *An Essay Upon Projects* (London, 1679), 282-283.

⁸³ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18-19.

⁸⁴ Wadsworth, *Well-ordered Family*, 48. The Proverbs 31 woman seemed to be the model for the successful wife. She was industrious, wise, thrifty, treated her servants well, and was beloved by all (31.28). She spins (31.13; 31.19), she cooks (31.15), she makes shrewd real estate deals (31.16), she gardens (31.16), she earns money for the family by trading goods made in her household (31.18; 31.24), she is generous to the needy (31.20), she makes bedding and clothing for her family with her own hands (31.21-22).

Proverbs 31.”⁸⁵ How did the households of colonial New England, and particularly the household of Hannah’s mother, Elizabeth Adams, measure up?

A Female Education: A Quadripartite Pedagogy

As a goodwife, Elizabeth had specific roles and responsibilities, including “cooking, washing, sewing, milking, spinning, cleaning, gardening” and the like.⁸⁶ Elizabeth was also expected to be a housewife, deputy husband, consort, mother, mistress, neighbor, and a Christian.⁸⁷ She would also have needed to be an educator. More specifically, she would be expected to be the primary educator of her daughters.⁸⁸

In the 18th century, a daughter's education rested firmly on her mother's shoulders.⁸⁹ This education, according to Rachel Bynoth in “A Mother Educating her Daughter Remotely,” consisted of a quadripartite pedagogy which insisted on the mastery of four specific fields. A daughter’s education, under the tutelage of a mother, would have specifically included instruction in “household management,” “domestic chores,” “emotional instruction,” and “societal behaviors.”⁹⁰ Such an education would prepare daughters, as suggested by Vives, Erasmus, Mather, and Ambrose, for their future roles as wife and mother, and potentially securing them appropriate suitors.⁹¹ This instruction is precisely the education in which Hannah complained of being deficient.

⁸⁵ Isaac Ambrose, *The Well-ordered Family*, (Boston, 1762), 19-22.

⁸⁶ Vives, *Education*, 58-62, 254, 260-262, 263, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316, 370, 376-377, 380-381. See also Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 9.

⁸⁷ Vives, *Education*, 58-62, 254, 260-262, 263, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316, 370, 376-377, 380-381. See also Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 9.

⁸⁸ Vives, *Education*, 54-55, 61-64, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316. See also Rachel Bynoth, “A Mother Educating Her Daughter Remotely through Familial Correspondence: The Letter as a Form of Female Distance Education in the Eighteenth Century,” *History (London)* 106, no. 373 (2021) 727-730.

⁸⁹ Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 727.

⁹⁰ Vives, *Education* 30, 54-55, 87-94, 110-111, 126-130, 132-133, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19. See also Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 727, 732.

⁹¹ Vives, *Education*, 45, 155-159, 175-177, 254; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 247, 293, 316; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19. See also Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 727, 732, 734.

Household Management

The 18th-century New England household extended far beyond what we now deem as the nuclear family, especially in an upper-class one like Elizabeth's.⁹² Instead, the family included everyone who resided in and on the estate. The household would have been comprised of a father, mother, children, grandparents, as well as aunts and uncles. Though there is no evidence that I found that the Adams household had servants, the typical upper-class New England household may also have included step-parents and their children, boarders, servants, and farmhands.⁹³ The average household in New England at this time consisted of 8-10 people.⁹⁴

The upper-class household Elizabeth managed from the time of her marriage at age 15 and for the 18 years that followed consisted at least of Elizabeth and her husband Thomas, their five children, Thomas's father, his wife Mary, and their never-married daughter Mary.⁹⁵ As they lived on one of the largest farms in Medfield, the scope of the estate would have also likely included several farmhands and servants.⁹⁶ The management of this robust household would have fallen to Elizabeth. And, as a mother, she would have been expected to mentor her daughters in this management. It was, after all, one of the components of a daughter's education.

Frequently, mothers like Elizabeth were expected to oversee large households while pregnant or nursing. More often than not, they did so while being both, even right up until days

⁹² Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 21.

⁹³ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284; Vives, *Education*, 256-259, 260, 262; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 370, 380. See Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 21.

⁹⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 29.

⁹⁵ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284.

⁹⁶ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284; Vives, *Education*, 256-259, 260, 262; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 370, 380. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 41. Though neither Tilden's *History of Medfield* nor Hannah's *Memoir* mention the Adams family having servants, Hannah's *Memoir* clearly explains that they had a farm manager, which implies that the manager was likely at very least was managing farm hands. Though also not mentioned, the Adams household might also have included enslaved individuals. The absence of mention of enslaved people, servants, and farm hands was not unusual for Hannah who failed to mention in her *Memoir* that not only a step-mother resided with them, but also a full sister, two full brothers, a half-sister, and several half-brothers. Hannah also never mentions her paternal grandmother, who resided with the family for years. Therefore, it is arguable that we should not discount the potential presence of servants, enslaved people, and farm hands if she neglected her own family.

before the delivery.⁹⁷ These household managers produced their own food and clothing.⁹⁸

Responsibilities as household managers included feeding, clothing, nursing and caretaking of the young, sick, and elderly, bearing and raising children, as well as overseeing servants.⁹⁹ This rigorous workload may sound overwhelming to some, yet trite and trivial to others. By today's standards, in this position, Elizabeth and household managers like her were at once the educator, human resource manager, event planner, farmer, cook, baker, seamstress, nurse practitioner, and probably several other professions. As the provider of a daughter's education, Elizabeth would have needed to train her daughters to be proficient in all of these tasks.

Operating in New England around the same time as the Adams family, the Canning household offers a glimpse of a daughter's education in the field of household management in action. In 1789, at the age of thirteen, Bess Canning's widowed mother, Hitty, who was away on extended business, left her to oversee their household, which included four siblings and staff, as well as her aunt and grandmother.¹⁰⁰ Bess was educated and well-equipped to keep the household account books. She carefully tracked the coal, services, and groceries expenses in neat columns in these books. Bess capably organized and paid bills in her mother's absence.¹⁰¹ She was also able to supervise the chores of her siblings and the family servants while efficiently organizing and administering extensive activities such as Stop-Watch laundry sessions.¹⁰² Bess even prepared and executed headhunting and the hiring of new staff members in her mother's

⁹⁷ Vives, *Education*, 53-55, 254, 260-262, 269; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 410-414; Isaac Ambrose, *Well-Ordered Family*, 9-10. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 27.

⁹⁸ Vives, *Education*, 58-61; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316, 370-374, 380-381, 413; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 19-22. See June Sprigg, "Women's Everyday Lives in 18th-Century Northeastern America," PhD diss. (University of Delaware, 1977), 7.

⁹⁹ Vives, *Education*, 58-61, 260, 261, 262, 263, 268-270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316, 370-374, 380-381, 413; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 19-22; Sprigg, "Women's Everyday," 6.

¹⁰⁰ Bynoth, "A Mother Educating," 741-742.

¹⁰¹ Bynoth, "A Mother Educating," 741-742.

¹⁰² Bynoth, "A Mother Educating," 743.

absence.¹⁰³ By the age of thirteen, Bess was well educated by her mother in household duties and management. Bess was only one year older than Hannah when her mother died. Elizabeth should have equipped her daughters in the same manner.

Elizabeth assumed the responsibility of overseeing her expansive household and guiding her daughters in the art of household management, intending to equip them with the skills needed to excel as virtuous wives, nurturing mothers, and efficient homemakers. It fell upon Elizabeth to manage daily household tasks herself and impart this knowledge to her daughters, ensuring their future efficacy and efficiency in running their own households. However, as noted by Hannah in her *Memoir*, Elizabeth's guidance, at least in the case of Hannah, appeared to be lacking or absent.¹⁰⁴

Domestic Chores

The second major component of a daughter's education, according to Bynoth, was the mastery of domestic chores. Household chores had daily, weekly, and seasonal rhythms.¹⁰⁵ Daily tasks, which consisted of indoor and outdoor chores, were sometimes performed by the household manager and other times relegated to hired girls or daughters as part of their training in a daughter's education.¹⁰⁶ Indoor chores began before dawn with tending to fires and preparing for breakfast, which likely would have consisted of bread, coffee, tea, broiled meat, and pudding.¹⁰⁷ Bedpans needed emptying, beds required making, candles fixing, and floors

¹⁰³ Bynoth, "A Mother Educating," 744-745.

¹⁰⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 116-142.

¹⁰⁶ Vives, *Education*, 254, 260-263, 270; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered* 19-22; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 239, 316, 370, 380-381. See Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 187.

sweeping.¹⁰⁸ Mending was also a part of women's daily routine, including darning, patching, and ironing.¹⁰⁹

The daily chore ritual for young daughters entailed dishwashing and the scouring of pots and pans, which included hauling water. Indoor plumbing was unavailable in New England until the late 18th century.¹¹⁰ Outdoor chores included milking cows at least twice daily, feeding hens, and gathering eggs.¹¹¹

Weekly and monthly rhythms guided the production of almost all New Englanders' household goods.¹¹² Elizabeth should have taught her daughters to make cheeses, cider, candlesticks, butter, yarn, brooms, and soap in weekly and monthly increments.¹¹³ They would have baked several times a week.¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Phelps, who also resided in 18th-century New England, made cheese at least thrice a week.¹¹⁵ Laundry, which traditionally occurred on Mondays, was a substantial weekly chore that required the heavy lifting and hauling of at least 50 gallons of water, not once but twice.¹¹⁶ The washing was most often relegated to daughters or hired girls, but women always executed it.¹¹⁷

Household tasks adhered to daily and weekly routines and followed a seasonal cadence. As spring unfolded, a symphony of activities occurred on the homestead. Potatoes transformed into starch, sheets and clothing were bleached, newborn calves entered the world, butter was made, and sheep received a thorough cleansing. Spring, a season synonymous with renewal,

¹⁰⁸ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 109.

¹⁰⁹ Vives, *Education*, 58-60, 113, 260, 262, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 140, 151, 161.

¹¹⁰ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 114.

¹¹¹ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 200.

¹¹² Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 103-106, 116-117.

¹¹³ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 117, 138.

¹¹⁴ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 198.

¹¹⁵ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 200.

¹¹⁶ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 131.

¹¹⁷ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 130-131.

witnessed many substantial efforts. It signaled the commencement of a meticulous process known as the "turning out" of the house—a ritual that involved the complete evacuation of each room, followed by a thorough scouring and a fresh coat of whitewash. Furniture received attentive care with dedicated rubbing and polishing, while featherbedding made way for cooler hey ticks. Wool blankets, meticulously packed away, stood guard against potential moth damage.¹¹⁸ The demanding routine extended to ash removal from fireplaces, the craft of soap-making, and the sweeping and scrubbing of the hearth.¹¹⁹ As spring unfolded, the sacrificial spring lamb entered the scene, marking a culmination of this season's endeavors.¹²⁰

As autumn transitioned into winter, a choreography of activities unfolded to harness and preserve the season's bounty. Vegetables found a new home in the cellar, carefully stored for the colder months. As the evening descended, apples took center stage, being plucked, peeled, cored, and meticulously boiled to create both cider and sauce—a month-long culinary affair that encapsulated the essence of November.¹²¹ Simultaneously, the advent of chilly weather, conducive to preservation, prompted a significant event in November or December—the slaughter of the autumn pig. This process extended to the painstaking preparation of salted beef and pork, a comprehensive undertaking spanning at least a week.¹²² The preservation efforts extended beyond meats; pumpkins were carefully preserved, peas and beans underwent shelling, and corn was diligently husked, weaving a tapestry of culinary preparations to sustain the household through the winter months.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 122.

¹¹⁹ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 104.

¹²⁰ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 202.

¹²¹ E. Smith, *The Complete Housewife: Or, Accomplished Gentlewoman's Companion*, (London: 1739), 113, 115, 129, 193, 228; Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 207.

¹²² Annon., *The Accomplished Lady's Delight in Cookery; or the Complete Servant's – Maid's [sic] Guide* (Wolverhampton: J. Smart, 1780), 8-9. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 202.

¹²³ Hannah Wolley (Chaloner), *The Queen-Like Closet, or Rich Cabinet: Stored With All Manner of Rare Receipts for Preserving, Candyings and Cookery. Very Pleasant and Beneficial to all Ingenious Persons of the Female Sex*,

Daughters like Betty and Hannah should have been called upon to assist their mother with the household chores not just because it was a copious amount of work but also because it was an integral part of their apprenticeships to become goodwives, mothers, and household managers in their own future homes. The tasks most often allocated to daughters, as suggested by Vives and Erasmus, beginning as early as age six, were sweeping, ironing, dusting, and arranging the table.¹²⁴ Starching, baking, making preserves, food preparation, and geese plucking would also have been part of a daughter's education.¹²⁵ However, the most prevalent chores given to upper-class daughters like Betty and Hannah were scrubbing, laundering, and spinning.¹²⁶

Daughters began to spin, a task that required long hours and lasted for weeks and months, in colonial New England, as early as eleven, the age Hannah likely was when Elizabeth died.¹²⁷ Almost all cotton and linen were spun at home. Flax was grown in the family garden to make shirts, dresses, shifts, aprons, sheets, tablecloths, and the like.¹²⁸ Spinning took up long hours in the lives of girls and young ladies, so much so that they began to be termed spinsters. Thus, Hannah should have been an actual "spinster" for at least part of her life. Spinning became a frequent topic in many young women's journals and diaries.¹²⁹ It was not mentioned in hers.

Spinning was, however, mentioned in the diaries of Abigail and Elizabeth Foote. The diaries of the Foote sisters, who were a similar age to Hannah and Betty and also lived through

Second ed. (1672), 34, 35, 36, 37; Smith, *Complete Housewife*, 175, 176, 183-184, 186, 187, 198, 204. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 222.

¹²⁴ Vives, *Education*, 60; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316, 415; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 51.

¹²⁵ Vives, *Education*, 61-62, 260-263; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 316; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 19-22. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 50-51; Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 66.

¹²⁶ Vives, *Education*, 58-60, 113, 260, 262, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 130-131, 168, 179; Sprigg, "Women's Everyday," 23.

¹²⁷ Vives, *Education*, 58-60, 113, 260, 262, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 179.

¹²⁸ Vives, *Education*, 58-60, 113, 260, 262, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 168.

¹²⁹ Vives, *Education*, 58-60, 113, 260, 262, 270; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 319. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 179.

the American Revolution, provide a window into what Hannah and Betty's typical daily chores may have looked like.¹³⁰ The Foote sisters report one day that they were up before sunrise making apple pies and dumplings for breakfast. After spending the morning doing housework, they later spooled, visited neighbors, made straw brooms, and prepared dinner.¹³¹

None of these chores were mentioned in Hannah's *Memoir*. In fact, Hannah claimed to have been exempt from most of these domestic duties and, therefore, also exempt from this portion of a daughter's education. In her own words, Hannah said, "as I was too feeble to engage in any laborious employments," so she therefore "found considerable leisure for reading."¹³² Instead of laboring away at family chores throughout the day, and thereby obtaining at least part of a female education, Hannah claimed to have spent her days languorously reading novels.

Emotional Instruction

Elizabeth's lack of instructing Hannah in domestic duties, including chores, is evident. Yet, the assessment of her proficiency in other crucial aspects, such as emotional education and control—fundamental for securing an ideal mate—remains uncertain. In the context of an 18th-century daughter's education, which encompassed not only household management but also "emotional instruction," Elizabeth's daughter Hannah faced a different trajectory. While the conventional curriculum emphasized emotional control and deportment, Hannah reported an alternative approach. Instead of fostering emotional restraint, Hannah's upbringing under Elizabeth's guidance leaned towards indulgence and coddling, as opposed to the intended cultivation of emotional composure.¹³³

¹³⁰ Sprigg, "Women's Everyday," 18, 25.

¹³¹ Wolley, *Queen-like Closet*, 56. Sprigg, "Women's Everyday," 23.

¹³² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8.

¹³³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6; Vives, *Education*, 273-280; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 431; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 23, 24.

Young ladies, according to Bynoth, were to be taught to act with “natural ease” and to perform a demeanour of “graceful control.”¹³⁴ Hannah, however, was never able to perfect this performance. She blamed the misguided sentimentality of her mother. Even before the death of her mother, Hannah blamed her parents for indulging her. In fact, Hannah claimed that rather than mentor her in emotional control, Elizabeth educated her “in all the habits of debilitating softness, which probably added to my want of bodily and mental firmness.”¹³⁵ In the same breath of lauding Elizabeth’s sentimentality, Hannah accused her mother of treating her “with exaggerated delicacy.”¹³⁶ Was Hannah celebrating Elizabeth, or was she chiding her?

To help their children develop emotional control, deportment, and manners, Puritan families often sent their children away.¹³⁷ As early as ten, sons and daughters were sent to boarding schools, apprenticeships, and to visit relatives and neighbors to act as nurses and childminders.¹³⁸ As a female educator, mothers often sent daughters out on tasks to be caregivers to ill family members or neighbors. During these assignments, it was customary to stay up all night and watch the infirm, providing them with prayer, encouragement from the bible, warm beverages, and toasty blankets.¹³⁹ Often, young ladies like Hannah and her older sister Betty were sent away to help for months as a part of their apprenticeship process.¹⁴⁰

Puritans, according to Morgan, undertook this task because they feared biological parents would spoil their children. They posited that their children would learn better manners and become more disciplined while residing under the roofs and supervision of other families.¹⁴¹ The

¹³⁴ Vives, *Education*, 126-131. See Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 737.

¹³⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3; Adams, “Shaw Account,” 201-202.

¹³⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 8

¹³⁷ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 77-78.

¹³⁸ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 77-78.

¹³⁹ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 35, 39.

¹⁴⁰ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 39, 48.

¹⁴¹ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 78.

process of “sending out” also played a significant role in the educational journey of daughters.

Illustratively, Samuel Sewall opted to send his daughter away at the tender age of thirteen as part of her developmental path.¹⁴² Similarly, rather than sending Bess out, Hitty Canning coached her daughter Bess while she was away on extended business.¹⁴³

In their absence, mothers would continue to coach and educate their daughters through letters. Mothers would instruct their daughters how to practice what was modeled in the natal home. Through letters, daughters were mentored through emotional episodes connected with separation anxiety and adjusting to new, unfamiliar surroundings. Gently, and at arms-length, mothers would guide their daughters’ emotions, preparing them for challenges they would face when they began households of their own.¹⁴⁴

From a distance, through letters, mothers would offer advice, correction, and encouragement as daughters transitioned from childhood to young adulthood.¹⁴⁵ But, there is no evidence in Hannah’s *Memoir* that Hannah or Betty were sent out. Nothing could prepare them for the permanent separation that occurred during Elizabeth’s ill-timed death. No letters of mentorship, encouragement, or guidance would or could come from the grave.

While Betty’s potential “sending out” remains uncertain, it is clear that Hannah did not undergo such an experience. If she had been sent away, it appears that she received minimal guidance in emotional control and decorum. In her *Memoir*, Hannah candidly reveals the struggle she faced, admitting that she grappled with maintaining control over her intense mood

¹⁴² Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 77.

¹⁴³ Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 727-728.

¹⁴⁴ Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 68. See also Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 747. Vives advises mothers to accompany daughters wherever they go; if a mother needs to go away, she should bring her daughter (Vives, *Education*, 110-111). He also advises daughters to stay at home in seclusion until she is ready to be married (Vives, *Education*, 126-127).

¹⁴⁵ Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 747.

swings. She admits that “instead of that gaiety which is often attended in youth, I was early accustomed to scenes of melancholy and distress.”¹⁴⁶ Hannah further describes her childhood-self as “warm and irritable,” “fluctuating and undecided,” and “extremely timid” while “inclined to melancholy, though sometimes high in spirits.”¹⁴⁷ It seems as if she was having either temper tantrums or manic depressive-like episodes, maybe both. Hannah felt that she could have and should have been trained through these episodes by her mother. She was not.

On top of her emotional mood swings, Hannah seemed incapable of overcoming her battle with fear and anxiety. Lee claims that “the ‘timidity’ of the ‘early years’ followed Miss Adams throughout life; and even when surrounded by intimate friends, it never fully forsook her.”¹⁴⁸ Hannah called this fear of people “awkwardness.”¹⁴⁹ She said, “I must impute that awkwardness of manners, of which I never could divest, myself at an advanced period of life. A consciousness of this awkwardness produced a dislike of the company of strangers.”¹⁵⁰ Lee concluded that Hannah’s fear of people caused her to obsess over and even avoid group gatherings and conversations.

Hannah claimed that not only did her mother’s absence cause her to miss out on vital emotional instruction, which impeded her ease in public settings, but the traumatic loss of her mother also affected her emotionally.¹⁵¹ And her mother was not there to coach her through it. Elizabeth was not there to teach Hannah how to discipline her emotions, and it caused her to shrink from friendships and crowds. Hannah’s arrested development in controlling her emotions,

¹⁴⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8.

¹⁴⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 47.

¹⁴⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 48-50.

¹⁵⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

¹⁵¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

particularly the uneasiness and fear in public places, likely contributed to her lack in the fourth area of female education: societal behaviours, etiquette, and “politeness.”

Societal Behaviours

Societal behaviours were a central part of a daughter’s education and had to be taught, modeled, and practiced, especially if one desired to attract a well-matched mate. Politeness was central and even analogous to these societal behaviours. Politeness, according to Bynoth, was a mastered art form that was “less a set of rules than the ability to create a feeling of ease and belonging.”¹⁵² Hannah bemoaned not learning, let alone mastering, this art. Her acquaintances attest to her lack of a daughter’s education, particularly in this department.¹⁵³

In the process of providing a daughter’s education, mothers would have assisted their daughters in perfecting their performances by providing opportunities to practice or hone skills to overcome their fears. Mothers planned and encouraged social activities to act as practice theatres. Their daughters’ first arena to master societal behaviours and rehearse politeness would have been with family and friends in female networks. Women built connections by working together and enjoyed “leisure” time networking through activities such as sewing, knitting, visiting, walking, riding, and sledding.¹⁵⁴

Young people also honed their societal etiquette and performed politeness through co-ed settings known as “frolics” (of which Vives and Erasmus did not approve). These events were well-planned by churches and families and were often centered around work projects such as sewing bees, corn husks, quilting parties, and barn and house raisings. The work was followed

¹⁵² Bynoth, “A Mother Educating,” 737.

¹⁵³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 48-50.

¹⁵⁴ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 222-223. In Vives, *Education*, 93, 126-127, 139-142; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 426-427, he disagrees with these activities, but that does not mean that they were not happening. The fact that they discouraged them may mean they were common practice.

by refreshments, food, and sometimes dancing. These frolics seemed designed so young people could show off their talent, spend time together, and connect with potential partners.¹⁵⁵

Dinner parties would have been another venue to practice politeness and refine social skills learned at home to be performed in public. Some families in the same era as the Adams sisters, like Abigail and Elizabeth Foote, took practicing politeness and societal behaviors further by sparking (or courting). Sparking or courting included entertaining gentlemen suitors with parlour games or even bundling (sleep together fully clothed—Vives and Erasmus would turn in their graves).¹⁵⁶ However, instead of frolics, sparking, or bundling, Hannah reports an adolescence and young adulthood spent in solitude and seclusion.¹⁵⁷

Hannah mentions “seclusion” several times in relation to her adolescence and young adulthood, claiming that her “life passed in seclusion.”¹⁵⁸ Later, Hannah said she spent her adolescence in “solitude,” which was “preferable to society in general.”¹⁵⁹ Lee reported that Hannah and Betty spent their young adulthood in “great retirement.”¹⁶⁰ An audience could read Hannah’s experience as almost monastic. Though both Vives and Erasmus had highly recommended seclusion for daughters, by Hannah’s day, the ideology had changed. Frances Brooke, publishing *The Old Maid*, suggested that keeping a daughter isolated in seclusion was dangerous. Brooke argued that too much time in isolation prevented daughters from developing what we would consider today as a sense of “street smarts,” making them unaware of the dangers of the opposite sex and vulnerable to be easily taken advantage of and seduced by military men

¹⁵⁵ Vives, *Education*, 93, 126-127, 139-142; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 426-427. See also Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 225, 227.

¹⁵⁶ Vives, *Education*, 93, 126-127, 136-138, 139-142; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 426-427. See Sprigg, “Women’s Everyday,” 23-24.

¹⁵⁷ Vives, *Education*, 110, 125-126; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 423; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 4, 6.

¹⁵⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 4, 6; Vives, *Education*, 110, 125-126; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 423. Vives recommends seclusion, and Erasmus said this was the popular notion.

¹⁵⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

¹⁶⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 56.

and fortune hunters.¹⁶¹ When Hannah did step out of her fortress of solitude to gather with a group of friends, they congregated not for sewing bees or husking parties. Instead, they met in private, almost secretive, scholarly sessions of poetry writing and novel reading.¹⁶² These secretive sessions afforded little venue for Hannah to hone her social skills and practice politeness as a part of her female education, let alone find a potential mate.

Hannah found herself not only deprived of opportunities to refine her politeness during her seclusion but also lamented a lack of correction for a speech impediment. Additionally, she expressed dissatisfaction with not receiving instruction in the art of the curtsy and lacking guidance on how to hold a pen properly.¹⁶³ While Hannah attributes these shortcomings to the Medfield school system, it raises the question of whether these correctible "flaws" should be attributed to Elizabeth, her mother, who served as her primary educator.¹⁶⁴ Were the perceived shortcomings in the student's performance indicative of inherent ineptitude, or do they, in fact, reflect the efficacy of the teacher's pedagogy?

In early Puritan society, there was a legal penalty for parents who failed to discipline their children and provide them with emotional instruction.¹⁶⁵ If parents raised rude children who lacked self-control, authorities reserved the right to intervene and remove the unruly youth, place them with another family, or put them to service.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Francis Brooks, *The Old Maid*, (London, 1755), 46.

¹⁶² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6-7, 60. Though likely not to the same degree, Hannah would have developed social skills within the context of her reading and writing gatherings. Her reading and writing small group sessions were female only, so she was not there able to practice social graces in the presence of a male audience (6-7). Hannah complained it was not enough.

¹⁶³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3, 52. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 18; Longo, "Hannah Adams," 1, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. In her *Memoir*, Hannah seemed just as disappointed in the school system as she was with her mother. Thus, there was a shared responsibility for her inadequate education; however, her perceived lack of what she calls a "female education" seems to rest on her mother's death and her mother's choices.

¹⁶⁵ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 107.

¹⁶⁶ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 107-108.

When parents disciplined their children, it was not always with “the rod” as stereotypes convey. Drawing from the writings of Samuel Willard and Anne Bradshaw, Morgan says that each parent was encouraged to get to know their children individually and raise and discipline them according to their unique bent.¹⁶⁷ Did Hannah's mother spoil her by not teaching her how to control her emotions? Or did Elizabeth, being a sentimental mother, educate and discipline her daughter according to Hannah's unique disposition? And, did this want of a female education contribute to Hannah's life-long single state?

Part III: Vindicating Elizabeth

Illness: Hannah's Story

Having delved into Hannah's articulated rationale for her single status, it becomes imperative to scrutinize four distinct factors contributing to singleness, as elucidated by Froide: finances, religion, illness, and family responsibilities. Finances and religion are both likely candidates for the Adams sisters' singleness. Just before the American Revolution, the family endured several significant financial setbacks.¹⁶⁸ Poverty, therefore, could have been the reason Hannah remained single. However, her younger sister Lucy married, even at the height of the revolution, so financial duress could not be the whole reason for their never-married status.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Erasmus, *Institutio*, 416-417, 437.; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19, 22-23, 25, 41; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 48; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 103.

¹⁶⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6; Adams, “Shaw Account,” 191, 201. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 187-189. Froide claims that one of the primary complaints of a “woman doomed to a life of singleness” was “due to the lack of a marriage portion” (187). She points out, however, that though it was “a common trope in eighteenth-century literature,” it is not as evident how much of this purported lack of finances “reflected reality,” and “how far down the social scale it was a factor (187). In England there was an issue among the elites for at least three centuries (from the late 1500s to the 1900s) of “dowry inflation” (187). Other women were bereft of a dowry portion due to losing a father or a father who had mismanaged funds (188). This is why we see the rise of the lotteries for women without dowries. At first glance, this would undoubtedly be the case with Hannah and perhaps her sister, Betty, given that their father, Thomas, had a substantial financial loss during the American Revolution. It was what I had assumed: Hannah had remained single when I first read the *Memoir*. However, after digging deeper, I later point out that this is not the entire reason for their never-married status, as their younger full sister Lucy marries despite the family's financial duress in the middle of the Revolution (see Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 50).

¹⁶⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284.

Financial reasons will, nevertheless, be examined in the context of Hannah's relationship with her father Thomas in Chapter Four.

Religion could have equally been the reason for Hannah's and Betty's never-married state. The era in which they lived was straddled by two Protestant religious "Awakenings." Hannah talks about growing up in monastic-like seclusion. Was that seclusion religiously induced? Although Hannah was a religious scholar and became an accomplished theologian, it is doubtful. Religious possibilities were explored in Chapter One in connection to Hannah's relationship with her Aunt Mary, and ruled out. This section will discuss the two remaining reasons Froide lists for women's single states, sickness and family obligations, which were arguably related to Elizabeth's pedagogical approach to her daughter's education.

Hannah's life was marred by persistent illness, a condition that plagued her since infancy. Her earliest recollections were not of joy but rather of enduring pain. Afflicted by chronic sickness, she was too unwell to attend school, forge childhood friendships, or engage in the typical pursuits of play.¹⁷⁰ Her *Memoir* reveals that Hannah bore the weight of a "weak and irritable nervous system," rendering her unable to find pleasure in the amusements cherished by children.¹⁷¹ This state of ill health persisted throughout her adolescence, hindering her ability to carry out even basic chores, as discussed earlier in this chapter. This debilitation extended to her pursuit of a daughter's education.¹⁷² Sickness followed Hannah into adulthood, becoming a prominent theme in her *Memoir's* pages.

After the Revolution, Hannah was too sick to teach in a classroom. Instead, she tutored three university-bound students in Latin and Greek.¹⁷³ To supplement her tutoring income, she

¹⁷⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191, 201.

¹⁷¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191, 201.

¹⁷² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191, 201.

¹⁷³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

took up writing. Nevertheless, even writing and research were stressful to her system. Just after publishing her breakthrough book *Alphabetical Compendium*, Hannah became so ill that her doctors predicted her imminent demise.¹⁷⁴ Hannah recovered but experienced several relapses, including a number of bouts of near blindness.¹⁷⁵

During Hannah's era, the association between sickness and perpetual singleness (spinsterhood) was not a mere coincidence. In colonial and early America, single individuals faced not only societal demonization but also a symbolic linkage to illness. Before the Protestant Reformation, according to William Hayley, writing in 1785, single, never-married women who had committed to lifelong celibacy (whom Hayley refers to as “monastic virgins”) were connected to disease, not as diseased themselves, but as supernatural healers. The various *Lives of the Saints* were filled with devout and celibate never-married women who were, either during their lifetimes or even from the grave, sought out for their power to heal. Some monastic members of “the sisterhood” of singleness included Saint Ositha, Saint Bridget of Scotland, and Saint Agnes.¹⁷⁶ To Hayley, the decision of a pre-Reformation female to remain single throughout her life was contagious, but it was contagious via religious inspiration.¹⁷⁷

After the Reformation, however, never-married women became associated with sickness and disease not as healers but as carriers of contagion. S. Lanser, in “Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid” found in *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800*, argues that in early modern England, spinsterhood was portrayed as a contagious state, particularly perilous to men. The prevalent print culture depicted never-married

¹⁷⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 16.

¹⁷⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 24-26.

¹⁷⁶ William Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*, By a friend to the sisterhood. In three volumes, vol. 3., (London: 1793), 64, 66–67, 70.

¹⁷⁷ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol.3, 50.

women not only as “Amazon cannibals” poised to consume but also as the “harbingers of disease and death.” Tumour-like, these women were labeled as “masses of diseases.”¹⁷⁸ Unmarried women were characterized as “sources of acrimonious liquids” who “spewed poisonous venom.”¹⁷⁹ Lanier asserts that the body of the never-married woman was directly linked to the hysteria surrounding the disease. Furthermore, popular poetry depicted the state of the never-married female as an “assault upon the non-productive female body,” depicted as a “tomb of contagion, putrefaction, and disease.”¹⁸⁰

In the poem *A Satyr Upon Old Maids*, published in London in 1713, never-married women are “the Scourge of Providence,” who are “Full of foul Diseases.”¹⁸¹ These women were branded as “lepers and Lechers fill’d with Stench and Sores.”¹⁸² They were associated with the “Plague, or leprosy, the Gout or Stone.” “The Clap or pox” was considered “a better portion.” She was a “foul Mommy” who exhaled “strong Pestilence.”¹⁸³ She had “Black stumps,” “putrid lungs,” and goo-filled eyes.¹⁸⁴ According to this anonymous poet, never-married women were the “Pestilence society will never be without,” whose “foul Carcasses,” were filled with “Numberless Diseases.”¹⁸⁵

Similarly, the never-married woman is portrayed in the first volume of William Hayley's *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids* as an illness of both the mind and body. Hayley claims the public had determined that perpetual single status, which he refers to as

¹⁷⁸ Susan Lanser, “Singular Politics: The Rise of the British Nation and the Production of the Old Maid” in *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 299.

¹⁷⁹ Lanser, “Singular Politics,” 299-302. Lanser quotes from the poem *Satyr Upon Old Maids* (London: W. Denham, 1713) 12, sometimes believed to have been written by Marshall Smith (Lanser, “Singular Politis,” 317).

¹⁸⁰ Lanser, “Singular Politics,” 312.

¹⁸¹ *Satyr Upon Old Maids*.

¹⁸² *Satyr Upon Old Maids*, 10.

¹⁸³ *Satyr Upon Old Maids*, 7-8.

¹⁸⁴ *Satyr Upon Old Maids*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ *Satyr Upon Old Maids*, 9.

“Autumnal virginity” is “a disorder for which language can afford no name,” as well as “a compound of mental and bodily distemper.” According to Hayley, it was a widespread opinion that the diagnosis of “spinsterhood” was, in fact, “more dreadful to support, and perhaps more difficult to cure, than any distinct maladies either of mind or body.”¹⁸⁶

Hayley connected the body of the never-married woman with suicidal ideation. He pathologized envy and meddlesome behavior as symptomatic of mental illness, which he diagnoses as “one of the most incurable mental maladies.”¹⁸⁷ His prognosis for meddlesomeness? Hayley considered prying spinsters “a kind of mental fever” and infectious disease that “rarely fails to infect the whole tribe.”¹⁸⁸

In this first volume, Hayley develops both the archetype of the delusional old maid and depicts several other pathologies, including thanatophobia (fear of dying), cacophobia (fear of ugliness), and gerascophobia (fear of aging).¹⁸⁹ In the old maid literature reviewed for this dissertation, the “crazy cat lady” archetype emerges for the first time, as an obsessive compulsion disordered never-married women who “takes a dog, parrot, or monkey to love her because she has no lover.”¹⁹⁰ Hayley observes, “she collects a group of animals, and lavishes upon those delicate endearments, which she has no opportunity of bestowing upon a man,” describing her home as “a little ark.”¹⁹¹ Her symptoms include professing to have an aversion to children due to hyperacusis. However, her animals make more noise “than a house of

¹⁸⁶ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 9-10.

¹⁸⁷ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 27.

¹⁸⁸ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 20, 85.

¹⁸⁹ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 56-59.

¹⁹⁰ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 69.

¹⁹¹ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 71.

children.”¹⁹² Because she spends more money on her pets than her nieces and nephews, this woman is also categorized by Hayley as abnormal.¹⁹³

Like Hayley, Richard Allestree in *The Ladies Calling* (1673) speaks of singleness as a state of disease. Allestree claimed this diseased state of perpetual singlehood needed a cure or an amulet to ward it off. The amulet Allestree suggests? “Modesty, obedience, and virtue in speech and behavior.” Strikingly, even in her *Memoir*, Hannah seemed to embody the diseased stereotype associated with the never-married body.¹⁹⁴

Looking back again at the early 16th century and *The Education of a Christian Woman*, Vives argues that when parents were choosing a spouse for their children, the good health of the potential mate was vital. Vives posited that “much attention should be given to good health, both for the sake of household duties, which often demand a healthy person at the helm, and for wife and children, whom he will afflict with his illness if it is contagious. This is to be guarded against all the more carefull [sic] if it is a foul and horrible disease, one of those that doctors call hereditary.” Vives also deemed that potential spouses with a propensity towards, or a family history of, insanity and mental illness were to be avoided when making marital matches.¹⁹⁵

In the 16th century, Erasmus emphasized the importance of marrying a healthy spouse and avoiding unwell potential mates. In his *Insitutio*, he listed sickness as a reason not to marry. Potential mates with leprosy, epilepsy, lameness, and dropsy were to be especially ruled out. Erasmus saw physical disabilities as impediments to performing marital duties.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 72.

¹⁹³ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 72.

¹⁹⁴ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling, in Two Parts* (Oxford, 1673), 146-147.

¹⁹⁵ Vives, *Education*, 159.

¹⁹⁶ Erasmus, *Insitutio*, 275, 326.

Moving forward to 18th-century New England, illness was perceived not only as a personal setback but also as a hindrance to the traditional roles of wife and mother. Women who had experienced substantial illnesses were discouraged, if not outright disqualified, from undertaking the demanding roles of wife and motherhood—positions already laden with significant responsibilities, especially in the most favorable circumstances.¹⁹⁷ Women with propensities towards sicknesses were not deemed to possess the fortitude to endure the arduous tasks that being a wife, mother, and deputy husband demanded.¹⁹⁸ Motherhood alone taxed the body. Pregnancies, childbirth, and nursing while minding several small children were beyond challenging and sometimes deadly, even for a woman with a healthy body. In addition to managing robust households and factoring in the rigorous schedule of chores discussed earlier, it is no surprise that optimal health was a prerequisite to wifehood and motherhood. Illness and deformity were some of the only valid theological and legal reasons not to marry in Puritan New England.

If Hannah was too ill to attend school or participate in family chores, how could she manage her household duties as a goodwife? If she was too infirm to manage a classroom as a teacher, how would she manage a household of not just children but also servants, workers, and boarders? To protect her daughter from a vocation that her body could not endure, it is likely that Elizabeth intentionally did not prepare Hannah with a female education.

From Hannah's testimony of her lifelong battle with illness and infirmity, it is arguable that Elizabeth was not neglectful in providing Hannah with a daughter's education, as Hannah had led her readers to believe. Instead, it is likely that Elizabeth, as a discerning mother, knew that Hannah's infirmity would, and should, prevent her from becoming a wife and mother.

¹⁹⁷ Vives, *Education*, 159; Erasmus, *Insitutio*, 275, 326. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 185.

¹⁹⁸ Vives, *Education*, 159; Erasmus, *Insitutio*, 275, 326. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 186.

Elizabeth knew her daughter. She knew Hannah's fragility and propensity towards illness.

Elizabeth tailored Hannah's educational plan to accommodate Hannah's unique needs. Elizabeth had the foresight to know that if she had prepared Hannah to become a goodwife and mother, Hannah's fragility and pain would only have exasperated her condition.

Family Responsibilities: Betty's Story

Hannah introduced her sister, Betty, to her audience by juxtaposing the pair,

Still, however, I was blessed with a sister of similar taste and sentiments, but very different in disposition. I was warm and irritable in my temper; she, placid and even. I was fluctuation and undecided; she, steady and judicious. I was extremely timid; she blended softness with courage and fortitude. I was inclined to be melancholy, though sometimes high in spirits; she was uniformly serene and cheerful.¹⁹⁹

Betty seemed to possess the polar opposite characteristics of Hannah. Where Hannah was awkward and timid, Betty had grace and poise. Where Hannah was moody and sullen, Betty was fearless, resolute, and cheerful. If Betty was not Hannah's opposite, she certainly had had very different experiences. Those experiences arguably included different approaches to education.

Unlike Hannah, Betty was well equipped in all four quadrants of a "proper" daughter's education. In the area of household management, for example, like Bess Canning, as early as 13, Betty was well prepared and able to step in to manage the Adams's household after Elizabeth's death. Betty became fully responsible for at least raising her two younger sisters, even to the point that she successfully mentored her younger sister Lucy in a proper female education. As a sign of her success, Lucy married during the height of the revolution.²⁰⁰

Likewise, as a household manager for her younger siblings, Betty had to have been equally proficient in the rigorous tasks of household chores. Hannah reports that Betty was so apt at

¹⁹⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8.

²⁰⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 50; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284.

needlework and sewing that on top of her onerous household duties, she sent out her work to earn extra money to help with household expenses.²⁰¹

Not only did Betty master household management and chores, she also eclipsed Hannah in the areas of societal behaviours and emotional control. Hannah reports that Betty was poised, wise, restrained, and centred. Hannah also claimed that Betty excelled at performing all the required attributes of “politeness,” areas in which Hannah admits to failing wretchedly. According to Hannah, Betty was “placid and even,” “steady and judicious,” “blended softness with courage and fortitude,” and was “uniformally serene and cheerful.”²⁰² Elizabeth would have been responsible for her student’s stellar success. But, if Betty had been so well equipped, why did she remain single?

Family responsibility was another main reason why women, like Betty, never married. According to Froide, many never-married women reported remaining single due to family obligations.²⁰³ These family obligations most frequently entailed caring for an infirm or elderly parent, especially a widowed one. It also included caregiving for the young, sick, and elderly.²⁰⁴ Although she had been equipped to become a wife and mother, Betty stepped up to fulfill family responsibilities when her mother died, therefore, would have set aside any potential for becoming a wife and mother in her own right. Betty's single status due to caregiving expectations should be no surprise. Single and celibate women have a long history in connection to caregiving and healing. Throughout the early modern genre of old maid literature, the caricature of the spinster healer and nurse was nearly unilateral or, at the very least, consistent.

²⁰¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 6, 10-12.

²⁰² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8.

²⁰³ Froide, *Never Married*, 187.

²⁰⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, 187.

The various *Lives of the Saints* were filled with devout and celibate, never-married women who were, either during their lifetimes or even after death, sought out for their power to heal. Some monastic members of “the sisterhood” of singleness included Saint Ositha, Saint Bridget of Scotland, and Saint Agnes.²⁰⁵ Later, this feminine virginal-healer figure evolved when lifelong single celibate nuns emerged as caregivers in the medieval hospital.²⁰⁶

As early as 1697, in “Letter XIII. Against Old Maids” and “Answer to Letter XIII. In Defence of Old Maids,” in John Dutton’s *The Challenge, Sent by a Young Lady to Sir Thomas—Or, The Female War*, never-married women were framed as nurses. According to a fictitious “Sir Thomas,” after a lengthy list of excessive slurs towards never-married women, Thomas conceded that single women were “useless” unless working “in a Hospital.”²⁰⁷ In response to his lengthy and detailed barrage of never-married women, a “Madam Snell” responded by reminding “Sir Thomas” and his critical male friends not to forget the “old maid” nurses who cared for them as infants, soothing and rocking them through the night while they were teething, and attending them while they had the croup, or spent days vomiting, changing clothes and graciously providing bedside meals and carefully prepared remedies. She also warns the male critics of the never-married woman to mind their degrading tone because it would one day be the same single women attending them when they are old, alone, and dying.²⁰⁸ Betty was remaining single to take on the very traditional virginal role of healer and “dry nurse.”

²⁰⁵ Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*, By a friend to the sisterhood. In three volumes, vol. 3., (London: 1793), 64, 66–67, 70.

²⁰⁶ Penelope D. Johnson, “The Cloistering of Medieval Nuns: Release or Repression, Reality or Fantasy?” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private Women’s History*, eds. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (New York, Cornell University Press, 1992), 27.

²⁰⁷ John Dutton, “Letter XIII. Against Old Maids,” *The Challenge, Sent by a Young Lady to Sir Thomas—Or The Female War*, 142.

²⁰⁸ John Dutton, “Answer to Letter XIII. In Defence of Old Maids,” *The Challenge, Sent by a Young Lady to Sir Thomas—Or The Female War*, 145–147.

Even in the scathing 1713 poem "A Satyr Upon Old Maids," the poetic voice claims that never-married women could be found in hospitals, albeit nursing would be their vocation until they experienced dementia.²⁰⁹ Likewise, in Bernard Mandeville's 1742 work *The Virgin Unmask'D: or, Female Dialogues*, the unreliable maiden aunt narrator Lucinda admits that her never-married status provided her with the leisure time to master the arts of midwifery and medicine and even anatomy.²¹⁰

In his survey of old maids ancient and modern (1785), Hayley includes a sketch of a purported non-fictitious contemporary never-married nurse named Chariessa. Chariessa resided with her brother, who decided he did not want his sister to marry because he found it more convenient to have her act as a dry nurse to his many children.²¹¹ Chariessa's brother regularly scared away decent suitors. The brother grew quite anxious when Chariessa was called upon to visit her married but barren sister, who suffered from a severe illness due to her depressed spirit. Chariessa's brother does not worry over the suffering sister. Instead, he frets that Chariessa's delay was due to her meeting a potential suitor.²¹² A doctor supposedly observing Chariessa for several years concluded to Mandeville's narrator that she was one of the happiest mortals he had ever encountered.²¹³ Whether or not the sketch of Chariessa was genuine or metaphorical, it represents societal expectations of a never-married daughter in colonial New England; at the very least, she was held up as an exemplum to Mandeville's intended never-married female audience.

²⁰⁹ *Satyr Upon Old Maids*, 10.

²¹⁰ Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 137.

²¹¹ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 203.

²¹² Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 207-212.

²¹³ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol I, 216.

Given Betty's extensive training as caregiver and household manager, contrary to Hannah's accusation of neglect, Elizabeth emerges as anything but an inattentive mother who failed to impart a daughter's education to her girls. She diligently provided Betty with such an education. Recognizing Hannah's frailty, Elizabeth likely displayed foresight, understanding that Hannah lacked the strength and resilience required for the demanding roles of a wife and mother. Nevertheless, Elizabeth took on the responsibility of mentoring Betty. This guidance made Betty poised, astute, self-disciplined, and proficient in essential needlework and household management skills.²¹⁴

Remarkably, at 12, Betty assumed the role of a surrogate mother to her younger siblings. Her capabilities extended further as she became a long-term caregiver to her ailing sister, Hannah. In this light, Elizabeth's actions reflect not neglect but a thoughtful and strategic approach to each of her daughter's unique needs and abilities.

Hannah, with her intermittent but likely lifelong need for a caregiver, would have been well aware of this reality, as would Elizabeth and Betty. In the scenario where Elizabeth had not passed away, Hannah might have spent her entire life in her childhood home, receiving attentive care and guidance from her mother. However, the unfortunate reality was Elizabeth's death. Consequently, the lifelong role of caregiver would have naturally fallen upon Betty's shoulders. Despite having received a comprehensive "proper" daughter's education from Elizabeth, Betty's life trajectory would have diverged significantly from Hannah's due to the unforeseen responsibility of caregiving and familial duties. By assuming the crucial roles of surrogate mother, particularly to young Lucy, and caregiver to her ailing sister Hannah, Betty was likely

²¹⁴ It is hard to determine here if Hannah's mother chose not to provide Hannah with a female education because she assumed Hannah would not marry, or if, because of Hannah's illness, Elizabeth was protecting Hannah from the rigorous role she would need to take on as a wife and mother. It may have been both.

either pressured by family, or chose to put her own life and prospects on hold. Betty's single status therefore stemmed from a sense of duty and family responsibility, setting her on a path different from Hannah's.

Conclusion: Did Elizabeth Fail as a Mom/Goodwife?

In 1763, the French and Indian War drew to a close. France, England, and Spain signed the Treaty of Paris.²¹⁵ In her *Summary History of New England*, Hannah reviewed the role of Massachusetts soldiers, which, according to Hannah, numbered 23,800.²¹⁶ Hannah claimed that Massachusetts men were present at important battles, while Massachusetts pirates were responsible for harassing the French by sea.²¹⁷ Britain had acquired vast parcels of land, including Canada and several islands in the West Indies.²¹⁸ The Acadian refugees left Medfield to return to their homeland in the north.²¹⁹ Elizabeth Clark Adams was dying of unknown causes at the young age of 33. She left behind five young children. Betty and Hannah's three younger siblings were only nine, six, and three.²²⁰

New England custom in the 18th century required around-the-clock care known as "watching" for the chronically ill, even after death, and until the burial.²²¹ The deceased's bodies were displayed in open caskets on tables or saw horses in the parlour. In the Massachusetts countryside, it was customary to leave the bodies in open caskets in the front yard, day and night, so neighbors could pay respects without disturbing the family.²²² As there was no embalming, the burial would have been quick. The ministers would arrive at the home and say a prayer while

²¹⁵ Adams, *Summary History*, 231-232. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 39.

²¹⁶ Adams, *Summary History*, 228.

²¹⁷ Adams, *Summary History*, 228-229.

²¹⁸ Adams, *Summary History*, 227-228. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 39.

²¹⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 152.

²²⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283-284. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 26.

²²¹ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 39.

²²² Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 40.

the ringing of the church bells marked the commencement of the procession from home to churchyard.²²³ The following is an epitaph written for Elizabeth by an “Episcopal minister” who was a friend of the family:

Beneath this monument of love and truth,
Rear’d by fair gratitude’s persuasive call,
Rest the remains of innocence, and youth;
Esteem’d, lamented, and beloved by all.

Fond of retirement, and of rural ease,
Her sober wishes never loved to stray.
Heaven was her aim, her study, how to please,
And carefully improve each fleeting day;
To worth, a friend, a parent to the poor.
Such was the woman could the saint be more?’²²⁴

The epitaph paints Elizabeth as the ideal New England goodwife. Hannah seemed to have arrested development partly due to her mother’s death, at least in the area of conducting herself in public spaces. Hannah had laid the blame primarily on her mother’s sudden passing. In her *Memoir*, Hannah calls Elizabeth “my excellent mother.” Yet, she does little to describe Elizabeth to her audience. Hannah seems only interested in including her “excellent” and “sentimental” mother for the sole purpose of explaining the lifelong challenges that she faced due to a lack of daughter’s education. This lack resulted in an inability to work the room in social circles and was inadvertently couched throughout her *Memoir* as an excuse for her singleness.

But Elizabeth had not shirked her duties as the ideal goodwife, as Hannah had lamented. At least she had not in the case of providing her daughters with a solid female education. Instead, as demonstrated in a close read of how she educated Betty compared to how she educated Hannah, Elizabeth proved to have acted as any good Puritan parent would, just as Willard and

²²³ Nylander, *Snug Fireside*, 40.

²²⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 55-56.

Bradshaw advised. Elizabeth understood Hannah's individual proclivities and raised her accordingly.

Should this be the end of this dissertation? Women were supposed to live in a female world while relying on a female network of support made up of their female kin. Yet, Hannah relied on an almost entirely male matrix, at least in part because both her mother and aunt died when she was young.

In *Bonds of Womanhood*, Nancy Cott suggests that women primarily forged reciprocal relationships among other women, a view echoed by Smith-Rosenberg and Chambers-Schiller. Despite the loss of significant familial female figures, like when Hannah lost her mother Elizabeth and maiden aunt Mary, Cott and Smith-Rosenberg posit that typically historical systems compensated for such disruptions, claiming that extended female networks in the absence of a mother continued to mentor and guide the development of a daughter, ensuring the cultivation her identity as a goodwife and mother.²²⁵

Contrary to the typical historical pattern, Hannah's extended female familial network that included sisters, cousins, aunts, and even at least one grandmother remained in absentia, at least in her *Memoir*. One can only posit that the absence of her quite vast female relations, many of whom resided in very close proximity (in the same town, and a few even in the same household), can only be attributed to a lack of shared lived experiences due to Hannah's illness and subsequent alternative educational path.²²⁶ As a never-married woman, likely due to her illnesses, she could never have conversations with her aunts and cousins about the woes of wifedom, or the challenges of parenthood, or the rigours of childbirth, thereby likely leaving her

²²⁵ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168; Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World," 9, 11, 17-18; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

²²⁶ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282, 354.

incapable of forming the deep bonds which occur through shared lived experiences with the female-kin relationships who remained after the death of her mother. This disconnect likely pushed her preferences towards male connections who, unlike her female kin, shared Hannah's interests and educational pathway. Thus, Hannah's atypical male matrix of support was at least somewhat catalyzed by Elizabeth's decision to not provide or inability to offer Hannah with a typical "daughter's education." But why did it matter that her mother did not provide her with a daughter's education and Hannah subsequently remained single throughout her life? Through looking at the life of the woman who filled in the maternal gap created by the death of Hannah's mother, her maiden Aunt Mary, the next chapter will explore why Hannah's single status mattered and the stigma connected to it in colonial New England.

Chapter Two: Mary Adams: “An Aunt with Maternal Fondness”

The year 1735 was charged with a series of Protestant spiritual events. Rebirths convulsed and reverberated not only in New England but across the Atlantic, affecting much of the Western world. This same year, less than 100 miles away from Mary Adams’s home in Medfield, Massachusetts, the preaching of 31-year-old Jonathan Edwards initiated thousands of conversions, which erupted with cries, shrieks, and groans.¹ Across the ocean in England, Oxford scholar George Whitefield experienced his conversion on the same day as the revivalist Howell Harris in Wales.² These conversion experiences were shortly followed by a deep spiritual awakening of the brothers who would soon found the Methodist movement: John and Charles Wesley.³ The year marked the commencement of what would come to be known as the First Great Awakening. It was also the year Mary Adams (1714-1769) turned 21. Mary Adams spent much of her adulthood in an era animated with religious fervor.

Mary and her hometown of Medfield seemed mysteriously untouched by this evangelical excitement. This is evident in the absence of comment in her records and the writings of her niece and neighbour. In 1740, when Mary was 26, Whitefield was making his ten-week tour of New England. During this itineracy, Whitefield preached some 200-plus sermons, often more than twice a day, to large outdoor crowds because there were too many people to fit in the churches. Yet, neither Whitefield’s visit, nor Edward’s fiery sermons, make the cut for either William Tilden’s *History of Medfield* or Mary’s niece Hannah’s *Summary History of New England*.

¹ Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Dowers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 77.

² Noll, *Rise of Evangelism*, 80.

³ Noll, *Rise of Evangelism*, 81.

Mary Adams was the first of four never-married single people to reside in the eleven-member Adams household in 18th-century Puritan-Congregationalist New England.⁴ This household included Thomas (senior), his wife Mary, their never-married daughter Mary, daughter Mary's brother Thomas (junior), his wife Elizabeth, and their five children Betty, Hannah, Lucy, Louis, and Newton.⁵ The century during which these four never-married Adams family members remained single (Mary Junior, Hannah, Betty, and Louis) was not only marked by the religious fervor of more than one awakening, but was also notable for the emergence of the derogatory caricature of the spinster or old maid.⁶ A never-married adult in the colonies, especially in 18th-century New England, was associated with eccentricity, awkwardness, isolation, burden, sadness, and a lack of fulfillment.⁷ Moreover, singleness in 18th-century New England was not just a stigma. It was also a sin. This "sin" carried with it legal ramifications limiting living arrangements, property rights, and occupations. To make matters worse, the

⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

⁵ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

⁶ It is likely Hannah's never-married brother Luis, and very certainly her never-married great-uncles suffered from similar stigmatization. According to John Gilbert McCurdy's *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), in colonial America, there was "A popular link between unmarried men and moral depravity" (2). With the exceptions of university professors and priests, McCurdy claims that the existence of the bachelor in early colonial America was that of a "man-child" (7). A bachelor's "reputation could be linked to sexual immortality" (2). Like never-married women, 17th-century laws and customs "severely circumscribed" bachelors lived under fathers with no freedom of movement, no political rights, no sexual freedom. McCurdy argues that in the 16th and 17th centuries, single men were "universally unwelcome," "rare and viewed with disapproval," to the point they were "almost a suspected class of criminals" (4). Like never-married women, bachelors faced the same 1636 Massachusetts law against living alone. Still, they also experienced pecuniary punishment for their status (there was a tax on Bachelorhood in Maryland during the Seven Years War) (4). Like never-married women, bachelors were more likely to be accused of witchcraft in New England (4). Bachelorhood was interpreted as "a sign of moral depravity," and "founders of the republic" saw bachelors as "disorderly men," and, like never-married females, bachelors were labelled as abnormal (4). McCurdy claims bachelors were dismissed "as immature, unmanly, or corrupt" (5). He argues that changes began to occur 17th century when colonies started to place more tax burden on single men to lighten the load for married men with children to care for and when people began to marry for emotional reasons, but that the present-day construction of the bachelor as the paragon of masculine bravado (or poster-boy for toxic masculinity, depending on your reading of the bachelor body) did not emerge until the 20th century (6).

⁷ Mary Kelly, "A Woman Alone: Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century America" *The New England Quarterly* 51, no.2 (1978): 210; Marie S. Molloy, "A Noble Class of Old Maids: Surrogate Motherhood, Sibling Support, and Self-Sufficiency in the Nineteenth-Century White, Southern Family" *Journal of Family History* 41, no.4 (2016): 402; Froide, *Never Married*, 45.

stigma attached to singleness was perpetuated by an emerging print industry. What caused such stigma? And, why would four members of the Adams household endure societal scorn and church condemnation? Through the case study of the first never-married woman in the Adams household, Mary, and her relationship with her niece Hannah, this chapter will explore the role of the church, state, and print culture in creating and perpetuating the 18th-century stigma around singleness.

The chapter will show that Hannah's early life was that of a typical early modern New England female, nested safely within a tight-knit and nurturing female familial network, as exemplified by her maternal-like relationship with her aunt Mary. However, due at least in part to a series of devastating losses, Hannah became atypical in pivoting from her reliance on female familial networks to cultivating and depending upon atypical elite non-familial male friendships. The chapter will specifically explore Mary's role in initiating Hannah's atypical alteration from favouring female to male support systems. This chapter will also question previously held beliefs around the supposedly insignificant and even burdensome role of never-married women in the 18th-century New England household. Like Amy Froide in *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, this chapter will challenge the idea that never-married women in the 18th century were the burdensome outliers of the family unit, illustrating instead that never-married women held a central role in the household, often buttressing and leading to the survival of the family unit, especially in times of trial and crisis.⁸

Part I of this chapter provides a brief biographical sketch of Hannah's aunt, Mary Adams. Part II analyzes the never-married women through theological and legal frameworks of 18th-century New England. Turning from church and state, Part III surveys the never-married woman

⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 45.

as she appeared in 17th- and 18th-century popular literature, illustrating the emergence of a new genre that I call “old maid lit.” Finally, through the lens of the unmarried Adams women Mary, Hannah, and Betty, Part IV explores modalities through which the never-married Adams women might have escaped the stigma attached to their status, and in doing so, begin to become embedded in male rather than female networks. Before diving into this examination, however, it is first important to delineate a clear framework for how this chapter will define and discuss the terms spinsterhood, singleness, and celibacy.

Despite the fact that today we, as modern readers, discern the statuses of singleness and celibacy as separate and distinct, in the early modern period examined in this chapter, and subsequently, more broadly throughout this dissertation, the concepts of celibacy and spinsterhood were arguably deeply enmeshed, even to the point they were nearly analogous. In the mid-17th century, singleness and celibacy were not just cognate, they were nearly synonymous. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in 1659, “celibate” meant “to restrain from marriage, to compel to celibacy.”⁹ Even as late as 1827, when Hannah was nearing the end of her life, the *OED* claims that celibacy was defined as “unmarried, single; bound not to marry.”¹⁰ Similarly, Van Dyne defines the term spinster as “the state of abstaining from sexual intercourse and activity, often for religious devotion or even life-long chastity.”¹¹ These definitions exemplify not only how entangled the concepts of singleness, spinsterhood, and celibacy were, at least until the early 19th century, but also how societal norms anticipated, and even demanded, that to remain single meant to abstain from sexual activity. Based on how the

⁹ Celibate,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=celibate> (accessed October 18, 2024). See also Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 47

¹⁰ Celibate,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=celibate> (accessed October 18, 2024). See also Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 47

¹¹ Devon Elizabeth Van Dyne, “Celibacy in the British North American Colonies, c. 1600-1750,” PhD. diss., (University of California, 2015), 4-5.

terms were often conflated and deemed analogous in the periods examined in this chapter, as illustrated by the *OED* definitions, this chapter will treat them as such. While doing so, this chapter will also endeavour to elucidate how the concepts of singleness, spinsterhood, and celibacy became so enmeshed.

In a similar vein, Di Leonardo provides a Western definition of “folk spinsterhood.” This “folk” definition includes six characteristics: spinsters must never have married; the spinster had to be celibate; the spinster could not be a biological mother; the spinster had to be heterosexual; the spinster lacked kinship by marriage; and the spinster did not reside in a communal religious context.¹² This “folk” definition, as outlined by Di Leonardo, omits single women who worked in sex industries as well as nuns.¹³ This chapter will do the same.

I reiterate here, as in my introduction, that I by no means believe or imply that because a single person, male or female, in New England was not married they practiced sexual abstinence in every case. Nevertheless, because the working definitions at the time conflated celibacy with singleness and spinsterhood in the early modern period discussed in this dissertation, as demonstrated both by the *OED* definitions as well as definitions and folk definitions put forth by Di Leonardo and Van Dyne, in this dissertation and especially within the framework of this chapter which discusses the history of the stigma, connected to spinsterhood and singleness, singleness and celibacy will be examined and discussed as such.

Part I: Mary Adams

In her *Memoir*, Hannah reports that she experienced a traumatic loss shortly following her mother's also very traumatic death. This loss served as one of several catalysts for Hannah's professional writing career, and potentially for her life-long single status: the death of her never-

¹² Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 48.

¹³ Di Leonardo, “Warrior Virgins,” 48.

married Aunt Mary. In her own words, Hannah reflected on her grief: “soon after, I was bereaved of an aunt who was attached to me with an almost maternal fondness.”¹⁴ Hannah’s account of her aunt is scant. In her *Memoir*, Hannah’s aunt remains unnamed. This aunt is unmentioned in her earlier and shorter autobiographical account written for William S. Shaw. There is no recollection of fond memories or details about her aunt's life. Hannah dedicates only one sentence to the tragedy.

Though unnamed, it is apparent through genealogical records that the aunt who had died was Hannah’s father's older sister, Mary. Nine years older than Hannah's father, Thomas, Mary had been born to Thomas Adams (senior) and Mary Ellis in 1714.¹⁵ Mary’s father, Thomas (senior), had been a prominent townsman. He sat as a selectman most of his adult life. He was also reportedly one of Medfield’s most successful land proprietors and businessmen.¹⁶ Despite this success, Thomas and Mary had only three children. Hannah, the eldest, was born in 1712, Mary in 1714, and Thomas in 1725.¹⁷

This family was unusually small for Puritan New England, where goodwives often gave birth to a dozen or more children.¹⁸ There is no record of stillbirths or childhood deaths in the family. There is, however, a record of Mary’s sister Hannah’s death, which occurred in adulthood, only two years after she married David Lovell in 1736.¹⁹ Despite his small household, Thomas (senior), who was known not only for his business acumen but also for his “extreme

¹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

¹⁵ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

¹⁶ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

¹⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

¹⁸ Jane C. Nylander, *Our Own Snug Fireside; Images of the New England Home 1760-1860*. 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1993), 26-27.

¹⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

frugality,” built a large two-story frame home on Elm Street in the south plain of Medfield, where Mary would have spent her entire life.²⁰

In 18th-century New England, almost every woman married. In the 18th century, the word *woman* was analogous to the word *wife*.²¹ That Mary, and her nieces Betty and Hannah (as well as her nephew Louis), remained unmarried in mid-18th-century New England was an anomaly.

Puritan congregational communities saw singleness not only as damning but also as a danger that invited the twin sins of idleness and sexual vice.²² Being never-married was also a breach of God’s first command to humankind—to “be fruitful and multiply.”²³ Singleness was not just a sin strongly discouraged by the Puritan church, it was also reinforced legally by the state. Legal restrictions were placed on single people's living arrangements, property rights, and occupations. Discouraged by the church and legally reinforced, the stigma around singleness was further perpetuated by the print industry. What was the source of such censure? And, why would Mary and her nieces endure such social and religious ridicule? Was there any way for the never-married Adams women to escape the stigma around singleness beyond the bonds of matrimony? By looking at the stigma around singleness in church, state, and print, it becomes clear that singleness and spinsterhood were not always frowned upon.

Part II: Church & State

Singleness & Celibacy: Protestant Reformation

The stigmatization of the single or never-married state has roots in the Protestant Reformation, initiated in 1517. In the pre-Reformation medieval Western world, which was

²⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

²¹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*. 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 6.

²² Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 99.

²³ Luther “Estate of Marriage,” 18-19; Genesis, 2:17; Genesis, 1:28. See also Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 7.

predominantly Catholic, celibacy was initially a voluntary choice for all, even the clergy.²⁴ However, Pope Innocent III imposed celibacy upon Catholic clergy in 1123.²⁵ Prior to this, celibacy was considered a gift, a voluntary act of devotion to God. Early ascetics, including the desert fathers and mothers, practiced celibacy to enhance their spirituality and draw closer to the divine, influenced, in part, by New Testament scripture.²⁶ Jesus and Paul both embraced a single and celibate lifestyle, with Paul asserting the benefits of singleness for wholehearted service to God and His kingdom. Although Paul acknowledged that marriage was not a sin, he upheld the value of remaining single. Jesus similarly advocated for the merits of singleness, emphasizing its status as a gift from God.²⁷ Despite this biblical encouragement and the perception of singleness as a precious and unique gift, the Puritan church later stigmatized and despised it. How did this shift in attitude toward singleness occur within a religious context that initially celebrated it?

Martin Luther, a German Catholic priest, grew disillusioned with the disparities he observed between the Bible and Catholic church traditions. On October 31, 1517, he boldly presented the church with 95 perceived errors in their practices, which he said were misaligned

²⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 8; St. Augustine of Hippo, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.6; *De virginibus* (or *Of Holy Virginity*); St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Treatise II, On the Dress of Virgins* 23; St. Ambrose of Milan, *Concerning Virgins* 1.10-13, 1.21, 1.24-31, 1.62-66, 6.24-29 (*Book I and II*).

²⁵ Lat. II, 1123, c.21 (c.3 in some manuscripts) in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* I: 194; Lat. II, 1139, c.7 in Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicea I to Vatican II*, vol. I (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990): 198. See also Karen Cheatham “‘Let Anyone Accept this who Can’: Medieval Christian Virginity, Chastity, and Celibacy in the Latin West,” in *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*, ed. Carol Olsen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 93-94.

²⁶ St. Gregory, *On Virginity* 3; 7; Augustine, *On Marriage* 1.6; *De virginibus* (or *Of Holy Virginity*), and also *De virginitate*, and *De habitu virgininum*; St. Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*; St. Cyprian of Carthage, *Treatise II, On the Dress of Virgins* 21; Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins* 1.10-13, 1.21, 1.24-31, 1.62-66, 6.24-29 (*Book I and II*); *The Rule of St Benedict* 73.8. See also Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, AD 150-750 (London, W.W. Norton & Co., [1971] 1984) 96-110. According to Brown, in 3rd- and 4th-century Egypt, the desert fathers like Anthony and Pachomius (c.290-347) were “holy men” who “had deliberately chosen ‘ant-culture’” retreating to “the neighboring desert the nearest mountain craig. In a civilization identified exclusively with town life,” the desert fathers “had committed the absurd—they had made a city in the desert.” These men chose a life of ascetism, which almost always included the renunciation of sex, which was experienced with intense battles with temptation (101-102).

²⁷ 1 Corinthians, 7:25-39; Matthew, 19:10.

with his interpretation of the scriptures.²⁸ Luther subsequently penned a manifesto highlighting doctrines such as *sola scriptura* and the priesthood of all believers. This manifesto proposed that individuals should independently read and interpret the Bible, eliminating the need for intermediaries between themselves and God.²⁹ This revolutionary doctrine proved particularly appealing to influential princes.³⁰

The time was ripe for Luther's confrontation. Previous attempts at challenging the Catholic Church had met with limited success, often resulting in excommunication, exile, or even death. However, a pivotal shift occurred when affluent princes were eager to reclaim influence and wealth from the Catholic Church.³¹ In England, Henry VIII, driven by the need for an heir and thwarted by the Catholic Church's refusal to grant him a divorce, seized the moment presented by Luther's confrontation. Henry VIII declared himself the head of a new church, breaking ties with the pope, and establishing the Church of England (later Anglican, and Episcopalian in America following the Revolution).³²

The church reform instigated by Luther (and in England by the Lollards) ushered in significant transformations. The translation of the Bible into the vernacular was allowed, making it accessible to a broader audience.³³ Literacy increased. Reformers advocated for the removal of non-biblical traditions from church practices, envisioning a return to what they perceived as the primitive or true church, as practiced by early Christians according to the Bible. However,

²⁸ Martin Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (Nuremberg: Hieronymus Holtzel, 1517), Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/95ThesesMartinLuther/page/n9/mode/1up> (accessed June 9, 2024).

²⁹ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 27, 43.

³⁰ Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 4.

³¹ Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 4.

³² Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 4.

³³ Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 5; Hall, *The Puritans*, 14, 35.

reformers had divergent interpretations regarding the specific characteristics of this reformed primitive church.³⁴

The Church of England was not as eager to reform, at least not too much. The monarch was now the head. Divorce was permitted. New bishops were appointed. Some sacraments, including marriage, were altered.³⁵ One consistent reform made by both Lutherans and the Church of England was that clergymen were no longer required to be celibate.³⁶ Luther pointed out that according to *sola scriptura*, celibacy could not be forced upon or required of anyone. It was a gift given only to a select few.³⁷ This reading freed the Lutheran and Anglican clergy from vows to celibacy. As a result, the Church of England legalized clerical marriage formally in 1563.³⁸ Nevertheless, according to Luther's doctrine, celibacy was still a more spiritual state.³⁹ The Church of England took a similar stance; celibacy was better and more spiritual, yet could not be forced upon or required of the clergy. For the Puritan reformers, however, this stance fell short.⁴⁰

Puritan Congregationalist New England

³⁴ Miller, *Errand*, 5; Hall, *The Puritans*, 35.

³⁵ *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1571), "The Anglican Church of Canada" web., <https://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/39-articles> (accessed June 9, 2024). See also Hall, *The Puritans*, 35.

³⁶ "Of the Marriage of Priests," *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XXXII; Luther "Estate of Marriage," 19. See also Erik R. Seeman, "'It Is Better to Marry Than to Burn': Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Celibacy, 1600-1800" *Journal of Family History* 24, no.4 (1999): 399-400; Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 9.

³⁷ "Of the Marriage of Priests," *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XXXII; Luther, "Estate of Marriage," 18, 21-22. See also Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 31.

³⁸ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 39.

³⁹ Luther, "Estate of Marriage," 18-19, 2. See also Seeman, "Better to Marry," 399-400.

⁴⁰ Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton*. Arranged by the Rev. John Keble MA. 7th edition revised by the Very Rev. R.W. Church and the Rev. F. Paget 3 vols. vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 5:73; John Cotton, "A meet help, or, A wedding sermon preached at New-Castle in New-England, June 19th 1694, at the marriage of Mr. John Clark, and Mrs. Elizabeth Woodbridge / by Mr. John Cotton," (Boston, Printed by B. Green and J. Allen, 1699), 9-11, 15, Early English Books Online 2. <https://name.umd.umich.edu/B08841.0001.001>, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 15, 2024). Cotton emphasizes in this sermon God creating a help mate in woman for man, whereas Luther emphasizes being fruitful and multiplying, though both discuss both scriptures. See also Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 9, 39.

Puritan reformers expressed dissatisfaction with the developments within the Church of England, perceiving it as excessively influenced by Catholic practices.⁴¹ By the year 1600, these reformers, not yet called Puritans, identified an additional 91 doctrines and traditions in the Church of England that they deemed excessively "popish."⁴² Puritan reformers, for example, were opposed to the office of the bishop, lavish priestly garments, kneeling for communion, making the sign of the cross, observation of holy days, use of the Apocrypha, and prayers for the dead, to name a few.⁴³ They also disagreed with the Lutheran and Church of England's stance on celibacy.

Puritan reformers were determined to restore the primitive church, not just to the early church, which was illustrated in the book of *Acts* and the Pauline letters, but much earlier, to the Garden of Eden. Puritans disagreed with Lutheran and Church of England's take on voluntary celibacy. They believed marriage was the higher and more spiritual state because it was a more primitive and Edenic command.⁴⁴ Puritan reformers argued that God's instruction to Adam and Eve in the garden in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner," and to "be fruitful and multiply," (Genesis 1:17), were commands that overrode Paul's encouragement in 1 Corinthians 1:7 which claims it is better to remain single. In Puritan thought, Paul's instruction applied to short periods of time under extreme duress, such as

⁴¹ Miller, *Errand*, 11.

⁴² Henry Jacob, "A defence of the churches and ministry of Englande. Written in two treatises, against the reasons and obiections of Maister Francis Iohnson, and others of the separation commonly called Brownists. Published, especially, for the benefitt of those in these partes of the lowe Countries," (Middelburgh, 1599), in the digital collection Early English Books Online 2. <https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A04215.0001.001> University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 17, 2024). See also Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 6; Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 5-6.

⁴³ Morgan, *Visible Saints*, 5-6, 7-12; Hall, *The Puritans*, 15-22, 49-50, 53-5.

⁴⁴ William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1609), 123-129 (chapter 11), *Early English Books Online*. <https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A09377.0001.001>, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 25, 2024). See also Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 7, 9.

war, plague, or famine.⁴⁵ When there was no time of duress, the Puritans reasoned that everyone must obey God's commandments to marry and multiply.⁴⁶ Puritans posited that those who did not marry were violating God's first ordinances and, consequently, sinning, opening themselves to several temptations, including greed and immorality.⁴⁷

Viewing the "new" world as a canvas for implementing the envisioned reforms, certain reformers embarked on an "errand to the wilderness" to manifest their ideals. Their objective was to showcase the primitive church in practice, serving as a living illustration to England and the global audience.⁴⁸ Consequently, the New England colony was conceived as a divine experiment, often referred to as "a city on a hill." Its purpose was to serve as an exemplum, demonstrating the potential restoration of the primitive church through further reforms back in England.⁴⁹ Mary's great-grandfather, Henry Adams, would have been one of these Puritan reformers who gathered and made a covenant at the first Medfield congregational church.⁵⁰

Henry came to Medfield with his three brothers in 1652.⁵¹ He bought land and later built a mill. He was also the first town clerk, and he held the office for decades. Henry acted as selectman and representative to the general court and held extensive land grants in the town as well as in nearby Sherborn. He was appointed as Medfield's principal military officer (Lieutenant) during King Philip's War, where he was shot and killed in the doorway of his home. His wife, Elizabeth Paine Adams, survived the attack at the home of a neighboring reverend, only to suffer a mortal wound when a billeting soldier allowed his gun to discharge inside the home. The battle destroyed the Adams's homestead and barns by fire. The couple left behind

⁴⁵ Genesis, 1:17; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Cotton, "A meet help," 9-10. See also Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 9.

⁴⁶ Genesis, 2:18; Cotton, "A meet help," 17.

⁴⁷ Cotton, "A meet help," 15-16, 22; Luther, "Estate of Marriage," Part I. See also Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 94-95.

⁴⁸ Miller, *Errand*, 12; Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 41.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Errand*, 12.

⁵⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 281.

⁵¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 279.

seven children: Eleazar, Jasper, Elizabeth, John, Henry, Moses, and Samuel.⁵² Coincidentally, two of Henry's sons, Jasper and John, remained lifelong bachelors (Jasper lived to be nearly 100). Though there is no record of Henry being in full membership of the church, there is an entire church membership record of his brother Edward, who died in 1716 as “the last of the original settlers.”⁵³ Records also confirm that Edward’s son Jonathan became one of the first deacons of the Medfield Congregational Church just a year after Mary was born.⁵⁴ Puritan reformed church leaders and founders like Mary’s great-grandfather, great-uncle, and uncle would have upheld the church doctrines concerning the state of marriage and singleness.

The State: Reinforcing the Ideology Through the Law

In the 17th century, the term spinster evolved from the occupational usage connected to a woman who spun cloth to a legal term connected to wills. The new usage of the legal term also related to a lifestyle of celibacy, although that may not always have been the case.⁵⁵ Used first by Edward Phillips in his *The New World of English Words* (1658), Phillips defined the term “spinster” as “a law term, being appropriate to unmarried women in all deeds, bonds, and evidences.”⁵⁶

At the same time, prolonged celibate lifestyles also became a concern, not just of the Protestant church but also of the state. By the mid-17th century, England saw an explosion of

⁵² Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 281.

⁵³ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 279-280. Given the frequency, going back at least to Hannah’s great-uncles Jasper and John, the Adams family may have had an unusual acceptance for never-married people.

⁵⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 279-280.

⁵⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 160.

⁵⁶ Edward Phillips, “Spinster,” *The new world of English words, or, A general dictionary containing the interpretations of such hard words as are derived from other languages ... together with all those terms that relate to the arts and sciences ... : to which are added the significations of proper names, mythology, and poetical fictions, historical relations, geographical descriptions of most countries and cities of the world ... / collected and published by E.P.* (London, 1658). In the digital collection Early English Books Online, <https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A54746.0001.001>, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 16, 2024).

fictional petitions where disgruntled never-married women complained about their singlehood, pointing the finger at the state for sending all the eligible men to war.⁵⁷ This was perhaps a fair accusation. Britain was constantly at war, and there was always a need for soldiers.⁵⁸

The Virgins Complaint, for example, published in London in 1642, was purportedly written by and on behalf of “all the Damsels both of Country and City,” for which they estimated in number, 5,000 under the age of 14 and another 200,000 “mature maids and virgins,” kingdom-wide.⁵⁹ In this pamphlet, these “maids of London” complained that as a result of all the eligible bachelors being sent to the war by the state, the city had been left desolate of potential husbands. They bemoaned that the only men left were too old to perform their marital duties, and as a result, the city had consequently experienced a severe epidemic of greensickness.⁶⁰ The deficit of men had also, in the petitioner’s estimation, resulted in the damnation of these never-

⁵⁷ *The Virgins Complaint*; “The young women and maidens lamentation: or, Their bitter sighs and sorrow to hear the old women are prest to go with army, while they themselves are slighted and dejected which are able to perform far better service. Tune of I marry and thank ye too. Licensed according to order,” (London, Printed for P. Brooksby, et al., 1690), in the digital collection Early English Books Online. <https://name.umd.umich.edu/B06789.0001.001>, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 13, 2024). This ballad, purportedly penned by the “Lasses of London” (1.1), was again concerned with men going off to war as soldiers. Here rather than ask for the war to be called off, the maids seek permission to go to war with their “sweet-hearts,” to act as caregivers and nurses (2.3; 4.4). See also Froide, *Never Married*, 162.

⁵⁸ *The Virgins Complaint*, 3. “The maidens lamentation.” See also Froide, *Never Married*, 167.

⁵⁹ *The Virgins Complaint*, “Title page,” 7.

⁶⁰ *The Virgins Complaint*, 2, 3. There is still much debate over what greensickness was. Nevertheless, historically greensickness is discussed as a disease directly connected to celibate females commencing in the 1500s. Greensickness, also called Chlorosis, and “the Virgin’s Disease” according to the *OED* was “a disease characterized by the discoloration of the skin” that is “frequently with reference to the abnormal appetite (pica) often accompanying the disorder.” “Greensickness,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/green-sickness_n?tab=factsheet#2440700 (accessed October 19, 2024). Though John Dutton in *The Ladies Dictionary* listed a number of cures, one of the most commonly prescribed remedies was marriage (sex) (Froide, 158-159). Froide says the disease, which by the middle of the 19th century became equated with anemia, and sometimes with anorexia or eating disorders, remained a common diagnosis until the 1930s when it suddenly seemed to disappear (Froide 159). For an excellent work on greensickness see Helen King, *The Disease of Virgins: Green Sickness, Chlorosis, and the Problems of Puberty* (New York: Rutledge, 2004). According to Helen King, greensickness was “a historical condition involving the lack of menstruation, dietary disturbances, altered skin colour and weakness, once thought to effect, almost exclusively, young girls at puberty” (King, 2).

married women's souls, due either to their inability to obey God's first command "to be fruitful and multiply," or because they were forced to fornicate in order to obey that command.⁶¹

These women called on parliament to end the wars due a desperate need to repopulate the nation. According to these London maids, the nation had suffered a massive population decrease not only due to war, but also, and more importantly, due to the inability of these women to marry and subsequently procreate. As a result, the population slump endangered the country, both on an economic and military front, due to a lack of fresh soldiers and tradesmen.⁶² Later in the 17th century, in similar fictitious petitions, women feared becoming "old maids." However, this time it was not war that was the culprit, but the allure of widows' purse strings and prostitutes' bedrooms which enticed eligible men away from marriageable young women.⁶³

In *Now or Never: Or A New Parliament of Women*, three speeches were provided by representatives of three types of women: the wife (a Grave Matron), the never-married woman (an ancient maid), and the virgin (a young Maid). In her speech, the wife sought legislation to mitigate spousal-abuse.⁶⁴ The young maid lobbied for the agency of young women to choose their own spouses and petitioned for laws against forced matrimony.⁶⁵ The ancient maid, however, lamented her single- status as "a despairing condition, nay a case of consumption." In

⁶¹ *The Virgins Complaint* 4, 6.

⁶² *The Virgins Complaint*, 6-7.

⁶³ Froide, *Never Married*, 164.

⁶⁴ *Now Or Never: Or, A New Parliament of Women Assembled and Met Together Neer the Popes-Head in Moor-Fields, on the Back-Side of Allsuch; Adjoyning upon Shoreditch. With their Declaration, Articles, Rules, Laws, Orders, and Proposals, to all London-Prentices, Young-Men, Batchelours, and Others; especially to Merchants, Silk-Men, Drapers, Grocers, Stationers, Haberdashers, Goldsmiths, Joyners, Carpenters, Masons, Bricklayers, Shoemakers, Weavers, Butchers, Cutlers, Dyers, Fish-Mongers, Curriers, Vintners, Inn-Holders, Chandlers, Glasiers, Taylors, and Upholsters. Likewise, Three Excellent Speeches made in this Great Assembly, by the City-Virgins; and Eight several Acts, Orders, and Decrees, Touching a Free Choice in Marriage: Together with the High Injunction, and Great Penalty on all Men Whatsoever, that Shall Abuse Or Prove Unkind to their Wives. Whereunto is Annexed, the Fair Maid of the Wests Love-Sonnet, very Pleasant and Delightful for all Young-Men and Maids, both in City and Countrey*, (London, 1656), 4, <https://ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/now-never-new-parliament-women-assembled-met/docview/2240919721/se-2> (accessed June 9, 2024).

⁶⁵ *Now or Never*, 6.

her petition to the state, she sought to remedy the lack of adequate male suitors in the city.⁶⁶ The “ancient maiden” claimed that only one in ten men took wives, primarily due to the fact that they could easily satisfy themselves with other men’s wives and prostitutes who had apparently become readily available. What should be done? The ancient maid suggested a number of laws to remedy the crises. First, she lobbied for the severe punishment of “harlots.” Next, she petitioned the state to limit the time men can remain bachelors, arguing that young men should be forced to marry by age 24 or pay a tax of three pounds yearly.⁶⁷

Similar to the *Now or Never* petition, *The Petition of the ladies of London and Westminster to the honourable house of husbands*, published in London in 1693, and printed for a “Mary Want-man” single women complained about the rise and prominence an extreme criticism of marriage in print, drama, and poetry. This critique had become, in their estimation, a social contagion that caused men to reject the institution altogether. In this petition, London’s single women griped about being unable to find “Persons of good sence and gravity, considerable for their Estates and Fortunes.” They argued that men were either too lascivious or too addicted to prostitutes to marry.⁶⁸ According to these ladies, when men were not filled with avarice, they used a plethora of excuses not to marry. These excuses included a false aversion to children, a fear a family was too expensive to manage, and the rising prevalence of cuckholding (or adultery by the wife).⁶⁹

The “ladies of London” claimed that eligible men would rather marry a widow “as uglie as one of the Witches in Macbeth, if she has but a store of Monie,” and that many “Chamber-

⁶⁶ *Now or Never*, 5.

⁶⁷ *Now or Never*, 5-6.

⁶⁸ “The Petition of the ladies of London and Westminster to the honourable house of husbands,” (London, 1693), in the digital collection Early English Books Online 2, <https://name.umd.umich.edu/A54550.0001.001>, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections (accessed May 13, 2024), 1.

⁶⁹ “The Petition of the ladies,” 1-2.

Maids and farmer's daughters had gone the way of the flesh." These single women saw alcohol and mistresses (both of the married and the unmarried variety) as the major barriers to marriage. They reasoned that Athens, Sparta, and Rome were better cities to reside in since these ancient communities had the foresight to withhold political and religious positions from unmarried men, until they married.⁷⁰

These single women boldly ask parliament to punish the reluctance to marry and have children "and all its wicked wake." They requested several laws be enacted to curtail the aversion to marriage including requiring men to marry before 21 or face a yearly fine, prohibiting unmarried men from taverns, censoring and destroying all anti-matrimonial literature, and fining married women involved in adultery and fornication, as well as harlots, especially those who pretend to be single. They further implored parliament to "destroie Celibacie." The fictitious petition was signed by "10,000 greensick maidens."⁷¹

In 1695, the English parliament did impose a tax on unmarried men. Known as the bachelor tax, or *The Marriage Duty Act* (formally *An Act for granting to his Majesty certaine rates and duties upon Marriages Births and Burials and upon Batchelors and Widowers for the terms of Five years for carrying on the Warr against France with Vigour*), this legislation levied a tax on bachelors over 25 and all childless widowers.⁷² No tax was imposed upon unmarried females. The English parliament was not the first to pass legislation against unmarried people. As early as 9 AD, Augustus imposed the *Lex Papia Poppaea* on Roman citizens, which

⁷⁰ "The Petition of the ladies," 2-3.

⁷¹ "The Petition of the ladies," 3.

⁷² *An Act for granting to his Majesty certaine rates and duties upon Marriages Births and Burials and upon Batchelors and Widowers for the terms of Five years for carrying on the Warr against France with Vigour*, (1695) 6 & 7 Will. & Mar. c 6.

attempted to encourage single people to marry and subsequently procreate (though curiously celibate vestal virgins were exempt).⁷³

In New England, no such tax against unmarried men (or women) was imposed. Puritan reformers, like Mary's great-grandfather Henry and her uncle Edward, brought their ideas on marriage and celibacy with them from England. While the colony aspired to maintain the independence of church and state, they envisioned a harmonious relationship through a "two kingdom model." In this model, the civil government refrained from interference with church discipline, worship, and doctrine.⁷⁴ Despite this separation, the colony implemented laws to shape the church's utopian experiment. Between 1630 and 1660, laws against singleness emerged across all New England colonies, out of fear of fornication and debauchery, uniformly prohibiting single individuals from living alone and compelling them to form families. Violators faced fines and were later obligated to secure and sustain employment.⁷⁵

⁷³ Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 19, *Perseus Digital Library*, <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078> (accessed June 9, 2024). See also Marjorie E. Kornhauser "Taxing Bachelors in America: 1895-1939," (July 12, 2012) *Tulane Public Law Research Paper No. 17-7*.

⁷⁴ Hall, *The Puritans*, 228.

⁷⁵ *At a General Court Held at Boston, in the Year [1668]: Order to Dispose of Single Persons, Stubborn Children, and Servants to Houses of Correction* (Cambridge, Mass: Green, 1668); *Whereas the Lawes Published by the Honoured General Court. Lib. 1, Pag. 76, Sect. 3, Do Require All Towns from Time to Time to Dipose of Single Persons and Inmates within Their Towns to Service* (Cambridge, Mass.: Green 1668); *History of the Town of Dorchester, by a Committee of the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society* (Boston: Clapp, 1859), 223-224; *Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, 5 vols. (Boston: White, 1853-54) I, 186; *The Book of the General Lawes and Libertyes Concerning the Inhabitants of the Massachusetts Collected Out of the Records of the General Court For the Several Years Wherin They Were Made and Established, and Now Revised by the Same Court and Dispersed into an Alphabetical Order and Published by the Same Authoritie in the General Court Held at Boston, the Fourteenth of the First Month, Anno 1647* (Cambridge General Court, 1648), 51; *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, ed. J. Hammond Trumbull et al., 15 vols. (Hartford: Case, Lockwood, and Brainard, et al., 1859-90), 1:8; *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, ed. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff et al., 11 vols. (Boston: White, 1855-61), 11:17; *New Haven's Settling in New-England and Some Lawes for Government: Published for the Use of that Colony* (London: M.S., 1656), 50-51; *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, ed. John Russell Bartlett, 10 vols. (Providence: Greene. 1856-65), 1.333; William B. Weedon, *Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894), 230; Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New York: Scribner, 1893), 36-38. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 27, 144-146; Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 77-79; John Gilbert McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 4, 12-13, 33; Seeman, "Better to Marry," 398, 402; Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 9. According to McCurdy, these laws against singles residing alone in New England fell out of fashion by 1677 and were merged into new poor

Several New England colonies also enacted legislation to remove the land title from single women to force them into marriages.⁷⁶ In New England, singleness and inheritance that included land title were at times connected to legal accusations of witchcraft. Seventy-eight percent of people legally accused of witchcraft in New England from 1620-1725 were female.⁷⁷ According to Carl F. Karlsen's *The Devil in a Shape of a Woman*, these accusations were often about property disputes.⁷⁸ Women accused of witchcraft experienced harsher treatment, and their bonds were often higher.⁷⁹ Older women, especially those over 30 who were alone (both never-married and widowed), were in greater danger of being accused and executed.⁸⁰ The Salem witch trials posed the greatest threat to single women and those who inherited property, particularly those without legitimate male heirs. This vulnerable group accounted for 61% of the accused individuals and an alarming 89% of those who faced execution.⁸¹

The trend of accusing single women of being witches was prevalent not only during the Salem trials but throughout the entire 17th century.⁸² According to Karlsen, because the single woman supposedly neglected her vocation of mother and helpmeet, "in the eyes of their community, the woman alone in early New England was an aberration."⁸³ Hannah's aunt Mary

laws (McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors*, 36-37). Morgan looks at several specific cases that went to court at Plymouth, Essex, Middlesex counties (Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 145-1747).

⁷⁶ di Leonardo, "Warrior Virgins," 50.

⁷⁷ Carol F. Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1987), 47.

⁷⁸ Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 61.

⁷⁹ *Essex Court Records* 4:133. See Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 60-61, 296.

⁸⁰ Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 67-68, 75.

⁸¹ Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 101-102. Karlsen acknowledges his findings were counterintuitive to those of John Demos in *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York, 1982) who found that there were significantly more married people accused (72-75), and claims this was due to the fact that Karlsen had uncovered more numbers of accused witches than Demos, and in this number were more single people (see footnotes, 302). Demos found only 20% of the non-Salem accused and 43% of the Salem accused single, whereas Karlsen found 26% of non-Salem and 47% of Salem accused single- both are significant enough stats.

⁸² Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 115.

⁸³ John Cotton, *A Meets Help, or a Wedding Sermon, Preached at New-Castle in New England, June 19th, 1694...* (Boston 1699,) 12, 23. See also Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 75. Karlsen here is referencing Cotton's sermon.

was neither a procreator nor helpmeet. She was also a recipient of a substantial land inheritance. Mary was also born only 30 years after the turn of the 17th century, just 50 miles from Salem. However, the negative shroud that hung about the never-married woman by the Protestant church and reinforced by the state was just the start. The stigma of being single was consolidated through the print culture.

Part III: Print Culture: Old Maid Literature

Froide identified the years 1550-1750 as a transitional period when the caricature and terms of the spinster and old maid became defined as we know them today. According to Froide, this development occurred in three phases. The first phase took place in the medieval period when the single woman was referred to as a young maiden or virgin. Because it was assumed that she would undoubtedly be married at some point, and if not, she would devote her life to the church, thus becoming a saint and living martyr (as an ascetic, nun, or anchoress), there was never a negative connotation to a woman's single status. She was always depicted as youthful.⁸⁴

The second phase, according to Froide, developed during the 17th century when, after the Protestant Reformation, the concept of the single-woman evolved from that of a youthful virgin to a woman of any age. The image of the single, unmarried woman was seen as a female who had failed to marry - a woman to be pitied.⁸⁵ The third phase occurred in the 18th century. In this stage, the spinster and old maid labels came into common usage and took on derogatory

⁸⁴ Juan Louis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth Century manual*, Ed. and Trans. by Charles Fantazzi (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 80-83; Erasmus Desidirus, trans. Michael Heath, *Institutio Christiani Matrimonii*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Spirituality and Pastoralia* vol. 69, eds. John W. O'Malley & Louis Perraud, (University of Toronto Press, 1999), 223. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 155. Vives emphasized and lifted up the role of the celibate virginal choice, though his friend Erasmus, writing at the same time, seems to advocate more for marriage, saying celibacy was important only in the past when the gospel was newly being disseminated, but in the era he was writing because it had been well-spread and thus there was no longer a need. Erasmus's stance reflects the changing opinion on vows of celibacy due to the Protestant Reformation.

⁸⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 156.

connotations.⁸⁶ This negative tone was perpetuated by church dogma, upheld in the judiciary, and disseminated in print culture. Moreover, this third and most volatile period is precisely where the Adams's household of three never-married women landed.

Mary, Hannah, and Betty would have been commonly considered spinsters and old maids. Though these terms did not always have derogatory connotations, we can trace the evolution of the negative characterization of the spinster through its history in print. Before the 17th century in print, never-married women were generally spoken of not as old maids or spinsters, but positively as celibate religious devotees or virgins.

Prior to the 17th century, literature concerning virgins was predominately theological. However, even non-theological (or humanist) literature like Juan Luis Vives's *The Education of A Christian Woman* (1532) described the never-married woman in a positive frame. In Vives's work, there are three categories of women to educate: "Unmarried Young Women," "Married Women," and "Widows." Though Vives does not offer a specific category for never-married women, he does concede in his first section on "unmarried young women" that a lifelong commitment to virginity, or celibacy, was a higher and "angelic-like" state that afforded special divine assistance, wisdom, and admiration. He provides a long list of examples of the scholastic achievements of women who remained single and celibate throughout their lives."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ "Old Maid," Oxford English Dictionary Online, <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=old+maid> (accessed June 9, 2024). According to OED, the term "Oulde mayde," was first used in John Palsgrave's *Lesclarcissement de la Langue Francoyse* (1530), 250; "Spinster," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/spinster_n?tab=meaning_and_use#21453009 (accessed June 9, 2024). According to the *OED*, the term "spinster" was first used in the way we understand it, as a derogatory slur towards a never-married woman, in 1714 by Thomas Tickell in the *Spectator* (No. 614). See also Froide, *Never Married*, 159.

⁸⁷ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth Century manual*, Ed. and Trans. by Charles Fantazzi (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 80-83. The three sections of Vives's work "Book I: Which Treats of Unmarried Young Women" (53-155), "Book II: Which Treats of Married Women" (175-294), and "Book III: On Widows" do not consider the education of never-married women or virgins. For classical (early church) theological writing on virgins, see St. Gregory, *On Virginity*, Augustine, *De virginibus* (or *Of Holy Virginity*), and also *De virginitate*, and *De habitu virgininum*, Methodius, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Cyprian, *Treatise II* "On the Dress of Virgins," and Ambrose, *Concerning Virginity* (Book I and II).

By the mid-17th century, the discourse moved from lauding the angelic celibate woman of virtue who chose to not marry an earthly husband to marry a heavenly one, to denote a concern with the rising population of single people in England. As discussed above in the section on the state, England saw an explosion of fictional petitions in which disgruntled never-married women worried they would never marry or fulfill their godly duty to procreate, thus complaining about their single status and blaming the state for sending eligible men off to war.⁸⁸ The literature in this century also denoted a change in the status of those associated with the antiquated maid archetype that also occurred at the end of the 17th century. Previously, the characterization of the ancient maid was connected to the lower class: servants, ladies in waiting, and chambermaids had to worry most about such fates and subsequent labels. Nevertheless, by the end of the 17th century, the term was transferred from being applied to servants to encompass the population of gentile ladies.⁸⁹

In the 17th century, the state of singleness also saw the literary advocacy for single women's academies, mainly to produce more knowledgeable women who were more attractive to potential mates. There was also a marginal push for Protestant convents, which were rejected in

⁸⁸ *The Virgins Complaint*. This ballad, purportedly penned by the "Lasses of London" (1.1) was again concerned with men going to war as soldiers. Here, rather than ask for the war to be called off, the maids seek permission to go to war with their "sweet-hearts" to act as caregivers and nurses (2.3, 4.4). See also Froide, *Never Married*, 162.

⁸⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 164. When I commenced my study on never-married women in the early modern era, I assumed that Queen Elizabeth I would have played a major role in the upward trend, especially in England. As a 25-year-old- single woman she ascended the throne in 1558 and remained on it and single until her death at age 69 (Froide, 156). Surprisingly, I found little discussion on her influence upon what seemed to be an upward trend of singleness amongst women, at least in England. Froide, in *Never Married* spends less than two pages on Elizabeth I, and in the collection of essays on never-married early modern European women *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800*, (edited by Amy Froide and Judith M. Bennett), she is only mentioned once in the introduction on page 6. In *Never Married*, Froide does claim that during Elizabeth I's reign, the literary dialogue around the never-married status was largely positive, with literary masterminds like Spencer, who was one of her courtiers, fashioning her as a modern Diana (and even Sappho). Froide, however, argues that the commentary by the public was largely mute on her marital status, mainly because they saw her as the exception and not the rule (156). Froide is careful to point out that though Elizabeth I decided to remain single, she did not encourage other women to do so, and though her court seemed in general to support her choice, her church pushed back against it, especially the separatists who later became the Puritan church (157).

England because they were too Catholic.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, there was some experimentation with religious communal residences for women in the North American colonies, which will be explored later in this chapter. In both the petitions to parliament and the plans for Protestant convents, the popular literature focused on finding solutions to the growing number of never-married women in England. Though much frustration is evident amongst the growing crowd of women who were destined to become antiquated virgins within these publications, there was at this point little evidence of the xenophobic characterization and stigma of the old maid or spinster that was to come.

The 18th century marked a significant literary turn for characterizing the antiquated maid as a spinster and old maid, terms which would become increasingly disparaging. According to Froide, the debasing of the single woman commenced with the poem "Satyr Upon Old Maids," published in 1713, just a year before Mary was born. Froide reports that graphic and pejorative caricatures followed the poem in Daniel Defoe's periodicals. Defoe's demoralizing stigmatization of the spinster is paradoxical because he had never-married daughters.⁹¹

The xenophobic obsession with the "old maid" caricature may have commenced before the early 18th century with the publication of the "Satyr Upon Old Maids." On the cusp of the millennial in 1697, a letter in the publication *The Challenge sent by a young lady to Sir Thomas &, or, The Female war*, "Letter XIII" was entitled "Against Old Maid." The fictitious letter, purportedly written by a "Sir Thomas," (but actually written by John Dutton), reported that old maids were monsters with "terrible fangs" for which it was "dangerous venturing to much as

⁹⁰ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (London, 1694), ed. Sharon L. Jansen (WA: Saltar's Point Press, 2014), 65; Edward Chamberlayne, *An academy or colledge, wherein young ladies and gentlewomen may at a very moderate expence be duly instructed in the true Protestant religion, and in all vertuous qualities that may adorn that sex also be carefully preserved and secured till the day of their marriage ...* (1616-1703), 5; Daniel Defoe, *AN ESSAY UPON PROJECTS*, (London: 1697; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 286-287. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 171.

⁹¹ Froide, *Never Married*, 177.

within the sight of 'em.'" In the letter, never-married women were described as "Porcupines" and "Serpents" with "loathsome faces" and "snaky hairs."⁹² They were "terrible," "despicable" "Creatures" for which there was not another living thing "in Nature so mean, so useless, so contemptible."⁹³

Never-married women, in "Sir Thomas's" estimation, were "Envious," "malicious," "talkative," and "dumb as a Paraquet."⁹⁴ According to Sir Thomas, these monstrosities could be detected by their "Beards," "Moustaches," and peach fuzz, for which there were not enough tweezers to remedy.⁹⁵ Further, they could also be recognized by their "Gummy eyes," the sores on their legs, and their distinct, pungent odor. The entire tribe, according to Sir Thomas, was "Proud, Prying, Conceited, Curious, Mischievous, Liquorish, Confident, Impertinent, Lazy, Noisie, Empty. Sencelss, Ridiculous Creatures, as their Mothers were at Sixteen."⁹⁶ Further, they were "Lump of Diseases," "Birds of Omens," "She-Cannibals," "Flesh-Crows," "Man-Catchers," and Hyaenas.⁹⁷ Sir Thomas's assault on the never-married woman's body and character in 1697 is echoed, though not in form but in tone and diction, in the 1713 poem Froide claimed to be the catalyst for the emerging derogatory old maid genre that grew prevalent in the 18th century: "A Satyr Upon Old Maids."

Like Sir Thomas's letter "Against Old Maids," never-married women in "A Satyr Upon Old Maids" could be profiled. These women could be detected by their rancid odor, legs sores, and crusty eyes. According to this unknown poet, never-married women's "Breath is ranker than

⁹² John Dutton, *The Challenge sent by a young lady to Sir Thomas & or, The Female war,* (E. Whitlock, London, 1697), 139-140.

⁹³ Dutton, *The Challenge*, 139-140.

⁹⁴ Dutton, *The Challenge*, 141.

⁹⁵ Dutton, *The Challenge*, 141.

⁹⁶ Dutton, *The Challenge*, 142.

⁹⁷ Dutton, *The Challenge*, 143.

the Fumes of Stys.” Their legs were “Black stumps.”⁹⁸ Almost stealing a line from Sir Thomas’s letter, the poet claims the “old maid” characteristically could be found with “goo” in her eyes.

⁹⁹However, here, never-married women were “Hated Harpies,” “a Cursd Crew,” “Rebels to humane Nature,” and “Impious Traytors” who “Live in Defiance of the Will of Heav’n,” “Rebels both to God and Men.”¹⁰⁰ They were “mere Drones, nay worse,” “Bags of Venom,” and “wicked Vermin” who were deemed “as a common Pest,” and since this was an era where plagues were prevalent, as “the Scourge of Providence.”¹⁰¹

She was a “curs’d She-Fiend” who inflicted torment and was “Full of foul Diseases” (even in her hair).¹⁰² According to the poet, these women were “Foul beastly Queens, and Witches” who were filled with “malice,” “revenge,” “despair,” and “Blackened envious,” and as such, they were, in his estimation, destined for hell.¹⁰³ The poet concludes with a word of advice to his intended youthful female audience: marry as soon as possible, or become “the scorn and sport of All.” In the poet’s estimation, it was “Better to marry and become a slave mistreated and beaten and pissed on by even an idiot or dolt of a husband than to be an antiquated maid.”¹⁰⁴

Between the quarter and mid-18th century, a more subtle but couched critique of the never-married woman emerged and was illustrated both in Bernard Mandeville’s 1724 dialogue *The Virgin Unmask’D: or, Female Dialogues, Betwixt an Elderly Maiden Lady, and Her Niece* and Francis Brooke’s periodical, turned collection *The Old Maid*, published the year Hannah was born (1755). The descriptive language around the never-married woman in Mandeville’s dialogue is softer and more reserved. Even though the terminology employed to the never-

⁹⁸ “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” (W. Denham, London, 1713), 8.

⁹⁹ “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” 8.

¹⁰⁰ “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” 5-6.

¹⁰¹ “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” 6-7.

¹⁰² “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” 7.

¹⁰³ “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” 8.

¹⁰⁴ “Satyr Upon Old Maids,” 10-11.

married female and her body is more respectful, the work nevertheless remains critical. Rather than using the terms “old maid” or “spinster,” Mandeville uses gentler terms like “elderly maiden lady” and “antiquated maid,” potentially to disarm his reader.¹⁰⁵

In Mandeville’s fictitious dialogue between a maiden aunt named Lucinda and her niece Antonia a new caricature of the “old maid” arises and becomes prevalent during the mid-century: she is the envious, malicious, fearmongering, and meddling maiden aunt who relentlessly endeavours to indoctrinate her unsuspecting and innocent niece into her misandrist ideology.¹⁰⁶ Like Hannah, the niece is often in her care due to the untimely death of her mother. Both androphobia and misandry are repeated *motifs* throughout the dialogue. Mandeville’s maiden Aunt Lucinda labels men as “devils” and “venomous creatures” and implores her dependent niece Antonia to never trust them.¹⁰⁷ Lucinda leverages fear to back up these neurotic assertions by telling her niece at least 500 “rape narratives” when she was a child.¹⁰⁸

Later Lucinda employs fearmongering again when Antonia is a young lady, this time not around rape but instead around pregnancy and childbirth. Fear is connected both to body image and the genuine potential of mortality. Maiden Aunt Lucinda endeavors to infect her niece with symptoms of thanatophobia (fear of death) and cacophobia (fear of ugliness) to prevent her from even entertaining the prospect of marriage.¹⁰⁹ Further, Lucinda seems to reinforce the mid-century characterization of the maiden aunt as one who stereotypically frightened away even reasonable suitors of their dependent nieces when she scares off those courting Lucinda.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Bernard Mandeville, *The Virgin Unmask'D: or, Female Dialogues, Betwixt an Elderly Maiden Lady, and Her Niece* (London, 1724), “Title page,” 34.

¹⁰⁶ Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 34-36.

¹⁰⁷ Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 134, 47.

¹⁰⁸ Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 133-136.

¹¹⁰ Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 50-51.

A little over a decade after the publication of Mandeville's dialogues, Frances Brooke, purportedly at the request of her friends, published in a collection selected from her popular periodical *The Old Maid*. In the collection, the narrator and fictitious editor, Mary Singleton, is a never-married woman nearing 50 who proves, like Lucina in Mandeville's *Female Dialogues*, also to be a meddling maiden aunt. Singleton's niece Julia, who is 18, plays a prominent role throughout the periodical, as does Singleton's endeavor to keep her niece from marrying a suitor who, by Singleton's admission, is polite, brave, and modest. Singleton even admits to her audience that she enjoys his company. However, in Singleton's eyes, Julia's suitor lacks adequate finances and vocation to keep her niece happy.¹¹¹ Where Mandeville used Lucinda's voice to discuss fearmongering maiden aunts around pregnancy and childbirth (and the subsequent potential loss of looks and loss of life), Brooke uses Singleton and her audience contributors primarily to explore gamophobia (or fears around a "bad" marriage).¹¹²

The form of the periodical acts as a frame and allows for many narratives and several voices to be heard, as Brooke includes correspondence from Singleton's readers, who include never-married women, married women (complaining of their marital circumstances), and bachelors. Like Mandeville's work, the never-married woman is again addressed more softly and respectfully in Brooke's *Old Maid*. Though Brooke refers to the never-married woman as an "old maid" in the title and throughout the work, she also employs more respectful terminology such as "the sisterhood," "the virgin state," "maiden lady," "nominal virgins," "stale virgins," "ancient virgin," "maiden aunts," "a maiden of the autumn life," "the maiden sisterhood," and "antiquated virgin."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 10-11.

¹¹² Brooke, *Old Maid*, 195-196, 243.

¹¹³ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 29, 30, 41, 62, 88, 89, 90, 105, 106, 158, 159, 263.

Despite the relatively positive branding of the terminology surrounding the nomenclature of the never-married woman, Singleton opens the work by degrading herself. As a never-married woman, Singleton claims to be not only depressed but also admits that as an “old maid” (her words), she sees herself as “the most useless and insignificant of all God’s creatures” and “one of those worthless animals.”¹¹⁴ Singleton further argues that never-married women are “mischievous, like monkeys,” but only because they are bored. Thus, she claims to have created the “periodical” to keep herself and other never-married women busy and productive by inviting them to contribute to the compilation.¹¹⁵

As in Mandeville’s dialogue, man-hate or misandry is a *topos* in Brooke’s *Old Maid*. For example, Brooke includes an alphabetical list of negative male attributes of a “modern husband”:

He is (says she) an absolute, arrogant, angry, abusive, blustering, boorish, brutal, choleric, churlish, coxcemical, currish, dictatorial, dear-bought, despotick, exceptionous, envious, forward, fretful, gloomy, gruff, growling, humoursome, huffish, headstrong, ill-natured, ill-bred, imperious, jealous, kingly, lofty, lordly, morose, moody, magisterial, narrow-soul’d, noisy, obstinate, over-bearing, odious, petulant, positive, queer, querulous, quarrelsome, rude, rough, restive, sour, snarling, sullen, stubborn, tart, touchy, unreasonable, uppish, ungrateful, violent, vexatious, wayward, waspish, yelping dog in a manger.¹¹⁶

In Brooke’s work, never-married women are also framed as Amazon warriors who would frighten away England’s enemies and win the war against France.¹¹⁷ It is hard to tell whether or not this was intended as a backhanded compliment. In a more positive light, the never-married woman was also connected to wisdom and the goddess Athena, as “the virgin train of Diana.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 2.

¹¹⁵ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 8-9.

¹¹⁶ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 193.

¹¹⁷ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 246-254.

¹¹⁸ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 263, 266-267, 276, 278, 279, 295.

Within the same decade of Brooke's *Old Maid*, Arthur Murphy had written and staged his well-received play titled *The Old Maid, a Comedy in Two Parts*. This play, which premiered and experienced a significant run at the Drury Lane Theatre in London in 1761, was still being performed in Philadelphia in 1826.¹¹⁹ The plot revolved around Miss Harlow, a 43-year-old never-married woman who lived with her brother and sister-in-law. Miss Harlow was two weeks out from marrying a worthy captain who had been courting her for three years; however, she decided to break off the engagement due to a younger, handsome, witty, and, most importantly, wealthy suitor who had proposed to her via correspondence: Mr. Clerimont.¹²⁰ The pair had met while Miss Harlow attended a gathering with her sister-in-law.¹²¹ The narrative, however, turns when the audience learns that Mr. Clerimont had mistaken Mrs. Harlow for Miss Harlow, leading to a series of comical misunderstandings that work to degrade and humiliate the never-married main character and frame her as delusional.

When Miss Harlow realized that Mr. Clerimont was not taken with her but with her sister-in-law, she attempted to reconcile with her former fiancé, to whom she had openly admitted her disdain. Miss Harlow was ultimately rejected not only by the young, dashing, and wealthy Mr. Clerimont but also by her ex-fiancé. Miss Harlow is left alone and humiliated.

The Old Maid is filled with dramatic irony, and the caricature of Miss Harlow as the old maid resembles both Brooke's *Old Maid* and Mandeville's *Virgin Unmask'D* in that, like Singleton and Lucinda, she proves conceited, petty, stubborn, judgmental, arrogant, and cruel to the captain and her sister-in-law. Murphy, however, introduces a new trait connected to the old maid archetype—delusional (to have believed this much younger eligible bachelor would ever be

¹¹⁹ Arthur Murphy, *The Old Maid, a Comedy in Two Parts* (London, 1761), 15, 18.

¹²⁰ Murphy, *Old Maid, a Comedy*, 8-9.

¹²¹ Murphy, *Old Maid, a Comedy*, 9-10.

attracted to her). Murphy's play and Miss Harlow's delusional state, which had emerged as a stereotypical trait connected to spinsterhood, is referenced two decades later in 1785 in William Hayley's three-volume survey of the state of spinsterhood (ancient and modern).

While proffering spinsterhood as an entirely new field of philosophical study to be entered into the academy, William Hayley dedicated his three-volume work *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids* (London, 1785) to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter. Hayley's work, not without its narratives on the misandrous and meddling maiden aunt (he related the narratives of at least three in volume I which fit the 18th century archetype), earmarked never-married women in his day (which was also Hannah's day) as the most oppressed population, even more oppressed than chimney sweeps in his estimation.¹²² Hayley, who considered himself a historian, or, in his words, an "antiquarian," claimed to have observed a rise of public obsession, or "a new curiosity," that belonged to the "class" of "old maids." In doing so, he marks the never-married woman as part of a separate and distinct class. As he saw this novel and "curious" class as the most oppressed, he declared himself their champion and defender while clarifying that the purpose of the work was to destigmatize and promote tolerance towards said "oppressed class."¹²³

Aiming to provide "a general survey" of the state of spinsterhood, in volume I, Hayley provides a moral, psychological, and sociological study of "old maids."¹²⁴ In volume II, Hayley turns to a geographical and historical survey that searches for the genesis of this "oppressed class," which, despite acknowledging several mythological "old maids" throughout antiquity, including Minerva (also Diana and Athena), the Sibyls, the Muses, and the Gorgons, he pinpoints

¹²² Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, 2, xv. For Hayley's narrative sketches on the archetypal maiden aunts see 34-52, 100-106, 175-193.

¹²³ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, volume I, 127; xvi-xviii, page unnumbered.

¹²⁴ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, volume I, xvi, 3.

as the advent of “spinsterhood” historically in the period of early Christianity.¹²⁵ The final volume catalogs a helpful record of "old maid" literature (better described as writings concerning virgins) from antiquity through medieval Europe.¹²⁶

Volume I proved particularly patronizing to never-married women when Hayley pathologized the group, not unlike the anonymous poet who wrote "Satyr on Old Maids." After offering a clear definition of old maid, complete with age frame (post-40), despite claiming to be "a friend and champion" of the never-married woman, Hayley seems to develop further Murphy's and Mandeville's diagnosis of the delusional old maid archetype, framing her social state as an illness of both mind and body.¹²⁷

Hayley next described the symptoms of a cacophony of mental disorders and phobias that at the time were commonly connected to the never-married woman and that would now be labeled cacophobia (fear of ugliness), gerascophobia (fear of aging), thanatophobia (fear of death), gamophobia (fear of marriage), tokophobia (fear of childbirth), misandry, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and mass psychogenic illness (also known as epidemic hysteria and shared psychotic disorder). Paradoxically, in both volumes II and III, Hayley further explores the never-married women's connection to disease, this time not as disease itself, but as monastic disease healers.¹²⁸ Hayley's psychological and moral pathologizing of the spinster's mind and body and her paradoxical role as a healer will be further discussed in the next chapter.¹²⁹ Though the disparaging "old maid" literature surveyed throughout this section circulated in the colonies, it all originated in England.

¹²⁵ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids, volume II*, xvi, 49, 73, 81, 122.

¹²⁶ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids, volume III*, xvi, 2-49.

¹²⁷ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids, volume I*, 10, 14.

¹²⁸ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids, volume I*, 9-14

¹²⁹ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids, volume III*, 50, 248-249.

In the colonies, almanacs and literary magazines reinforced the stereotypes coming out of England.¹³⁰ These almanacs and magazines often included entertainment in the form of poetry, short stories, satires, and essays. These entertaining additions highlighted themes of singleness, courtship, and marriage.¹³¹ Verses and essays, which in the main discouraged marriage, reinforcing the spinster and old maid stigma, were published in *Father Abraham's Almanac* in mid to late 18th-century colonial America. According to Karin Wulf, in *Not All Wives*, essays like “The Unfortunate Delay” (1777) reinforced pejorative archetypes of the never-married woman as “too picky, too greedy, too flirtatious, or too learned.”¹³² Odds seemed stacked against her never-married status. Was there any way of escaping the stigma?

Part IV: Escape Roots/ Escaping the Noose

Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, in “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” highlights not only the importance of the mother-daughter mentorship system in New England in the 18th century but also emphasizes the significance of the mother’s network, which included aunts and friends in the apprenticing of young ladies.¹³³ This network was of particular importance in the mother’s absence. This mentorship network would have been vital to Hannah and Betty in their mother Elizabeth’s absence following her death, making their aunt Mary a key player.

¹³⁰ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 31; David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 7.

¹³¹ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 31-32.

¹³² John Tobler, “The Maiden’s Choice,” *Father Abraham's almanack, for the year of our Lord, 1771 ... Fitted to the latitude of forty degrees, and a meridian of near five hours west from London. ... By Abraham Weatherwise, gent.* Philadelphia: Printed and sold by John Dunlap, at the newest-printing-office, the south side of the Jersey Market, and three doors below Second-Street, [1770], 10, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (accessed May 27, 2024) https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/apps/doc/CB0132241978/ECCO?u=yorku_main&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=1f020813&pg=36; John Tobler, “Advice to a Friend Inclining to Marry,” *Father Abraham's almanack, for the year of our Lord, 1771 ... Fitted to the latitude of forty degrees, and a meridian of near five hours west from London. ... By Abraham Weatherwise, gent.* Philadelphia: Printed and sold by John Dunlap, at the newest-printing-office, the south side of the Jersey Market, and three doors below Second-Street, [1770], 8, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (accessed May 27, 2024) https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/apps/doc/CB0132241978/ECCO?u=yorku_main&sid=bookmark-ECCO&xid=1f020813&pg=36. See also Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 39-40.

¹³³ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 9.

In times of illness, death, and travel, which might separate mothers and daughters, aunts and mothers' networks of friends stepped in as surrogate mothers to fill the gap. Mary would have been no exception. According to Smith-Rosenberg, whose research draws from 100,000 plus letters as well as diaries from 35 New England families between 1760 and 1880, as well as advice books, sermon guides, and medical texts, Hannah and her sister Betty lived in a sexually segregated world, and "central to this world was a core of kin."¹³⁴ This kin-core anchored a young lady with vital lifelong ties to aunts, sisters, and cousins, forming a tightly woven network of female support to offer physical and emotional assistance throughout key moments like marriage, childbirth, nursing, illness, and death.¹³⁵ This kin-core female support network also operated as an apprentice system where mature women, especially aunts, in the absence of a mother, would train young ladies in the arts of housewifery and motherhood.¹³⁶ But Mary was neither a wife nor a mother. She was a single, never-married "spinster," who, given her gendered segregation, was likely to have remained celibate.

While formal studies on singleness in New England during this era are limited, one study conducted in the town of Hingham, Massachusetts, located just 31 miles from Mary's hometown of Medfield, found that only 3.4% of the population was unmarried. However, this study did not distinguish between males and females, suggesting that the percentage of never-married females was likely even lower.¹³⁷ In contrast, England's singleness rates were considerably higher, ranging between 10-20%, attributed to factors such as high unemployment, land scarcity, war, overpopulation, and the Church of England's ambivalent stance on singleness.¹³⁸ Similarly, other

¹³⁴ Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World," 11.

¹³⁵ Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World," 11.

¹³⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World," 16.

¹³⁷ Scott Paul Gordon, "Mary Penry and the Politics of Singleness" *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 144, no.3 (2020): 277.

¹³⁸ Erik R. Seeman, "'It is Better to Marry Than to Burn': Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Celibacy, 1600-1800," *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 4, (1999): 398.

colonies in British North America, which did not stigmatize singleness and celibacy to the extent of the Puritans, also exhibited higher rates of singleness and never-married individuals.

Mary, her nieces Hannah and Betty, and her never-married nephew Louis living in colonial New England, where the population of never-married people was extremely low, faced much stigma as never-married persons. Was there any way to escape the ridicule that surrounded them in church, in court, and in print? At least for never-married females, there could be three forms of reprieve. The first would be to move to a different colony where the stigma was not as stifling. The second was conversion to another denomination that encouraged singleness, or at least did not discourage it. The third would be participation in *The Cult of Single Blessedness* as the ideal maiden aunt figure. The third option purportedly did not rise until the early 19th century, long after Mary was deceased. This section will nevertheless explore all three escape routes available to the never-married Adams women.

Demographics: Un-stigmatizing Singleness- Other Regions, Other Religions

Celibacy and singleness were not consistently demonized in the colonies of British North America. Much like the Puritans, religious denominations and groups like the Quakers, the Moravians, and several Pietists immigrated to America in the 17th century to experiment with their beliefs and find some reprieve from persecution in Britain.¹³⁹ These groups had very different biblical interpretations of the role of singleness and celibacy in their practices. They established their communities primarily in Pennsylvania and Maryland.¹⁴⁰

Quakers

During the Protestant Reformation, when the Bible became accessible in the vernacular, ordinary men were encouraged to participate in Luther's "priesthood for all believers" and

¹³⁹ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 10-11.

¹⁴⁰ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 227, 233-234.

therefore read and interpret scripture for themselves.¹⁴¹ Not all Englishmen interpreted the Bible like the Puritans. Though not a Puritan, Quaker founder George Fox was one of them.¹⁴²

Fox, of Leicestershire county, experienced conversion in 1647 in England. He founded the Quaker movement shortly after, though they were not known as the Quakers, they called one another “Children of the Light” or “Friends in the Truth.”¹⁴³ The movement discouraged the mediatory role of the preacher, particularly the paid and educated one. Instead, early Quakers believed in a literal priesthood of all believers, in which the Holy Spirit, who, according to Fox and Quaker theology, lived within everyone as the inner light, was the only teacher and leader the believer required.¹⁴⁴

Because Fox reasoned that the same spirit lived in all people, whether male, female, rich, or poor, Quakers adhered to tenets of equality and therefore vehemently opposed all social hierarchies.¹⁴⁵ In their refusal to conform to societal norms, Quakers defied conventions such as wearing hats in the presence of social authorities, including the king, and using formal addresses that reinforced social hierarchies.¹⁴⁶ Their services used no liturgy or sacraments. They had no paid or educated clergy.¹⁴⁷ Instead, early Quakers relied solely on their inner light, or voice of

¹⁴¹ Sarah Crabtree, *Holy Nation: The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 11-12.

¹⁴² Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 11-12.

¹⁴³ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 12; Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 139, 161; Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 19.

¹⁴⁴ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 12. See also Carla Gardina Pestana, “The City Upon a Hill Under Siege: The Puritan Perception of the Quaker Threat to Massachusetts Bay, 1656-1661,” *The New England Quarterly* 56, no.3 (1983): 334.

¹⁴⁵ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 12; Pestana, “City Under Siege,” 342.

¹⁴⁷ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 13, 15, 17.

God within, to lead and teach through members during their highly itinerant services.¹⁴⁸ These leaders and teachers could be male or female.¹⁴⁹

Opposing common European gender ideologies, Quakers' reading of "the fall" (of Adam and Eve) stipulated that Eve became subject to Adam only because of the fall. Quakers argued that before the fall, Adam and Eve were equal partners. Quakers reasoned that after Jesus had restored man to his Edenic state through the cross, the sexes were now back on equal footing, and therefore, God was able to speak to and through women just as well as through men.¹⁵⁰ Further, early Quakers saw women preaching as the sign of a much-anticipated return of Christ.¹⁵¹

Quakers brought singleness to the colonies as missionaries as early as the mid-17th century. They settled in Pennsylvania in the 1680s, in a colony founded by Quaker William Penn, who had envisioned the settlement as a "holy experiment," much like the Puritans had seen New England.¹⁵² Singleness was popular, especially amongst Quaker women, who were allowed to minister publicly and often spent 3-5 years away from home while on missionary assignments

¹⁴⁸ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 12-13; Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 139, 160.

¹⁴⁹ Susanna Morris, "Journal of Susanna Morris," (1722-1753) in *Wilt Thou Go on My Errand? Journals of Three 18th Century Quaker Women Ministers*, ed. Margret Hope Bacon (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1994), 33-84; Elizabeth Hudson, "Journal of Elizabeth Hudson," (1742-1761) in *Wilt Thou Go on My Errand? Journals of Three 18th Century Quaker Women Ministers*, ed. Margret Hope Bacon (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1994), 121-243; Ann Moore, "Journal of Ann Moore," (1756-1778) in *Wilt Thou Go on My Errand? Journals of Three 18th Century Quaker Women Ministers*, ed. Margret Hope Bacon (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1994), 285-368. See also Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 12-13.

¹⁵⁰ Morris, "Journal of Susanna Morris," 33-84; Hudson, "Journal of Elizabeth Hudson," 121-243; Moore, "Journal of Ann Moore," 285-368. See also Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 13-15; Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 21.

¹⁵¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 23. The Quakers practice of women preaching as a sign of Christ's imminent return was likely based on end-time scriptures in Joel and Acts by which predicted at the end of the season, God's spirit would be poured out on all flesh- men and women. Joel 2:28 says "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (English Standard Version). This scripture is repeated in Acts 2:17.

¹⁵² Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 8.

as itinerant preachers.¹⁵³ Between 1685 and 1835, 35% of American Quaker itinerant ministers who travelled to preach in Great Britain were female.¹⁵⁴

In *Holy Nation: The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution*, Sarah Crabtree looked at the diaries, letters, and sermons of 110 male and female transatlantic ministers between 1750-1820; her research inflates the number of female Quaker ministers. Crabtree found that 50 of the 110 transatlantic Quaker ministers she studied were female, raising the number to almost half during the time Hannah was alive.¹⁵⁵ Crabtree also points out that “women were one and a half times more likely than men to stay abroad for longer than three years.”¹⁵⁶ She claims that some stayed as long as a decade!¹⁵⁷ Many of these female ministers left large families behind. Female Quaker preachers, therefore, often delayed marriage at least ten years longer than Quaker women who were not preachers.¹⁵⁸ If they delayed marriage, they could avoid such separation.

Quakers did not remain celibate due to a higher spiritual state; they rejected all hierarchies.¹⁵⁹ Instead, they remained single and celibate or delayed marriage to devote themselves more completely to their missionary work.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the trend towards lifetime singleness rose in colonial Quaker communities, especially among women. At the Philadelphia

¹⁵³ Morris, “Journal of Susanna Morris,” 33-84; Moore, “Journal of Ann Moore,” 285-368; Hudson, “Journal of Elizabeth Hudson,” 121-243. See also Margaret Hope Bacon ed., *Wilt Thou Go on My Errand?: Journals of Three 18th Century Quaker Women Ministers : Susanna Morris, 1682-1755 ; Elizabeth Hudson, 1722-1783 ; Ann Moore, 1710-1783* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1994), 8. Hudson did not marry or have children until a decade after her ministry commenced at age 25. Hudson was one of 11 children born to Quaker parents in Philadelphia. She was also one of six sisters, three of which were never-married women. According to Bacon, she was also a regular visitor at Fairhill (Bacon, *Wilt Thou Go*, 123).

¹⁵⁴ Morris, “Journal of Susanna Morris,” 33-84; Moore, “Journal of Ann Moore,” 285-368; Hudson, “Journal of Elizabeth Hudson,” 267-272. See also Bacon, *Wilt Thou Go*, 7; Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 23.

¹⁵⁶ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 23.

¹⁵⁷ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 23.

¹⁵⁸ Hudson, “Journal of Elizabeth Hudson,” 267-272. See also Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 135.

¹⁵⁹ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 5, 8, 12-13.

¹⁶⁰ Hudson, “Journal of Elizabeth Hudson,” 267-272. See also Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 172.

meetings, 14% of Quaker women between 1681 and 1734 remained single throughout their lives, a much higher percentage than in New England.¹⁶¹ By the late 18th century, New Jersey Quaker meetings reported that 23% of women under 50 remained never-married.¹⁶² Before 1786, the same New Jersey meetings reported that only 10% of women remained single by 50.¹⁶³

In the 18th century, women like Elizabeth Norris, a never-married Quaker woman who was one of the wealthiest women in Philadelphia, opened her family estate, Fairhill, to a small community of never-married Quaker women.¹⁶⁴ These women included her never-married sisters, nieces, and cousins.¹⁶⁵ The Fairhill community of never-married Quaker women was not the norm in either Philadelphia or Quaker tradition. However, Quaker tenets around women's equal role in the church set the tone for other religious communities who encouraged singleness and even required celibacy.

Moravians

The Moravians, under founder Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf of Herrnhut, a Lutheran Pietist priest, first arrived in America when they built a settlement in Georgia in 1730.¹⁶⁶ Hannah's Aunt Mary would have been 16 when the settlement was established. Moravians did not believe in doctrines of election but instead preached that salvation was available to everyone.¹⁶⁷ They emphasized an emotional, heartfelt relationship that followed experiential conversions. Moravians, like the Quakers, were pacifists and did not take vows or

¹⁶¹ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 277.

¹⁶² Gordon, "Mary Penry," 278.

¹⁶³ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 277.

¹⁶⁴ Crabtree, *Holy Nation*, 20.

¹⁶⁵ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 33, 66. Bacon claims Quaker minister Elizabeth Hudson who had three never-married sisters was a frequent visitor at Fairhill (Bacon, *Wilt Thou Go*, 123).

¹⁶⁶ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 272.

¹⁶⁷ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 272-273.

swear oaths. Also, like the Quakers, the Moravians saw women as central to their community and as spiritual equals.¹⁶⁸

As with the Quakers, Moravian women took leadership roles in teaching and governance. Moravian women, however, were only permitted to teach and preach to other women. Unlike the Quakers, the Moravians lived in quasi-communal settings in sex-segregated dormitories, which were organized according to both sex and age.¹⁶⁹ Also, unlike Quakers, who were ambivalent towards celibacy and singlehood, the Moravians saw celibacy as a higher spiritual status.¹⁷⁰

Originally conceived as a mere missionary outpost, Moravian communities flourished in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Lititz, Pennsylvania during the 1740s.¹⁷¹ The influx of single individuals into these communities surged in response to messages promoting celibacy delivered during the Great Awakenings.¹⁷² Embracing a celibate lifestyle, single women from diverse denominations (Unitarians, Presbyterians, Quakers, and Methodists) and various heritages (European, Indigenous, and African) gravitated towards the Moravian communities.¹⁷³ In the initial decade of the Moravian church's establishment in America, 38% of the community comprised single individuals, a figure that escalated to 57% by the third decade.¹⁷⁴ Of the single women in the community during this period, 54% were born in America, and 42% had never been married.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁸ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 47.

¹⁶⁹ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 48; 276.

¹⁷⁰ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 75.

¹⁷¹ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 264.

¹⁷² Brooke, *Old Maid*, 207-209. See also Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 258-263. In Brooke's *Old Maid*, a never-married woman writes to Miss Singleton asking about the Moravians. Her only living benefactor, and hope for survival was a wealth maiden aunt who had become a Moravian and was residing in a Moravian community. The correspondent was seriously considering taking the same course and looked to Miss Singleton to explain the religious beliefs of the community. In the work Miss Singleton never replied.

¹⁷³ Brooke, *Old Maid*, 207-209. See also Gordon, "Mary Penry," 278 and Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 76.

¹⁷⁴ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 76.

¹⁷⁵ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 278.

Moravian women found residence in specialized dormitories known as "single-sister houses," where up to 50 women shared attics, communal meals, and collaborative workspaces after contributing modestly to room and board expenses.¹⁷⁶ The Bethlehem community, a popular destination for Philadelphians, garnered acclaim for its artistic endeavors; women engaged in activities such as spinning cloth, wool muslin production, and intricate needlework throughout their days.¹⁷⁷ In addition to their creative pursuits, the single sisters were actively involved in tending to livestock, maintaining gardens, overseeing boarding schools, and contributing to tasks such as mending, laundering, and kitchen duties.¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the vibrant community met an untimely end in 1762. The demise was likely precipitated by the death of Count Zinzendorf in 1760, prompting Moravian elders to modify certain tenets that had previously caused offense and led to persecution.¹⁷⁹

Pietist Communes

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, numerous pietist experimental communes established themselves in the Americas, predominantly advocating for celibacy and singleness. Many of these communities had transitioned to requiring celibacy from their members.¹⁸⁰ Notably, these experimental communes were primarily situated in Maryland or Pennsylvania, rather than in New England.

Established in 1680 in Maryland, Bohemia Manor was founded by Jean De Labadie, a convert to Congregationalism with French Huguenot parentage.¹⁸¹ Despite its short duration, the community reached its peak with 125 members, including children. Following a model similar to

¹⁷⁶ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 264.

¹⁷⁷ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 71; Gordon, "Mary Penry," 275.

¹⁷⁸ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 275.

¹⁷⁹ Gordon, "Mary Penry," 283.

¹⁸⁰ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 188.

¹⁸¹ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 224-226.

the Moravians, residents lived in gender-segregated dormitories, embracing celibacy and sexual asceticism as fundamental tenets.¹⁸²

In 1694, Johannes Kelpius founded the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness, colloquially known as the Wissahickon Hermits, in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Embarking on this venture at the age of 20, Kelpius, firm in his belief in Christ's imminent return, gathered 40 scholars dedicated to holiness and celibacy in anticipation of the Messiah's second coming.¹⁸³ Like the ancient desert fathers, this group earned recognition for their commitment to seasons of solitude and seclusion, with mandated celibacy for salvation rooted in scripture, particularly Revelation's reference to the 144,000 virgins.¹⁸⁴ The community disbanded following Kelpius's untimely death in 1708.¹⁸⁵

After visiting the Wissahickon Hermits, Johann Conrad Beissel built his Protestant monastic community, Ephrata, in 1721, also just outside of Germantown.¹⁸⁶ According to Van Dyne, Ephrata was “the largest and most enduring of the three” religious communities.¹⁸⁷ Similar to Wissahickon, celibacy held a central and mandatory role at Ephrata for achieving salvation.¹⁸⁸ While married couples were welcome to join, they had to commit to a celibate lifestyle. Like Bohemia Manor and the Moravians in Bethlehem, Ephrata featured gender-segregated dormitories. Unlike Bethlehem, which attracted single colonial women, Ephrata appealed to single European women and men who specifically immigrated for this purpose.¹⁸⁹ The

¹⁸² Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 227).

¹⁸³ Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 233-234.

¹⁸⁴ Revelation, 7:1-8; 14:1-5.

¹⁸⁵ Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 241.

¹⁸⁶ Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 243, 245.

¹⁸⁷ Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 251.

¹⁸⁸ Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 251.

¹⁸⁹ Van Dyne, “Celibacy,” 253.

community's membership peaked in 1750, with its sister cloisters, akin to Bethlehem, gaining popularity and establishing communities in Virginia and the Carolinas.¹⁹⁰

Given the number of religious denominations and sects coming into the colonies with more openness to singleness and celibacy as a lifestyle, the grip of the Puritan dogma and stigmatism that surrounded singleness should have loosened. In New England, however, the acceptance and even encouragement of singleness in other colonies had the opposite effect.¹⁹¹ Open views about singlehood and new celibate experimentation in the colonies were deemed a threat by Puritan ministers who tightened their grip and further stigmatized those who remained single within their communities.¹⁹² Singleness and spinsterhood were still seen as extraordinary even well into the 19th century when, in New England, nine out of ten women married.¹⁹³

Neither Mary, Hannah, nor Betty ran off to join one of these new experimental communities. None of them ventured to move to a freer colony like Pennsylvania, where singleness was far more prevalent and much less disdained. Mary likely resided in the Adams homestead until her death. Hannah and Betty remained at least until the end of the Revolution. As already mentioned, Hannah ventured out of Massachusetts only once to conduct research in Rhode Island.¹⁹⁴ For the sisters to convert or move geographically would have been a legitimate means of escaping the stigma. However, neither Mary nor her nieces did either. Was there another avenue of dodging the degradation attached to being never-married? An option was to embody the persona of the maiden aunt, which was purportedly unavailable until the 19th

¹⁹⁰ Van Dyne, "Celibacy," 253.

¹⁹¹ Seeman, "Better to Marry," 407.

¹⁹² Seeman, "Better to Marry," 407.

¹⁹³ Mary Kelly, "A Woman Alone: Catharine Maria Sedgwick's Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century America," *The New England Quarterly* 51, no.2 (1978): 209.

¹⁹⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 76.

century. But, the character of the maiden aunt had been branded as meddling, jealous, and misandrous. Was she not a person to be avoided like the plague?

Maiden Aunt Mary: A Forerunner to *Cult of Single-Blessedness*?

Mary did not just have to fight the stereotype and stigma around the characterization of the old maid and spinster. She also had to resist and escape the archetype of the maiden aunt which, as already illustrated in this chapter, was depicted as a meddling, nosy, misandric fearmonger, who was very often an influential figure in the lives of her brother's children, especially his daughter (or daughters), frequently after the sudden loss of a youthful and doting mother. This near-stock character was often portrayed as insidious. Her nieces were in constant danger of being infected with her ideologies. These ideologies included not only her intense misandry but also her fear of marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, and children in general. She was perhaps best known for frightening all her niece's worthy suitors away. Fortunately, this "maiden aunt" figure underwent a serious re-branding. This rebranding eventually became an avenue to escape the stigma connected with the never-married status. But, according to Chambers-Schiller, this re-brand did not occur until the early 19th century. However, the example of Hannah's Aunt Mary shows that this rebranding occurred, or was beginning to occur, much earlier.

An avenue in which Mary and her nieces might escape the stigma of the old maid or spinster caricature was playing the role of the "maiden aunt." The "maiden aunt" was supposedly a social construct promoted by *The Cult of Single Blessedness* in the 19th century.¹⁹⁵ According to Chambers-Schiller, *The Cult of Single Blessedness* arose between 1810 and 1860. Through this purported "cult," never-married women could escape the stigmatism around "spinsterhood"

¹⁹⁵ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband*, 35; Molloy, "'A Noble Class of Old Maids,' Surrogate Motherhood, Sibling Support, and Self-Sufficiency in the Nineteenth-Century White, Southern Family" *Journal of Family History* 41, no. 4 (2016): 402.

and garner societal approval through choosing singleness as a vocation if “they assumed noble work in a good cause at the inspiration and command of their God.”¹⁹⁶ Mary and Betty were dead long before the construct of the maiden aunt was prescribed in novels, periodicals, and almanacs, where the never-married woman might redeem her singlehood by devoting herself to a life of service to as a “maiden aunt.” The rebranded role of the “maiden aunt” required single women to be a surrogate wife, a surrogate mother, and a sister of mercy.¹⁹⁷ The construct of the revamped maiden aunt figure rose to popularity during the early 19th century but had much earlier roots. Mary Adams and her nieces, Hannah and Betty, demonstrate earlier iterations of this maiden aunt reinvention (that I would venture to call rebrand) and escape from stigmatism decades before the rise of *The Cult of Single Blessedness*.¹⁹⁸

There has been a widespread contention that never-married women were a burden and embarrassment to their families.¹⁹⁹ Through the case study of Mary Adams, this chapter demonstrates that never-married women were instead central figures, holding the family together in times of crises. Rather than being burdens and bleeding families of resources, maiden aunts like Mary Adams ensured their families’ survival.²⁰⁰ The multifaceted role required of Hannah's Aunt Mary to escape social stigmatization included acting as a surrogate wife to her brother Thomas, a surrogate mother to his children, and a sister of mercy to her community.

Maiden Aunts as Surrogate Wives

One of the typical traits or expectations of the maiden aunt figure in 19th-century literature was to enable bachelors or widowed brothers to establish or maintain their households

¹⁹⁶ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband*, 18-19, 21.

¹⁹⁷ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband*, 35; Molloy, “A Noble Class,” 402.

¹⁹⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 67.

¹⁹⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 74; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband*, 35; Molloy, “A Noble Class,” 402.

²⁰⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 74; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband*, 35; Molloy, “A Noble Class,” 402.

without a wife.²⁰¹ Mary was already residing in the Adams family homestead, so she may have stepped into this role when Hannah's mother Elizabeth became ill (we are not sure when she became sick or how long the illness lasted before her death). Mary may have stepped in much earlier, even before her brother Thomas and his new bride Elizabeth arrived as a married couple in her natal home.²⁰²

One of the responsibilities that Mary may have taken on as a surrogate wife was the role of the deputy husband. In this capacity, Mary would have assisted in managing Thomas's accounts and businesses, as well as the rental of the Adams's farm.²⁰³ Thomas (junior) was well known for his lack of business acumen. His business failed; he was duped by the farm manager he hired; and his attempt to help Hannah obtain a contract for her first book was an utter failure. A closer inspection reveals that both the business failure and the farm scandal occurred only a month after Mary's death. Such timing easily implies that Mary was likely helping to run, if not running, the estate business and farm, and therefore acting in the capacity as deputy husband and a surrogate wife to her brother Thomas (junior), and perhaps also much earlier to her father Thomas (senior).²⁰⁴

Mary's possible business acumen, especially in contrast to her brother's apparent lack thereof, raises the possibility that she remained single out of a sense of filial duty to her father, who likely required assistance in managing the estate. With only three children, two daughters and a lone son, Thomas (senior) faced challenges when one daughter, Hannah, passed away shortly after her marriage.²⁰⁵ Thomas (junior), the only son, had initially been preparing for

²⁰¹ Froide, *Never Married*, 75.

²⁰² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

²⁰³ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 18.

²⁰⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 1.

²⁰⁵ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

Harvard but was summoned back by his father to oversee the farm, altering his educational trajectory.²⁰⁶ Thomas (senior) likely relied on his elder daughter Mary to help run the estate, having mentored her into the role long before recalling Thomas (junior), who was a decade younger. This hypothesis gains credence when considering Mary's inheritance.

In New England, the customary inheritance practice entailed an equal division among all children, with sons inheriting land and daughters receiving goods or money, sometimes both. Notably, the eldest son typically received a double portion.²⁰⁷ In the Adams family, Thomas (junior) did receive the double portion, adhering to this tradition. However, Mary, despite being a daughter, also inherited a substantial portion of land when her father passed away in 1763. This bequest held particular significance given the limited number of children and the estate's prominence within the community.²⁰⁸

Mary probably not only acted as surrogate wife to her brother Thomas by helping manage the business and farm, acting as deputy husband, but she also may have stood in the role of deputy husband and surrogate wife for her father (Thomas, senior). The role of surrogate husband was not the only potential way Mary may have employed to escape the stigma of her never-married status. On Elizabeth's death, she also stepped in as a surrogate mother to younger brother Thomas's children.

Surrogate Mothers

Even before the passing of Mary's sister-in-law Elizabeth, it is most likely that Mary assumed the role of a surrogate mother to Thomas's children during Elizabeth's illness.²⁰⁹ It aligns with the conventional literary archetype of the maiden aunt stepping in during times of

²⁰⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

²⁰⁷ Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 81-82.

²⁰⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16-17.

²⁰⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 27.

crises, such as illness or the loss of a parent, to assist in raising orphans.²¹⁰ Hannah's testimony underscores Mary's maternal influence, describing her as an aunt who was "attached to me with almost a maternal fondness."²¹¹ Following Elizabeth's death, Mary had an additional two years with the children to act as a maternal figure, providing them with what Hannah later describes as "a female education" (to be explored in more detail in the next chapter). Despite being neither a wife nor a mother, Mary, a single, never-married, celibate "spinster" with an inheritance, dedicated ample time to offering her nieces a proper female education. She fulfilled the role of their maternal surrogate until Hannah was 13 and Betty was 15. However, the question remains: did Mary have a distinct vision for a different kind of "female education"?

There is a great likelihood that Mary not only stepped in emotionally as a maiden aunt, but also she stepped in financially. In literature idealizing the maiden aunt in the 19th-century south, maiden aunts took on the caregiving and financial responsibilities for their surrogate children, who were most often their nieces and nephews.²¹² It was also common for maiden aunts in early modern England who had taken on the surrogate mother role to designate their nieces and nephews, but more commonly, their nieces their beneficiaries.²¹³ Mary was no exception. When she passed, she left her entire inheritance, which included a significant portion of land, to Thomas's children, including her nieces Hannah and Betty.²¹⁴

Hannah had learned much from her never-married aunt. Almost immediately following Aunt Mary's death, Hannah passed the guardianship of her portion of Mary's inheritance over to the town clerk, treasurer, and selectman, John Baxter.²¹⁵ Her father would have traditionally held

²¹⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 67.

²¹¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

²¹² Milloy, "A Noble Class," 405; Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 109.

²¹³ Froide, *Never Married*, 67.

²¹⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

²¹⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

this guardianship as Hannah was only 13, not to mention single.²¹⁶ One wonders if Hannah's frugality was a result of the tutelage of the maternal guidance of Aunt Mary. Mary not only played the maiden aunt by acting as a surrogate mother to Hannah and Betty, she also acted as a sister of mercy to her community.

Sister of Charity/Mercy

As prescribed by the *Cult of Single Blessedness*, a third role a lifecycle never-married woman must play to escape the stigma of singleness is the "sister of mercy." Not only must the single woman prove her "usefulness" by supporting her family as a surrogate wife and surrogate mother, but she must also serve her broader community.²¹⁷ Mary's will indicated that she did just that. Recently, historians have been reading wills autobiographically. This approach can be beneficial to Mary's legacy. Not only does she fulfill the maiden aunt/surrogate mother role by leaving her inheritance to her brother's children, but in her will, she instructs that all of her clothing was to be left to the "town poor."²¹⁸

Conclusion

Froide highlights religion as a central reason why never-married women claimed they remained single.²¹⁹ The era in which Hannah and her aunt lived was profoundly steeped in religious fervor, with Mary reaching maturity during the First Great Awakening, while Hannah experienced the second. Despite this religious backdrop, it remains uncertain if Mary's decision to remain single was rooted in religious considerations. Hannah, a scholar and theologian, delved into religious topics with publications such as a world religion dictionary presenting an

²¹⁶ Karlsen, *Devil in the Shape*, 83.

²¹⁷ Froide, *Never Married*, 75.

²¹⁸ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282.

²¹⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 184.

ecumenical creed.²²⁰ Her works, including *History of the Jews* and *Truth and Excellency*, sought to establish the validity of Christianity.²²¹ In *Letters of the Gospels*, Hannah provided historical and geographical context to illuminate the New Testament for young readers.²²² While her *Summary History of New England* and textbook *Abridgment* promoted religious tolerance, intriguingly, these histories omitted any mention of the first or second Great Awakenings, almost as if they existed in a vacuum or had not occurred at all, at least not in New England.²²³

Hannah did not convert to any of the denominations that supported or even encouraged singleness for the sake of the ministry, like the Quakers or Moravians. By this time, even Baptists and Methodists were (still) encouraging single female preachers and celibacy. New communal denominations were being born in America that also encouraged singleness, like Ann Lee's Shakers and the Public Universal Friend's community New Jerusalem, which was much closer to Hannah in Rhode Island (1790s). Hannah did not convert to these either. Instead, at the end of her *Memoir*, she affirms her commitment to the Unitarian church. But, did she not marry due to religious fervor? It is doubtful. Her Aunt Mary effectively mentored Hannah in another route to escape the stigma around singleness that was so stifling in 18th-century New England: the rebranded role of the maiden aunt.

The rebranded role of the maiden aunt evolved from the meddling, jealous, petty, nosy, useless, and misandrous old woman to that of a benevolent surrogate wife, surrogate mother, and sister of mercy, as prescribed by women's literature in the 19th century, supposedly commencing during the rise of *The Cult of Single Blessedness*. Was Mary's performance as a maiden aunt

²²⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 12.

²²¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 126, 131, 245.

²²² Hannah Adams, *Letters of the Gospels*, 323-325.

²²³ Adams, *Summary History*; Adams, *Abridgment History*. Both neglect to mention the Awakenings, as did her *Memoir*.

prophetic? Alternatively, did the social construct which allowed single-women to the escape from the stigma of spinsterhood through the role of the maiden aunt exist, at least orally, long before the 19th century? Froide confirms that literature prescribing the maiden aunt escape route was circulating as early as the 18th century in England.²²⁴ Mary's will and Hannah's recollection of her Aunt Mary uphold Froide's contention that an earlier iteration of this role was also present in New England.

Hannah does not mention that her aunt Mary was single in her *Memoir*, only that she stepped in as a maternal loving figure in her life, especially in the crises of the two-year gap when her mother died. Counter to the belief that never-married women were burdensome outliers in their families, Mary held the family together. Mary stepped up to raise the children, likely when Elizabeth was ill, as well as after she died.

Even after her death, Mary fulfilled the role of caregiver by providing for her nieces. It is also likely that Mary gave Hannah direction on how to preserve her inheritance once she was gone.²²⁵ Mary's death brought about yet another tragedy Hannah pinpointed as a catalyst for her writing career: the financial ruin of her family. The loss of the family business and the failure of the farm due to mismanagement occurred a month after Mary died. This failure gestures towards Mary as a key player in managing the family estate as a surrogate wife and deputy husband to Thomas (junior). Mary had kept the family finances and income in check for years, perhaps even before Thomas was called home from his studies. Rather than being a burden or an outsider in the Adams family, never-married Aunt Mary held the family together. She held it together while she lived and well after her death through her inheritance. Later, Hannah followed in her

²²⁴ Froide, *Never-married*, 67.

²²⁵ Tilden, *History of New England*, 282. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

footsteps and did the same, illustrating that under Mary's tutelage, Hannah and Betty received a distinct female education in singleness.

Hannah followed in her aunt Mary's footsteps, eventually taking on the maiden aunt role herself. In her old age, Hannah had an impoverished half-sister that she helped to support financially. Hannah's sister Mary (29 years younger) became pregnant out of wedlock at the age of 24 in 1808. She announced her engagement to the baby's father, Amasa Fiske, just five weeks before the baby arrived. Fiske, a lawyer, struggled financially throughout their marriage and was in constant debt. Hannah often intervened by writing letters on their behest asking for forgiveness of debts and offering financial support for years. To add to their troubles with debt, Hannah's sister Mary struggled with chronic illness.²²⁶ Unfortunately, Hannah's sister was eventually deserted by her husband.²²⁷ Hannah wrote and published her *Memoir*, hoping to leave a financial legacy to support her sickly sister after she was gone.²²⁸ As she had hoped, the *Memoir* was successful in supplying for her sister's needs. The funds did not need to support her for long. Mary died in 1834, just two years after the book was published.²²⁹

Hannah's sister Mary was not Hannah's only act in the sister of mercy role. Like her Aunt Mary, at the end of Hannah's life, her mind was on the destitute. Where Mary left her clothing to the poor in her will, Hannah's last visit was to a juvenile offenders institution.²³⁰ Whether she wanted to become involved financially or wanted to encourage the children she called "rescued" is undetermined, but the act mirrors Aunt Mary's and indicates effectual

²²⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 288.

²²⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 349.

²²⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 350.

²²⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 354.

²³⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 354; Longo, "Hannah Adams," 58. I call the institution Hannah visited a juvenile offender institution because Schmidt claims she visited "the superintendent of juvenile offenders" (354).

mentorship, thereby establishing that the role of the maiden aunt was nothing new; it had been around long before the emergence of *The Cult of Single Blessedness*.

Hannah began her life embedded in a nurturing and intimate female familial network that consisted of at least her mother, her never-married aunt Mary, and her older sister Betty. But Hannah's mother died when she was at a formative period, when Hannah typically should have been mentored by her mother in the "art, or arts of womanhood" or "a daughter's education," which was essentially motherhood, wifedom, and household management. Her never-married aunt Mary stepped in as a maternal figure and, in doing so, altered the trajectory of Hannah's life by replacing her dependence upon a female to support systems. As a never-married woman Mary would not have been able to mentor Hannah as a wife or as a mother. However, because she had as a never-married woman stepped in to the role of maiden aunt, Mary could apprentice Hannah in the ins and outs of maiden aunthood.

Next, Mary herself seemed bereft of the typically vast familial female network. As a never-married woman, she was already atypical- we have already established that in New England, more than 90 % of women married. Further, the family in which Mary grew up was atypically small; Mary had only two siblings in a culture where 10 to 12 was much more common. Her one and only sister had passed away during her first year of marriage. Her sole sister-in-law also died young.²³¹

Moreover, it seemed as if something was wrong with Mary's mother, which likely added to the expectation that she remain unmarried to look after her parents. Though she was alive, Hannah never mentions her in her *Memoir*, and Mary had already stepped up to support her father in the capacity of household manager, a job which should have been held by her mother.²³²

²³¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-283.

²³² Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-283.

As such, Mary herself was unable to rely on a female network, let alone model one for Hannah, because she had none. Because Mary's female network was non-existent, Mary was not only unable to model how to cultivate a female network for Hannah, she also could not emphasize to Hannah the importance of a female network. As Hannah's only remaining maternal figure, neither could Mary pass her female support system onto Hannah in the typical manner after she had died. Further, in this void of a female network, Mary instead modeled to Hannah a deeper reliance on male relationships, like those of her father and brother. Thus, where, according to 18th-century print culture, archetypical maiden aunts ideologically instilled a fear and even hatred of men in nieces left in their care, Mary atypically demonstrated and instilled in Hannah a reliance and trust.

Finally, we cannot overlook the psychology of the impact two traumatic losses of two maternal figures in her life at such an early age likely had on Hannah. Certainly, death in early America was a common occurrence. Nevertheless, Hannah was still human, and though it can only be inferred, the loss of two maternal figures in the succession of three years no doubt taught Hannah that any dependence upon a familial female network was unreliable and perhaps too painful. But never-married Aunt Mary was not the only female culpable in causing Hannah to become atypical in relying on a male matrix rather than a female support system. After her death, her sister, Betty, stepped in to take Mary's spot as surrogate mother, also proving to be a catalyst in this atypical process.

Chapter Three: Betty Adams: A “Beloved Sister”

In 1773, when 150 people dumped 342 chests of tea into Boston harbor to inadvertently spark the American Revolution, Hannah was 18 and her older sister Betty was 20. Hannah, however, was mute about the entire experience in her writings.¹ Living in eastern Massachusetts, only seventeen miles from Boston, which British soldiers occupied, the young Adams sisters likely lived in constant fear. Prices soared, inflation skyrocketed, and towns passed laws to curb gouging and hoarding.² But Hannah did not comment on the war in her *Memoir*. Later that year, Hannah's distant cousin, John Adams, represented Massachusetts at the Second Continental Congress. Even though Hannah dedicated the second and third editions of her world religion dictionary to her cousin John and was invited to freely use his private library for her research, Hannah does not mention John in her *Memoir*.³

Though Hannah spent a significant portion of her youth living through the American Revolution, spanning from the *Stamp Act* to Independence (from age ten to 28), in her *Memoir* she reports very little on this major transformative event. She does not report the building of a powder house in her hometown of Medfield in 1768.⁴ When a group of British soldiers fired on Bostonian youth during the Boston Massacre in 1770, she was silent. Even when she wrote her *Summary History of New England* and school textbook *Abridgement History*, Hannah stood

¹ Adams, *Abridgement*, 141; Adams, *Summary History*, 264-267. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 61.

² Adams, *Abridgement*, 137-138; Adams, *Summary History*, 254-263. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 77.

³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 74, Hannah does not mention her friendship with President Adams, but Lee briefly does. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 49, 114-115.

⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 11. Here Hannah allows for two sentences concerning the Revolution. The first concerns her inability to devote time to her studies. The second is about her family's reduction to poverty “at the termination of the war.” See also Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 175.

objectively silent and outside her own experience, instead allowing David Ramsay's *History of the American Revolution* to narrate the history.⁵

In the aftermath of the pivotal Revolutionary battle in Lexington and Concord in 1775, Medfield mobilized a company of 21 Minutemen, including a drummer, a captain, three sergeants, and two corporals. Captain Ephraim Chernye's company, comprising 54 officers and men, joined them for twelve days of service.⁶ Although they did not participate in the Battle of Bunker Hill, these Medfield forces actively served during the siege of Boston. In the significant turn of events in 1776, when 2000 soldiers stealthily ascended on Boston at night, successfully reclaiming the city after six years of British occupation, Hannah was 21 and Betty 23, a moment that Hannah, intriguingly, does not personally describe.⁷

The Town of Medfield records the plight of one soldier, James Tisdale, who served in Washington's army against Quebec. He was wounded and taken captive for a year before he returned home.⁸ Hannah makes mention of none of it. Though no Adams men were on the list of soldiers or Minutemen, Hannah and Betty certainly knew several. In 1776, Medfield received a general court order for a quota of 26 men to serve in the Continental Army.⁹ A motion was passed to raise bounties for "the men listed to Goe to Cannady."¹⁰ Presumably, these Medfield men were en route to meet Arnold and Tisdale in Quebec. Hannah seems indifferent. Perhaps she was traumatized. One or several of these men could have been potential suitors for Betty and Hannah. Did either sister traumatically lose a loved one to war? It is a possibility, but there is no record.

⁵ Adams, *Abridgement*, 137-138; Adams, *Summary History*, 254-263. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 108.

⁶ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 165. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 72.

⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 165. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 76.

⁸ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 166.

⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 167.

¹⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 168.

In her *Memoir*, Hannah remained silent about the Boston massacre, the tea party, the capture and retaking of Boston, and the conscription of men from her town. Rather than record her experience of the revolution, she devotes swaths of space to her evocative and affectionate relationship with her never-married sister Betty. This relationship primarily took place prior to and throughout the revolutionary war.¹¹

It has been commonly held that never-married women like Hannah and Betty were doomed to a life of isolation, loneliness, and lack of affection.¹² Chambers-Schiller argues that “in the absence of serious inquiry into the status, lives, work, and role of single women in America, the assumption remains that the spinster or old maid was a woman of low social status and self-esteem, lacking a positive identity or a viable social role, the object of opprobrium and ridicule. We think of these women as alone and lonely.”¹³ This was far from the case for many never-married women. Instead, many never-married women, especially sisters like Hannah and Betty Adams, filled the supposed marital gap by living together, working together, and being affectionate with one another, especially in times of crises.

This chapter examines Betty’s role as the final lifeline of Hannah’s early female kinship network, which, when it met its tragic end, pushed Hannah to atypically seek out and align herself with elite non-familial male friendships rather than nesting herself in a nurturing female familial support system. Using the case study of Hannah’s very intimate relationship with her never-married sister Betty, this chapter dispels the claims that all never-married women were isolated, lonely, or lacked affection.¹⁴ Part I discusses the importance of the sibling bond and

¹¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8, 12, 17-18, 56-60.

¹² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 9, 18, 58. At times Hannah did admit to loneliness and isolation, but she found companionship with Betty, and later within her elite male circle. See also Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 10; Froide, *Never Married*, 45.

¹³ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 10.

¹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8, 12, 17-18, 56-60. See also Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 10; Froide, *Never Married*, 45.

explores the phenomenon of single siblings residing with one another. Part II discusses how single siblings, especially sisters, worked together. Part III examines how single siblings were affectionate with one another, sometimes employing romantic language, a practice which was common in sibling relationships as early as the 17th century. The conclusion explores Hannah's supportive and intimate relationship with her sister, Betty. However, Betty alone did not constitute an extensive female support network that Cott, Smith-Rosenberg, Chambers-Schiller, and even Froide argue that women needed to thrive.

A Tale of Two Sisters: Single Siblings

In the lives of unmarried siblings, the significance of relationships with parents was undeniable. Yet, it was the bonds between siblings that held unparalleled importance.¹⁵ In instances where parents, as observed in the case of the Adams sisters, either passed away or were absent, siblings tended to maintain enduring connections that spanned their entire lives. This enduring connection not only served to extend the familial legacy but also facilitated the cultivation of profound and lasting relationships among siblings.¹⁶

Probate law in early modern England reveals the importance of sibling relationships. These laws indicate that sibling bonds were not only strong in childhood and youth but remained intact well into adulthood. Evidence drawn by Froide from the wills of never-married women illustrates that sisters primarily remembered other sisters as their beneficiaries. More often, they bequeathed their never-married sisters.¹⁷ The evidence from wills indicates that relationships between sisters, especially never-married ones, were cardinal. Though evidence from wills can

¹⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8, 12, 17-18, 56-60. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 52.

¹⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8, 12, 17-18, 56-60. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 53.

¹⁷ Froide, *Never Married*, 53.

be circumstantial, Hannah Adams's *Memoir* supports Froide's contention concerning the importance of the sororal bond, at least in the setting of the 18th-century English colonies.¹⁸

Betty was two years older than Hannah. In her *Memoir*, Hannah affectionately referred to Betty as her "beloved sister."¹⁹ Betty lived with Hannah not only through the first two devastating losses of their mother and aunt but also endured the loss of affluence with the failure of their father Thomas's business on the cusp of the American Revolution.²⁰

Similar to Hannah and Mary, Betty also remained unmarried throughout her life.²¹ After the passing of Hannah's mother, Elizabeth, and her Aunt Mary, the role of surrogate mother fell to Betty.²² However, the depictions by Hannah Sawyer Lee and Lydia Maria Child, both of whom conducted interviews with Hannah towards the end of her life, present Betty's and Hannah's relationship as symbiotic, resembling that of a couple, and perhaps perceivable to modern readers as an emotionally charged romantic friendship. Understanding Hannah's connection with Betty necessitates an exploration within the context of unmarried siblings and the dynamics of surrogate spousal relationships.²³ Traditionally, amicable spouses are anticipated to cohabit, collaborate, and express affection toward each other, a pattern frequently observed in the lives of never-married sister siblings like Hannah and Betty.

Never-Married Sisters

Unmarried sisters such as Hannah and Betty Adams did not always experience loneliness or deprivation. Building upon the themes explored in the preceding chapter on Mary Adams, these single siblings were not only embedded within expansive families and actively engaged in

¹⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 53.

¹⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 18.

²⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 11.

²¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284.

²² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 56.

²³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8, 57; Lydia Maria Child, *Letters From New-York, Second Series*, (New York: C.S. Francis, & Co., 1845), 135.

their communities, but they also mirrored the dynamics of a married couple by cohabiting, collaborating on various endeavours, and expressing genuine affection for each other. The interconnectedness and profound bond observed in sibling relationships, reminiscent of the Adams sisters, were not unique to the colonies; they echoed a broader pattern prevalent in England as well.

The most important relationships in early modern England were no doubt relationships between siblings.²⁴ Froide reviewed 310 wills of never-married women from Bristol, Oxford, and Southampton. Wills in York and Hampshire, dated from 1550 to 1750, illustrate that siblings were the most prominent benefactors. The main and largest benefactors were sisters, especially never-married ones.²⁵

Like Hannah and Betty, never-married sisters in England often came in pairs.²⁶ For example, fine artist William Hogarth (1697-1764) had a pair of never-married sisters. Novelist Fanny Burney (1752-1840) had a pair of never-married aunts. Although he perpetuated the prerogative stereotype of the old maid in his periodicals, Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) ironically had a pair of never-married daughters, Hannah and Henrietta. Likewise, writer Henry Fielding (1707-1754) had four never-married sisters. Froide reports that through her probate research, which focused on women from families engaged in craft or trade, more than 50 pairs of never-married sisters resided in the provincial towns of England between 1550 and 1750.²⁷

Moving across the ocean and jumping ahead about a century, a similar attachment between never-married female siblings is evident in antebellum America. They also seemed to

²⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, 50.

²⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 54.

²⁶ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol. I, 22-27, 28-30. Sometimes they came in clusters. William Hayley in his *Essay on Old Maids* tells the story of two elderly nosy sisters who resided together, but also of a friend's visit to a household of five maiden relatives who were sisters residing together.

²⁷ Froide, *Never Married*, 54-55.

come coupled in pairs. Pairs of never-married sisters included the Dales, Townsends, and Morris's from Philadelphia, the Browns and Lees of Boston, the Gilpins and Smiths of Brandywine River Valley, the Carys of New York City, the Anthonys of Rochester, and the Dickinsons of Amherst. Chambers-Schiller claims that "this phenomenon of sibling attachment emerged in the early 19th-century and appears to be linked both to changes in the middle-class family and to the transformation of American society from a transgenerational to a peer culture."²⁸ These never-married pairs from early modern England and antebellum America relied on each other financially and emotionally. Hannah and Betty were a never-married sister pair who lived together, worked together, and served each other as emotional companions prior to the antebellum period. Because Betty had died before the turn of the 19th century, Chambers-Schiller's timeline should be expanded.²⁹

Part I: Living Together

Contrary to spinster mythology, never-married siblings were not alone. They most often lived together.³⁰ This was especially the case with never-married sisters. Not only did they often reside together, but they frequently, like a married couple, shared a bedroom. Many times, they even shared a bed.

In the 19th century, during the height of the *Cult of Single Blessedness*, single women often lived with other single siblings. Novelist Catherine Maria Sedgwick, for example, lived between the homes of her two brothers, whom she served as a surrogate wife before they wed

²⁸ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 128.

²⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 18; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284. See also Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 128.

³⁰ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, vol. I, 22-27, 28-30.

and after they became widowers.³¹ Emma Mordecai, like Sedgwick, resided with her lawyer and businessman brother, George, in Raleigh, North Carolina.³²

These women resided with their single brothers, helping them set up and maintain their households without a wife. More common, however, were never-married sister pairs who resided with one another. Amanda and Josephine Varner, for example, lived together in Indian Springs, Georgia, where they ran a very successful hotel together for 50 years.³³ Similarly, single sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké lived together while fighting slavery. Even after Angelina married late in 1838, they continued to reside in the same household.³⁴

Never-married siblings sharing living quarters was not unique to the rise of the *Cult of Single Blessedness* in the early 19th century. In early modern England, never-married sisters, according to Froide, “almost always lived together.”³⁵ At the turn of the 18th century, never-married sisters Alice and Jane Zanies, and sisters Elizabeth and Ann Waller both lived and held property together.³⁶ Never-married middle-aged sisters Ursula, Sarah, Catharine, and Beatrice Fielding also resided together.³⁷ Half a century earlier, in the 17th century, Winifred and Frances Blundell resided with one another for three decades, as did never-married sisters Louise-Jane and Perrette Bretin, and Jane and Anne Borrow.³⁸

In the 18th-century American colonies, Lydia Maria Childs tells us that Hannah Adams claimed to have gained her attachment to Betty by spending many years in the same apartment.³⁹

³¹ Kelly, “Woman Alone,” 213.

³² Molloy, “A Noble Class of Maids,” 415.

³³ Molloy, “A Noble Class of Maids,” 415.

³⁴ Molloy, “A Noble Class of Maids,” 415.

³⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 55.

³⁶ Froide, *Never Married* 48-49.

³⁷ Froide, *Never Married* 54-55.

³⁸ Margret Blundell (ed.), *Cavalier: Letters of William Blundell To His Friends*, 1620-98 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933), 54-56. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 55-56.

³⁹ Childs, *Letters From New-York*, 135.

Childs is unclear about when and where Hannah resided with Betty. Despite spilling much ink about her beloved sister, Hannah never mentioned their living arrangements in her *Memoir*. However, the never-married sister pair likely resided in her aunt's apartment in her father's household in Medfield during the Revolution.⁴⁰

Following the passing of Hannah's mother, Elizabeth, Thomas married Sarah Harris within a year.⁴¹ Remarkably, Sarah was merely a year older than Betty and only three years senior to Hannah. Hannah's aunt Mary's demise led to Betty assuming the surrogate mother role, primarily for Hannah, who was fourteen at the time, and Lucy, who was eleven.⁴² Notably, there's no mention of Betty taking on a motherly role for Hannah's younger brothers, Louis and Newton, aged five and eight, respectively, when Aunt Mary passed away.⁴³ The transition is likely explained by the fact that when Thomas married Sarah, the girls, Hannah and Betty, may have moved into Aunt Mary's quarters to accommodate the newlywed couple, who assumed care for the boys.⁴⁴ Curiously, Hannah makes no mention of leaving Medfield until she boarded in Dedham much later, while composing her *History of the Jews*, a period that transpired many years after Betty's death but just before Hannah's relocation to Boston.⁴⁵ Hence, it is plausible that, until Betty's demise, Hannah and Betty, while possibly residing in separate quarters, continued to dwell on their ancestral estate.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284. We know from Tilden that Hannah's home had an apartment built and attached to the primary residence where Thomas senior, his wife, and daughter Mary resided when Thomas and Elizabeth married and moved in as a newlywed couple.

⁴¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

⁴² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 56.

⁴³ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

⁴⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282, 284.

⁴⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 36.

⁴⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 58.

Never-married sisters like Hannah and Betty did not just live together. Like a conjugal couple, they often shared a bedroom and sometimes shared a bed.⁴⁷ Early modern and colonial bedrooms were not the places of privacy they are today. Multi-purpose spaces, then known as closets or chambers, bedrooms were communal and shared by even elite women with other women, who included servants, children, cousins, and sisters.⁴⁸ Sleeping together and eating together cultivated solid and affectionate bonds. It also staved off loneliness and isolation. For example, Anne Clifford (1590-1676) claimed that her affectionate friendship with her cousin Francis Boucher was established when they shared a bedroom and co-slept.⁴⁹ Clifford admitted that “she could not bear to sleep alone.”⁵⁰ Though not never-married sisters, but never-married friends, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby shared a bedchamber with a tiny bed for over 50 years in the 18th century.⁵¹ Hannah and Betty likely did the same.

Contrary to the popular perception, never-married sisters like Hannah and Betty Adams were not isolated or alone. The sisters not only resided in an apartment together for years, but it is also likely that their younger sister Lucy also lived in the same apartment. Lucy perhaps even shared the same chamber and possibly the same bed with Hannah and Betty until she married.⁵² Because Hannah shared such small quarters with at least three siblings, there was little privacy and seldom time and space for isolation or loneliness. Besides, the three sisters were not alone. Though they may have resided in a separate apartment, the Adams sisters still lived in their

⁴⁷ Anne Clifford, *Diary of the Lady Anne Clifford: With an Introductory Note by V. Sackville-West*, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., [1603-1675]1923) 11-12, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/diaryofladyannec0000pemb/page/n69/mode/1up> (accessed June 9, 2024). See also Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 83.

⁴⁸ Hannah Wolley, *The Complete Servant-Maid* (London, 1683), 105. See also Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 83.

⁴⁹ Clifford, *Diary*, 11-12. See also Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 85.

⁵⁰ Clifford, *Diary*, 11. See also Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 83.

⁵¹ Stuart Curran, “Dynamics of Female Friendship in the Later Eighteenth Century,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 23, no.2 (2001): 221.

⁵² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 57.

ancestral home with their father Thomas, younger brothers Newton and Louis, stepmother Sarah, and eventually her four children, as well as the Dowager Mary Adams.⁵³ It is hard to imagine anyone being lonely or isolated in such a busy household. But Hannah's family and new step-family were not their only housemates.

Hannah and Betty were further graced with the presence of several Harvard-bound boarders who seemed to have spent much time with Hannah, providing her with free lessons and the education she would require providing for herself and, one day, her family.⁵⁴ But, where was Betty while Hannah had her head in the books of her Harvard-bound tutors? She was busy being the surrogate mother and goodwife, working.

Part II: Working Together

Contrary to popular belief, never-married women were not lonely or alone. Never-married women often did not live alone. They also did not work alone. Like an 18th-century New England married couple who often also worked together, the wife as a deputy husband, filling in for the husband during absences, and even working alongside her husband in shops and trades, never-married sisters were not isolated or lonely because they worked together.⁵⁵ Consequently, they were devoid of loneliness and did not necessarily pose a financial burden to their natal families, debunking yet another misconception. This was particularly evident in the context of early modern England.

During the mid-18th century, a proliferation of boarding schools catering to middling girls emerged across England. Many of these educational institutions were founded and overseen by never-married sisters. In Bath, the Lee sisters (Sophia, Harriet, and Ann), for instance,

⁵³ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282, 284.

⁵⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 10-11. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 25.

⁵⁵ Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 35-37, 40; Froide, *Never Married*, 25.

established and managed a prominent boarding school.⁵⁶ Another example includes Hannah Moore and her never-married sisters, who were instrumental in running a successful boarding school in Bristol. Similarly, the Shergold sisters played a pivotal role in the operation of a boarding school in Southampton. The remarkable success of these schools, led by unmarried sisters, was evident in their ability to construct and secure leases for the city's most prominent homes and facilities.⁵⁷

The collaborative endeavors of never-married sisters extended beyond the realm of boarding-school management in early modern England. In the bustling streets of London, the Hogarth sisters successfully operated a line drapery shop, while the Burney sisters managed a thriving coffee house.⁵⁸ Glancing back to the 17th century, the Zaine sisters excelled in running a line drapery shop, this time in Southampton. Moving forward to 18th-century Southampton, the Smith sisters skillfully managed an ale and tippling house. In Edinburgh, the three never-married Wilson sisters joined forces in the millinery trade. Notably, the Shergold sisters, who not only ran a boarding school but also inherited their family business, demonstrated their business acumen by paying art and stall fees, allowing them to trade independently for over three decades.⁵⁹ A similar pattern of entrepreneurial spirit emerged in the American colonies, where Hannah and Betty resided.

The Adams sisters had not always worked together. Before the Revolution, in 18th-century New England, women had little opportunity to advance themselves financially.⁶⁰ The primary providers for New England women were initially their fathers and subsequently their

⁵⁶ Froide, *Never Married*, 99.

⁵⁷ Froide, *Never Married*, 99.

⁵⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 109-110.

⁵⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 110.

⁶⁰ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 21.

husbands. Irrespective of marital status, the predominant occupation for upper-class women like Hannah and Betty was the management of household duties within the family home.⁶¹ As daughters, both Hannah and Betty were anticipated to assist their mother, as discussed in Chapter One, in the execution of various household tasks, encompassing meal preparation, gardening, cleaning, and the production of household goods.⁶² Central to a daughter's labour was spinning, although she could also earn income outside the family by extending her domestic services to friends, neighbors, and the wider community.⁶³ When daughters did secure funds beyond the family sphere, it was often considered part of their female education rather than primarily for financial gain.⁶⁴ However, in the case of Hannah and Betty, their mother, and subsequently their aunt, had passed away. This shift in familial dynamics undoubtedly influenced their roles and responsibilities within the household.⁶⁵

To make matters worse, not only did the Adams sisters lose their aunt and mother, but they also lost the financial support from their father when his business and farm failed within months of each other.⁶⁶ Had Thomas not failed at administering the shop, Betty and Hannah could have been busy tending the store for their father, a common role for unmarried daughters in 18th-century New England.⁶⁷ In fact, the most common trade for women during this period was shop-keeping.⁶⁸

Owing to revolutionary political boycotts and the unscrupulous conduct of the farm manager, pursuing a career in shop-keeping became an impractical choice.⁶⁹ The loss of the

⁶¹ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 21.

⁶² Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 26.

⁶³ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 28.

⁶⁴ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 28.

⁶⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 5-6.

⁶⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 18.

⁶⁷ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 26.

⁶⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 98.

⁶⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 54.

family's business and the mismanagement of the farm (not to mention the speedy remarriage of Thomas) forced Betty and Hannah to find work to help support themselves outside the natal home.⁷⁰ Their pecuniary needs were compacted by the fact that it would have been challenging for the destitute Adams sisters to receive aid from colonial authorities as able-bodied single women. They would not have been considered "deserving poor."⁷¹ Aid was reserved for widows and children of the destitute, but not an adolescent or young adult still residing in the natal home.⁷² Options open to young women were most commonly positions in service, as governesses, teachers, and companions.⁷³

Breaking into trades was a formidable challenge for women, a hurdle that persisted until the 18th century. Legislation imposed restrictions on women in trades, grounded in the belief that they would be competing with married men striving to provide for their families.⁷⁴ In response to these stringent regulations in England, some women turned to informal trades, notably tavern-keeping.⁷⁵ However, in the colonies, particularly in urban areas, women had opportunities to engage in industries and productions linked to clothing and textiles, including roles such as weavers, spinners, fullers, seamstresses, and milliners.⁷⁶ Yet, the circumstances differed for Betty and Hannah in Medfield, located 17 miles from the city. Complicating matters further, the

⁷⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6.

⁷¹ Froide, *Never Married*, 34. This dissertation depicts Hannah as somewhat physically impaired. Betty was undoubtedly able-bodied until the last two years of her life. Though Hannah struggled with an infirmed constitution as a child preventing her from attending school regularly, and preventing her mother from mentoring her as a household manager, it would appear that in the period following her mother's death until after the American Revolution (the decades we are examining in this specific chapter), Hannah appeared to be somewhat well and able-bodied until she had issues with her eyes following the publication of her first work *Alphabetical Compendium*. Until her repeated bouts of near blindness, which occurred during her research for *Summary History*, which was after Betty's death, to local authorities, Hannah would have appeared to be able-bodied, albeit untrained, much like autoimmune disorders like fibromyalgia are often treated today.

⁷² Froide, *Never Married*, 36.

⁷³ Froide, *Never Married*, 100, 107.

⁷⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, 93.

⁷⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 87, 93.

⁷⁶ Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 23.

city itself was under occupation by British soldiers for eleven months, adding an additional layer of complexity to their potential involvement in these trades.⁷⁷

The Revolution changed much for women.⁷⁸ As the managers of the family households, women played a role in “economic warfare.”⁷⁹ As deputy husbands, they took on dual roles in the absence of their spouses who were off at war.⁸⁰ Some women spearheaded fundraisers and protests, while others served as spies and soldiers. Some followed the troops to supply medical and culinary support.⁸¹ Not the Adams sisters!

Hannah reported that as an alternative to shop-keeping, soldiering, or nursing, she first rather unsuccessfully tried “spinning, sewing, and knitting.”⁸² Then, due to the boycott of English goods, the war opened up the opportunity for her to learn to weave bobbin lace.⁸³ Near the end of her life, Hannah “pleasantly observed” that she earned more weaving lace bobbins during the Revolution than she had ever made during her career as a professional writer.⁸⁴

Professional writing was not Hannah’s only attempt at a post-war career. Teaching at a school was another option comparable to the wage of domestic employment.⁸⁵ During the mid-18th century, young unmarried daughters like Hannah would be boarded out to work at “dame schools.”⁸⁶ These were generally run during the summer for a few months and taught young children and girls basic skills of reading and sewing, though some included arithmetic and writing in their lesson plans.⁸⁷ While Hannah states in her *Memoir* that her health was not robust

⁷⁷ Adams, *Abridgement*, 139-152; Adams, *Summary History*, 291-308.

⁷⁸ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 28.

⁷⁹ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 29.

⁸⁰ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 30.

⁸¹ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 30.

⁸² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 11.

⁸³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 11.

⁸⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 56.

⁸⁵ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 30.

⁸⁶ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 30.

⁸⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. See also Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 30-31.

enough for her to work in a school, she effectively leveraged the knowledge she gained from her father's boarders, who imparted lessons in Latin and Greek. Harnessing these acquired skills, she took on the role of tutoring male students preparing for Cambridge while simultaneously working on her inaugural publication.⁸⁸ This career choice was not an unexpected development.

Commencing in early 18th-century England, middle-class women, who were often also educators, began experimenting with writing as a second potential profession. Writing seemed a viable option because it did not require an apprenticeship, and there was a low overhead investment to get started.⁸⁹ In both England and New England, never-married women often had to juggle more than one source of employment at the same time to make ends meet. With writing, it was almost always the case.⁹⁰

What did Betty do for work? Betty was scrubbing floors, making bread, milking cows, sewing dresses, and parenting her two younger sisters, and potentially her two much younger brothers from Thomas's first marriage.⁹¹ By this time, as a country peddler, Thomas had taken what was left of his shop on the road and must have been away from home often.⁹² On top of this copious list of duties, Betty sent out her wares for her father to sell to help finance the family's needs.⁹³ To add to her massive job as a household manager and sending out her domestic fare, Betty became Hannah's stenographer/amanuensis.⁹⁴ Like many never-married sisters, Hannah and Betty worked together on the publication *An Alphabetical Compendium*. This publication would eventually provide Hannah with the title "the first woman in America to earn her living

⁸⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12.

⁸⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 101.

⁹⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 101; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 39.

⁹¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 356.

⁹² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 354. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

⁹³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12.

⁹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 67. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 45.

from her pen,” and bring her before presidents and dignitaries. She could not have done it without Betty’s assistance.

Not only was Betty’s work as a transcriptionist for Hannah’s breakthrough book vital to Hannah’s success, but Betty was also the muse for Hannah’s second edition of the publication. It was Betty’s death that inspired Hannah to work on the second edition of her popular world religion dictionary. This edition would be dedicated to future president John Adams and purchased by several signers of the Declaration of Independence.⁹⁵ That second edition paid off both her own and Betty’s medical bills.⁹⁶ Rather than draining funds from their father and his family, Betty and Hannah supported one another financially by living together, working together, and even by paying for one another’s medical bills when their father could not.

Part III: Affectionate/Intimate Exchanges/Friendships.

Unwed sisters, living in the same household, shared a closeness that mirrored the intimate dynamics of married couples. Much like conjugal partners, these sisters collaborated in their work, provided mutual financial support, and expressed affection toward each other. Just five years after the American Revolution reached its conclusion, and just four years after Hannah published her first book, Betty passed away after a two-year battle with an undisclosed illness.⁹⁷ Hannah was 34; Betty was 36. In her *Memoir*, Hannah reflected on the loss of her never-married sister Betty not through the lens of sisterhood, but instead through the frame of a symbiotic sensual friendship.

In *Bonds of Womanhood*, Nancy Cott explains that there was an explosion of “romantic effusions” between middle-class single females, especially between never-married sisters of all

⁹⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 19. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 53.

⁹⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 21.

⁹⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 57. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 44.

ages, in the early 19th century.⁹⁸ However, Betty passed away at the age of 36 in 1789. Hannah's and Betty's affectionate "sibling-friendship," therefore, predates the 19th century. Cott does admit, however, that this trend towards "sibling attachment" in the form of a "new idealized friendship" began amongst elite adolescent writing as evidenced in their diaries, around the late 18th century.⁹⁹ By definition, Hannah and Betty might be considered elite, at least before their father sent the family into financial ruin.¹⁰⁰

Touched by the sorrow of Betty's premature passing, Hannah found solace in the expressive art of composing heartfelt pages of romantic poetry dedicated to her beloved sister. In a poem included by Lee in her biography, Hannah speaks of Betty's love as an "attractive force."¹⁰¹ Hannah also speaks of her "bleeding heart" for Betty's "tender love."¹⁰² Hannah calls their bond a "fond officious love."¹⁰³ Why were her sentiments so affectionate, perhaps bordering on amorous?

Cott claims that because women resided in a "largely female world" of separate spheres, romantic friendships between women were fostered and celebrated "as beautiful, caring, and pure."¹⁰⁴ These affectionate female friendships were, in fact, "promoted as the feminine ideal."¹⁰⁵ In a similar suit, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg's "The Female World of Love and Ritual," which explores the correspondence and diaries of 35 families from 1760 to 1880, argues that a "specifically female world did indeed develop, a world built around a generic and unself-

⁹⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 17; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284. See also Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 183.

⁹⁹ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 183, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 11.

¹⁰¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 59.

¹⁰² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 59.

¹⁰³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 59.

¹⁰⁴ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 183; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 42; Curran, "Dynamics of Female Friendship," 222.

¹⁰⁵ Marilyn Yalom and Theresa Donovan Brown, *The Social Sex: A History of Female Friendship*. First edition (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2015), 145-146.

conscious pattern of single-sex or homosocial networks.”¹⁰⁶ Smith-Rosenberg posits that “these supportive networks were institutionalized in social conventions or rituals which accompanied virtually every important event in a woman’s life, from birth to death.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, she contends that “entire days, even weeks, might be spent almost exclusively with other women.”¹⁰⁸ Because of this close and intimate proximity, the female kin network was integral, and “ties between sisters, first cousins, aunts, and nieces provided the underlying structure upon which groups of friends and their network of female relatives clustered” who would assume the “emotional centrality in each other’s lives.”¹⁰⁹

Sometimes, these same-sex relationships fulfilled both physical and emotional needs.¹¹⁰ Like couples today, women kissed, held hands, and snuggled in bed.¹¹¹ Like Hannah and Betty, they wrote and spoke about each other in suggestive manners.¹¹² Women commonly referred to one another in terms of endearment and promised fidelity.¹¹³ Chambers-Schiller claims that these romantic relationships eased the social isolation of single life for never-married women like Hannah and Betty.¹¹⁴ According to Yalom and Brown, these same-sex, “often passionate, exclusive, and obsessive” friendships were rooted in the rise of the novel.¹¹⁵

Sagal, Garrioch, and Yalom and Brown all posit that the rise of affection, and even romantic dialogue among females were perpetuated by the explosion of a fictional landscape of novels. These novels were often written by women for women, and encouraged emotional

¹⁰⁶ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 9.

¹⁰⁷ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 9.

¹⁰⁸ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 10.

¹⁰⁹ Smith-Rosenberg, “Female World,” 11, 13.

¹¹⁰ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 43.

¹¹¹ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 43; Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 144.

¹¹² Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 43.

¹¹³ Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 144.

¹¹⁴ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 43.

¹¹⁵ Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 144-145.

female relationships.¹¹⁶ Garroch claims 17th-century novels which were prudish, transitioned to emotional and sentimental novels in the 18th century.¹¹⁷ Yalom and Brown suggest the fictional impetus for emotionally charged female friendships was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's novel *Julie or the New Heloise*.¹¹⁸ International best sellers like Rousseau's went on to inspire other authors to follow in their footsteps.¹¹⁹ By her own admission, Hannah's early education was entrenched in novel reading to the extent that she was ashamed to admit it.¹²⁰ These novels that romanticized female friendships influenced Hannah's romantic idealization of her sister Betty.

The transition from emotional and amorous language confined to fiction to its manifestation in everyday correspondence marked a notable shift. Journals, autobiographies, and letters became mediums for the expression of such sentiments and were even published, such as the passionate letters of Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot in 1809.¹²¹ Another instance is found in the series of spiritual and sensual tribute poems by Anna Seward, portraying her relationship with her adopted sister Hannah Sneyd, which emerged in 1769.¹²² Garroch contends that these intense, intimate friendships between women, prominently evident in their written exchanges, were a blend of societal trends and a subversive force.¹²³ However, the question arises: subversive to what? What defined this *Cult of Female Friendship*, and how did it shape relationships, such as that between Hannah and Betty? Moreover, how did it serve to alleviate

¹¹⁶ David Garroch, "From Christian Friendship to Secular Sentimentality: Enlightenment Re-Evaluations," and "The Classical Ideals of Friendship," in *Friendship: A History* ed. Barbara Caine (London: Equinox Pub., 2009), 17; Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 145; Anna K. Sagal, "That Friendship Which Is Yet Dearer to Me Than Any Other Earthly Good: Female Intimacy in Eliza Haywood's Epistles for the Ladies," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 43, no.3 (2019): 67.

¹¹⁷ Garroch, "Christian Friendship," 179-180.

¹¹⁸ Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 176.

¹¹⁹ Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 145.

¹²⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8-10.

¹²¹ Garroch, "Christian Friendship," 199.

¹²² Curran, "Dynamics of Female Friendship," 226, 229.

¹²³ Garroch, "Christian Friendship," 199-200.

the loneliness and isolation traditionally associated with lifelong singleness? To trace the origins of the *Cult of Female Friendship*, it becomes essential to unravel the classical roots of the *Cult of [Male] Friendship*.

Lee's *Notices* includes a poem Hannah wrote during her time of grief which followed Betty's death. It echoed themes of friendship more so than sisterhood or sibling bonds:

The first attachment of my earliest years,
Ere yet I felt the attractive force
Of sacred friendship, was my love to her.
Our minds expanding, each succeeding year
Heightened our mutual friendship. Not a joy
Ere touched my soul, but when she shared a part.
When pierced with sorrow, her all cheering smile
Could give me comfort. Well she knew to bear
Life's adverse scenes with calm, undaunted mind,
And placid resignation. Grace divine
Illumed her soul, and stamp'd its features there.

The best of friends! Oh, how my bleeding heart
Recalls her tender love! Of self unmindful,
For me she seemed to live; forever kind,
Forever studious to promote my good
"She was my guide, my friend, my earthly all;"
Heaven's choicest blessing. Not a single thought
Could lurk in close disguise. I knew to trust
This much loved sister with my inmost soul.

And I must lose her! While unkind disease
Threatened a life so dear, my trembling heart
Sunk in overwhelming wo. Could prayers. Prayers, or tears
Could sleepless nights, or agonizing days,
And all the care of fond officious love
Avert thy fate, sister, thou still hadn't lived.¹²⁴

Hannah speaks about Betty affectionately in this poem and in her *Memoir*. Hannah does not discuss her in terms of a sister as much as she does a friend and spouse.¹²⁵ Four times in this poem, Hannah refers to Betty as a friend. Only twice does she depict Betty as a sibling or sister.

¹²⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 59.

¹²⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 17.

Why would Hannah describe her sister as a friend? Were friendships different in Hannah's time than in ours? Did they carry different connotations? For answers, we look to the classical ideologies on ideal friendship to trace its roots in Hannah's writing. This section discusses the historical context of intimate female friendship and classical ideal friendships employed in the 18th century to analyze Hannah's rhetoric surrounding her relationship with her sister Betty in her *Memoir*.

The authors of the classical cult of friendship are arguably Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BCE) through his dialogue in *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Roman statesman and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE) through his "de Amicitia" in *Other Selves*. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies three types of friendships: the useful friendship, the pleasurable friendship, and the virtuous or ideal friendship.¹²⁶ Hannah and Betty's "friendship" concerned the latter. According to Aristotle, the quintessential form of friendship hinged on the Greek term "philia," denoting "dear," "own," and "tendency toward."¹²⁷ This concept of philia was further expounded upon by Aristotle and later by Cicero, referred to in Latin as "amicitia."

This ideal or perfect friendship, as articulated by Aristotle, was invariably confined to two men of equivalent status, sharing similar values and possessing equal goodness and virtue.¹²⁸ Furthermore, this exemplary friendship was voluntary, unburdened by biological obligations, social coercion, or institutional regulations.¹²⁹ Such ideal friendships were exclusive and carried

¹²⁶ Ivy Schweitzer, "Making Equals: Classical Philia and Women's Friendship," *Feminist Studies* 42, no.2 (2016): 341.

¹²⁷ Cicero, "de Amicitia," 7.23, 6.20, 4.12, 25.92; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4.29, 8.8.12. See also Schweitzer, "Making Equals," 337.

¹²⁸ Cicero, "de Amicitia," 7.23, 6.20, 4.12, 25.92; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4.29, 8.8.12. See also Dirk and Nick Eliopoulos Baltzy, "The Classical Ideals of Friendship," in *Friendship: A History* ed, Barbara Caine (London : Equinox Pub., 2009), 10, 16, 18, 23; Constant J. Mews, "Cicero on Friendship," and "The Classical Ideals of Friendship," in *Friendship: A History*, ed. Barbara Caine (London : Equinox Pub., 2009), 67; Schweitzer, "Making Equals," 342.

¹²⁹ Schweitzer, "Making Equals," 340.

an elitist undertone, designed to withstand the test of time as a lifelong bond.¹³⁰ The fundamental purpose of the ideal friendship was for friends to engage in honest critiques, serving as a catalyst for each other's moral growth and the development of exemplary citizenship.¹³¹

In the classical ideal friendship model, it was also incumbent upon friends to extend their care to each other's families in times of absence or, even more significantly, death. Beyond emotional support, ideal or perfect friends were expected to act as proxies in legal or political matters, extending their assistance in various aspects, including business affairs and loans.¹³² This mutual support was deemed crucial as ideal friends were believed to be so harmonized with each other that they were metaphorically described as “one soul in two bodies” or “another or second self.”¹³³ Cicero says, “he who looks upon a true friend, looks, as it were, upon a sort of image of himself” and later, “the effects of friendship is to make as it were, one soul out of many... .”¹³⁴

Hannah claimed she had this type of “one soul” relationship with Betty. In fact, Hannah depicts her classical “one soul” friendship with Betty almost obsessively throughout her *Memoir*. For example, Hannah said that Betty was her life.¹³⁵ Not only did Hanna describe Betty as “my own life,” she also claimed that their “interests were so closely blended that I nearly identified

¹³⁰ Cicero, “de Amicitia,” 7.23, 6.20, 4.12, 25.92; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4.29, 8.8.12. See also Baltzly, “Classical Ideals,” 10; Mews, “Cicero on Friendship,” 67; Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 343; Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 29.

¹³¹ Cicero, “de Amicitia,” 7.23, 6.20, 4.12, 25.92; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4.29, 8.8.12. See also Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 337; Baltzly, “Classical Ideals,” 3; Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 37.

¹³² Baltzly, “Classical Ideals,” 29; Mews, “Cicero on Friendship,” 68; Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex*, 36-37.

¹³³ Cicero, “de Amicitia,” 7.23, 6.20, 4.12, 25.92; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4.29, 8.8.12; Yalom and Brown, *The Social Sex* 29; Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 342; Baltzly, “Classical Ideals,” 23.

¹³⁴ Cicero, “de Amicitia,” 7.23, 25.92.

¹³⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 18.

her existence as my own.”¹³⁶ Borrowing from this classical ideal, Hannah even went as far as to tell Lee that only “one heart existed” between them.¹³⁷

Cicero and Aristotle felt that ideal friendships were extremely rare, happening only once in a lifetime.¹³⁸ Some argued that ideal friendships were even more unusual, and only happened a few times in all history. Exemplars of such ideal friendships included those of Achilles and Patroclus, Alexander the Great and Hephaestion, and Jonathan and David.¹³⁹ Based on her statements, Hannah was likely to see her friendship with Betty as comparable.

Hannah was not the only one who saw her relationship with Betty in terms of the classical ideal that was so rare it only occurred once in a lifetime. Lee also felt Hannah and Betty were one of these classic exemplars. Lee framed Hannah’s and Betty’s friendship in this classical context when she claimed “the death of this sister seemed to be the dissolution of a tie, like that which occasioned the exclamation of David in his beautiful lamentation over Jonathan. Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”¹⁴⁰ But ideal friends, according to classical philosophers, were restricted to elite males. They also could not be related.¹⁴¹ Hannah and Betty were obviously female and related. So, how would Hannah, and even Lee, come to apply this exclusively male elite concept to the context of female sisters more than a millennium later?

Early Modern Revival

Renaissance humanists, in their rediscovery of classical texts by luminaries such as Cicero and Aristotle, utilized these writings to educate privileged men in what were considered

¹³⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 18.

¹³⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 57.

¹³⁸ Cicero, “de Amicitia,” 7.23, 6.20, 4.12, 25.92; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4.29, 8.8.12. See also Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 343.

¹³⁹ 1 Samuel 20:14-17, 42. Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 345; Baltzly, “Classical Ideals,” 23; Mews, “Cicero on Friendship,” 66.

¹⁴⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 56-60; 2 Samuel, 1:26.

¹⁴¹ Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 340-343; Baltzly, “Classical Ideals,” 10; Mews, “Cicero on Friendship,” 67.

“dead” languages.¹⁴² Unintentionally, language classes sparked a resurgence of the ideal friendship, evolving into a fully-fledged cult, with Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) often credited as the instigator—the pioneer of what became known as the *Cult of Friendship*.¹⁴³ This *Cult of Friendship* during the early modern era prompted young elite male friends to commission dual portraits and, intriguingly, even be buried in the same graves, signifying a profound commitment to their idealized bonds.¹⁴⁴

Michael de Montaigne’s essay “On friendship” (“De l’amitié”) became wildly popular during the period. To Montaigne, the ideal friendship moved beyond the classical concept of “one soul in two bodies” with fused souls. Montaigne claimed, “but in the friendship I speak of, they mix and work themselves into one piece, with so universal a mixture, that there is no more a sign of the seal by which they were conjoined.”¹⁴⁵

Lydia Maria Child spoke of Hannah’s and Betty’s friendship in similar terms: “Thus early accustomed to lean upon a [Betty’s] more robust nature, she [Hannah] was like a vine deprived of its support, when this beloved relative passed into the world of spirits, and left her alone, at the age of 35.”¹⁴⁶ Employing a garden metaphor, Child claimed that Hannah’s and Betty’s affectionate friendship was more than Montaigne’s fusion, it was a grafting. But, Montaigne, who felt women were too fickle, maintained that ideal friendships were still only obtainable and viable between unrelated men. Where did women fit in? How did Hannah come to hijack the concept, which was still exclusive to male friends outside the bonds of kinship?

¹⁴² Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 337-338, 350; Baltzy, “Classical Ideals,” 2.

¹⁴³ Carolyn and Bill Kent James, “Renaissance Friendships: Traditional Truths, New and Dissenting Voices” in *Friendship: A History*, ed. Barbara Caine, (London: Equinox Pub., 2009), 112, 133.

¹⁴⁴ Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 350.

¹⁴⁵ Michel de Montaigne, trans. M. A. Screech, and M. A. (Michael Andrew) Screech, *On Friendship*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) 27.5; Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 25; Schweitzer, “Making Equals,” 345.

¹⁴⁶ Child, *Letters From New-York*, 135.

The Church

Captivated by the fervor surrounding the early modern *Cult of Friendship*, the Catholic Church eagerly embraced this trend. Influential church leaders, including figures like Erasmus and his friend Juan Luis Vives, expanded upon the classical “one soul in two bodies” motif.¹⁴⁷ Vives claimed, “If friendship between two soul[s] renders them one, how much more truly and effectively must this result from marriage, which far surpasses all other friendships.”¹⁴⁸ Vives and Erasmus introduced a modification, applying it to the marital relationship, asserting that the ideal friendship was not confined to elite men but was instead found between husbands and wives. This innovative model of the ideal friendship, as per the church's perspective, surpassed male friendships because married couples, sharing not only a soul but also a physical bond in the marital bed, epitomized the concept of a shared body, in line with biblical references such as “one flesh.”¹⁴⁹

The classical ideal friendship model, adapted by the church, finally afforded the experience of the ideal friendship to women. However, women were still restricted. The ideal friendship was still limited to the context of a marriage between a husband and wife.¹⁵⁰ However, elite women who read the classical texts (like Hannah) were not happy with the classical elite male model or the church's stance.

Elite Women React

¹⁴⁷ Vives, *Education*, 172, 175, 176, 177, 186; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 222, 226-227. See also Constance M. Furey, “Bound by Likeness: Vives and Erasmus on Marriage and Friendship,” in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, eds. Daniel T. Lochman, and Maritere López (Taylor and Francis, 2016), 30-31.

¹⁴⁸ Vives, *Education*, 186; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 222.

¹⁴⁹ Genesis, 2:24; Matthew, 19:5; Mark, 10:8; Ephesians, 5:31; Vives, *Education*, 172, 175, 176, 177, 186; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 222, 226-227. See also Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 26.

¹⁵⁰ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 26.

Elite women subverted both the classical model and the Christian husband-wife prescription and instead began to write about women, both sisters and female connections, as friends and husbands.¹⁵¹ In the 17th century, Anne Dormer wrote “my dear soul” and “I love you dearer than my own life” – not to her husband or lover, but to her sister Elizabeth Trumbull.¹⁵² In defiance of early modern male philosophers like Montaigne, who proscribed women from partaking in these ideal friendships, and the restriction imposed by church leaders such as Erasmus and Vives, who confined women's experiences to marital connections, elite women of the early modern era, well-versed in classical texts, boldly repudiated the male-exclusive theory. Early modern women claimed they too could have sublime ideal friendships which experienced the shared soul with other women.¹⁵³ Lucy Hutchinson, for example, in her *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, depicts the one-soul friendship between two sisters—her mother and aunt. Herbert claims the sisters “had contracted such an intimate friendship that they seemed to have but one soul.”¹⁵⁴

Elite women, even royal ones, resisted the male-only classical model of the ideal friendship. They did so by calling their female friends their husbands. Mary Stuart (later Mary II), for example, referred to her friend Frances Apsley as her “dear husband.”¹⁵⁵ Isabella Seton, Countess of Perth in Scotland, referred to her friend as a female spouse.¹⁵⁶ As early as the 15th century, Queen Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549) commissioned a translation of *Lysis*, a dialogue on friendship written by Plato. She also wrote a lengthy poem on female friendship

¹⁵¹ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 26.

¹⁵² Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 25.

¹⁵³ Vives, *Education*, “Preface”; Erasmus, *Institution*, Prologue. Both Erasmus and Vives dedicated these works to Queen Catherine of Aragon, mainly for the raising of her daughter. These books became wildly popular in both Protestant and Catholic England, and the base, or general standard for the norm. One must wonder its effect on Elizabeth, who chose to remain single throughout her life and reign. See Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 24.

¹⁵⁴ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 25.

¹⁵⁵ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 28.

called *La Coche* or *The Coach*.¹⁵⁷ Like Hannah, William Blundell called his two never-married sisters husbands (as in married to each other).¹⁵⁸ According to Chambers-Schiller, “many sisters thought of themselves as wedded to one another in a relationship more meaningful than many marriages and carrying equal social significance.”¹⁵⁹ Hannah and Betty were no exception.

Hannah wrote affectionately about her sister Betty. When first introducing Betty to her reader, she says Betty was “my guide, my friend, my earthly all.”¹⁶⁰ This line is repeated in the primary records of Hannah at least three times. First, the line “she was my guide, my friend, my earthly all,” in connection to Betty appears twice in Hannah’s *Memoir*. A third time, it is recorded in Hannah’s interview with Lydia Maria Childs. The phrase was not commonly connected to a sisterhood or friendship. Instead, the phrase was commonly employed in the context of marriage.¹⁶¹

Hannah referred to Betty as her kin. Before the 18th century, the definition of a *friend* was associated with family.¹⁶² This definition would make sense in the context of Hannah’s and Betty’s relationship; as sisters, they were kin. However, the use of the word friend altered in the 18th century. Though the word friend was still employed in kinship terms, it was connected only to the husband, not other family members.¹⁶³ Like other elite women, Hannah was likely saying that Betty was her wife.

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¹⁵⁷ Marc D. Schachter, “The Friendship of the Wicked in Novella 12 of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron*” in *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700*, eds. Daniel T. Lochman, and Maritere López (Taylor and Francis, 2016), 165.

¹⁵⁸ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 28.

¹⁵⁹ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 130.

¹⁶⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8, Adams, “Shaw Account,” 193.

¹⁶¹ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 130.

¹⁶² Cott, *Bonds*, 186.

¹⁶³ Cott, *Bonds*, 186

During the early modern era, the influence of medical perspectives coincided with female resistance to classical ideals of friendship, contributing to a substantial female backlash. The theories of humor propagated by Galen posited that women's bodies were inherently designed for affection and emotions more than their male counterparts.¹⁶⁴ In this period, inexpensive medical pamphlets, drawing from the rediscovered works of Galen, circulated widely and found a receptive audience among women. These pamphlets argued that due to women's higher levels of phlegm and black bile, they were physiologically better suited for expressions of affection and heartfelt caring. Consequently, these texts suggested a departure from the prevailing notion that men should be the epitome of ideal friendships, asserting instead that women should occupy this esteemed role.¹⁶⁵ Aligning with the tenets of medical literature, Thomas Heywood's chapter titled "Friendships in Women" in his *Generall History of Women* (1657) claimed that women's friendships were, in fact, more effective than those of men.¹⁶⁶ William Hill's *New Year's Gift for Women* (1660) portrayed a similar sentiment.¹⁶⁷ Subsequently, religious writings began echoing the assertions of medical pamphleteers, asserting that women were more suitable for deep and affectionate friendships.¹⁶⁸ It did not take long for prescription literature, explicitly addressed to a female audience, to follow suit. Female friendships were not only endorsed but elevated to a transcendent status, surpassing the love and friendship shared between a husband and wife by virtue of their purity and non-sexual nature.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 32.

¹⁶⁵ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 31; 33.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Heywood, *Generall History of Women*, (London, 1657, Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A43596.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext;q1=Women+--+Biography> (accessed June 9, 2024).

¹⁶⁷ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 33.

¹⁶⁸ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 161.

¹⁶⁹ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 189.

Hannah only offered a handful of sentences about her relationship with her mother. She offered even less to her relationship with her aunt. She left out entirely her other siblings, including three full siblings and four half-siblings.¹⁷⁰ Yet, Hannah provided a significant reflective account of her relationship with her older and never-married sister, Betty.¹⁷¹ Much of her writing about her single sister, Betty, was framed in romantic and even spousal terms of love and friendship.

Far from being alone and subsequently lacking affection, not only did Hannah feature her intimate relationship with Betty as one of the key motifs of her *Memoir*, but Lee included a substantial portion of Hannah's memories of Betty. Likewise, Child's chapter on Hannah was almost entirely about her symbiotic partnership with her sister.¹⁷² Thus, it is safe to conjecture that Betty was a significant player in Hannah's life. A central *topos* to her recollection of Betty was the motif of friendship, a very intimate and romantic friendship, which certainly does not denote any loneliness, at least not until after Betty's death.

Concluding Arguments

In a manner reminiscent of a married couple, Hannah and Betty not only provided each other with financial support through their shared living and working arrangements but also, akin to spouses, offered one another emotional sustenance through intimate conversations and written expressions of affection—potentially more profound than many married couples. This case study of their dynamic partnership dispels two prevalent myths: first, the notion that never-married women were burdensome to their families, and second, the stereotype that never-married women

¹⁷⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 5-6; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284.

¹⁷¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7-8, 17-19; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193. In her 13-page account to William S. Shaw, Hannah says the following of Betty: "While my mind was thus involved in perplexity, I had the misfortune to lose a beloved sister, who was dearer to me than life. My attachment to her equaled the high descriptions of friendship in poetry and novels. Her death seemed to deprave me of the better half of my existence, and the world appeared a desert, in which I was left almost alone, without health and without property."

¹⁷² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 56-60; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193; Child, *Letters*, 137.

endured a life of loneliness, isolation, and disaffection. However, just as being never-married did not inevitably consign one to a life of solitude and despondency, marriage itself did not guarantee affection or eliminate feelings of loneliness. Often, as is still true today, the opposite scenario unfolded.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, a palpable fear gripped many women at the prospect of matrimony.¹⁷³ The pages of journals and diaries from the 18th century vividly captured the apprehension young women experienced as they contemplated the solemnity of exchanging wedding vows. Elizabeth Smith Shaw, for example, in 1786, writes she was plagued with “fearful apprehensions” regarding her impending marriage. Likewise, Anne Emlen was overtaken with a sense of gloom on her wedding day. Anticipating an unhappy marriage, Elizabeth Foote similarly “prepared herself for the worse.” Anna Rowle consoled herself with the knowledge that life was short should her marriage turn out unhappy.¹⁷⁴

The result of entering into matrimony was anxiously likened to a gamble, frequently illustrated as a lottery or the roll of a die.¹⁷⁵ According to Mary Beth Norton, every 18th-century woman knew women trapped in sub-optimal and even abusive marriages.¹⁷⁶ These “other” women would have included women like Nancy Shippen, who, as a teenager, was forced by her father to marry a much older man whom she described as a tyrant. She later deserted him.¹⁷⁷ They would have also included women like Abigail Bailey, who discovered her husband had

¹⁷³ Matrimony; or, Good Advice to the LADIES to Keep Single (London: Printed for T. Read, in Dogwell Court, White-Fryers, 1739), 1-12; Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'D*, 51-52, 133-135; Brooke, *The Old Maid*, 51-53, 118-119, 192-196, 243; Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids* vol. III, 222-225. See also Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: the Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 42.

¹⁷⁴ *The Love-Lottery*, 3-8. See also Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 42-43.

¹⁷⁵ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 43; Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 37.

¹⁷⁶ *Now Or Never*, 4, 6. See also Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 44.

¹⁷⁷ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 48.

engaged in incestual relations with one of their daughters. It took Abigail years to procure legal safety for herself and her children.¹⁷⁸

In colonial New England, adultery and cruelty were women's most prevalent charges against their spouses when applying for divorce.¹⁷⁹ In the case of Abigail, it was nearly impossible to get out. In New England, between 1692 and 1786 (two years after Hannah published her first book), only 110 divorces were granted. Most were granted to men. Colonial New England combined English practices and Puritan divorce theory. English practices allowed only separation in cases such as adultery, desertion, or cruelty, in which case, neither party would be permitted to remarry. The only grounds for divorce were sexual incapacity, bigamy, or consanguinity.¹⁸⁰ When women were permitted to leave due to their husband's adultery or cruelty, they could not remarry. Instead of being granted a divorce, they were often only provided separate beds and board (which were known as "separation"). Not being able to remarry posed a significant issue, as married women legally had no control over their finances.¹⁸¹

In the confines of a challenging marriage, particularly one from which a woman found no escape, solace could often be sought in the bond with her children. But even motherhood meant hard work, heartache, and loss. First, marriage implied a commitment of at least three decades of pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing an average of ten children. Next, mothers in the colonial era had an average of 3-4 miscarriages, stillbirths, and childhood deaths.¹⁸² Norton claims that "all white women colonists appear to have been acquainted with women who had died in

¹⁷⁸ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 49; Cott, "Divorce," 594.

¹⁷⁹ Cott, "Divorce," 597.

¹⁸⁰ Cott, "Divorce," 588-589.

¹⁸¹ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids* vol. III, 224-225; Mandeville, *Virgin Unmask'd*, 133-136. See also Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 45.

¹⁸² Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 71-72.

childbirth.”¹⁸³ But as never-married single-women, Hannah and Betty dodged all of these concerns (but certainly had others).

In Betty, Hannah discovered not just a sibling but a true companion with whom she shared not only a bloodline but also a rich history. Hannah found in Betty a reliable pillar of support. This cohabitant not only nurtured her aspirations of becoming a writer but stood by her side through some of the most poignant losses in her life. Their connection was no game of chance; this sisterly partnership provided unwavering financial and emotional support, sparing them the anxiety faced by other women in their community who grappled with the uncertainty of marrying an unpredictable, distant, or domineering husband.

Hannah did have a female support system until Betty's passing. However, Betty served as an individual female support figure, not forming part of a female support network, which scholars have argued were essential for early modern women in New England. The envisioned female support network was meant to be a close-knit group of familial females. It is crucial to note that Hannah's network differed significantly due to the deaths of her aunt and mother. The female support network was not supposed to consist only of aunts and mothers. It was also supposed to include sisters, and Hannah had unexpectedly lost Betty. But Betty was not Hannah's only sister. In addition to Betty, Hannah also had a younger sister named Lucy. Further, she had a step-sister named Mary.¹⁸⁴ Hannah mentions neither sister in her *Memoir*.

Mary and Lucy were not Hannah's only sisters. Her brother Newton also had a wife, as did at least two of her step-brothers. Thus, Hannah, at the very least, in addition to three biological sisters (two still living long after Betty's death), had three sisters-in-law. Considering the number of sisters that Hannah had, yet omitted to mention, it can be inferred that she should have

¹⁸³ Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 75.

¹⁸⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284-285.

possessed an extensive and supportive female-familial network.¹⁸⁵ Yet, in her *Memoir*, aside from Betty, she mentions not one of these sisters.

When reading her *Memoir*, it is as if Hannah's mother, aunt, and sister Betty were her only female relatives, and therefore, when they died, Hannah's female network died with them, forcing her to seek out male support. This was not the case. For some reason, Hannah fails to mention that she had a slew of sisters (both biological and through marriage), let alone aunts and cousins, most of which resided close to her, many of whom lived in her small home town of Medfield, and some even within her household (at least one even sharing a bedroom). By omitting these women from her narrative, effectively erasing them from her story, and investing considerable time and effort in documenting and expressing gratitude toward the non-familial male figures who supported her, it becomes evident that, at least in Hannah's perspective, these sisters did not constitute a substantial support system for her.

Though Betty, unlike Hannah, was trained in a daughter's education by Elizabeth and likely more apt to relate to extended still living female kin, she shared a number of lived experiences with Hannah, which bonded the pair—lived experiences to which their extended female kin network likely could not relate. These experiences included living through the tragic loss of both a mother and an aunt who had stepped into a maternal role for the girls, the sudden loss of status when their father lost the family fortune, as well as the shared lived experience of both being never-married women in a culture that strongly emphasized marriage and motherhood, not to mention the shared experience of living with the American Revolution on their door step. It is little wonder that when Betty passed, the support system Hannah rebuilt was primarily and atypically, male. Though this male network likely could not relate to the loss a female in early

¹⁸⁵ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284-285.

America may feel with the early passing of a mother, or even enduring the fall from familial affluence, nor could they bond over a stigmatized single status, they could relate through the shared lived experience of a classical education, and later through the shared lived- experience of vocation (teaching and tutoring). Who were these non-familial men that made up her support system? We will explore them in the next chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter Four: Thomas Adams: Failure or Forerunner?

As the *French and Indian War* ended, Britain, left with massive war debt, attempted to pass the hefty bill along to the colonists through several financial strategies.¹ One of these attempts was taxation in the form of the *Stamp Act* (1765). The act, which would raise funds by taxing several paper items in the American colonies, was not well received. The move resulted in several riots and burned effigies in Boston. These riots started the revolutionary era.²

Outrage against the *Stamp Act* not only instigated riots and effigies but also initiated the first of several boycotts of English goods in Boston.³ By 1767, the Town of Medfield followed Boston merchants' lead and took measures into their own hands. In November, Medfield selectmen voted to boycott manufactured goods from Great Britain, an action which would significantly affect the then affluent Adams family.⁴

Just seventeen miles from Thomas Adams's shop in Medfield, youth in Boston were massacred. Tea filled the harbor. Colonial women protested by organizing boycotts of English goods, the very English goods that Hannah's father Thomas sold in his shop.⁵ When the *Stamp Act* was finally repealed, it was quickly replaced by the *Townshend Duties* of 1767. Another boycott quickly ensued. Again, Boston merchants reacted by drafting a non-compliance agreement on January 1, 1768 that lasted a year.⁶

¹ Adams, *Summary History*, 240-253; Adams, *Abridgement*, 99-114, 138-139. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 45.

² Adams, *Summary History*, 247-250; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 150-152.

³ Adams, *Summary History*, 247-250; Adams, *Abridgement*, 137-141; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 150-152. See also Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 46.

⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 153.

⁵ Linda Kerber, "'I Have Done...Much to Carry on the Warr' Women and the Shaping of Republican Ideology After the American Revolution" *Journal of Women's History* 1, no. 3 (1990), 231-232.

⁶ Adams, *Summary History*, 247-250; Adams, *Abridgement*, 137-141. Miller, *Rebecca Dickinson*, 48.

Hannah's hometown of Medfield again followed Boston's lead. According to Medfield records, on November 18, 1767, a warrant article was presented to the town selectmen. The purpose of the article was to agree upon some "effectual measures to promote Industry, Oeconomy, and Manufacturing, thereby to prevent the unnecessary Importation of European Commodities, which threatens the Country with Poverty and Ruin."⁷ By December, the town had ratified its commitments to avoid imports from England. Specifically, they pledged to:

discountenance the use of the following articles imported from abroad, namely, loaf sugar, coaches, chairs. And carriages of all sorts, harness for the same, men's and women's saddles and bridles, all sorts of whips, men's hats, and women's apparel, ready made hose, all sorts of gloves, women's hats, men's and women's shoes, sole leather, decknails, gold and silver, diamonds, stone and past ware, snuff, manufactured tobacco, mustard, clocks and watches, silversmith and jeweller's wear, broadcloths, etc.⁸

It was also "recommended" that those whose profession dealt in the import, sale, or distribution of such items pursue new vocations to "promote some measures for the profitable employment of the poor, and the encouragement of our own manufacturing."⁹

Thomas's business had already been hit by the *Stamp Act* of 1765 and the *Townshend Duties* imposed in 1767.¹⁰ Now, the town leaders had instructed his clientele not to purchase his imports. Leaders further "encouraged" Thomas to no longer sell his boycotted products. To make matters worse, the monetary setbacks to Thomas's business were quickly followed by another financial hit, this time to the family farm. The farm had been leased out to a manager who had "plundered and cheated" Thomas, forcing him to sell off large parcels of land he had inherited from his father.¹¹ This series of pecuniary failures thrust the family into financial duress.¹² The

⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 153.

⁸ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 154.

⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 145.

¹⁰ Adams, *Abridgement*, 138-139; Adams, *Summary History*, 240-253.

¹¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 54; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193-194, 202.

¹² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193-194, 202.

losses not only forced Hannah and her sister Betty to experience a series of financial losses, but it was likely a significant factor in their perpetual state of singleness.¹³

According to Amy Froide, financial hardship was a common trope connected to singleness in 18th-century literature.¹⁴ Among the diaries, memoirs, letters, journals, and poetry belonging to never-married women, Froide posits it was common to find examples of women blaming poverty (and therefore lack of an adequate dowry) for their never-married experience.¹⁵ Hannah Adams seems to be no exception.

The central theme of this chapter is the relationship between a colonial father and his daughter: specifically, Thomas and Hannah Adams. The chapter explores the *motif* of fathers and never-married daughters. It challenges current scholarship, which argues that early modern fathers had tenuous, unsupportive relationships with their never-married daughters.¹⁶ It also questions current scholarship around Hannah Adams, which frames Thomas Adams as a negligent father because he was unable to protect and provide for his family.¹⁷ Finally, where current scholarship has argued that female relationships were the central nexus in the lives of daughters, especially never-married daughters, this chapter argues that at least in the case of Thomas and Hannah, the father-daughter relationship proved paramount. As such, it will introduce Thomas as the impetus of Hannah's atypical dependence on her elite-male network, rather than the typical familial female support system.¹⁸

¹³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 6, 54, 58, 69; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193-194, 202-203.

¹⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, 188.

¹⁵ *Love-Lottery*, 3-8; Brooke, *The Old Maid*, 49-53. See also Froide, *Never Married*, 183.

¹⁶ Froide, *Never Married*, 51, 65.

¹⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 54; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193-194, 202-203. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 18, 42.

¹⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 51, 65; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168, 189; Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World," 8-10, 13-14, 17-18; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

Existing scholarship on fatherhood in colonial and antebellum America predominantly focuses on the dynamics between fathers and sons, leaving the realm of father-daughter relationships relatively unexplored. The limited primary evidence available provides only fleeting glimpses into these paternal connections with daughters. The dearth of information concerning father-daughter relationships in colonial America underscores the significance of a case study centred on Thomas and Hannah, utilizing the lens of Hannah's *Memoir*. This case study proves invaluable in contributing to the development of an emerging field that is yet to fully comprehend the complexities of father-daughter dynamics during this historical period.

Where there is much more evidence of a daughter's relationship with her mother, and plenty of evidence of her relationship with her siblings, and, surprisingly, even some with her uncles and aunts, primary evidence of a daughter's relationship with her father is nearly non-existent.¹⁹ The little evidence on the relationship between early modern fathers and single daughters has been primarily drawn from court depositions and wills.²⁰ According to Froide, in early modern England, a father was likelier to appear in a court case concerning his daughter than his son. Depositions indicate that complaints mainly concerned spousal choices; either the single daughter was unhappy with the father's choice of mate for her, or her father was discontented over the daughter's choice not to marry.²¹

Thankfully, there is evidence beyond court depositions and wills that can provide insight into the historical relationship between fathers and daughters. Hannah's writing provides a distinct window into this understudied relationship. Where female relationships are supposed to be key to the never-married woman, in Hannah's life, her relationship with her father seems to be the

¹⁹ Froide, *Never Married*, 49, 65.

²⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 51.

²¹ Froide, *Never Married*, 51.

central and consistent force. Far from being a tense, tenuous, or even a negligent relationship, as indicated by court cases and wills, Hannah's father, Thomas, did not beguile or deride his daughter's single status but instead acted as her champion and central support system.

Thomas "Book" Adams ironically serves as the book ends to Hannah's *Memoir*. Hannah's *Memoir* begins with her father's early history and ends with her father's death. It should be of little wonder as he was the family member who was present in her life the longest.

Unfortunately, Thomas acquired a bit of a bad reputation mainly connected to a series of unwise and untimely business and financial decisions. These grievous decisions included the mismanagement of the family farm, the failure of his shop, and the purported botching of Hannah's first book publishing contract.²² Hannah was complicit in, and, arguably, the primary source of such slanderous accusations against her father. Was Thomas's "bad" reputation warranted? As Chapter One sought to address accusations of failure leveraged against Hannah's mother, Elizabeth, from Hannah's accusations of neglect, this chapter will seek to vindicate Thomas's reputation for failing his family both as protector and provider.

Part I provides a brief biography of Thomas up to the death of Hannah's mother, Elizabeth. Part II addresses the history of fatherhood in colonial America, focusing on the central role of the father as a provider and protector of his family. It will ask if Thomas failed to perform these central roles. Part III outlines Hannah's accusations of Thomas's purported fathering failures. Part IV addresses Hannah's accusations by providing a historical context and a deep reading of their relationship through Hannah's *Memoir*. This section illustrates how rather than being a derelict father, Thomas was in fact an enduring presence and consistent champion in Hannah's life. The chapter illustrates how, in a time of familial crises and national transition, Thomas both

²² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 54; Adams, "Shaw Account," 192, 193-194, 202-203. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42-43.

encouraged and catalyzed Hannah's career and her independence as a never-married woman in America. This trajectory positioned her as a trailblazer in several literary and professional fields.

Part I: Who was Thomas Adams?

One of the first people we meet in Hannah's *Memoir* is her father, Thomas. Hailing from a long line of town selectmen back to its founders, Thomas was a member of one of Medfield's most well-respected families in the small rural New England town.²³ Hannah tells us that her father was a would-be scholar who was "imbibed with a love of literature."²⁴ While he was preparing to leave for Harvard College, however, his parents suddenly had a change of heart and called him home to run their "large family farm," for which Thomas had no training.²⁵ According to Hannah, Thomas neither possessed the inclination nor the aptitude for agricultural pursuits. He was remembered by his family as the sole son with an apparently "infirm" constitution. Thomas begrudgingly but obediently returned to Medfield.²⁶ Inheriting and subsequently managing the Adams's farm was a good opportunity. The property was one of the most prosperous estates in the region, with Thomas's father holding a prominent and successful position as a businessman and selectman.²⁷

Hannah reported that early in her life, her "father's circumstances then appeared affluent, and it was not supposed I should be reduced to the necessity of supporting myself by my own exertions."²⁸ However, that was precisely what was to happen. Sometime after being recalled from his studies, a 25-year-old Thomas returned home with his 15-year-old wife, Elizabeth

²³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 15-16.

²⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2.

²⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1.

²⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1.

²⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-283; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2, 4, 69. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 18.

²⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 69.

Clark.²⁹ The young family lived with Thomas's father, mother, and older never-married sister, Mary, for thirteen years before his father died in 1763. Only then did Thomas inherit the prosperous family estate.³⁰ At this time, Thomas, tired of agricultural life, hired a farm manager and opened a bookstore and pharmacy on the property.³¹ Unfortunately, he opened his shop, which specialized in English goods, just prior to a series of boycotts that would directly target his products. The business failed, thrusting the family into financial duress. The family's status and reputation suffered. Thomas, subsequently, became labeled as a derelict father. What warranted such a label?

PART II: Patriarchal Fatherhood

During the American colonial era, the father was the central figure of the household. E. Anthony Rotundo, in "American Fatherhood: A Historical Perspective," claims that "at the beginning of American history, the father was a towering figure."³² Scholars have marked the colonial period of fatherhood as authoritarian and patriarchal. The most prominent roles of fathers were protection and provisioning.³³ In *The Puritan Family*, for example, Edmund S. Morgan says that "the first duty of a Puritan parent was the duty of any parent: to give food, shelter, and protection to his children."³⁴ According to John Demos in *A Little Commonwealth*, Puritan patriarchs set up laws reinforcing the colonial father's duty to protect and provide.³⁵

²⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 16.

³⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 56.

³¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness* 16.

³² Anthony Rotundo, "American Fatherhood: A Historical Perspective," *American Behavioral Scientist* 29, no.1 (1985): 8.

³³ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 104; Travis Don Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers: Republican Fatherhood and the American Revolution and Early Republic 1763-1814," Ph. D. diss., (Mississippi: University of Mississippi, 2017), 29; Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 65.

³⁴ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 65.

³⁵ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 104.

Fines were enforced if a colonial father failed to provide for or protect his family.³⁶ Thomas was reported as a failure on these fronts.³⁷

Duty to Provide

Loren Marks and Rob Palkovitz posit that “good fathers” in America have always been synonymous with being good providers.³⁸ Nevertheless, colonial fathers in New England were “not absentee breadwinners.”³⁹ Because they were mainly farmers, their work was close to home. Thus, colonial fathers were readily at hand and actively involved with their families.⁴⁰

The duty to provide for their households was not just a societal expectation. It was “a sacred trust.”⁴¹ Moreover, provision was not just a “sacred” tenet prescribed by the church, it was also held up by the court.⁴² Colonial fathers had a legal obligation to provide for their living family members. That responsibility extended past his lifetime; he was also expected to leave a legacy by continuing to provide for his household from beyond the grave.⁴³

Colonial or patriarchal fathers were required to provide their households with basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. Morgan claims that “the law obliged all parents to perform this duty: no New England father could loaf away his time while his cupboard was bare.”⁴⁴ Those who did not provide necessities could be fined, or worse, their children could be removed

³⁶ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 104.

³⁷ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283; Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 6, 54, 69; Adams, “Shaw Account,” 192, 193-194, 202-203.

³⁸ Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 29, 46; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered Family*, 5. See also Loren Marks and Rob Palkovitz, “American Fatherhood Types: The Good, the Bad, and the Uninterested,” *Fathering; Harriman* 2, no.2 (2004): 4.

³⁹ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 48. See also Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 99.

⁴⁰ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 48. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 99.

⁴¹ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 29, 46; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 5. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 104.

⁴² Watertown Records (Watertown, 1894) I, 64. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 65.

⁴³ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10. Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 104.

⁴⁴ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 29, 46; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 5. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 65.

by colonial authorities from the home.⁴⁵ But, what constituted a good provider? How much was enough?

In her book *Ye Heart of a Man*, Lisa Wilson claims that a colonial father “had the legal duty to ensure the family enterprise was successful.”⁴⁶ More than ensuring a family's basic needs were met, a father was also obliged to, at minimum, maintain the status held by his wife when they had married. What was considered needful varied according to a man's means when he entered into the bonds of matrimony.⁴⁷ When a colonial father failed to provide for the basic needs of his households or maintain his family's status, he was legally responsible and subject to public scorn.⁴⁸

Beyond being mediated through legal channels, the community also played a vigilant role in overseeing the obligations of fathers to provide for their families.⁴⁹ A notable instance is observed in the aftermath of Hannah Blanoë's death, where her husband John allowed their property to deteriorate. Consequently, his in-laws took legal action against him, accusing him of neglecting not only his children but also his property.⁵⁰ Similarly, in 1712, Cotton Mather criticized a slothful group of men who neglected to financially care for their families whom they supposedly left “starving in great miseries, while they are following vain Persons.”⁵¹ John Adams likewise critiqued a landlord who had been blessed with both an auspicious name and a

⁴⁵ Watertown Records (Watertown, 1894) I, 64. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 65.

⁴⁶ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 29, 46; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 5. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 103.

⁴⁷ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 29; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 19. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 104.

⁴⁸ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 29. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 110.

⁴⁹ Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family*, 29; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 19. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 106.

⁵⁰ George Francis Dow, ed., *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County Massachusetts* (1912), vol. 2, 303-304. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 106.

⁵¹ Cotton Mather, *Diary*, vol. 2, (Boston: The Society, 1911), 187. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 110.

quality education yet failed to provide for his family, having to turn to taking in student boarders and tutoring.⁵² Was he talking about his distant cousin Thomas?⁵³

Not only did a colonial father have to provide for his family's needs while he was living, but he also was legally expected to provide for them after his death. He did this through inheritance.⁵⁴ A father was expected to leave a third to the dowager (this portion was considered so important that it was protected legally and paid before his debts). He was also obliged to provide a double portion for his first son. Moreover, a father was also expected to leave an inheritance portion for *all* his children (regardless of gender). This inheritance for all children was a societal expectation and was not legally required or enforced.⁵⁵

Fathers who failed to leave their wives and children an adequate inheritance were also subject to communal ridicule. In 1777, John Adams recorded how horrified he was by his cousin Samuel's lack of concern and subsequent preparation for the future of his family should he die.⁵⁶ Likewise, Cotton Mather, who had to settle his son-in-law Nathan Howell's affairs following his sudden death in 1716, complained that due to the mismanagement of the family finances, Howell was "the worst Husband on Earth."⁵⁷ It was not only a colonial father's duty to provide; it was also his responsibility to protect.

Duty to Protect

Physical Protection

A father's duty to protect his family included physical and spiritual oversight.

⁵² John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography*, vol. I, 358. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 110.

⁵³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12, 54-55.

⁵⁴ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 102.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 102.

⁵⁶ Adams, *Diary and Autobiography*, vol. I, 358. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 107.

⁵⁷ Mather, *Diary*, vol. 2, 401. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 111.

Physical protection did, at times, overlap with a father's duty to provide. For example, physical protection included protection from the elements through shelter, food, and clothing. These basic material needs were covered in the last section, so they will not be repeated here. Instead, this section explores a father's duty to protect his family from predators—not just mountain lions and bears, which were genuine predators in the New England wilderness, but also from overreaching authorities (including the Crown) and potential future spouses. This section also investigates the less anticipated form of protection practiced by colonial fathers: the protection of their children's health and development by the careful measurement and account of childhood milestones.

Physical Protection: War & Predators?

The duty of a colonial father to protect his family included protecting town and country. Fathers did this both by participating in the military and by playing a civic role in their community as freemen and selectmen. According to Demos, “the status of ‘freeman’ conferred the right to take part in the government of the Colony as a whole.”⁵⁸ The minimum age to become a freeman was 21, but the average man became one in his mid-30s.⁵⁹ Town leadership, however, commenced much later. Selectmen and deputies generally were appointed between the ages of 40 and 70, after a man had a chance to prove himself by successfully managing his own household.⁶⁰ There were unusual exceptions for younger men who were particularly affluent, as well as for those who displayed “demonstrable character.”⁶¹

As civic leaders, fathers directly and indirectly protected their families by making decisions for their communities. As younger men, fathers could become involved in local government

⁵⁸ William Brigham, *The Compact with the Charter and Laws of the Colony of New Plymouth*, (Boston, 1836), 258, 285-286. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 148.

⁵⁹ Brigham, *Charter and Laws*, 258, 285-286. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 148.

⁶⁰ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 174.

⁶¹ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 174.

much earlier, before they obtained freeman status through participation in the local military defense units.⁶² Thus, the military, or militia, was another avenue through which colonial fathers could serve and protect their families. But war also took fathers away from their homes.

As the war for independence intensified, fathers who were for so long the staple and centre of the home while farming on their estates and homesteads were absent because of soldiering, inscription, and politics. Suddenly, the paramount duty of the colonial father, to protect his family in close proximity, was nearly impossible. Because the Revolution was fought on home soil, everyday family life was dangerously disrupted and often directly in the line of battle.⁶³

While protecting their country, colonial fathers were protecting their families from afar. But, with the war on their doorsteps and battles taking place in their fields, their family's immediate safety could never truly be ensured. Jaquess points out that "the war often threatened homes and family farms and disrupted all aspects of domestic life, making it virtually impossible for fathers to ensure their families' safety."⁶⁴ A seven-year-old John Quincy Adams, for example, while holding his mother's hand, watched the Battle of Bunker Hill.⁶⁵

Physical Protection: Monitoring Mates

Fathers also protected children, mainly their daughters (though also their sons), through negotiating marriages.⁶⁶ In Puritan New England during colonial times, a father chose his children's mates.⁶⁷ No one could legally marry without parental consent. Punishment for doing so resulted in a fine or corporeal punishment, and often both.⁶⁸ The main concern for parental

⁶² Brigham, *Charter and Laws*, 98. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 148-149.

⁶³ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 37.

⁶⁴ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 85.

⁶⁵ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 85.

⁶⁶ Mather, *Family Well Ordered*, 47; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 42; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 3. See also Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 8.

⁶⁷ Mather, *Family Well Ordered*, 47; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 42; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 3. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 79.

⁶⁸ Brigham, *Charter and Laws*, 44. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 154; Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 57.

consent was that the couple would be “equally yoked.” This equal yoking did not just pertain to religious beliefs. It was instead connected to equality of wealth and status.⁶⁹

There is, according to Demos, a lack of primary resources about courtship in this period. Demos posits that courtships likely “lacked much formal ceremony (no dating, dances, etc.).”⁷⁰ However, courting likely “developed under the watchful eye of parents and siblings, or indeed of a whole neighborhood.”⁷¹ Fathers needed to protect their family's reputation. Even the early colonial court records bear adequate witness to the illicit acts. Throughout the 17th century, “a steady succession of trials and convictions for sexual crimes” were punishable by fine, public whipping, or both to both parties.⁷² Thus, there was no shortage of accusations and cases of “Fornication,” usually uncovered due to pregnancy outside of wedlock.⁷³

Fathers held the legal right to refuse their consent to both their daughter's and son's choice of partners, especially if they suspected “sinister intent” or “covetous desire.” The child could appeal, but these cases rarely made it to court. According to Demos, wills suggest that a father's “control of property and his power to dictate the terms of an inheritance gave him considerable leverage in these situations.”⁷⁴ More than one father leveraged penalties of disinheritance or gifting bribes into his will to “encourage” a “fitting” match, thereby protecting his children even from beyond the grave.⁷⁵ The father's role in protecting his children began long before the marital contract commenced, from early infancy, and even from the womb.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 56.

⁷⁰ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 152.

⁷¹ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 152.

⁷² David Pulsifer, ed. *Plymouth Colony Records*, XI, (Boston: William White, 1801), 46. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 152.

⁷³ Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Plymouth Colony Records*, V, (Boston: William White, 1856), 14. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 152.

⁷⁴ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 155.

⁷⁵ Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 156.

⁷⁶ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10.

Physical Protection: Measuring Milestones

Puritan patriarchs in New England have been unfairly stigmatized for their perceived authoritarian and controlling methods in early parenthood.⁷⁷ In the past, scholars have posited that colonial fathers with authoritarian tendencies were distant and exhibited minimal direct involvement, implying apathy and lack of affection toward their children.⁷⁸ They could not be more wrong. Wilson refutes this notion, asserting that during the colonial era in both the 17th and 18th centuries, actively engaged fathers meticulously tracked milestones of their children's lives, even from infancy.⁷⁹

Journals and letters from 17th- and 18th-century colonial America demonstrate fathers acting to protect their children physically by closely monitoring their health and achievements. Not only were fathers responsible for naming and baptizing their children, but diaries and journals illustrate that colonial fathers showed interest and responsibility in their children's health, growth, and development at all phases of their lives.⁸⁰

Father's journals and memoirs in both the 1600s and 1700s, for example, mention and describe the details of both the nursing and weaning progress of their infants. Some even include details about their wives' experiences with nursing, such as bouts of mastitis.⁸¹

This careful monitoring extended well beyond infancy. For example, Ezra Stiles, a contemporary and friend of Thomas Adams, regularly recorded his seven children's heights in his journals.⁸² Colonial fathers also showed keen interest in their offspring's mental and cognitive

⁷⁷ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 255.

⁷⁸ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 60.

⁷⁹ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 41. See also Wilson, "Ye Heart of a Father": Male Parenting in Colonial New England," *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 3 (1999): 256.

⁸⁰ Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729*, ed. M. Halsey Thomas (New York: Farrar, Straus and Groux, 1973), 1: 87, 133, 264; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10. See also Wilson, "Heart of a Father," 258-259.

⁸¹ Sewall, *Diary*, 1:41. See also Wilson, "Heart of a Father," 259.

⁸² Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 2: 200; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 11; Mather, *A Family*, 13-14. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 260-261.

development. In their absences, colonial fathers, like Oliver Ellsworth, a lawyer in 1781, were eager to receive regular reports on their children's milestones. Wilson posits that the attentiveness of fathers was due to high rates of childhood morbidity, which is also where spiritual protective duties came into play.⁸³

Spiritual Protection: Baptism

The father was responsible for arranging an infant's baptism in colonial New England. Planning for baptism was not just a matter of religious tradition as it is today. With such high infant mortality rates, baptism was a matter of spiritual preservation in the harsh environment of the new colonies.⁸⁴ Puritan doctrine maintained that as much as an adult, infants were subject to the sinful nature caused by Adam's fall. Infants required baptism and salvation to enter Heaven by way of protection under their parents' covenant until they reached the age of accountability.⁸⁵

Because the mother had just given birth, church leaders felt she was too weak to make the baptismal arrangements. The responsibility, therefore, fell to the father.⁸⁶ According to James Axtell in *The School Upon a Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England*, it was the father's protective duty to choose the date, location, time, and witnesses of the baptism to ensure the spiritual protection and fate of his newborn. The newborn needed to be baptized almost immediately after birth.⁸⁷ If the infant was in peril during delivery, midwives were authorized to perform baptism rituals. If all went well during the delivery baptism would occur on or before

⁸³ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 11; Mather, *A Family*, 13-14. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 260-61; James Axtell, *The School Upon a Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1974), 7.

⁸⁴ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 13-14. See also Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 7.

⁸⁵ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 13-14. See also Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 36.

⁸⁶ William Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, 3d ed. (London, 1634), 526-527; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A68107.0001.001?view=toc> (accessed June 9, 2024). See also Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 6.

⁸⁷ Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, 526-527; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10-11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 32. See also Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 7.

the 14th day after birth. The ceremony usually took place the first Sunday after birth, regardless of the weather or how difficult the journey was to the meeting house.⁸⁸ So essential was the timing of the ceremony that even if the mother was unable to attend, the ceremony would take place without her.⁸⁹

Spiritual Protection: Prayer

Fathers were the physical protectors of their homes, as well as the spiritual overseers. Not only was it their duty to conduct regular family prayer and oversee the spiritual growth of children through “daily religious instruction,” but according to Ambrose, “it was also their duty to be spiritual warriors by praying for those under their charge.”⁹⁰ One out of five wives died during or from complications following childbirth in the Old Colony (Plymouth). Demos estimates that one in ten newborns did the same.⁹¹ Thus, when a wife was pregnant and nearing childbirth, Ambrose reported that “a man prayed his wife would be a ‘Living mother of a Living Child.’”⁹²

Fathers felt their duty was to pray for their sick and dying children. Though fathers left the nursing of sick children to their wives, many fathers remained in the room with a watchful and prayerful eye.⁹³ Some even questioned if their sin caused their children's illness and death.⁹⁴ For example, when separated from five of his children after an attack in Deerfield, Massachusetts, in 1703/04, Reverend John Williams, as head of the household, believed his only

⁸⁸ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10-11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 32; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 4, 9, 58. See also Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 6.

⁸⁹ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10-11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 32; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 4, 9, 58. See also Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 7.

⁹⁰ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10-11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 32; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 4, 9, 58. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 129.

⁹¹ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 10-11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 32; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 4, 9, 58. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 129.

⁹² Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 11. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 83.

⁹³ Sewall, *Diary*, 1:328, 1:350, 1:89. See also Wilson, “Heart of a Father,” 265-266.

⁹⁴ Sewall, *Diary*, 1:328, 1:350, 1:89. See also Wilson, “Heart of a Father,” 265-266.

recourse was prayer.⁹⁵ Cotton Mather, in 1699, “wrestled with God” in prayer when one of his daughters was on death’s door. In exchange for his daughter’s healing, he pledged to increase pastoral visits and write a book, translating it into an Indigenous language. He also promised God he would promote schools in exchange for his daughter’s well-being.⁹⁶ Mather repeated this pattern when his son began having seizures in 1700.⁹⁷

Spiritual Protection: Discipline

Colonial fathers not only spiritually protected their families through prayer, but they also spiritually protected their offspring by acting as disciplinarians. Puritan church tenets charged colonial fathers with the duty to defend their households as spiritual disciplinarians because they believed that women and children were “easily corruptible and weakened by their sinful nature, thus in need of a strong moral and spiritual patriarch to lord over them.”⁹⁸ Colonial fathers were, therefore, commissioned spiritually and legally as heads of their households to oversee and mitigate the “sinful passions” of those under their charge, who included children, wives, servants, and enslaved people.⁹⁹

The primary source of a colonial father’s authority was Puritan doctrine. Many of these ideologies were backed by legislation. Demos argues that to the New England family, the Bible’s command to “Honor thy father and mother” was a paramount tenet backed by legal recourse.¹⁰⁰ Though adolescents were able to defend themselves in court against charges of dishonouring parents, all children over the age of 16 who cursed or physically assaulted their mother or father

⁹⁵ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 118-119.

⁹⁶ Mather, *Diary* vol. 1, 303-305, 336-337; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19, 22-23, 24-25, 32; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 51-55. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 134.

⁹⁷ Mather, *Diary* vol. 2, 8-9, 388; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 11; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19, 22-23, 24-25, 32; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 51-55. See also Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 135.

⁹⁸ Mather, *Family, Well-Ordered*, 2, 4, 19, 22-23, 25; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 36. See also Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 36.

⁹⁹ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 41-42, 47, 55. See also Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 36.

¹⁰⁰ Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 100.

could be legally subject to execution.¹⁰¹ Fortunately, only a few cases of the physical or verbal assault of parents by children reached the courts. In these cases, the death penalty was never enforced.¹⁰²

Laws not only applied to children who were disrespectful to their parents. There were also laws for parents who overindulged their children. Fines could be levied for neglecting to discipline one's offspring. Alternatively, in cases of overindulgence, children could also be removed and placed with another family.¹⁰³

As mentioned earlier, fathers controlled and disciplined their children through inheritances.¹⁰⁴ In colonial New England, fathers leveraged inheritances as a source of authority and protection. The labour of children held considerable value during this period.¹⁰⁵ The colonial era was marked by an extended adolescence where sons stayed home as long as possible to assist in farm labour.¹⁰⁶ Colonial fathers controlled their sons' marriages by bestowing land, ensuring proximity for labor assistance.¹⁰⁷ Colonial fathers also used land inheritances to ensure their care in old age.¹⁰⁸ How did colonial fathers protect their daughters?

Colonial fathers did not just rule with an iron fist. Both Cotton Mather's *A Family Well Ordered* (1699) and Benjamin Wadsworth's *The Well-Ordered Family* (1712) advised fathers to mix "Fear with Delight."¹⁰⁹ Mather, for example, encouraged the fathers in his flock to "establish

¹⁰¹ Brigham, *Charter and Laws*, 245. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 100-101.

¹⁰² Shurtleff, ed. *Plymouth Colony Records*, VI, 20; V, 16; III, 201. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 102.

¹⁰³ *Massachusetts Laws of 1648*, or *The Book of the General Lawes and Libertyes Concerning the Inhabitants of Massachusetts Collected Out of the Records of the General Court For the Several Tears Wherein They Were Made and Established* (Cambridge, 1648) 11. See also Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 78.

¹⁰⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2. See also Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 8.

¹⁰⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2. See also Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 35.

¹⁰⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 104.

¹⁰⁷ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 11; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 45. See also Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 32-33.

¹⁰⁸ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 11; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 45. See Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 33.

¹⁰⁹ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 257.

‘sweet authority’ over their children.”¹¹⁰ Rotundo argues that there is evidence that fathers in the colonial era were more affectionate with their daughters than their sons. Fathers seem to use affection more with their daughters as a disciplinary tool to reward good behavior and withdraw affection to punish unseemliness.¹¹¹ But that was about all he had to say. The lack of scholarship concerning the motif of the father-daughter bond is typical. There is even less evidence of the fathers’ relationship with their never-married daughters, as was the case with Hannah and Thomas, which is why a deep read of their relationship through her *Memoir* is warranted.¹¹² How did Thomas measure up considering these roles and responsibilities?

Part III: Thomas’s Fatherhood Flaws

Failure to Provide

Thomas Adams managed well under his father’s watchful eye. The family’s estate and fortune were well intact until Thomas’s father died. Almost immediately following his father’s death, however, Thomas leased the family farm to a manager and started a business on the property.¹¹³ Lee explains that Thomas “entered into trade as a desperate resource from the weariness of an agricultural life, for which he had no taste.”¹¹⁴ But Thomas’s entrepreneurial ventures seemed poorly planned. Not only was the store located miles from customers, but it also opened on the brink of the American Revolution, which was marked by boycotts of several

¹¹⁰ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 256.

¹¹¹ Rotundo, “American Fatherhood,” 9.

¹¹² Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids vol. I*, 143-151, 163-193. Also see Froide, *Never Married*, 49. Though Froide claims that in her research, fathers and never-married daughters had the poorest relationships, and the least material was written about them, in the first volume of his *Essays on Old Maids*, Hayley includes two lengthy case studies of relationships between fathers and their never-married daughters. These two case studies are a Dr. Cora and his daughter Theodora, and the other a daughter named Constatia whose father is unnamed. They are used as exemplars of “good” never-married women who exemplified filial devotion to their somewhat eccentric fathers. Published in 1785, by this time this father-never-married daughter bond seems to be yet another trope, one for which Hannah’s relationship with her father Thomas seems consistent.

¹¹³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 1-2, 54. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17.

¹¹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 54.

English goods which Thomas had planned to sell. Thomas was unable to adapt to the changing circumstances.¹¹⁵

Despite the lack of a strategic locale for the store, the family business still fared well financially until the deaths of two other family members: Thomas's wife Elizabeth and his sister Mary. Almost immediately following the death of his sister, Thomas lost the family fortune, forcing his daughters, Hannah and Betty, to provide for themselves.¹¹⁶

Wilson claims that family members working outside the home to contribute to the finances was normal. She argues that although the father was legally expected to be the provider, in colonial New England families, most wives and family members worked together to eke a communal living.¹¹⁷ Not the affluent Adams family, however. As one of the leading and wealthiest families in the small town, before the failure of the farm and store, Hannah and her siblings would not have been expected to work or contribute to the family finances. But Hannah reports being forced to financially support herself when she explains how: "a few years after my father failed in trade, in consequence of which I was reduced to poverty, with a constitution and early habits which appeared invincible obstacles to my supporting myself by my own exertions."¹¹⁸ Thomas had broken one of the cardinal rules of his duty to provide. The family's status when he married Elizabeth had grossly diminished due to his poor business decisions.¹¹⁹

Due to poor timing, planning, location, management, and potentially a fraud case (enacted against Thomas by his farm manager), Thomas had single-handedly diminished the family estate

¹¹⁵ Adams, *Summary History*, 247-250; Adams, *Abridgement*, 137-141; Adams, "Shaw Account," 202; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 150-152, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17-18.

¹¹⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 11, 54, 69; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191-192, 193-194, 201-202; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

¹¹⁷ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 101.

¹¹⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 11; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191-192, 193-194, 201-202.

¹¹⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 11, 54, 69; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191-192, 193-194, 201-202; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

and, along with it, the family name. Both Tilden and Lee testify to the degradation of the family name by Thomas's financial losses. Lee sympathized with Hannah's family's loss of status when she stated that "there can hardly, indeed, be a suffering more acute to the mind, that has experienced pleasure of bestowing, than to find its means of benevolence cut off, and all its powers necessarily turned into a weary, wasting struggle for self-preservation."¹²⁰ Similarly, Tilden confirms that due to Thomas's failure to provide, he had garnered a poor reputation amongst his neighbors. To put it nicely, Tilden reports that "in the judgment of his more prosaic neighbors, he was deficient in the tact for dealing with the common affairs of life."¹²¹ As Wilson argued, fathers like Thomas who failed to provide suffered harsh ridicule and were strongly critiqued by the community.¹²² Tilden's and Lee's statements bear witness to said critique. Thomas not only mismanaged the farm and his business, but he forced his formerly affluent daughters to work outside the estate, thereby diminishing the family's social status and reputation.

His failure as a provider also caused him to break another expectation placed on colonial fathers: leaving his children an inheritance.¹²³ Thomas had brought the family to such ruin that several times, beginning in 1790, he was so hard pressed that he was forced to sell off large parcels of land.¹²⁴ As a consequence, by the time Thomas died in 1812, he was unable to leave an inheritance for Hannah. Due to his financial struggles, he signed the remainder of the estate over to Hannah's half-brother, John Wickliffe, who was already residing at the estate with his

¹²⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 54, 69; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

¹²¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

¹²² Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 106, 110.

¹²³ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 107, 111.

¹²⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 68.

family and his apprentices.¹²⁵ Not only had Thomas failed to leave Hannah an inheritance (who, as a never-married daughter, would have been his responsibility to protect and provide for throughout her lifetime), but he also died in debt.¹²⁶ Because Thomas died in debt and was unable to leave Hannah with an inheritance, Thomas seems derelict in his duty to provide. How did he fare as a protector?

Failure to Protect

As discussed in Chapter One, Hannah claimed she was spoiled or excessively indulged.¹²⁷ Though she blamed her mother for this purported overindulgence, it was her father's job to oversee this arena. In this regard, Thomas appears to have fallen short in his role as the spiritual protector, particularly in the capacity of a disciplinarian. Was Thomas derelict in *all* his expected duties? Because Thomas was neither involved in the militia nor involved in political leadership, at first glance, it would appear to be the case.

Thomas did not go to war. There are extensive records of the men from Medfield who participated in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Thomas's name is nowhere on any of Tilden's lists of Medfield militia men.¹²⁸ Records from the town in 1761 list 44 men of a population of 628 who served in the French and Indian War. Thomas would have been 36 at the time. Though his wife's brother is on the list, and several of her cousins were named, Thomas was not amongst the ranks.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 58; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191-192, 193-194, 201-202. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 255.

¹²⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 18-19, 40-41; Adams, "Shaw Account," 191-192, 193-194, 201-202. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 255.

¹²⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2.

¹²⁸ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 146-147.

¹²⁹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 146-147.

Similarly, at the end of the Revolutionary War, Tilden says that 154 men from Medfield served at some point.¹³⁰ Tilden claims that more men per capita served from Massachusetts and Connecticut than any other state (one in seven). He further claims that the ratio was even higher from Medfield where one in five men served.¹³¹ Thomas was not amongst them.¹³² Thomas would have been in his 40s and 50s, so he was not too old. Because Thomas did not participate in military actions, he proved to be derelict in his duty to protect his family through military means. What about his protective civic duties?

Though Thomas's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him served extensively as political leaders and selectmen in Medfield, Thomas did not.¹³³ Schmidt says Thomas was the first in his family's line not to act as selectman. According to Tilden, however, Thomas had been chosen to stand as selectman, but he only served for one year in 1769.¹³⁴ Perhaps Thomas was not a selectman because the town leaders felt that he lacked the requisite responsibility due to his failed business. Alternatively, it is possible that because he took his sales career on the road he was away from Medfield too often to properly participate in the capacity of selectman. Either way, Thomas's protection of his family through civic duty was minimal or non-existent. What about his job as a protector for his household in other areas, like marital negotiations?

Not surprisingly, Thomas seems to have failed to negotiate adequate mates for three of his four daughters. The eldest two daughters never married. His third daughter, Lucy, did marry during the Revolution, as did his youngest daughter, Mary (from his second marriage). Mary, however, conceived out of wedlock with a man who would come to abuse, abandon, and

¹³⁰ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 178.

¹³¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 178.

¹³² Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 180.

¹³³ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17.

¹³⁴ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 156.

financially neglect her.¹³⁵ Thomas failed to protect Mary from the predatory behavior of her spouse. Based on the fact that Thomas did not defend his family militarily, as a civic leader, or by negotiating adequate husbands for three of his four daughters, we can observe that as much as Thomas fell short as a provider, he equally failed in his role as protector. The evidence requires more scrutiny.

Part IV: Thomas, Redeemed

Redeemed as Provider

Thomas was cheated by the farm manager he had hired, bankrupted the family business, sold off much of the estate (his father's legacy), failed to leave Hannah an inheritance, let alone a roof over her head, and reduced the family name and status. He did not serve in the army for at least two wars he lived through, nor did he serve in any significant civic capacity. He was unable to secure three of his four daughters with adequate spouses and was unable to protect his youngest one from conceiving out of wedlock and being abandoned and abused. Was Thomas misrepresented in Hannah's *Memoir*?

Despite all of Thomas's apparent shortcomings, Hannah still had a lot of good things to say about her father. Throughout her *Memoir*, she reflected fondly that Thomas "had been a very kind parent to me, and though he could not bestow any property upon me, he was very solicitous to aid me as far as he could."¹³⁶ What did this "aid" and "kindness" look like?

Schmidt claims that Thomas listed his occupations as the importer of English books, farmer, and literary agent—but emphasizes that "he would fail at all three."¹³⁷ It is worth questioning this assertion. The previous section looked at all the things Thomas neglected to do as a father; this

¹³⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, "Introductory Note," 91; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 288, 354.

¹³⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 40-41, 54, 58.

¹³⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 18.

section explores the things he did not neglect. Though Thomas could not provide financially for Hannah, he worked very hard to open doors to several opportunities for Hannah to establish her career and subsequent independence. Rather than proving to be a failure as a father, or a “bad” father as Marks and Palkovitz described, Thomas was a force in supporting his daughter’s careers both as a writer and as an educator. This “aid” or support came in the form of procuring research material, negotiating contracts, and the promotion and distribution of her publications.¹³⁸

First, Thomas provided Hannah with books and manuscripts she needed to conduct her research.¹³⁹ Thomas not only permitted Hannah access to research material through his extensive family library, which was built up over several generations, but he also granted her access to the books he was selling. First through the store, and later through his traveling book-sales business, Thomas sought out and ordered manuscripts, maps, travel journals, dictionaries, histories, and magazines that Hannah required to carry out her research for not just her first but almost all her publications.¹⁴⁰

Later, when the store failed, Thomas provided Hannah with access to research material from across Massachusetts and New England when he became a traveling book salesman (as mentioned earlier).¹⁴¹ Thomas sold copies of unbound books from Britain on the road and, according to Schmidt, “acted as a book lending library across eastern Massachusetts.” Thomas, therefore, was positioned to both borrow and purchase books (especially rare and expensive ones), specifically for Hannah’s research.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 40-41, 54, 58.

¹³⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2-5, 8-9, 10, 54.

¹⁴⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2-5, 8-9, 10, 54.

¹⁴¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 4, 29. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 26.

¹⁴² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2-5, 29, 54. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 26.

Hannah appreciated her father's assistance. In her *Memoir*, she said she desired "to recognize with gratitude the attention of my kind father, who took pains that I should have the benefit of all books he could procure."¹⁴³ And no wonder she was appreciative. Thomas had procured these books from some of New England's most prolific personal libraries. President John Adams, for example, records a visit from Thomas, who borrowed books from his library for Hannah to use in the third edition of her world religion compendium.¹⁴⁴ Thomas also obtained several books for Hannah from geographer Jedidiah Morse.¹⁴⁵ Thomas was so devoted to the success of Hannah's writing profession that when he died, he was indebted to Jedidiah Morse due to research material he had purchased for his daughter's literary endeavors.¹⁴⁶

Next, Thomas supported Hannah in developing her career by helping her negotiate her first book deal with printer Benjamin Edes. Edes was likely one of Thomas's personal and professional book-distributing contacts from his book sales business.¹⁴⁷ Though the contract negotiations did not go as well as Hannah had anticipated, the deal arguably opened the door to further publications. Eventually, it allowed Hannah to boast of her position as the first female American author to earn her living from writing, thus enabling Hannah to obtain financial independence.¹⁴⁸ Whether the deal was as botched as Hannah had depicted will be further

¹⁴³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 29.

¹⁴⁴ John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams vol. 3*, eds. L. H. Butterfield, Leonard C. Faber, and Wendell D. Garrett, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1961) 243. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 114-115.

¹⁴⁵ Hannah Adams, *A Narrative of the Controversy Between the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, D.D, And the Author* (Boston: John Eliot, Printer, 1814) 2; Morse, *An Appeal to the Public: On the Controversy Respecting the Revolution in Harvard College, and the Events Which Have Followed It; Occasioned by the Use Which Has Been Made of Certain Complaints and Accusations of Miss Hannah Adams, Against the Author*, (Charlestown, 1814) 9; Sidney Morse, *Remarks on the Controversy between Doctor Morse and Miss Adams* (Boston: Samuel T Armstrong, 1814), 11. Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 157.

¹⁴⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 157. It is unclear if Hannah resolved this debt after her father's death, but as Morse ended up owing Hannah money, that he never repaid, due to a legal dispute discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Seven, it is unlikely.

¹⁴⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15; Adams, "Shaw Account," 147. Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 41.

¹⁴⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15.

examined in the next section on Thomas's redeeming himself as a protector. But the contract was not the only way Thomas assisted Hannah with her publishing career. He also helped to market and distribute her publications.¹⁴⁹

Despite being unable to provide for Hannah and purportedly not securing Hannah the most optimal publication contract (which was a difficult task), Thomas contributed to Hannah's finances by being devoted to both promoting and distributing her books. Hannah noted that Thomas "was a great assistant to me both in procuring books and in disposing of my works."¹⁵⁰ Thomas procured orders for Hannah's publications almost until he died in 1812.¹⁵¹ Thomas also delivered most of Hannah's ordered books. Thomas acted as Hannah's public relations person, marketer, and distributor. Hannah admitted her dependence on her father's help when she claimed that "after the age and infirmities of my father prevented him from assisting me, as he had formerly done, in selling and exchanging the copies of my work, I was necessitated to exert myself in doing business out of the female line, which exposed me to public notice."¹⁵² It was not until her father's death that she had to pick up the slack when she realized and admitted how much Thomas had done for her success as a writer. Thomas redeemed himself by procuring research material for her writing, negotiating her first book publication, and distributing and promoting her books. Was he able to also redeem himself in his role as protector?

Redeemed as Protector

While Thomas failed to fulfill his duty as a father by either protecting his community or country, that does not indicate that he failed to safeguard his immediate family. Instead, Thomas defended his family in several ways. These ways included protecting his family by his speedy

¹⁴⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 40.

¹⁵⁰ Adams and Lee *Memoir*, 40.

¹⁵¹ Schmidt *Passionate Usefulness*, 54-55.

¹⁵² Adams and Lee *Memoir*, 5, 29; Adams, "Shaw Account," 202; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

remarriage, as well as providing protection to his daughter Hannah through his business connections and his intellectual network.

Thomas's wife, Elizabeth, died suddenly in 1767. Soon after her death, his store failed, and he had to take his career on the road as a traveling book salesman. Thomas was often not physically present to defend and care for his five children. Within a year of Elizabeth's death, he quickly remarried Sarah Harris of Walpole.¹⁵³ This was arguably a move to protect his children during these extended absences. It was at least a move to protect the family from being separated.

According to Jaquess, "most men were not equipped to be single fathers."¹⁵⁴ This was true of Thomas. As already established in Chapter One, the expectations and duties performed by a wife and mother in colonial New England were, to put it lightly, colossal. Because of the copious workload carried out by wives and mothers, it would be impossible for the husband, should his wife die, to fill in the gap. There were only two choices for a widowed father in early America. The first option was to remarry hastily. The second was to send their children away to other homes or boarding schools.¹⁵⁵ The former occurred in large numbers.¹⁵⁶

In 1812, for example, when New England minister Jacob Norton lost his wife, he was forced to "send out" all his children. Norton sent his daughters to live with his in-laws in another town.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, when Henry Laurens lost his wife in 1770, he sent his sons to school, and his daughter went to live with his sister.¹⁵⁸ In 1780, when his wife died during childbirth, Peter Oliver sent three of his children away to school and rented a nursery while paying a nurse to care

¹⁵³ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283.

¹⁵⁴ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 73.

¹⁵⁵ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 73; Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 144.

¹⁵⁶ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 73.

¹⁵⁷ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 73-76.

¹⁵⁸ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 74, 77.

for his newborn while he rented a room elsewhere.¹⁵⁹ At least by remarrying within a year of Elizabeth's death, Thomas was moving to protect his family by keeping them together.

In her chapter "Widower" in *Ye Heart of a Man*, Lisa Wilson claims that it was not uncommon for a widower to find a new spouse within a year.¹⁶⁰ Men remarried to fill in the household manager and childcare gap left by their wives and to stave off poor reputations. Widowed husbands were considered social "pariahs" and were in danger of being seen as irresponsibly dependent upon their children should they remain unmarried, thus shirking their fatherly duty to provide.¹⁶¹

Cotton Mather, for example, was urged by his friends to remarry quickly because "it was the only way to restore his tarnished name."¹⁶² Hasty remarriages, however, did not mean that the widower did not grieve the loss of his first wife.¹⁶³ Though the widower's children sometimes interpreted these prompt remarriages as self-serving, remarriage was a necessary evil, essential to keep the family enterprise functioning.¹⁶⁴ Thomas did not hesitate to reconcile himself to this necessary evil.

Thomas's decision to marry Sarah was, at best, a questionable choice. When they married, Sarah was just 16. Thomas was 45.¹⁶⁵ Being 16 meant that Sarah was only a year older than Thomas's eldest daughter, Betty, and only three years older than Hannah. Not surprisingly, Schmidt claims Sarah was never "a mother to Hannah."¹⁶⁶ He also posits that Sarah did not share

¹⁵⁹ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 77-78.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 157.

¹⁶¹ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 158, 170.

¹⁶² Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 159.

¹⁶³ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 170.

¹⁶⁴ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 167, 170.

¹⁶⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

¹⁶⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

a love for books or learning like Thomas did with his daughter Hannah. Instead, she was unsupportive and even disparaging towards their literary proclivities.¹⁶⁷

Hannah never once mentioned her stepmother in her *Memoir*. The narrative implies a narrative void, as if Thomas existed in perpetual widowerhood throughout his life and Sarah never existed. Why this omission? Hannah often left out the people who caused her offense. While Sarah may have safeguarded Hannah's younger siblings while Thomas was absent, it is unlikely that Thomas's remarriage protected his never-married older daughters, Hannah and Betty. But Thomas extended protection to Hannah in other ways, such as through his business connections and intellectual networks.

Protector in Contracts

Where Thomas did not need to protect Hannah from suitors with potential nefarious intentions because, due to her undefined sickness, she likely did not have any, he did try to serve as her protector in her business contracts. After the Revolution, to help the family and make ends meet, Hannah decided to complete her world religion dictionary that she had started as a personal project before the war and try to have it published. To negotiate a contract with a printer, she looked to her father for help. He was, after all, a book salesman and therefore had connections in the industry.¹⁶⁸

Thomas took Hannah's first book to printer Benjamin Edes.¹⁶⁹ The contract Thomas negotiated stipulated that Hannah had to come up with a subscription list of 400 people before he would print her manuscript. Furthermore, Edes would reap all the benefits of each of those 400 subscribers. Hannah would only receive 50 books from the deal and be responsible for procuring

¹⁶⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 28.

¹⁶⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15-16; Adams, "Shaw Account," 192. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15-16; Adams, "Shaw Account," 192. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42.

sales above and beyond the 400 subscribers she had already provided.¹⁷⁰ Hannah was so disappointed with the contract that she never allowed her father to negotiate another contract for any of her 12 subsequent publications.¹⁷¹ How bad was this deal?

I would argue that Hannah's first book contract was better negotiated by Thomas than Hannah had claimed. Both Hannah and Lee critique Thomas for poorly negotiating her first book contract.¹⁷² Hannah was so bitter about the contract with Edes that she did not mention Edes's name when she wrote her *Memoir* 50 years later.¹⁷³ The contract, however, was a decent deal for a first-time unknown female author, especially one entering the genre dominated by white, Christian, college-educated men.¹⁷⁴

Benjamin Edes was a prolific Boston publisher. Before Thomas Adams had reached his door to negotiate Hannah's first book contract, Edes had published some of the best names in New England.¹⁷⁵ During the Revolution, Edes published political works by John Hancock, Joseph Warren, James Otis, Samuel Adams, and Josiah Quincy.¹⁷⁶ Mainly a religious publisher both before and after the war, Edes had also already published works by New England's most well-reputed theologians like Charles Chauncy (president of Harvard), Samuel Mather (Cotton's son), Jonathan Mayhew, and Ezra Stiles (president of Yale). In 1777, Edes became the first to publish one of Mercy Otis Warren's political satires, thus demonstrating an openness to publish female writers like Hannah.¹⁷⁷ Thomas had negotiated Hannah's first book contract with one of the country's best publishers, who had worked with some of the country's biggest and most

¹⁷⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42-43.

¹⁷¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 43.

¹⁷² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15, 58, 68-69.

¹⁷³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15.

¹⁷⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42.

¹⁷⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 41.

¹⁷⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 41.

¹⁷⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15-16; Adams, "Shaw Account," 192. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 41.

respected names. Yet, Hannah complained about it for at least 50 years. Her complaints could be construed as prideful, presumptuous, and even reasonably audacious.

In addition to being an unknown and unpublished female writer, the text Hannah hoped to publish was a hard sell. At the time of her publication in 1784, an ordinary book may cost \$1.50. According to Schmidt, this price was worth three days of work for an unskilled labourer and a day and a half's labour for a skilled one.¹⁷⁸ Hannah's book, as a world religion dictionary and theological reference compendium, according to Schmidt, was "generally rather expensive."¹⁷⁹ A book like Hannah's generally served as a mark of status. These status symbols were found most commonly in the libraries of ministers and theologians.¹⁸⁰ Not only would Hannah's book be expensive to print and have a restricted audience, it was also risky because she was an unknown, untraditionally educated female attempting to publish in the strictly male genre of theology. Reference works like Hannah's were used as sermon tools to help college graduate ministers prepare their sermons. This genre was, according to Schmidt, "the most gendered arena in American letters."¹⁸¹ The fact that Thomas could negotiate a book deal for Hannah with a publisher as accomplished and famous as Edes was nothing short of a miracle.

Before the 19th century, almost all books were published by subscription, so the fact that Edes demanded a subscription list was no surprise.¹⁸² Thomas's business acumen on this end was, therefore, not deficient. Moreover, Hannah's share of 50 books to sell above and beyond the 400 subscriptions, at first, seems admittedly tiny and may be where Thomas fell short in his negotiation and, therefore, protection skills. However, after further consideration, the proceeds

¹⁷⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42.

¹⁷⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 38.

¹⁸⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 33.

¹⁸¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 34.

¹⁸² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42.

from 50 books would have been no shortfall. Hannah reported in her account to Shaw that the sale price for her book was \$1.25 a book. The 50 books would have garnered \$62.50. According to Schmidt, that amount equated to around two years of a male teacher's salary.¹⁸³ Moreover, with her father Thomas distributing her product, she should have had no significant issues moving the books she received from Edes.

The books sold well. Soon after publication, Edes wrote to inform Hannah that most of the first edition was sold, and he was about to reprint the book.¹⁸⁴ Hannah immediately declined. She had obtained a copyright and was determined to negotiate a better contract with a different publisher. However, was the copyright protection her idea or Thomas's?

Protector in Copyright

In 1790, Hannah wrote to Congressman Fisher Ames asking him to establish a federal copyright law.¹⁸⁵ Ames was a personal friend of Thomas and a regular visitor to the Adams homestead, at least up until the commencement of the Revolution.¹⁸⁶ Ames, his brothers, and several of the area's learned elite were fellow members with Thomas of a professional gentlemen's organization known as *The Honourable Free Brothers*. *The Free Brothers* met weekly, first at a tavern in Dedham and later in 1766 at Thomas Adams's estate. The group discussed science, politics, and literature. If it was not Thomas's suggestion that his daughter reach out to his friend Ames on the issue of a federal copyright act to protect her intellectual property, his connection opened the door.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 15-16; Adams, "Shaw Account," 192. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 42.

¹⁸⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 16; Adams, "Shaw Account," 194. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 43.

¹⁸⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 16, 19-20; Adams, "Shaw Account," 194. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 9.

¹⁸⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17.

¹⁸⁷ William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, eds. *Life, Journal and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler* (Cincinnati: R. Clarke and Co., 1888), 8, 10, 12-14; *A History of Dedham, Massachusetts* (Dedham, MA: Transcript Press, 1936), 333. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17.

Up to that point, copyright laws existed only at the state level. The state copyright laws had been put in place four years earlier in 1786. Because there was no overarching federal legislation, a printer in another state could print an author's work without recourse even if the author had obtained copyright protection in their state.¹⁸⁸ However, by February of 1790, during the Second Congress and shortly after Hannah wrote Fisher, the *Federal Act of Copyright* was brought forth by Ames and passed, protecting copies of maps, charts, and books.¹⁸⁹ The act allowed Hannah to protect her book from being reprinted by Edes or any other publisher in the United States with legal recourse. It also allowed her to make significantly more money on the second edition of her publication. It may be argued that Hannah safeguarded herself here. It could also be argued that the government protected her. But her father, Thomas, was likely protecting her by encouraging Hannah to contact his friend, Fischer Ames. The fact that Thomas had the foresight and fortitude to forge a network of intellectual elites who met weekly in his home eventually made this invaluable connection with Ames for his daughter and her career possible.

Because of Thomas, Ames had been in Hannah's home weekly since she was ten or eleven. These weekly meetings allowed Hannah to raise the matter and feel confident to press the issue with a congress member. Ultimately, the intellectual network connections Thomas had forged by opening his family home allowed Hannah to own intellectual property, indicating another mode in which Thomas acted as protector of Hannah. Thomas forged these networks, which also lauded Hannah in American history as "the first woman to petition Congress for a general

¹⁸⁸ *Federal Act of Copyright*, 1790, United States Copyright Office web., <https://copyright.gov/about/1790-copyright-act.html>, <https://www.copyright.gov/history/1790act.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2024). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 48.

¹⁸⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 16, 19-20; Adams, "Shaw Account," 194. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 48.

copyright law.”¹⁹⁰ Fischer Ames was not the only masculine public persona who assisted Hannah in securing success in her publication process. Reverend James Freeman and President John Adams also proved to be significant players in Hannah’s life.

James Freeman- New Contracts

Even if we buy Hannah’s claims that her father Thomas failed to protect her interests due to a purported unfavourable initial book contract (if anyone could financially claim success in any first book contract) it was nevertheless this contract made by her father that arguably allowed her to publish a second and much more successful edition of her book, which ended up becoming her breakthrough work. Because her father was able to get the first edition of her dictionary published, it landed in the hands of Reverend James Freeman, who loved the work so much that he wound up being one of Hannah’s greatest supporters, ultimately launching her successfully into the public and political sphere.

Another significant relationship Hannah includes in her *Memoir* is with Reverend James Freeman (1759-1835). Freeman, founder of the first openly unitarian church in America, personally promoted her work amongst the political elite of Boston, negotiated a book deal that financially took care of Hannah and her sister’s medical bills and living expenses, and influenced the tenor of her work. Hannah has much to say about him in her *Memoir*:

I went to Boston for this purpose; a friend of mine introduced me to the Rev. Mr. Freeman, whom I had only once before seen: but I was well apprised of his benevolent character, which I found more than realized the ideas which I had formed of it from the report. I shall ever recollect the generous interest he took in my affairs, with the most lively gratitude, He removed my perplexity, by transacting the business with the printer.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Cutler, *Manasseh Cutler*, 333. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 8.

¹⁹¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 20-21.

The "friend" whom Hannah says introduced the pair was, according to Hannah in her autobiographical account to William S. Shaw in 1803, an unnamed female friend.¹⁹² In her *Memoir*, Hannah continued to describe what Freeman had done for her career as a writer:

By his advice, a subscription paper was published; and I soon found the benefit of his patronage in procuring a large number of subscribers and concluding an advantageous bargain for me with Mr. Folsom, the printer. The second edition was published in 1791, and the emolument I derived from it not only placed me in a comfortable situation but it enabled me to pay the debts I had contracted during my and my sister's illnesses and to put out a small sum upon interest.¹⁹³

Hannah not only mentions her friendship with Freeman in her *Memoir*, but she also positions him as a central character in her shorter and much earlier "Shaw Account." Surprisingly, her biographer and friend Hannah Sawyer Lee says nothing about Freeman, Hannah's "friendship" with Freeman, or his role as her "patron."¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Freeman was an absolute force in Hannah's writing career. Not only had Freeman negotiated a very successful second book contract for Hannah's second edition of her religious dictionary, but he also acted as her publicist, soliciting an advance buyers' list to ensure a successful readership.¹⁹⁵

The subscription list Freeman volunteered to amass comprised all the who's who of the Boston elite.¹⁹⁶ Amongst the Boston elite who were eager to purchase Hannah's book due to Freeman's promotion were not only most of Boston's prominent clergy, wealthy merchants, and notable physicians but also some of Boston's most eminent politicians.¹⁹⁷ These politicians included attorney general of Massachusetts James Sullivan; Massachusetts congressmen George

¹⁹² Adams, "Shaw Account," 194-195.

¹⁹³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 20-21.

¹⁹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 20-21; Adams, "Shaw Account," 194-195. Hannah never entirely calls Freeman a friend. However, she does laud him with the title of a patron.

¹⁹⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 20-21; Adams, "Shaw Account," 194-195.

¹⁹⁶ Adams, *View of Religions*, "Subscribers Names." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 51. The end of her book includes an alphabetical twelve-page list of her subscribers entitles "SUBSCRIBERS NAMES," which includes the town where the subscriber resides, and in some places their vocation.

¹⁹⁷ Adams, *View of Religions*, "Subscribers Names." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 53.

Thatcher and Harrison Otis; state representative to the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Lincoln; Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts William Phillips; Governor of Massachusetts Increase Sumner; Vice-President and later President of the United States John Adams; and signers of constitution John Hancock and Samuel Adams (who was at the time of the book's release, President of the Massachusetts Senate, and later sat both as Lieutenant Governor, and Governor of Massachusetts).¹⁹⁸

President John Adams

Once Freeman invested himself in the project of the second edition of Hannah's world religion compendium, she made several significant changes which were arguably at least somewhat influenced by Freeman.¹⁹⁹ One of the most significant of these alterations was the addition of a dedication. This new dedication was to none other than Hannah's very distant cousin, the then Vice-President John Adams. The two-page dedication reads:

To John Adams
Vice-President of the United States of America
SIR,

ENCOURAGED by your well-known condescension and goodness, I take the liberty to prefix your name to this work, a name expressive of every patriotic virtue, which excites the veneration and gratitude of your fellow citizens, the admiration and esteem of foreign nations.

While your distinguished abilities, the ornament and delight of your country, have raised you to the first rank of literary eminence; let me humbly hope my feeble attempt to represent with impartiality the sentiments of the various denomination of Christians will meet with your candor and indulgence.

Though born in humble obscurity, a stranger to polite forms of address, I am capable of the highest esteem for those illustrious characters to whom, under heaven, we are indebted for our civil and religious privileges.

¹⁹⁸ Adams, *View of Religions*, "Subscribers Names." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 53.

¹⁹⁹ Adams, "Shaw Account," 194-195. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 50, 51, 52, 54.

That you may long enjoy the felicity of seeing your generous exertions for your country crowned with increasing success, and the sentiments of liberty, which you have cultivated in America, extending their beginning influence through the world, is the ardent wish of.

SIR,
Your most obedient
Humble servant,
HANNAH ADAMS²⁰⁰

Though Hannah dedicated this new edition to him, she did not mention John in her *Memoir*.

However, her biographer, Hannah Lee, did. Lee noted Hannah's friendship with John twice in her biography of Hannah (attached to Hannah's *Memoir*).²⁰¹ John Adams, to whom the work was dedicated, became more than a protective patron to Hannah. After the project, Hannah and John wrote to each other.²⁰² They spent time together. He invited her to stay at his home for two weeks in 1797. She was encouraged to make use of his extensive library.²⁰³ John loaned her books. He was one of the subscribers to the second edition of the world religion dictionary. He subscribed to all her other books thereafter.²⁰⁴

This dynamic duo of Freeman and Adams, who proved pivotal in the triumph of at least the second edition of Hannah's world religion dictionary, and therefore catapulting Hannah's writing career into the public sphere, came to support Hannah directly because her first edition was published thanks to the role of her father Thomas who made sure this happened. Even if that first edition did not garner the finances Hannah felt she deserved, it did land in the lap of one of her greatest supporters, Reverend James Freeman, and, in turn, the dedication of the second edition, spearheaded and supported by Freeman, encouraged a lifelong friendship and patron in President John Adams, which otherwise might never have occurred.

²⁰⁰ Adams, *View of Religions*, "Dedication."

²⁰¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 74.

²⁰² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 49.

²⁰³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 74. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 114-115.

²⁰⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 53, 135.

Conclusion: Revolutionary Fathers & Fatherhood in Transition

In New England, the mid-1700s marked a shift in ideologies surrounding fatherhood. Several factors were at play and not just the Revolution. Initially, farms that had been divided for inheritance underwent successive divisions over several generations, stretching to their utmost limits.²⁰⁵ With little farmland left to divide as inheritance between sons, sons had less incentive to stay close to their fathers, let alone obey their authority or follow in their footsteps as “apprentice” farmers. Other career paths were required, especially in large families with many sons. Simultaneously, a surplus of goods emerged for the first time, giving rise to cash crops that extended beyond the community's borders for sale in urban centres. These transformations catalyzed the ascent of a burgeoning middle class of merchants and commerce, subsequently drawing more fathers away from their households.²⁰⁶

Ideology also began to change. Enlightenment rhetoric, from thinkers like John Locke, encouraged independence and was disseminated across England and its colonies alike.²⁰⁷ Jaquess claims that “the gradual change in the middle years of the 1700s paved the way for a new concept of parenting that reached America from England in the 1760s and 1770s,” the exact time Thomas was fathering Hannah as a single parent, without a mother figure for Hannah in the home.²⁰⁸ This emerging revolutionary rhetoric framed England as the overbearing authoritarian father unwilling to let his son gain American independence and flourish. How could revolutionary fathers buy into this propaganda for their potential country but not allow the same

²⁰⁵ Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 10.

²⁰⁶ Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 10.

²⁰⁷ Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 2.

²⁰⁸ Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 2.

ideology sway at home? Rather than dependence, the rhetoric and propaganda caused fathers to encourage more independence in their children.²⁰⁹

In the absence of revolutionary fathers, mothers and wives stepped in to fill in the gap during their husband's long absences. Acting in the traditional colonial Puritan role of deputy husband, women became the family's disciplinarian, educator, and at times, even the protector and provider. In the absence of the father's central role due to the Revolution, the mother and wife became the centre of the family, first temporarily, but then long-term, replacing the father.²¹⁰ Jaquess claims, "at the same time that traditional ideas of patriarchy fell into decline, a new notion of womanhood emerged: a belief that women were inherently moral, more spiritual, and more tender than men."²¹¹ Thus, ushered in by the absent father due to the American Revolution, "in the late eighteenth century, a new and more powerful style of motherhood emerged."²¹²

Thomas Adams was a father in this epoch. Hannah's mother was dead. Her aunt, who stepped in as a surrogate mother, also died. Hannah's stepmother Sarah was only three years older. Her older sister, Betty, tried, but she, like Sarah, was only a few years Hannah's senior. Thomas had to act as a sole parent. As a part of a literary circle up on the latest scientific, political, and literary trends, he was privy to this new and liberal approach to parenting. But could this more liberal fatherhood model be applied to daughters as well as sons? What about fathers and their never-married daughters?

Thomas had failed to provide for Hannah through losing his business, as well as by diminishing the family wealth, name, and property. He failed to protect his family through military or civic means, as well as in the negotiating of fit spouses for his daughters. But, he

²⁰⁹ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 1.

²¹⁰ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 11.

²¹¹ Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 10.

²¹² Jaquess, "Revolutionary Fathers," 10.

redeemed himself by providing Hannah with independence and her income, and protected the family through remarriage, as well as by employing assistance from his business contacts and intellectual networks. But, Thomas seemed to fall short in his protection and provision for his never-married daughter Hannah one more time.

For the most part, fathers protected their never-married daughters by keeping them at home, often for the duration of their lives.²¹³ Never-married women, unlike their married counterparts, who were primarily seen as wives and mothers, were always seen as daughters.²¹⁴ In *Liberty, A Better Husband*, Chambers-Schiller claims, “Whatever an unmarried daughter’s age, her parents never recognized her as fully self-governing.”²¹⁵ Not only did daughters almost always remain under the natal roof and subsequently her father’s thumb, but daughters were also even required to gain their father’s permission to travel.²¹⁶

After the “poorly negotiated book deal,” Thomas neglected his duty further as a protector when he could no longer keep Hannah safely under his roof. Though Thomas’s never-married daughter Hannah should have been his lifelong responsibility to both provide for and protect, after the war, Thomas was unable to house her.²¹⁷ Having parceled off pieces of the estate to make ends meet, Thomas signed the last of the estate over to one of his sons from his second marriage.²¹⁸ As this son had a family of his own as well as several apprentices, along with Thomas, who was still residing on the property with his second wife and their younger children,

²¹³ Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 50.

²¹⁴ Jaquess, “Revolutionary Fathers,” 107, 123.

²¹⁵ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 107.

²¹⁶ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 107.

²¹⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 58.

²¹⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 58; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 68.

Hannah was forced to move out and board elsewhere.²¹⁹ Thus, Thomas failed to protect his never-married daughter in the most elemental way of keeping her safe under his roof.

Never-married daughters normally remained at home under the natal roof because they were perpetually on call to assist the family. Even if they lived away or had their vocation, never-married daughters could be recalled for familial duties at any time. Chamber-Schiller argues that “until he gave her hand to another, a father retained responsibility for his daughter and held a claim on her services.”²²⁰ Even when she had her career, like teaching or writing, and had to help to contribute financially to support herself or the family, “family participation was a given.”²²¹

In antebellum America, never-married daughters grappled with a profound sense of guilt, a sentiment perpetuated by the influential ideologies of the *Cult of Single Blessedness* and *Cult of Domesticity* (discussed in Chapter Two). These daughters felt the weight of societal expectations, pressured to delicately balance family responsibilities with their personal vocations. This balancing act often led them to undergo periods of dutifulness, wherein they ritually sought to absolve themselves of perceived “selfishness” associated with pursuing autonomy through their vocations.²²² It was unusual for never-married daughters to ignore demands to perform familial duties and obligations.²²³ Society ingrained the belief that the domestic role was indispensable for women, whether single or not, with such responsibilities deemed crucial for both their health and happiness.²²⁴

²¹⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 58; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 255.

²²⁰ Chamber-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 107.

²²¹ Chamber-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 107.

²²² Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 108-109.

²²³ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 107.

²²⁴ Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 108-109.

The expectation of the “on call” never-married daughter was not unique to antebellum America. In early modern England, Froide claims that “it was not uncommon for women who never married to efface their identities and talents by dedicating their lives to their fathers.”²²⁵ Froide provides the example of writer Anna Seward who put her vocation as a writer on hold because she devoted her “first fifty years of her life living with and keeping house for her father Canon Seward of Lichfield,” only to push pause later to nurse him in periodic episodes of illness.²²⁶ Hannah was much different. Rather than Hannah constantly being on-call for her father, Thomas seems to dedicate his life to his daughter.

Hannah did, however, like Seward, return home to care for Thomas in the days leading up to his death, even though her step-mother Sarah, only a few years older than Hannah, was still alive and well. But Hannah did not come home to help her dad out of guilt, under obligation, or by compulsion. In her *Memoir*, Hannah records that she came home to be comforted by her father after grieving the loss of a very close friend, who we will discuss briefly in the next chapter.²²⁷ Hannah had no idea that her father would soon experience the same fate as her beloved friend. Hannah just wanted to be with her father when she was grieving and thus ran home for comfort from him when she was in pain. Instead of relying on the comfort of a female network of support, Hannah turned to her father, who was parenting on the cusp of a new era. Such actions are hardly a sign of a tenuous or absent relationship (as depicted by Froide), but instead indicate a strong, vibrant, reciprocal, and mutually supportive father-daughter bond.²²⁸ The distinctness of that bond remains to be determined, or at least it invites further exploration

²²⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 51.

²²⁶ Froide, *Never Married*, 51-52.

²²⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 40-41.

²²⁸ Froide, *Never Married*, 51, 65; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168, 189; Smith-Rosenberg “Female World,” 8-10, 13-14, 17-18; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

through the meticulous examination of other father-daughter relationships. Should sources become available, it would be enlightening to discern whether Hannah's and Thomas's connection was an anomaly or, indeed, reflective of a broader norm.

When Hannah lost both her mother and her aunt, who acted as a surrogate mother to her after her mother's death, her father stepped in to fill the gap. Even before the death of Hannah's mother, Elizabeth and Thomas made the decision not to train Hannah in a "daughter's education," which would have enabled her to be prepared to become a wife, mother, and household manager, due to her illness. Thomas would have been expected to have provided for Hannah in her never-married status for the remainder of her life, including after his own death. However, in making this parenting move, neither Thomas or Elizabeth foresaw the massive financial devastation Thomas would experience, mainly due to the American Revolution, which would prevent him from caring for Hannah (and her sister Betty) as he should have.²²⁹

While Elizabeth as a mother should have mentored her daughter Hannah into the vocation of household manager but did not because of Hannah's propensity to illness (and Elizabeth's early death), Thomas stepped in to mentor Hannah in his own vocation, as he would a son (though he did also have sons). He provided Hannah with an education similar to his own and introduced her to his male business, academic (which we learn more of in the next chapter), and political network.²³⁰ It was this cytokine storm of Hannah's illness, the loss of her mother, the loss of the family fortune, and the American Revolution that forced Thomas to creatively support Hannah when he could not financially. He used creative means like mentoring her in his occupation like a son, and in the absence of a mother who would extend and share her female kin network, Thomas extended his male network to Hannah. He modelled to her the importance and

²²⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 6, 54, 58, 69; Adams, "Shaw Account," 193-194, 202-203.

²³⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 40-41, 54-55.

value of such elite male networks, as well as how to build and maintain them. The next chapter illustrates how Hannah began to cultivate some of her own elite male networks rather than relying upon female and familial networks.

Chapter Five: Hannah Adams: Too Educated

In 1783, a treaty was signed between Great Britain, France, and Spain at Versailles. On the same day, a treaty was signed between Britain and the newly formed United States of America, ending the Revolutionary War.¹ After hearing the news of the truce, after a long period of unpaid service, several officers and soldiers were driven to mutiny. General George Washington quickly intervened by sending a contingent of 1500 men to de-escalate the situation and restore order.² A part of that contingent was a young 21-year-old woman who had pushed gender norms earlier that year when she dressed as a man, took on the name of her brother, and enlisted in the Continental Army. That young woman was Deborah Sampson.³

Less than a year later, Hannah Adams, like Sampson, also pushed the bounds of gender norms. Hannah published her first book in the male-dominated field of theology, in addition to crossing into the male field of classical education when she prepared a 21-year-old Pitt Clarke for his entrance examination to Harvard College.⁴ Pitt was not her first male Harvard-bound student. How did an “unschooled” female come to be qualified enough to prepare Clarke for the rigorous Harvard exam?

When females were not permitted entry to grammar schools, let alone be allowed to teach in them, and women were banned from Harvard campuses, how did a 29-year-old unschooled spinster come to tutor not just Pitt but also several other Harvard-bound young men? In a world where educated elite men supposedly saw single scholarly-minded women as dangerous pariahs,

¹ Adams, *Summary History*, 478.

² Adams, *Summary History*, 478.

³ Abigail M. Smith ““Among the Revolutions of Her Sex”: The biographies of Deborah Sampson Gannett and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin,” *Women’s Writing* 23, no.3 (2016): 339; Judith Hiltner “She Bled in Secret”: Deborah Sampson, Herman Mann and ‘The Female Review,’ *Early American Literature* 34, no.2 (1999), 193-196.

⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 29.

and one where being too educated was a primary reason why a woman might never marry, how was it acceptable for Hannah to be tutoring young men in her small Medfield community for college, and even ultimately preparing them for the pulpit?

This chapter explores Hannah's enduring lifelong friendship with her student Reverend Pitt Clarke, who was likely the first male friendship she cultivated on her own in what would become a vast elite-male network, as opposed to the typical female-kin support system that undergirded most early modern women. The chapter contrasts the educational paths which would have been available to Hannah as a female and Pitt as a male. It also traces the paths the two friends pursued from childhood until the launch of their respective careers, Hannah as an author and tutor, and Pitt as a minister and tutor. This chapter compares the history of education in America of colonial girls to that of colonial boys, illustrating how Hannah was upheld and supported primarily by a male-dominant network (rather than a female-centred collective) within the purview of her educational path and vocation.

Part I of this chapter sets the historical stage by looking at the progression of colonial education from dame schools to ordination. Part II compares Hannah's educational path to Pitt's and illustrates that though Hannah did not have a formal education per se, she obtained an education like men who attended college, even procuring a theological training congruent with the preparation of an ordained congregational minister. This pathway at the time was restricted to men. In the process, this chapter demonstrates how despite the fact that Nancy Cott, Carol Smith-Rosenberg, Lee Chambers-Schiller, and Amy Friode maintain that female networks were integral to colonial women (and especially never-married women), Hannah flourished within a male matrix who did not discourage, critique, or impede her education, but instead encouraged,

enabled, and championed it.⁵ The chapter refutes scholarship that argues that educated men and the clergy critiqued female education by illustrating that Hannah had the support and oversight of several prominent educated clerical men who not only included her friend Reverend Pitt Clarke, but also Reverend Thomas Prentiss, Ezra Stiles, and Jeremy Belknap, who were all men of the cloth and leading educators. This chapter explores the gendered education of colonial America, the educational support Hannah received from her male network, and her qualifications to prepare her friend, Pitt Clarke, for Harvard.

PART I: Education in Colonial America

Education in colonial America began in the home under the supervision of the household head: the father. Fathers had a duty to educate all the children in their households, including enslaved people, servants, and apprentices. As early as 1642, Massachusetts law required fathers to “teach their children and apprentices to read.”⁶ Five years later, legislation was amended to also require fathers to teach *all* children in their household the “capital laws” as well as to catechize them at least once a week.⁷ The penalty for neglecting this education was 20 shillings per child and/or the removal of said children.⁸

The primary goal of education was to ready children for salvation.⁹ Reading the Bible was key to redemption and conversion in Puritan New England.¹⁰ The central tenet of Protestantism, “the right and duty of the individual to make his own personal interpretations of the Bible and of theology instead of accepting blindly those of the church,” according to Clifford Shipton, was at

⁵ Froide, *Never Married*, 51, 65; Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World,” 8-10, 13-14, 17-18; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168, 189; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

⁶ Cotton Mather, *Cares about the Nurseries*, 12-13, 34; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 55; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 3. See also Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 90.

⁷ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 19; Ambrose, 7. See also Demos, *A Little Commonwealth*, 104-105.

⁸ *Plymouth Colony Records*, V, 13, and XI, 111. See also Demos, *A Little Commonwealth*, 104-105.

⁹ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 9-13, 18-19. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 90.

¹⁰ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 9-13, 18-19. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 90.

its nexus.¹¹ To achieve this “right and duty,” one must know how to read. Therefore, in Puritan New England, mastering reading was a requirement and Bible reading was a must for all.¹² What did this education look like?

Dame Schools

Because of the emphasis on Bible reading for conversion, children began to learn to read as young as two.¹³ Though it was the father’s responsibility to ensure proficiency, women mostly taught reading.¹⁴ Children were not only taught to read by their mothers, but with large families and great responsibilities resting on the mother’s shoulders, children were also often sent to dame schools.¹⁵ Dame schools were seen as “an extension of the home,” where women from the village opened their own homes to teach children under five how to read, usually during the summer.¹⁶ It is unclear whether mothers sent their children to dame schools to learn or sent them as a childminding service. It was likely a bit of both.¹⁷

Andrea Wyman claims that before the American Revolution, dame schools were run by widowed and unmarried women trying to eke out a living.¹⁸ These female teachers likely never attended school themselves above a dame school, and therefore, they were not formally trained.¹⁹

¹¹ Clifford K. Shipton, “The Puritan Influence in Education,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 25, no.3, (1958): 224.

¹² Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 48.

¹³ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 55. See also Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 4.

¹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. See also Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 4.

¹⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. See also Andrea Wyman, “The Earliest Early Childhood Teachers: Women Teachers of America’s Dame Schools,” *Young Children* 50, no.2 (1995): 29.

¹⁶ Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 101; E. Jennifer Monaghan, “Family Literacy in Early 18th-Century Boston: Cotton Mather and His Children,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 26, no.4 (1991): 348.

¹⁷ Wyman, “Early Childhood Teachers,” 29.

¹⁸ Wyman, “Early Childhood Teachers,” 29.

¹⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. See also Wyman, “Early Childhood Teachers,” 31.

Dame school teachers were often paid in goods (like eggs or firewood) or bartered services.

Attendance at dame school was neither mandatory nor consistent.²⁰

Dame schoolteachers, according to E. Jennifer Monaghan, generally used *The New England Primer*, *The Psalter*, *The Hornbook*, and the *Bible* to encourage the rote memorization of vowels, the alphabet, and Biblical questions (catechisms).²¹ *The New England Primer* was printed in the colonies and readily available. According to Schwartz, “colonial printers produced between six and eight million copies of *The New England Primer* between 1690 and 1830 for the study of reading.”²² Dame school teachers who also focused on developing fine-motor skills taught sewing, knitting, stitching, and breadmaking to both genders.²³

Writing Schools

Once a child could read proficiently, they could graduate to attend a writing school, also called a public school. Here, male teachers instructed children aged four to five in penmanship, cyphering, and sometimes book-keeping, generally in preparation for commerce and clerical work.²⁴ As commercial needs in the colony expanded, there was a growing demand for a workforce who were proficient in record-keeping, and thus the demand for writing schools expanded.²⁵

Although fathers in New England were legally required to teach the children in their households to read, mainly for religious ends, writing was considered a difficult and specialized skill and, therefore, was only taught to children who might require it for their future vocation.²⁶

²⁰ Wyman, “Early Childhood Teachers,” 30.

²¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 101; Monaghan, “Family Literacy,” 348.

²² Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 49.

²³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 52. See also Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” *The Pioneer Intellect*, 30.

²⁴ Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49. See also Morgan, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 101; Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 48; Monaghan, “Family Literacy,” 347-348.

²⁵ Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 50.

²⁶ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49. See also Schwartz, “The Pioneer Intellect,” 49.

Expensive writing manuals imported from England were not readily available.²⁷ According to Robert Middlekauff, by 1647, towns of at least 50 residents were legally required to maintain a writing school. However, like the dame school, no laws were in place to require parents to send children to school to learn to write or cypher.²⁸ Proficiency in writing and success in writing school were requirements for admission into grammar school. Not all children went to grammar school.

Vocational Training

Fathers were legally required to ensure that all children under their care were adequately trained for future employment, both to support their future families and to be useful members of their communities.²⁹ By age seven, girls began training for vocation under their mother's tutelage. Household management was their only career choice.³⁰ Boys, however, chose their vocation or calling later because they needed time to develop "character" and for their parents to discern their gifts and bents.³¹ This decision relating to a boy's vocation was taken very seriously. Vocation was deemed to be ordained by God, regardless of whether the call was to the ministry or the field.³²

²⁷ Schwartz, "The Pioneer Intellect," 49.

²⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 52-53. See also Middlekauff, "Education in Colonial America," *Current History* 41 (1961): 7-8.

²⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 52-53; Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49; Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 22. See also Demos, *Little Commonwealth*, 104-105; Morgan, *Puritan Family*, 66; Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 8.

³⁰ Ambrose, *Well-Ordered*, 22; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 436-437. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 66; Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 8.

³¹ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 436-437. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 67-68.

³² Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 436-437. Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 68.

Once chosen, a boy's vocation was difficult to change later in life. Vocational changes rarely occurred.³³ This difficulty in career path changes was mainly due to the lengthy investment in a child's training. It was also connected to the weight Puritans put on "callings" to professions which they believed were God-ordained even for the layman.³⁴ There were two standard choices to prepare boys for their vocation after writing school. The first was an apprenticeship, which was vocational. The second was to continue to grammar school, which was deemed classical.³⁵ Apprenticeship was the more common of the two.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships generally took seven years to reach the level of mastery. Decisions around the choice of vocation usually occurred between the ages of 10 and 14. This early age of decision ensured that their training was completed by the time the young apprentice would be ready to settle and marry (around the age of 21).³⁶ Apprentices signed contracts with their masters, which were called indentures.³⁷

Indentures included room and board; apprentices often left their families to reside with their masters for the duration of their training.³⁸ Though apprenticeship was an option for training, George M. Woytanowitz claims that only a minority of children from Maine to Georgia were educated via formal apprenticeships where they acquired mastery in a trade like "shoemaking, carpentry, or coopering."³⁹ Most children were instead "educated" or apprenticed

³³ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 68-69.

³⁴ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 69-70.

³⁵ George M. Woytanowitz, "Parents, Preachers, and Pedagogues: Education in Colonial America," *Contemporary Education* 47, no.3 (1976): 127.

³⁶ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 67-68.

³⁷ Morgan *The Puritan Family*, 75.

³⁸ Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 75.

³⁹ Woytanowitz, "Parents, Preachers," 125.

in agriculture on their own family farms by their fathers and older siblings.⁴⁰ Another alternative for education after writing school was grammar school.

Grammar Schools

The grammar school (or English school) in New England generally took seven years to complete. The exclusively male grammar school was, according to Clifford K. Shipton, primarily a stepping-stone to prepare a student for college. Students would enter grammar school between the ages of six and ten.⁴¹ In colonial America, a liberal arts degree obtained from a college was mainly a preparation for either a vocation as a minister or magistrate.⁴² Unless parents felt their sons were called for the ministry or law, they likely encouraged their children to enter a trade or agricultural apprenticeship. Those pursuing a vocation in medicine, however, may also have attended grammar school as a knowledge of Latin would be necessary for their trade.⁴³

A grammar school education focused on a classical education, which culminated in learning Latin and Greek.⁴⁴ Massachusetts legislated mandatory grammar schools for towns with more than 100 residents.⁴⁵ If a son went on to college, the choice of vocational calling could be made later than between ten and 14 years of age.⁴⁶

What did a child's time at grammar school look like? According to Middlekauff, students would begin Latin through rote memorization in their first year of grammar school. They would memorize the rules of declining nouns and conjugating verbs, as well as begin learning about

⁴⁰ Mather, *Family Well-Ordered*, 18; Wadsworth, *Well-Ordered Family*, 47-49. See also Woytanowitz, "Parents, Preachers," 125.

⁴¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 52-53; Adams, *Abridgement*, 52. See also Clifford K. Shipton, "Secondary Education in the Puritan Colonies," *The New England Quarterly* 7, no.4 (1934): 650.

⁴² Woytanowitz, "Parents, Preachers," 127.

⁴³ Shipton, "Secondary Education," 657.

⁴⁴ Woytanowitz, "Parents, Preachers," 127.

⁴⁵ Schwartz, "Origins," 215; Middlekauff, "Education," 7.

⁴⁶ Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 68.

Latin grammar, likely from Ezekiel Cheever's *A Short Introduction to Latin*.⁴⁷ Children at grammar school would spend hours filling up copybooks with rules, examples, and exercises.⁴⁸

Next, the student would learn nomenclature and accidence, memorizing words and phrases from texts like Francis Gregory's *Nomenclatura brevis Anglo-Latino...* or Johann Comenius's *Orbis sensualium pictus* (a poorly illustrated picture English-Latin dictionary).⁴⁹ The student would then move on to memorizing and reading aloud phrases, constructing and parsing orally and in copybooks like Mathurius Coderius' *Colloques*. The students were then introduced to the classics commencing with Cicero's *Epistles* or Virgil's *Aeneid* for which the student would translate orally, then in written form, and finally re-translate his English version to Latin changing tenses.⁵⁰

It was not until the student mastered the Latin that he would turn to learning Greek, which had a completely new alphabet and rules of grammar.⁵¹ Greek texts a student would be exposed to at grammar school included the New Testament and works by Homer. Students would again translate the Greek to English, and then to Latin, and back again.⁵² Each master had his own methodology, so not all students followed the exact same formula.⁵³ But not all students attended grammar school to be admitted to college, nor did all students complete an apprenticeship on their path to their vocation. Private school was another route to both college and professional training.

Private Schools & Tutors

⁴⁷ Robert Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition: The Classical Curriculum in Eighteenth-Century New England," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no.1, (1961): 58.

⁴⁸ Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition," 58.

⁴⁹ Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition," 59.

⁵⁰ Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition," 60.

⁵¹ Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition," 61.

⁵² Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition," 62.

⁵³ Middlekauff, "A Persistent Tradition," 62.

Around the turn of the 17th century, private schools began to increase in numbers, especially in Boston.⁵⁴ College administrators did not believe there was a place for business training in the context of a college education.⁵⁵ A rival private school system emerged to fill the gap.⁵⁶ These private schools, which were favoured amongst middle-class families, often included boarding and specialized in classes not offered in writing or grammar schools. These private boarding academies were wildly popular and often enrolled more students than the required grammar and writing schools combined.⁵⁷

Private Schools of Colonial Boston by Robert Francis Seybolt claims that these schools were popular because they were “unhampered by the control of the town meeting” and were subsequently, “free to grow with the town.”⁵⁸ The first private school master on record was a “Mr. Jones” in 1666.⁵⁹ Schools offered a comprehensive curriculum which included dancing and music along with traditional subjects.⁶⁰ Other subjects offered included shorthand, mathematics, French, fine arts, pastry-making, and painting.⁶¹ Both grammar and private schools prepared students for college.

Higher Education and College Life

The first colonial college in North America was Harvard College. Harvard was founded just six years after the “great migration” of the Puritans in 1630.⁶² Like today, a liberal arts

⁵⁴ Shipton, “Secondary Education,” 658.

⁵⁵ Shipton, “Secondary Education,” 658.

⁵⁶ Shipton, “Secondary Education,” 658.

⁵⁷ Shipton, “Secondary Education,” 660.

⁵⁸ Robert Francis Seybolt, *Private Schools of Colonial Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), “foreword.”

⁵⁹ Seybolt, *Private Schools*, 3.

⁶⁰ Seybolt, *Private Schools*, 7, 16.

⁶¹ Seybolt, *Private Schools*, 18-19, 22-24. Humanist scholars like Erasmus actually recommended tutors of small groups over schools, see Erasmus, *Institutio*, 427.

⁶² Josiah Quincy, *The History of Harvard University* (Boston: Crosby, Nichola, Lee, & Co., 1860): 1-2; Adams, *Summary History*, 73-74; Adams, *Abridgment*, 52-53. See also Middlekauff, “Education,” 7.

degree from colleges like Harvard was expected to be completed in four years.⁶³ Philo A. Hutcheson points out that unlike today, a liberal arts curriculum in colonial America focused on the seven liberal arts which consisted of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) which were studied during the first two years, and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) which was the focus of the upper two years.⁶⁴ Much different from the university pedagogical approach we see today that consists of the lecture, the seminar, and the lab (modeled by German universities, this approach did not come to North America until the very late 1800s), John Seiler Brubacher claims that the colonial college instead focused on recitation and disputation.⁶⁵

Eight other liberal arts colleges, aside from Harvard, were founded in colonial America: Yale, the College of William and Mary, the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), King's College (now Columbia), Rhode Island College (now Brown), Queen's College (now Rutgers), and Dartmouth.⁶⁶ Of these nine schools, five denominations were represented, which was much different from Oxford or Cambridge in England, where students had to be Anglican to earn a degree. Though the central purpose for the establishing of colleges in colonial America was to train ministers, these colleges were also seen, in the words of Harvard historian Josiah Quincy, as "repositories of the community's future hopes, for upon them depended the political, economic, and moral stability of the society."⁶⁷

⁶³ Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 101; Axtel, *School Upon a Hill*, 201.

⁶⁴ Philo A. Hutcheson, *A People's History of American Higher Education*, (Florence: Routledge, 2020), 24-25.

⁶⁵ John Brubacher, *Higher Education in Transition*, (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1997), 47, 175, 177, 182.

⁶⁶ Adams, *Summary History*, 182-183, 234-237; Adams, *Abridgment*, 108, 135-136. See also Hutcheson, *A People's History*, 28.

⁶⁷ Quincy, *The History of Harvard*, 3. See also Woytanowitz, "Parents, Preachers," 128.

Over half of the boys who had a liberal arts education at Harvard, however, did enter into the ministry during the 17th century.⁶⁸

Though only a “tiny minority” of the New England population attended college, at Harvard, the student body was made up of a motley crew of boys and men aged between ten and 30, and included both rich and poor students.⁶⁹ The majority of this “tiny minority,” according to James Axtel, were affluent.⁷⁰ The average student began college at age 15, though some students were much older.⁷¹ The younger students were from mainly upper-class populations. In comparison, the older students were poorer and often received scholarships and taught at public schools during extended winter holidays to make ends meet.⁷²

What was college life like for the colonial student? “Ezra Stiles: The Education of a Yale Man, 1742-1746,” by Edmund S. Morgan, provides some insight. Stiles, who attended Yale from 1742 to 1746, started Yale during the Great Awakening, while President Thomas Clap was leading the university. Like Harvard, Yale’s student body was miniscule. There were only 13 freshman and 66 upperclassmen the year Stiles began.⁷³ Stiles attended classes in a long 22 x 165-foot three-story frame building, which also housed the college hall, library, and residence. Stiles’s tutors and fellow students resided in this same building with him where they ate, slept, studied, and attended classes together.⁷⁴

Stiles spent the first two years of his studies learning “tongues and logic,” which included Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. Stephanie C. Jannenga notes that some schools also taught Chaldee (a

⁶⁸ Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 68.

⁶⁹ Woytanowitz, “Parents, Preachers,” 128; Shipton, “The Puritan Influence in Education,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journey of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 25, no.3 (1958): 228; Axtel, *School Upon a Hill*, 20.

⁷⁰ Axtel, *School Upon a Hill*, 207.

⁷¹ Axtel, *School Upon a Hill*, 204.

⁷² Axtel, *School Upon a Hill*, 207.

⁷³ Abiel Holmes, *Life of Ezra Stiles*, (Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1798), 12. See also Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 254.

⁷⁴ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 254.

dialect of Aramaic).⁷⁵ In his second year, Stiles graduated to studying rhetoric, geometry, and geography.⁷⁶ In his third year, he began to learn about natural philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics. His fourth year was spent concentrating on metaphysics and ethics.⁷⁷ Jannenga explains that the older students, in addition to the quadrivium, learned “the three philosophies of Aristotle” which were “natural philosophy, mental philosophy, and moral philosophy.”⁷⁸ At Yale, during Stiles’s stay, seniors took part in disputations twice a week in the fall.⁷⁹ Stiles did catch the tail end of what has come to be known as “new learning,” which included Newton and Locke, who were introduced in the early 1700s.⁸⁰ Between 1716 and 1719, Yale added modern science and math to its curricula.⁸¹ Harvard followed suit in 1726.⁸² Though history is not one of the seven liberal arts, Jannenga shows that it was being taught “nearly from the beginning of collegiate education in the colonies.”⁸³ For example, since 1642, Harvard taught history on Saturday mornings.⁸⁴ At Yale, President Thomas Clap gave history lectures commencing in 1743.⁸⁵

Weekends did not provide free time. On Fridays at Yale, students honed their language skills when they were only permitted to speak in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew.⁸⁶ On Saturdays, Stiles claims he spent his days studying divinity.⁸⁷ On Sundays, President Clap preached to students

⁷⁵ Stephanie C. Jannenga, “Making College Colonial: The Transformation of English Culture in Higher Education in Pre-Revolutionary America,” PhD diss. (Kent State University, 2020), 98.

⁷⁶ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 259.

⁷⁷ Holmes, *Life of Stiles*, 13. See also Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 259.

⁷⁸ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 93.

⁷⁹ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 259.

⁸⁰ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 261.

⁸¹ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 101.

⁸² Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 101.

⁸³ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 109.

⁸⁴ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 109.

⁸⁵ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 109.

⁸⁶ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 259.

⁸⁷ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 259.

and instructed the “senior students in biblical studies.”⁸⁸ What did these students do after graduation? Would all this hard work and discipline result directly in a vocation? What could one do with a liberal arts diploma?

Graduate Apprenticeships

There were no graduate programs in America until the mid-1800s. Similarly, there were also no professional schools until the early 1800s. Brubacher claims that after completing his four-year liberal arts degree at one of the nine colonial colleges, “the professional candidate” (for ministry, law, or medicine) was still required to carry out an apprenticeship period.⁸⁹ These apprenticeship terms had no specific regulated length and could last months to years.⁹⁰ Law clerks worked under experienced lawyers, served writs, and filed actions. Apprenticing physicians performed the grunt work for experienced doctors by washing bottles, mixing drugs, and administering blood lettings.⁹¹

In addition to observation and imitation, apprentices from the three professions of medicine, law, and ministry were expected to read a number of books related to their field or profession as a part of their training, despite having no specified systematic or regulated course list in place. Instead, the “required” reading was usually just recommended by the master and consisted of books available in his own personal library.⁹² This dissertation is specifically concerned with a theological apprenticeship because it is the path Pitt pursued post-graduation and the path taken by Hannah. What did a theological “apprenticeship” look like?

Theological Training

⁸⁸ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 119.

⁸⁹ John S. Brubacher, *Higher Education in Transition*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 198.

⁹⁰ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 199.

⁹¹ Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 199.

⁹² Jannenga, “Making College Colonial,” 199.

After graduating from a college like Harvard, there were three options to train for the ministry. All three methods reverted to the apprenticeship system. Ministers, like doctors and lawyers, required a practical apprenticeship following their liberal arts degree, but it was much shorter than the seven years required for trades. The apprenticeship for the ministry generally lasted two to three years.⁹³

The first method was less common and only available to wealthy students who could remain at school for an additional one to two years to continue their studies and procure a master's degree while earning wages and gaining experience as tutors or librarians at the college.⁹⁴ These students completed their "apprenticeship" under the college president, who was also frequently a minister.⁹⁵ The other two more common options were either to teach at a public school or to reside with and work under a trained minister.⁹⁶ Most congregationalist ministers in New England who were ordained did some combination of the above.⁹⁷ What of Pitt and Hannah? How closely did they follow the prescribed paths of education to their prospective vocations?

Part II A Path Less Traversed: The Colonial Educations of Pitt Clarke and Hannah Adams

Who Was Pitt Clarke?

Pitt Clarke was born in Medfield on January 15, 1763. His father Jacob Clark's second wife was Meletiah Hammant (later Hammond), who was Pitt's mother.⁹⁸ Meletiah was very religious

⁹³ Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 187; Eliza Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs of Rev. Joseph Buckminster, D.D., and of His Son, Rev. Joseph Stevens Buckminster*, (Boston: W. Crosby & H.P. Nichols, 1849), 183.

⁹⁴ Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 187.

⁹⁵ Brubacher, *Higher Education*, 200.

⁹⁶ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 183. See also Axtell, *School Upon a Hill*, 187.

⁹⁷ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 187.

⁹⁸ Pitt Clarke, Mary Jones Stimson Clarke, and Edward H. (Edward Hammond) Clarke, *Memorial of Rev. Pitt Clarke, Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Norton, Mass. and of Mary Jones Clarke (His Wife)*. (Cambridge: Press of J. Wilson and son, 1866), 19; George Clark, *A History of the Town of Norton, Bristol County, Massachusetts, from 1669 to 1859* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols and Co, 1859), 186. The earliest published, but latest written, is his autobiography. Pitt wrote his autobiography in his 70s in 1832, the same year Hannah published her

and oversaw the spiritual education of her children. Though Pitt claimed she was pious to the point of “superstition,” he felt her faith early marked him for his future vocation as a spiritual leader.⁹⁹

Pitt married Rebecca Jones, a close friend of Hannah, in February of 1798.¹⁰⁰ Hannah introduced the pair.¹⁰¹ The couple had five children, but two died in infancy. The happiness of the couple was unfortunately short-lived as Rebecca soon followed her children to the grave; she died of consumption in March of 1811.¹⁰² Pitt quickly remarried Mary Jones Stimson on November 12, 1812.¹⁰³ He had four more children with Mary. One also died in infancy.¹⁰⁴

Pitt was ordained as a Congregational preacher in Norton, Massachusetts in 1793. After two years, he discovered his salary was inadequate to support his growing family. To make up for the shortfall, Pitt bought a farm (with the help of his church), and used farming throughout his ministry to supplement his income.¹⁰⁵ Pitt, like Thomas, also boarded Harvard students who had

Memoir. Pitt’s autobiography is short, only seven pages, but was published in two sources: *The History of the Town of Norton* written by George Faber Clark (no relation), and in the *Memorial of Rev Pitt Clarke*, which also includes a memoir of Pitt as well as one of his wife Mary Jones Clarke, written by his son Manlius Stimson Clarke Esq., and published in 1866 by John Wilson. The second primary source written by Pitt that can be used to etch out a brief biography of his life and education was discovered and released much later: *The Harvard Diary of Pitt Clarke 1786-1791*, written by Pitt and transcribed and edited by Earnest John Knapton. Knapton found Pitt’s diary in the vault of the Public Library of Norton in 1980. The diary was misfiled and discovered in a box labeled “George Faber Clark.” Though Clark includes Pitt in his history of Norton, he did not use this diary as a reference for his sketch (Knapton, *The Harvard Diary*, 234). The discovered diary is much longer than the autobiography and consists of 176 15’2 x10 cm loosely bound pages. The diary mainly focuses on Pitt’s four years at Harvard and the one and a half years he spent training for ministry. Written by Pitt while he was at Harvard, the diary includes a detailed record of what he read and his life at school. It also contains a list of the books he purchased and a short copybook. Knapton’s edition, *The Harvard Diary of Pitt Clarke, 1786-1791*, is published in Volume 59, *Sibley’s Heir* by The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, University Press of Virginia, 1982, 230-329, <https://www.colonialociety.org/node/1225> (accessed June 9, 2024).

⁹⁹ Clarke, *Memorial*, 20-21; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹⁰⁰ Clarke, *Memorial*, 25; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹⁰¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 55.

¹⁰² Clarke, *Memorial*, 25; Clark, *History of Norton*, 190.

¹⁰³ Clarke, *Memorial*, 25; Clark, *History of Norton*, 190.

¹⁰⁴ Pitt Clarke, *The Harvard Diary of Pitt Clarke 1786-1791*, ed. Earnest John Knapton, vol. 59, *Sibley’s Heir*, The Colonial Society of Massachusetts website <https://www.colonialociety.org/node/1242237> (accessed June 9, 2024).

¹⁰⁵ Clarke, *Memorial*, 25; Clark, *History of Norton*, 189.

been temporarily separated from the college.¹⁰⁶ Knapton claims that Pitt took in students on academic or disciplinary leave from Harvard. Harvard school records show Pitt took in 23 such students throughout his lifetime.¹⁰⁷ How did Pitt become qualified to be an ordained preacher and prepare students on probation to return to Harvard? His educational journey seemed to be inspired by his grandfather.

Pitt Clarke remembered his grandfather fondly. According to Pitt, his grandfather named him after his favourite British general William Pitt (1st Earl of Chatham), who had been instrumental in defending the colonists during the French and Indian War.¹⁰⁸ Pitt says his grandfather was also responsible for encouraging his collegiate ambitions. It was his grandfather who planted the seed.¹⁰⁹ In Pitt's own words, his grandfather "flattered me with the idea of going to college."¹¹⁰ But Pitt's arm did not need to be twisted. Pitt retrospectively admitted that regardless of his grandfather's nudging, at an early age he "felt a desire to learn, and was ambitious to excel my classmates."¹¹¹

It is unclear whether Pitt attended dame school. He never discussed it. He also did not discuss writing school in his autobiography (nor did his son when writing his father's biography). It is likely that Pitt attended writing school since proficiency in writing was required to be admitted to grammar school. Pitt attended grammar school, though only for a year.

Though Pitt's educational inclination was confirmed by his grammar school master, Pitt was forced to discontinue his studies during his first year at grammar school due to military threats

¹⁰⁶ Clarke, *Memorial*, 17.

¹⁰⁷ Clarke, *Memorial*, 17; Knapton, "Introduction" in *The Harvard Diary of Pitt Clarke 1786-1791*, ed. Earnest John Knapton, vol. 59, *Sibley's Heir*, The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, website <https://www.colonialsociety.org/node/1242237> (accessed June 9, 2024), 237.

¹⁰⁸ Clarke, *Memorial*, 21; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹⁰⁹ Clarke, *Memorial*, 21; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹⁰ Clarke, *Memorial*, 21; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹¹ Clarke, *Memorial*, 21; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

during the Revolution.¹¹² With military danger on the rise, many New England schools closed indefinitely. Pitt felt there was both no point and no opportunity to continue his studies and thus “went to work on the farm at home, and occasionally abroad for wages.”¹¹³ He did not abandon his scholarly dreams entirely. Pitt records earnestly saving for his education should the war end.¹¹⁴

With schools closed, Pitt eventually enlisted with the militia. When the British captured Rhode Island with its aim to take Massachusetts, Pitt’s contingent was sent to dispel the invaders.¹¹⁵ Just before the battle, the British vacated the island, and Pitt returned home.¹¹⁶ When British troops left Boston, colleges resumed. Pitt set his hopes on returning to school at the age of 17 or 18. However, his scholarly aspirations were dashed by another disaster. In November of 1779, his family’s farm was destroyed in a fire.¹¹⁷ The devastating fire not only destroyed Pitt’s home with all the furniture and fall stores, but also all the finances Pitt had managed to put aside for his studies.¹¹⁸

But all was not lost; from 1784 to 1786, a mature but determined Pitt commenced his studies with Miss Hannah Adams.¹¹⁹ Preparing for the Harvard entrance exam would have been no easy feat. Pitt had garnered one year of experience at grammar school. He would have memorized the rules of declining nouns and conjugating verbs. He also would also have likely begun to read Ezekiel Cheever’s *A Short Introduction to Latin*, or something like it.¹²⁰ But Pitt would have

¹¹² Clarke, *Memorial*, 21; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹³ Clarke, *Memorial*, 21-22; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187; Adams, *Abridgement*, 147-150, 153-154.

¹¹⁴ Clarke, *Memorial*, 22; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹⁵ Clarke, *Memorial*, 22; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹⁶ Clarke, *Memorial*, 22; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹⁷ Clarke, *Memorial*, 22; Clark, *History of Norton*, 187.

¹¹⁸ Clarke, *Memorial*, 22; Clark, *History of Norton*, 188.

¹¹⁹ Clark, *History of Norton*, 188.

¹²⁰ Ezekiel Cheever, *A Short Introduction to the Latin Tongue for the Use of the Lower Forms in the Latin School, Being the Accidence, Abridged and Compiled in That Most Easy and Accurate Method, Wherein the Famous Mr. Ezekiel Cheever Taught, and Which He Found the Most Advantageous, by Seventy Years Experience. To Which Is*

missed out on lessons on nomenclature and accidence and memorizing words and phrases.¹²¹ Pitt would have missed out on constructing and parsing orally and in copybooks.¹²² And, only having had one year before schools closed due to the Revolution, Pitt would have missed out entirely on learning Greek.¹²³ Yet, Pitt studied under Hannah for less than two years when he was accepted into Harvard.

Of this time, Pitt says: “I studied partly at home, and partly with Miss Hannah Adams, who lived nearby, and to whom I recited my lessons. Under her tuition principally, I fitted for college, and was admitted into Cambridge University about a year after I commenced my studies.”¹²⁴ How was he able to cover so much ground he had lost during the revolutionary crises in so little time? Neither Hannah nor Pitt left a record of their study plan (though Pitt recorded a detailed diary of his studies at Harvard). Pitt would likely have taken a similar path to that of Solomon Drowne, for whom we have a record of college preparation.

Solomon Drowne, like Pitt, prepared for Harvard at later age, and likewise in just over a year. Drowne, at age 16, began his classical education under private tutor Charles Thompson in the spring of 1769. He began constructing and parsing from Corderius. Within a month, Drowne was working on Erasmus.¹²⁵ By his second month, he was on to Justinian. Before half a year was completed, Drowne worked through Ovid and was “making Latin for the first time” while filling up his copybook.¹²⁶ Within a month of “making Latin,” Drowne was started in his Greek grammar. He spent the rest of his first year working at his Greek grammar, on Ovid, and at Latin

Added, a Catalogue of Irregular Nouns and Verbs, Disposed Alphabetically, (Newburyport, Mass.: Printed by John Mycall, for E. Battelle, 1785). Also see Middlekauff, “Persistent Tradition,” 58.

¹²¹ Middlekauff, “Persistent Tradition,” 59.

¹²² Middlekauff, “Persistent Tradition,” 60.

¹²³ Middlekauff, “Persistent Tradition,” 61.

¹²⁴ Clarke, *Memorial*, 23; Clark, *History of Norton*, 188.

¹²⁵ Middlekauff, “Persistent Tradition,” 64.

¹²⁶ Middlekauff, “Persistent Tradition,” 64.

composition. In his second year he studied Cicero's *Orations*, two-volumes of Virgil, and the Greek New Testament, which he read through twice. He took his college entrance exams less than half-way through his second year and passed.¹²⁷

Most boys started Harvard by the age of 15 after years at grammar school. Pitt, like Drowne, conducted his studies at a later age. When studying under Hannah, Pitt likely would have followed a course of study similar to that of Drowne, as opposed to the lengthy six- to seven-year traditional method laid out in grammar schools. Nevertheless, Pitt would have followed a rigorous schedule to be a classical student and, one day, a master and tutor himself. His determination and perseverance paid off. On July 22, 1786, Pitt was admitted to Harvard College.¹²⁸ How did Hannah's early education compare with Pitt's? And, how did she become educated and qualified enough to tutor him?

Hannah's Education: A Brief History of Female Education in Colonial America

As with sons, fathers taught their daughters morals. Fathers were expected to be the moral instructors of the household.¹²⁹ Most of a daughter's education, however, occurred in the home, under the supervision of her mother (as already illustrated in Chapter One). Girls could attend dame schools to learn to read. But dame schools were only for a few hours a day and mainly held only in the summer months.¹³⁰ After dame schools, as early as five or six, daughters commenced their apprenticeships as household managers under their mother's watchful eye.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Middlekauff, "Persistent Tradition," 65.

¹²⁸ Clarke, *Memorial*, 23.

¹²⁹ Wadworth, *Well-Ordered*, 8; Erasmus, *Institutio*, 433-434. See also Wilson, "Ye Heart of a Father," 261.

¹³⁰ Vives, *Education*, 59-61. Vives, who dedicated his book on female education to Queen Catherine of Aragon as a strategic guide for the education of her daughter Mary, advocated for the education of young girls as to be a better partner to their husband. He suggested that a girl learn to both read and write as well as be apprenticed by her mother in household management. This guide was the first of its kind and widely read and accepted (1-3). Vives claimed that reading the right kind (not romance novels or those that had themes of war) of books would keep a young lady chaste. He does provide a suggested reading list as well as a banned look list (Vives, *Education*, 65, 74-75, 78). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 24; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 102-103.

¹³¹ Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 8.

In most cases, girls did not attend writing (public) schools. Writing was deemed useful for commerce and clerical work which were “male only” professions.¹³² Only seven writing schools in New England permitted girls. One was in Hannah’s home town of Medfield.¹³³ It was not until 1771 when poor laws extended to include teaching female apprentices to write.¹³⁴ What about grammar schools?

Daughters never attended grammar (English) schools. Upper class ladies did not need to learn Latin since generally their only option for a vocation was to be a household manager as a wife and mother. Thus, there was no need to prepare for college, which as we learned earlier in this chapter, was specifically for vocations in ministry or magistrate, careers barred to the female gender.¹³⁵ If a father wanted his daughter to gain a classical education like his sons, or learn how to write, she would be sent to a private tutor or an adventure school.¹³⁶ Several adventure schools in Boston opened their doors to educate girls.¹³⁷ Some private boarding schools opened their doors to daughters and even specialized in female educational skills.¹³⁸ At these institutions, sometimes called “adventure” or “venture” schools, New England daughters were instructed sometimes in classics, composition, and book-keeping. But these schools for girls mainly focused on “female arts.”¹³⁹ It was likely at one of these private Boston adventure schools where Cotton Mather’s daughter Katy learned physics and medicine (two subjects where a basic

¹³² Schwartz, “Pioneer Intellect,” 4.

¹³³ Schwartz, “Pioneer Intellect,” 50, 215.

¹³⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 24.

¹³⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 24. According to Wyman in “Early Childhood Teachers,” teaching a dame school was not a fulltime vocation, and dame school teachers were unlikely to have been formally trained, but rather were led by their “intuition” (31). The role was more of a side job for widows and young unmarried women, and was more of a childminding role (29-31).

¹³⁶ Monaghan, “Family Literacy in Early 18th-Century Boston: Cotton Mather and His Children,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 26, no.4 (1991): 348.

¹³⁷ Shipton, “Secondary Education,” 659.

¹³⁸ Shipton, “Secondary Education,” 659.

¹³⁹ Shipton, 659; Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, 40.

knowledge of Latin was necessary).¹⁴⁰ These adventure schools for females included Dove's and Benzet's schools in Philadelphia, which opened in the 1750s.¹⁴¹ Private schools which permitted females were usually, though not always, run by females, or by husband and wife teams.¹⁴²

Like grammar school, women were not permitted to attend college. They were not even allowed on campus. According to P. Vine, the dramatic increase of college enrollment in the mid-18th century may be due to a change in emphasis on the social function of the college due to a perceived "improper training in the family."¹⁴³ Society in colonial America became increasingly concerned that sons were spending too much time with their mothers and, as a consequence, becoming too effeminate, or not manly enough.¹⁴⁴ There was a move to remove boys from "indulgent mothers" while at the same time to offer "proper" masculine role models in their male professors.¹⁴⁵ As a result, college campuses banned females. The only exception was a cook.¹⁴⁶ Male professors who worked on campus could not live there once they married (due to the prohibited presence of their wives).¹⁴⁷ Under these circumstances how did Hannah become qualified to tutor Pitt for his Harvard examinations in such a seemingly unsupportive educational environment for females?

Hannah's Early Education

¹⁴⁰ Vives, *Education*, 61, 263. Here, Vives advocates for cooking as a type of medicine. Later, he discusses wives needing to learn essential remedies for everyday household illnesses and emergencies from worms to dislocations, but advises her not to study medicine, instead to get advice from other women, local doctors, and remedy manuals. See also Shipton, "Secondary Education," 659.

¹⁴¹ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 112.

¹⁴² Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 115.

¹⁴³ Phyllis Vine, "The Social Function of Eighteenth-Century Higher Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no.4, (1976): 409.

¹⁴⁴ Vine, "Social Function," 412.

¹⁴⁵ Vine, "Social Function," 412.

¹⁴⁶ Vine, "Social Function," 413.

¹⁴⁷ Edmund S. Morgan, *The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795* (New York: Norton, 1984), 101; Vine, "Social Function," 413.

It is likely, but unclear, that Pitt attended dame school. Did Hannah? Again, it is not clear. In her *Memoir*, Hannah says she was too sick to attend school, but her discussion of her experience at them provides contrary evidence.¹⁴⁸ She claimed the schools which were available to her were not the best. When Hannah was growing up in Medfield, dame schools were only open for a few months in the summer.¹⁴⁹ Teachers, according to Hannah, were inept and unqualified women.¹⁵⁰ Students were only taught reading and sewing.¹⁵¹ Hannah said they only used the Bible and the Psalter (not even the ever-popular *New England Primer*).¹⁵² And, Hannah complained that her teachers, when she had them, failed to correct her stutter, which she called “faulty speech.”¹⁵³

Because he needed to be proficient in penmanship to gain entrance to grammar school, Pitt likely attended the Medfield writing school. Did Hannah attend writing school? She could have. Her town was one of the seven that did allow girls to attend. Since writing schools had male teachers, however, and Hannah spoke only of unqualified female teachers, we can assume that Hannah did not attend writing school.¹⁵⁴ Additional proof of her lack of formal writing education lies in the irony that, despite becoming the first professional American female writer, she lamented the inadequate instruction she received in the art of holding a pen.¹⁵⁵

Pitt had attended grammar school for a year from ages 10 to 11. Did Hannah attend grammar school? As a female, Hannah was prohibited.¹⁵⁶ Women were not permitted to attend college, which was the sole purpose of grammar school.¹⁵⁷ Yet, Hannah is one of the few women in the

¹⁴⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2-3, 52.

¹⁴⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3, 52-53.

¹⁵⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3, 53.

¹⁵¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3.

¹⁵² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3.

¹⁵³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 52. See also Schwartz, “Pioneer Intellect,” 52.

¹⁵⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 52.

¹⁵⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 54. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Morgan, *The Gentle Puritan*, 101.

colonies with a classical education. She was also, therefore, one of the few women who was equipped to teach grammar school level curricula.¹⁵⁸ How did she gain this expertise?

Hannah was proficient in Latin, Greek, and geography. She was, in fact, so competent in her classical studies that she taught Latin and Greek to at least three boys who were college-bound.¹⁵⁹ She went on to publish seven books (with several editions, or iterations, so some scholars argue that number is ten) in subjects which were to become collegiate disciplines (philosophy, theology, and history), even employing a systematic methodology, which she herself designed. If she was barred from grammar school and did not attend adventure school, how was she able to accomplish so much? The answer is through tutors.

Despite the fact that most daughters in Massachusetts were not permitted an education through writing school, and no daughters were allowed to obtain an education through a grammar school or college, there were several alternative approaches for a daughter to obtain an education similar to the education received by sons. Private tutoring was one of these.

Since she did not attend school (and perhaps only briefly dame school), Hannah's earliest education primarily consisted of independent reading in her father's library.¹⁶⁰ Hannah claimed her earliest reading, at least until her 12th year, consisted primarily of novels, histories, biographies, and poetry. Favourites from this era included Milton, Thompson, and Rowe.¹⁶¹

Hannah says "From my predominant taste I was induced to apply to reading, and as my father

¹⁵⁸ Schwartz, "Origins," 215.

¹⁵⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 54-55.

¹⁶⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2, 52-54.

¹⁶¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 4-5, 10. When referring to Rowe here, Hannah is referring to *Mrs. Rowe's Devout exercises of the Heart, in Meditation and Soliloquy, Prayer and Praise*, Boston, 1790 (10). In her *Memoir*, she mentions enjoying as poets Milton, Thomson, and Young (4-5). Though it is clear who Milton is, it is not clear about who Young and Thomson are. We can however speculate that she may be referring to Scottish poet James Thomson and English poet Edward Young.

had a considerable library, I was enabled to gratify my inclination.”¹⁶² Hannah claimed that she “read with avidity a variety of books” and admits “I was passionately fond of novels,” which gave her “false ideas of life.”¹⁶³

Another method that females used to informally augment their education, even to the point of obtaining a classical equivalent, were reading circles, also known as literary circles and social circles. Mary Kelly found that reading circles began to pop up as early as the mid-1760s.¹⁶⁴ The female reading circle Hannah led was one of the first, if not *the* first in colonial New England.¹⁶⁵ These informal groups gathered together to read, discuss, create, and critique poetry, drama, and prose.¹⁶⁶ These two methods would have been taught her literary proficiency in lieu of dame and writing schools.

The main avenue which equipped Hannah with a classical education that enabled her to tutor several Harvard-bound students was her own private tutors. From the time Hannah was 11 or 12 until the age of 20, Hannah worked with a number of unnamed Harvard tutors. These tutors enabled Hannah to experience at least the equivalent education to the intensive seven-year grammar school program.

Just before the Revolution, in the same era when Thomas lost his shop and had been cheated by his farm manager, there was a want of properly trained Latin tutors and grammar masters to prepare boys for college.¹⁶⁷ Thomas was proficient in classical education. He had been himself ready and prepared for Harvard before being recalled by his father to run the family farm.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 4, 10.

¹⁶³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 4.

¹⁶⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7, 60. See also Kelly, “‘A More Glorious Revolution’: Women’s Antebellum Reading Circles and the Pursuit of Public Influence,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no.1, (2008): 164.

¹⁶⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7, 60. See also Kelly, “Glorious Revolution,” 164-165.

¹⁶⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 7, 60.

¹⁶⁷ Schwartz, “Pioneer Intellect,” 53.

¹⁶⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 17.

Due to his precarious pecuniary situation, Thomas Adams arguably opened and operated a private boarding school, not in Boston, but in Medfield.¹⁶⁹ Both Hannah and Lee tell us that Hannah's father, Thomas, was forced to take in student boarders when his shop failed in 1768. Schmidt tells us these boarders were from Harvard. It was too far to walk daily, so either these Harvard boarders were students preparing for Harvard, or students who were temporarily separated from Harvard due to struggling with academic, financial, or disciplinary reasons.¹⁷⁰

Given the lack of properly trained tutors and the advertisements in the Boston newspapers, it is not a stretch to believe that the students were not just being boarded at the Adams homestead, but were also being tutored by Thomas in preparation for college entrance and re-entrance exams. Hannah, who called her tutors "some gentlemen who boarded at my father's" had this to say of her time with the said gentlemen: they "offered to instruct me in these branches of learning gratis, and I pursued these studies with indescribable pleasure and avidity. I still however, sensible felt the want of a more systematic education."¹⁷¹ Even though as a female Hannah was not permitted to attend grammar school like Pitt, she actually received grammar school level training in Latin and Greek through her tutors who boarded with her father.

In sum, Hannah's and Pitt's childhood educational experiences were somewhat similar. It is hard to tell whether or not they went to dame school or writing school, but they could both read and write. Though Hannah did not go to grammar school because girls were prohibited, Pitt only spent one year at grammar school. Subsequently, both Hannah and Pitt obtained a grammar level education, learning Greek and Latin through private tutors. How do their later studies compare?

Colonial Collegiate Life

¹⁶⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8-9, 54-55; Knapton, "Introduction," 235.

¹⁷⁰ Knapton, "Introduction," 236. In the introduction to Pitt's Harvard diary, Knapton explains how Harvard students were often boarded out when on probation.

¹⁷¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8-9, 54-55.

Pitt at Harvard

Pitt was accepted to Harvard just two years after Hannah had published her first book in 1786. By the time Pitt was attending college, Harvard had begun to have separate teachers specializing in subjects like math, natural philosophy, divinity, and Hebrew.¹⁷² The medical school was in its infancy. French had been added to the curricula.¹⁷³

In Pitt's first freshman year at Harvard, learning centred around recitation. Pitt recalls reciting from Homer's *Iliad*, Xenophon, Horace, and Caesar's *Commentaries*, as well as the New Testament. On Fridays and Saturdays, Pitt studied elocution and English grammar. His first year was spent mainly working on Greek, Latin, geography, and logic. Near the end of the term Pitt began studying Hebrew.¹⁷⁴

Pitt's second or sophomore year commenced August 15, 1787. Again, Pitt was found busy reciting, translating, and giving syllogisms. Pitt said he recited from Sallust, Horace, Xenophon, Homer, for the first time Euclid's *Elements*.¹⁷⁵ In his second year, Pitt continued working on Hebrew and English grammar and spent much of his time on logic, geography, arithmetic, cyphering, and astronomy.¹⁷⁶ He also began French. On top of his studies, Pitt also records taking an active role in a singing club.¹⁷⁷ He attended several lectures in science and astronomy, including one on the sun.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 239.

¹⁷³ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 239-240.

¹⁷⁴ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 245.

¹⁷⁵ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 246-251.

¹⁷⁶ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 264.

¹⁷⁷ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 255.

¹⁷⁸ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 249.

In his leisure time, Pitt visited Hannah's house several times.¹⁷⁹ He hunted squirrels with friends.¹⁸⁰ He attended a three-hour wrestling competition. He went fishing.¹⁸¹ During this busy second year, Pitt contracted smallpox and was hospitalized. He also taught at a school in Medfield, likely for five weeks during winter break.¹⁸²

Pitt's junior or third year began on July 16, 1788. The classical works he records studying were Xenophon, Livy, Horace, Cicero, Homer, the New Testament, Terence, Sallust, and Euclid.¹⁸³ This year was heavy on math, where he focused on arithmetic, cyphering, algebra, and geometry.¹⁸⁴ He attended a number of science lectures.¹⁸⁵ Pitt attended more wrestling matches (though it is unclear whether or not he took part). Again, he hunted squirrels. This year he also went to a dance.¹⁸⁶ In his third year, Pitt taught at Medfield again.¹⁸⁷ He also frequently visited the homes of Thomas and Hannah Adams and a Reverend Thomas Prentiss.

Pitt's fourth and final year at Harvard was very math and science driven (with a sprinkle of theology/moral philosophy).¹⁸⁸ He studied chemistry and trigonometry for the first time.¹⁸⁹ He attended several science lectures, which included topics like hydraulics and gravity. He records spending lots of time reading and reciting from William Enfield.¹⁹⁰ In his fourth year, rather than

¹⁷⁹ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 255, 268, 270.

¹⁸⁰ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 253.

¹⁸¹ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 248.

¹⁸² Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 258, 267-268.

¹⁸³ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 274-275, 278, 281, 283.

¹⁸⁴ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 274, 281, 282.

¹⁸⁵ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 274, 281-283.

¹⁸⁶ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 278.

¹⁸⁷ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 280.

¹⁸⁸ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 293.

¹⁸⁹ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 296.

¹⁹⁰ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 292.

keep a school at Medfield, he kept a school at Lexington.¹⁹¹ Again, his diary specifically records a visit with Hannah.¹⁹²

Hannah's Harvard Tutors

Though Hannah did not attend Harvard like Pitt, under the tutors who resided at her father's home, she at the very least experienced an education equivalent to the first two years of college. Schwartz says Hannah's "education mirrored her male contemporaries far more than her female contemporaries."¹⁹³ Hannah tells us these boarders trained her in Latin, Greek, rhetoric, geography, and logic. From these Harvard "tutors," Hannah was not just provided with the classical equivalent to grammar school but was also versed in the sophomore and junior college curricula of the *trivium*.¹⁹⁴ Further, we know from her *Memoir* that, like college students, Hannah had already spent plenty of time studying history.¹⁹⁵ However, unlike Pitt and other Harvard students, Hannah does not mention any exposure to the *quadrium* subjects studied by male college students in their final two years. There is no record of her learning astronomy, math, or music.

Mentorship with Yale President Ezra Stiles

Though Hannah did not seem to get beyond a junior (or year two) level college education through her tutors, she did have the advantage afforded to senior college students: the direct mentorship of the college president.¹⁹⁶ In Hannah's case, this was the mentorship of Yale's president Ezra Stiles. According to Morgan, Stiles was "Yale's third and probably her most

¹⁹¹ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 299-300.

¹⁹² Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 308.

¹⁹³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8-9, 54-55. See also Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 215.

¹⁹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8-9, 54-55; Adams, "Shaw Account," 202.

¹⁹⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 8, 10.

¹⁹⁶ Morgan, "Ezra Stiles," 383, 385.

learned president.”¹⁹⁷ Stiles helped found Baptist Rhode Island College.¹⁹⁸ He was librarian for Newport Library, as well as Minister of the Second Congregational Church at Newport.¹⁹⁹ Stiles was elected president of Yale in 1777 and also served as the professor of ecclesiastical history.²⁰⁰

Stiles, who shared a publisher (Edes) with Hannah, did not commence his mentorship of Hannah until after she published her first book.²⁰¹ Stiles, who had begun writing an American history of his own in the 1760s and later narrowed the scope to an American ecclesiastical history, sent portions of his manuscript to Hannah, likely in response to reading her world religion dictionary. From there, the two commenced corresponding.²⁰² Hannah gladly included Stiles’s manuscripts in the second edition of her world religion *compendium*, which was renamed *A View of All Religions* (1799). Though Stiles’s history project was never published, portions of it appear in at least three of Hannah’s publications: *View of All Religions*, *Summary History*, and *Abridgement History*.²⁰³

Hannah was not the first or only female scholar with whom Stiles had cultivated an educational relationship. According to Cora E. Lutz, Stiles had a special relationship with “celebrated English historian” Catherine Macaulay (1731-91).²⁰⁴ Stiles read Macaulay’s *History of England* in March of 1772, after which the two corresponded with one another for almost two

¹⁹⁷ Morgan, “Ezra Stiles,” 251.

¹⁹⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

¹⁹⁹ Lutz, “Ezra Stiles and the Educations of Women,” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 71, no.1/2, (1996): 51; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

²⁰⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

²⁰¹ Adams, *Alphabetical Compendium*, “Appendix,” lviii. Here Hannah cites Stiles’s *Christian Union* as a source.

²⁰² Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, June 12, 1794, Adams Papers, NEHGS. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 70-71.

²⁰³ Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, April 7, 1795, Adams Papers, NEHGS; Adams, *Summary History*, 49, 111, 158, 179, 183, 185-186. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

²⁰⁴ Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles D.D., LL.D. I*, Franklin Dexter, ed. (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1901), 293, 411, 501. See also Lutz, “Ezra Stiles,” 51.

decades until her death in 1791.²⁰⁵ Stiles had read and seemingly been inspired by Macaulay's publication on female education.²⁰⁶ Perhaps the work had encouraged him to work with Hannah. Macaulay and Hannah were not the only female scholars with whom Stiles was connected. Stiles also took an interest in scholar Lucinda Foote.

Foote was a daughter of a Yale man who had been a lifelong friend of Stiles. In December of 1783 (the year before Hannah published her first book), Stiles allowed Foote to perform the entrance exam to Yale.²⁰⁷ Foote was examined in Greek and Latin by Stiles in four books, which included Aeneid, John's Gospel in Greek, as well as Virgil and Tully. She was 12. Foote was consequently awarded by Stiles with a diploma which found her "fitted to be admitted to the freshman class." Foote, however, was not admitted to Yale due to "Sexus ratione." Her certificate is still on display at the Yale archives.²⁰⁸

When Hannah began to write an American history of her own, she maintained a relationship with Stiles for a season, mainly through correspondence. Stiles mailed copies of sermons and his Yale lectures to Hannah, as well as his manuscript chronicle of Yale history.²⁰⁹ Stiles even visited Hannah at her family farm in the fall of 1793. Recalling this visit in his prolific diary,

²⁰⁵ Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles D.D., LL.D. III*, Franklin Dexter, ed (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1901), 503; Stiles, *Literary Diary I*, 219, 293, 411, 501. See also Lutz, "Ezra Stiles," 52.

²⁰⁶ Stiles, *Literary Diary III*, 504. See also Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay, *Letters on Education; With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (London, England: C. Dilly, 1790). See also Lutz, "Ezra Stiles," 52.

²⁰⁷ Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles D.D., LL.D. II*, Franklin Dexter, ed. (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1901), 102-103. Lutz, "Ezra Stiles," 54. In a footnote Lutz explains that an article written for *Yale Alumni Magazine* 38 (1975): 16-18 suggests "but does not substantiate" that Stile privately tutored Foote in the Yale curricula, thus she would have obtained the same educations, as I suggest about Hannah.

²⁰⁸ Stiles, *Literary Diary II*, 103. See also Lutz, "Ezra Stiles," 54.

²⁰⁹ Ezra Stiles, *Extracts from Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D., 1755-1794*, Franklin Dexter, ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1916), 418; Stiles, *Literary Diary III*, 507; Adams, *Summary History*, 49, 111, 158, 179, 183, 185-186; Adams, *Abridgment*, 98. In Hannah's *Summary History* and *Abridgment* textbook, she cites Stile's sermons and manuscripts that he shared with her. In *Summary History*, she affectionately refers to him in her citations as "the late President Stiles." See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

Stiles called Hannah both “an Authoress” and a historian, and claimed that she had read more than most individuals her age.²¹⁰

In an era when women were forbidden to step foot on the Harvard campus, he advised Hannah to use Harvard’s library for her historical research (he may have been joking, but the record of his intention is unclear).²¹¹ Stiles also encouraged Hannah to narrow her focus. He suggested that instead of writing for an adult audience, she create an American history textbook for youth. At the time of the recommendation Stiles had recently begun using Jedidiah Morse’s American geography textbook at his university. It is therefore likely that Stiles had planned to similarly use Hannah’s history textbook at Yale.²¹² If that were indeed the case, Hannah, as a woman, would have been barred from teaching at a college, attending one, or even receiving a degree. However, had she followed Stiles’s sage advice, she could essentially have taught college students through her history textbook!

By the spring of 1785, Hannah quickly completed the first 18 chapters of her history. She sent them to Stiles for his feedback.²¹³ Stiles, however, sadly declined to weigh in. This refusal was likely because he was ill; he died a month later. Before he died, Stiles encouraged Hannah to seek out the mentorship of another textbook writer: Jedidiah Morse. Instead, Jeremy Belknap stepped in to mentor Hannah in the gap left by the deceased Stiles. Stiles was, nevertheless, instrumental in encouraging Hannah “to enter an academic arena in which no female pen in

²¹⁰ Stiles, *Extracts*, 418; Stiles, *Literary Diary III*, 507; Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, June 12, 1794, Adams Papers, NEHGS. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

²¹¹ Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, June 12, 1794, Adams Papers, NEHGS. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

²¹² Adams, “Shaw Account” 195. In her account to Shaw she claims “In 1793 I engaged in writing the Summary History of New England, which was originally intended for the use of schools.” She is, however, unclear about which schools (195); Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, June 12, 1794, Adams Papers, NEHGS. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

²¹³ Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, April 7, 1795, Adams Papers, NEHGS. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71-72.

America had published in the form and language of the discipline,” which was the field of history.²¹⁴

Jeremy Belknap as Advisor

When Hannah lost the mentorship of Ezra Stiles, she gained the confidence of another New England intellectual: Jeremy Belknap. Belknap was, according to Schmidt, “the best regional historian in her time.”²¹⁵ He was not only the author of the *History of New Hampshire*, he was also a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and according to George B. Kirsch, one of New England’s most prominent cultural leaders during the 18th century.²¹⁶

Born 1744, Belknap was only eight years older than Hannah. Because they were close in age, they treated one another as contemporaries. Belknap started Harvard in 1758 and was ordained Congregational clergyman in 1767 Dover.²¹⁷ When his pastoral salary shrank (like Pitt’s) in the 1770s due to inflation caused by the Revolution, he began writing history, likely to supplement his income. Belknap completed his first volume of three in the early 1780s, but like Hannah, had issues with publishing.²¹⁸ After the passing of Stiles, Belknap proved instrumental in helping Hannah with her *Summary History* and subsequent abridged textbook.²¹⁹

In 1784, Hannah used Belknap’s newly released *History of New Hampshire* in the first edition of her *Alphabetical Compendium*.²²⁰ This was likely the first connection between the

²¹⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 74.

²¹⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 72.

²¹⁶ Kirsch, “Jeremy Belknap: Man of Letters in the Young Republic,” *The New England Quarterly* 54, no.1, (1981): 33, 62.

²¹⁷ Jeremy Belknap, *The Life of Jeremy Belknap, D.D. the historian of New Hampshire: with selections from his correspondence and other writings*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1847), 10-11; Kirsch, “Jeremy Belknap,” 33-34.

²¹⁸ Belknap, *The Life*, 31-32. Also see Kirsch, “Jeremy Belknap,” 35.

²¹⁹ Belknap, *The Life*, 61-62, 126-128. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 68.

²²⁰ Jeremy Belknap, *History of New Hampshire* (Philadelphia, 1784).

pair.²²¹ *Alphabetical Compendium* was not the only project where the two crossed paths. Where Stiles was unwilling or unable to comment on her manuscript of *Summary History*, Belknap was enthusiastic to weigh in on her project.²²² Belknap not only advised Hannah on her American history project, as its foremost founder, he also opened the door to the Massachusetts Historical Society collection for her research, even though as a woman she was not permitted membership to the society, let alone access to the collection.²²³

Hannah not only used the records from the Massachusetts Historical Society in her research, she also employed copious numbers of excerpts from Belknap's *History of New Hampshire* in the body of her *Summary History*. In fact, her first two volumes, from the "Plymouth settlement" to the *French Indian Wars*, large 20-40-page swaths were essentially lifted word-for-word from Belknap's work.²²⁴ Hannah quoted from Belknap's history upwards of 50 times.²²⁵ Despite being a close advisor and champion of her education, in 1798, Belknap, like Stiles, passed away suddenly before he could see his influence on Hannah's work come to fruition. Belknap's unexpected passing occurred just one year shy of the printing of Hannah's *Summary History*.²²⁶ Rather than resisting her education or treating her as a pariah, Belknap, like Stiles, encouraged, advised, and opened doors for Hannah. But before Belknap and Stiles mentored and encouraged Hannah's educational appetite and aptitude, Reverend Joseph Prentiss acted as a theological mentor to her. Long before the Revolution ended, which caused educational winds to change for

²²¹ Adams, *Alphabetical Compendium*, "Appendix," lvii; Adams, *Summary History*, 27-68, 193-216. See also Kirsch, "Jeremy Belknap: Man of Letters in the Young Republic," *The New England Quarterly* 54, no.1 (1981): 35.

²²² Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 104.

²²³ Belknap, *The Life*, 184-187. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 72.

²²⁴ Adams, *Summary History*, 27-68, 193-216. Belknap also was heavily cited in her later Abridgement 8, 25, 28-29, 43-46, 53, 79, 87, 90-95, 100, 108, 110, 111, 118, 120-129. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 102-103.

²²⁵ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 102.

²²⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 104.

women, Prentiss oversaw Hannah's theological training. He also oversaw the theological training of her former student, Pitt.

Theological Training

Pitt graduated from Harvard on July 21, 1789.²²⁷ In line with the traditional trajectory of professional training for the ministry, Pitt kept a school for almost two years at Cambridge, even while he performed his preparatory theological reading.²²⁸ During his two years of teaching school, in his diary, Pitt records reading just over 20 books.²²⁹ Pitt also found some leisure time to study sermons and attend lectures.²³⁰ Pitt records episodes of sledding with college chums and visits with Hannah and her father during his preparation for the ministry.

Though Pitt was well on the road to becoming a minister, he claimed that during this professional apprenticeship period, he purchased a bible and psalm book, it seems for the first time! He was also offered membership to a church, where he partook of communion, also likely for the first time. On April 17, 1792, Pitt was tested by the Cambridge Association of Ministers and was approved for preaching. However, before accepting a placement, Pitt practiced preaching for a year throughout New England. He was ordained in Norton on July 3, 1793.²³¹ Neither his diary nor his biographies reveal who oversaw Pitt's apprenticeship. He likely apprenticed with someone he and Hannah held in common: Reverend Thomas Prentiss. Prentiss

²²⁷ Clarke, *Memorial*, 23; Clark, *History of Norton*, 188.

²²⁸ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 309; Clarke's "Autobiography" in Clark, *History of Norton*, 188.

²²⁹ Pitt read the *History of Charles 5th*, Clarke's *Demonstration*, Leachman's *On Prayers*, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiment*, Roley's *The History of Fredrick Roi* (in French), Abbadie, Dodridge's *Lectures and Memoirs*, Pike's *Arithmetic*, Hartley's *Observation of Man*, Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, and also Clarke's *Sermons*, Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Oswald's *Appeal to Common Sense*, *Religion Essential to Man*, Baxter's *History* and *On the Soul*, Fordyce's *Art of Preaching*, Horrewood's *Introduction to the New Testament*, Grove's *Sermons*, Mason's *Student & Pastor*, Orrery's *Life of Swift*, Jenyng's *Works*, and an unknown text by Rousseau (Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 310; 311; 314; 316; 317; 321; 322; 324; 328; 329; 330; 331; 344; 345; 346).

²³⁰ Pitt says he attended lectures on comets, natural philosophy, and one by historian Thomas Barclay.

²³¹ Clarke, *Memorial*, 23-24; Clark, *History of Norton*, 188-189. This lack of owning his own bible may seem unusual because Pitt came from a Congregational household, where the emphasis of bible reading, as demonstrated in the last chapter, was central. It may, however, be evidence of the changing tides in religious practice in New England and the rise of secular religion. It may also just be connected to the price of books.

performed Pitt's ordination sermon. Unlike Hannah, Prentiss is not mentioned in Pitt's autobiography. But he is mentioned several times in Pitt's Harvard diary.

Thomas Prentiss

For more than 40 years, Reverend Thomas Prentiss was the Congregational pastor for Hannah's and Pitt's hometown of Medfield. Prentiss had graduated Harvard three decades before Pitt in 1766. Prentiss trained first as a doctor and later for the ministry under his father Reverend Joshua Prentiss of Holliston, until he was ordained in Medfield on October 31, 1770 at the youthful age of 23.²³² Prentiss also served a short stint in the Revolution as a chaplain, possibly with Pitt's unit that went to Rhode Island. Perhaps it was there that the two struck a friendship. According to Knapton, Pitt was indebted to the guidance of Prentiss, who he visited regularly during his four years at Harvard.²³³

In his diary, Pitt records at least 30 visits he made to Prentiss during his four years at Harvard.²³⁴ During these visits Pitt often spent afternoons and even several nights at Prentiss's home in Medfield. Pitt recorded meeting Prentiss for tea and dinner, though a few interactions recorded in the diary were Pitt attending sermons delivered by Prentiss. During Pitt's year and a half of ministry training at Cambridge (while teaching school, and at times still boarding at Harvard), that number dropped significantly to two, which included a dinner and a sermon.²³⁵

Despite the significant diminishment of the pair's interactions, Prentiss preached Pitt's ordination sermon.²³⁶ Also present were Reverend Jacob Cushing of Waltham, who "gave the charge," Reverend Roland Green of Mansfield, who "gave the right hand of fellowship,"

²³² Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 157; Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 235. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 268.

²³³ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 235.

²³⁴ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 253-54, 263, 271, 278-81, 284, 291-94, 308-09.

²³⁵ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 317, 325.

²³⁶ Clarke, *Harvard Diary*, 235.

Reverend Jason Haven of Dedham, who offered the opening prayer, Reverend Jonas Clark of Lexington who gave Pitt's ordination prayer, and Reverend Abiel Holmes of Cambridge, who offered the closing prayer.²³⁷ The only minister of these mentioned in Pitt's diary is Prentiss. Pitt could have been training under the minister in Cambridge (Reverend Holmes), since that is where he was living and teaching school. However, Holmes is not mentioned in Pitt's diary. Pitt could also have been apprenticed under the president of Harvard since he boarded on campus several times during his "training" period, and he was often on campus as well as interacting with tutors and students. But there is no mention of the Harvard president in his ordination ceremony or diary. There is little doubt that Prentiss was a major mentor in Pitt's life, and his role in both Pitt's education and vocation was instrumental. Prentiss's role in Hannah's life was equally as vital.

Hannah & Prentiss

Though Hannah did not obtain a liberal arts degree from a college, she did, like Pitt, follow a similar modified pathway taken by theologians on their road to ordination. First, where Pitt taught a grammar school to prepare for his ministry vocation, like Joseph S. Buckminster, Hannah tutored instead. Around the age of twenty, Hannah commenced tutoring for several years many Harvard-bound students under Prentiss.²³⁸

As with Pitt, under the guidance of Prentiss, Hannah carried out several years of extensive theological reading. Pitt records reading just 24 books during his theological training. His combined reading over the course of his time at Harvard and his theological training culminated

²³⁷ Clark, *History of Norton*, 175; Clarke, *Memorial*, 14. Holmes later wrote the *Life of Ezra Stiles*, and *American Annals; or a Chronological History of America from its Discovery in 1492 to 1806* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard, 1805), for which Hannah's *Summary History* was a main source. See Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 72.

²³⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 26. Though according to her *Memoir*, Hannah claims that she was too ill to teach in a school, according to Lee, Hannah did briefly take a job at a school (unlike Pitt, this was likely a dame school- women could not teach in grammar schools), but it proved too taxing for her. See Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 70-71.

in the total of 65 books. Hannah, on the other hand, in the writing of her theological text *Alphabetical Compendium*, records reading over 150 books during the course of her research, most being theological.²³⁹ That is more than double Pitt's reading list!

Where Pitt practiced preaching for a year at various pulpits, though her extensive reading under Prentiss would never lead to her ordination or allow her to take a pulpit, let alone practice in one, Hannah's readings were coalesced in a theological reference work that would one day be a source which was employed in not one, but in many pulpits, across several denominations throughout New England. Ministers owned Hannah's religious dictionary, and, therefore, regardless of whether or not Hannah preached or practiced in pulpits, pulpits were nevertheless influenced by her theological handiwork.²⁴⁰

During ordination, Pitt was provided a public act of endorsement by various preachers, including Prentiss, through the tradition of being given "the hand of brotherhood." Though Hannah would never have this experience as a woman, her world religion dictionary was similarly endorsed by Prentiss who penned her preface. Prentiss directly addressed Hannah's readers in the beginning of her compendium on September 2, 1784:

To THE Readers.

²³⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 38.

²⁴⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 51-53. Ministers who owned Hannah's theological work hailed from varying denominations and theological leanings. Unitarian leaders included, but were not limited to Reverend James Freeman, who helped her publish and find subscribers, Rev. William Bentley of Salem, Rev. Thaddeus Mason Harris of Dorchester, and Rev. Henry Ware of Hingham. Episcopalian ministers included John Gardiner, who later became the rector of Boston's Trinity Church and the first Episcopal Bishop to Massachusetts, Edward Bass. Hannah's compendium was found in the libraries of Baptists Pastors like James Manning who also was the first president of Rhode Island College, Jonathan Maxcy who was its second president, and Samuel Stillman, minister of First Baptist Church of Boston. Methodists circuit rider Jesse Lee, who became known as "the apostle of the Methodism to New England," owned a copy of Hannah's dictionary, as did Congregationalists Reverends like Nathaniel Fischer (Salem), Samuel Parker (Trinity Church Boston), William Montague (Christ's Church Boston), Enos Hitchcock (Providence), Samuel Nott (Malden), Samuel West (Dartmouth), Samuel Hopkins (Newbury), and Samuel Spring (Newburyport). Rev. Jeremy Belknap and Rev. Jedidiah Morse also owned copies (Morse purchased more than one) of Hannah's theological dictionary. Her student and friend, Pitt, who was also a reverend, also owned one.

It will be easily perceived, that the compiler of the following work has, with great labour and pains, ransacked the treasures of ecclesiastical history, ancient and modern, to bring into view what is here presented to the public.

She claims no other merit than that of having honestly and impartially collected the sense of the different sects, as it is given by the authors to whom she refers: nor was it a vain ambition of appearing as an author, that put her upon writing her own satisfaction and amusement being the only object; Having yielded however to its publication, at the desire of several judicious friends, she has also done violence to her own inclination, by prefixing her name.

The world has been, absurdly accustomed to entertain but a moderate opinion of female abilities, and to ascribe their pretended productions to the craft and policy of designing men; either to excite admiration or screen their weakness from censure: whereas unbiased reason must allow, if an invidious comparison between the sexes is in any respect justifiable, it cannot be grounded upon a defect of natural ability, but upon the different, and perhaps faulty mode of female education for under similar culture, and with equal advantages, it is far from being certain that the female mind would not admit a measure of improvement, that would at least equal, and perhaps in many instances eclipse, the boasted glory of the other sex...²⁴¹

Here, Prentiss not only endorsed Hannah's book, but also her theological education. Further he also seemed to endorse education for other females, which like Hannah's might come to rival or even outshine that of males. Like her Yale president mentor Ezra Stiles, Prentiss also later in the preface seemed to fancy Hannah as an American Catherine Macaulay. But Clarke and the Harvard tutors who boarded at Hannah's fathers were not the only young male scholars from Harvard who became a significant part of Hannah's male matrix of support. It would be remiss not to consider other young male scholars who were significant in Hannah's career and broader life like Joseph S. Buckminster and William S. Shaw, who like Stiles and Belknap, became deeply committed to the successful promotion and publication of Hannah's history project(s).

Reverend Joseph Buckminster

²⁴¹ Thomas Prentiss, "To The Readers," in Hannah Adams's *Alphabetical Compendium*, 1784, i-ii.

Even more affectionately than Hannah spoke about her enduring lifelong friendship with Harvard graduate Reverend Pitt Clarke, Hannah gushed about her friendship with Harvard graduate and Unitarian prodigy Reverend Joseph S. Buckminster. Born the year after the American Revolution had come to a close, and the same year (1784) Hannah published her first book, Joseph S. Buckminster, like Freeman, was a major player in the formation of the early Unitarian church as a denomination in the United States.²⁴² Buckminster entered Harvard as the “youngest and smallest in his class.” His father, who had attended Yale and mentored, according to Buell, both Noah Webster and Joel Barlow, had already held his son back a year.²⁴³

In 1800, Buckminster matriculated, according to his sister, “standing in the first rank.”²⁴⁴ He was only 16. It was the year he met Hannah.²⁴⁵ By 1803, he had earned his MA, also from Harvard.²⁴⁶ Not long after, Buckminster was offered a pulpit at the prestigious, and already very liberal, Brattle Street Church in Boston.²⁴⁷ Buckminster was an instant success, drawing crowds and immediately becoming earmarked in Boston as a “celebrated minister.” His popularity behind the pulpit launched his acceptance amongst the inner echelon of the Boston liberal elite.²⁴⁸ Buckminster was not just a popular preacher for an elite Congregational chapel; he was

²⁴² Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 68. See also Lawrence Buell, “Joseph Stevens Buckminster: The Making of. New England Saint,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 10, no.1, (1979): 1. American religion historian Perry Miller even goes as far as to credit Joseph with the foundation of another “American Original” religious movement: Transcendentalism. Buell argues that Buckminster, like Hannah, has been neglected by scholars, religious and historical. Buckminster likely more so. The last biography that was written on this purported paragon of Universalism in Boston was in 1849, by his sister. The only published article specifically on Buckminster was Buell’s, published in 1979. Buell, “Joseph Stevens Buckminster,” 3.

²⁴³ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 81, 83. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 145.

²⁴⁴ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 104.

²⁴⁵ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 201.

²⁴⁶ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 101. See also Buell, “Joseph Stevens Buckminster,” 3-4.

²⁴⁷ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 186-187, 190, 192. See also Buell, “Joseph Stevens Buckminster,” 5; Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 146.

²⁴⁸ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 298; Buell, “Joseph Stevens Buckminster,” 4.

also an active member of the Anthology Society, a founding member of the Boston Athenaeum, a member of the Massachusetts Bible Society, and a member of the Boston School Committee.²⁴⁹

Buckminster's allure in the pulpit, not to mention in the social circles of the Boston elite, was short-lived. Just after he graduated from Harvard he became gravely ill. Within just two years of his Boston debut, Buckminster, on doctor's orders, after suffering a relapse, he was sent by his church to Europe to convalesce. He remained in Europe from 1806 to 1807.²⁵⁰ Before he departed, like his mentor James Freeman who had edited Hannah's religious dictionary, Buckminster edited and advised Hannah on her schoolbook *Abridgment History of New England*.²⁵¹ As early as 1804, while he was busily preparing for his ordination, Buckminster was editing the leaves of Hannah's history schoolbook, the same schoolbook for youth that had been inspired and influenced by Ezra Stiles, *An Abridgement of the History of New England*.²⁵²

Several years later, after the editing of the second edition of her schoolbook had been completed, again by Buckminster, the pair found a new project in *The History of the Jews*. It was on this project that they spent endless hours quietly alone, together.²⁵³ Of this time, in her *Memoir*, Hannah recalls:

Mr. Buckminster was so kind as to give me the use of his large and valuable library, which was of great advantage to me in compiling my *History of the Jews*. In my efforts to complete the work, I was encouraged and animated by his participating in the interest I felt in this extraordinary people. Though entering into the details of the sufferings of the persecuted Jewish Nation, yet the enthusiasm Mr. Buckminster inspired, and the pleasure of conversing with him upon a subject with which he was intimately acquainted, rendered the time I was writing my History one of the happiest periods of my life.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 75; Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 393-413. See also Buell, "Joseph Stevens Buckminster," 4.

²⁵⁰ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 195, 198-201, 256-296 (the entire chapter is devoted to his trip). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 147.

²⁵¹ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 210. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 146, 162.

²⁵² Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 210. Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 146, 162.

²⁵³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 38-39; Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 210, 211.

²⁵⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 38.

In similar suit, Hannah's biographer Lee says of this time:

Mr. Buckminster assisted Miss Adams's researches, and procured information for her, relative to the Jews. He took a warm interest in the oppressed people, and often prayed for the, during communion service, in the same language in which Jesus had prayed for them. 'Father forgive them! For they know not what they do.' For about two years after the removal of Miss Adams to Boston, she enjoyed this intercourse, visiting his study with the utmost freedom.²⁵⁵

Even Buckminster's sister recalls the pair working together: "She was so familiar and so quiet, that though they pursued their studies many days and weeks together, they never disturbed or interrupted each other."²⁵⁶ It is little wonder. Buckminster's impressive library was part of his inheritance from his maternal grandfather who had been a president-elect at Harvard. In addition to his grandfather's collection which he had inherited, Buckminster enthusiastically enhanced his collection during his convalescence in Europe, and according to Schmidt, at the time Hannah was freely using it, Buckminster, in what several have deemed a fever of bibliomania, had amassed over 3,000 works. This library, which Hannah was so eagerly engrossed in, and which Buckminster had allowed her open and free access to anytime she desired, was the second largest library in all New England.²⁵⁷

Though the *History of the Jews* that the pair worked on was a massive two-volume work, according to Schmidt, it was not well received in America. It was, however, welcomed with open arms in England, where evangelizing the Jewish diaspora had become popular amongst missionary societies.²⁵⁸ In fact, *The London Evangelical Magazine* called Hannah's *History of the Jews* "the most valuable of her works."²⁵⁹ The work was so well received that it was later

²⁵⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 77.

²⁵⁶ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 210.

²⁵⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 147; Buell, "Joseph Stevens Buckminster," 9.

²⁵⁸ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 251.

²⁵⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 252.

“borrowed” and abridged without crediting Hannah by Thomas Brown in 1825, who republished it in his own name and title: *History of the Destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem, and the Ruin and Destruction of the Jewish Nation*.²⁶⁰ The book, which took half a decade to write with Buckminster’s inspiration and encouragement, not to mention, mainly within the walls of his library, was so successful that it was translated into German in 1819. It was the only one of Hannah’s works to be translated.²⁶¹ Hannah said she could not have written the work, which took more than half a decade to complete, without Buckminster. It was at this time that he convinced her to move closer to him, from Dedham, where she was boarding, to Boston.²⁶² Perhaps more significantly, it was also then that Buckminster arranged for Hannah to be provided for financially for the rest of her life.²⁶³

The friendship was reciprocal. There was as much space and attention devoted to her in his *Memoir* as she had devoted to him in hers.²⁶⁴ But like Stiles and Belknap, Buckminster would not live to see the successful fruits of their labours. Once again, suddenly, when Hannah was about to publish their *History of the Jews* project, he was gone. It was 1812. America was back at war with Britain. Her *Memoir* does not comment on the battle for which so much historical ink has been spilled. Instead, the year was devoted to her greatest loss: the loss of his life. And though he was often depicted as one of the rising stars and leading men amongst the

²⁶⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 252.

²⁶¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 252. The title of the German translation of the book was *Die Geschichte der Juden von der Zerstoerung Jerusalems und bis auf die gegenwartigen Zeiten*.

²⁶² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 75; Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 211.

²⁶³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 75; Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 210.

²⁶⁴ Buckminster Lee, *Memoirs*, 210-214.

Boston elite at the time, she claimed that no one grieved his loss more than her.²⁶⁵ His close friend and colleague, William Ellery Channing, agreed with her.²⁶⁶

She was so depressed and distraught over his death that she returned to her hometown of Medfield to care for her father, hoping to distract herself from her grief. In her *Memoir*, the space she devoted to memorializing this man rivalled that of her beloved sister Betty and overshadowed that of her father Thomas.²⁶⁷ However, he was not her husband. Though she gushed over him like a schoolgirl in her *Memoir*, not to mention during interviews with friends, it is questionable whether or not he was even a lover. Instead, she calls him a “literary friend.” They were an odd and unlikely couple. Yet, Gary D. Schmidt says, “if there was one of the Boston circle who might have been a soul mate to Hannah Adams, it was J. S. Buckminster.”²⁶⁸

William S. Shaw

Despite Hannah’s deep and intimate friendship with Buckminster, Buckminster was not the only young and eligible Boston bachelor with whom Hannah had cultivated a deep and reciprocal friendship. She had also developed an endearing relationship with Harvard graduate William S. Shaw (1778-1826). Schmidt claims that Shaw was “the most influential in her [Hannah’s] literary life.”²⁶⁹ Wolff similarly posits that Shaw was at “the centre of her patronage network.”²⁷⁰ What does Hannah say about him? She calls him “friend” more than once (and we know from Chapter 3 what “friend” meant to Hannah).²⁷¹ She also includes him anonymously in

²⁶⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 39; Adams, *Narrative Controversy*, 19.

²⁶⁶ William Ellery Channing, “Christian Discourse, December 25, 1831,” *Memoir of William Ellery Channing, with extracts from his correspondence and manuscripts 2* (London: G. Routledge, 1870), 419-20. Also see Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 254.

²⁶⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 39-40.

²⁶⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 38-39. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 145.

²⁶⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 142.

²⁷⁰ Wolff, *Culture Club*, 73.

²⁷¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 37, 38, 75, 8-9; Felt, *Memorials*, 201 includes a letter written in 1803 from Hannah to Shaw that ends ““I must be allowed to consider myself under great obligations to you, sir, in particular; since I am

dedicatory letters in several of her later publications.²⁷² The *Memoir* we are analyzing throughout the dissertation was actually based on an earlier, much smaller eleven-page autobiography she wrote personally for him at his request (it appears in full in his *Memorials*).²⁷³ Who was Shaw?

Shaw was a nephew of Abigail Adams (on her sister's side).²⁷⁴ After graduating from Harvard in 1798, young Shaw served as John Adams's personal secretary for two years while Adams was president.²⁷⁵ When Jefferson was elected, Shaw, then aged 22, returned to Boston as a lawyer and started a practice. Back in Boston, in the spring of 1806, Shaw was offered a post as clerk of the district court, which allowed him to close his law practice and freed up his time to focus on his lifelong aspirations of becoming a "man of letters."²⁷⁶ According to Schwartz, this post as the district clerk allowed him to vet which books would (and would not) obtain copyrights.²⁷⁷

Leveraging his position in this post, Shaw quickly became a central and leading force as a founder of several institutions: The Anthology Society, its publication *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, and the Boston Athenaeum.²⁷⁸ These liberal institutions had direct connections with Hannah and her history schoolbook.

sensible, that by your kindness to me you gratify the benevolent feelings of your heart, I derive pleasure by indulging my grateful sentiments, That heaven may reward and bless you, is the ardent wish of "Your much obliged friend, "Hannah Adams."

²⁷² Adams, *Abridgement*, iii-iv. Referring to Shaw and Buckminster et al., in her preface, Hannah says, "The complier desires to make her public acknowledgements to those respectable literary gentlemen who have patronized her work; she is sensible that actuated by the most disinterested motives, they have exerted themselves to promote her usefulness and welfare; and regrets that a feeble state of health may prevent her evincing, by future exertion, her ambition to merit their good opinion; but she will ever cherish the most lively gratitude, and take pleasure in the idea that their benevolence will be rewarded by the great Author of every blessing." The page before the preface contains a copyright authorized by Shaw (Adams, *Abridgment*, ii). See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 236.

²⁷³ Felt, *Memorials*, "Shaw Account," 190-203. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 162.

²⁷⁴ Felt, *Memorials*, 39-57. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 142.

²⁷⁵ Felt, *Memorials*, 27. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 142.

²⁷⁶ Felt, *Memorials*, 212. See also Wolff, *Culture Club*, 20, 28.

²⁷⁷ Swartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 94.

²⁷⁸ Felt, *Memorials*, 203-202, 221, 234. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 142.

Shaw personally provided Hannah with the funds to publish her textbook. He also negotiated the contract with the publishers. He promoted her work by ensuring she had a positive review in the *Monthly Anthology* (not to mention making sure her competitor received a negative review in the publication). In October 1805, the *Monthly Anthology* had published back-to-back reviews of Hannah's and her competitor's textbooks.²⁷⁹ The *Monthly Anthology* reviewed Hannah's as a "valuable work" that "is exactly suited to schools and deserving of public support" and "that labour should be remunerated, the unconditional recommendation of Adams's text over any other similar work."²⁸⁰ On the other hand, the *Monthly Anthology* launched a nine-page attack on a competing schoolbook. This critical review reported that this competing history schoolbook lacked "usefulness." It claimed the work was full of religious bias and bigotry and smacked a strong odor of sect."²⁸¹ The *Monthly Anthology*'s critical review of Hannah's competitors, *Compendious History*, boldly recommended Hannah's text over all her competition.²⁸²

Shaw did not stop at supporting Hannah by promoting her work in his magazine. He went as far as to lobby on Hannah's behalf with the Boston schools, both public and private, securing for Hannah the exclusive rights for her schoolbook to be used, and her competitor's books, both history and geography, to be censored and removed.²⁸³ And that was not all. As the head of the Boston Athenaeum, Shaw even ensured that Hannah was granted access to the exclusive male-

²⁷⁹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 191-192.

²⁸⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 192. This review of Hannah's work was written Edmund Trowbridge Dana.

²⁸¹ Edmund Trowbridge Dana, "Review of Hannah Adams, *An abridgement of the history of Newengland*" *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* 2 (October 1805): 538-541. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 191-192.

²⁸² William Emmerson, "Review of Jedidiah Morse and Elijah Parish, *A compendious history of Newengland*" *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* 2 (October 1805): 541-549. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 191-192.

²⁸³ Robison, *Proofs*, 108, 12-113. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 142.

only institution for her research, making her the first woman to ever be permitted access to its shelves.

Conclusions: Hannah's Untraditional Female Education

Where Froide has claimed that the most common reasons early modern women remained unmarried were being too sick, too poor, too religious, having too many family responsibilities, or experiencing an early demise of a loved one, Karin Wulf claims that being too educated was one of the popular reasons females remained single throughout their lifetimes in colonial America.²⁸⁴ Wulf asserts that popular literature promoted the ideology that women who were too educated disqualified themselves from the marriage pool. An anonymous essay published in 1772 in *Father Abraham's Almanac*, for example, pushed "four archetypical spinsters" -- those who were too picky, too flirty, too greedy, or "too learned."²⁸⁵

Wulf reinforces the observations made earlier by Nancy Cott, who argues that educated women were demonized by men and even deemed as dangerous pariahs, or at minimum, inappropriate and deprived of their charms.²⁸⁶ Those men who did see educating women as important, like Benjamin Rush, encouraged the education of females only as a means to be supportive companions to their husbands and, after the revolution, educated enough to raise good republican sons.²⁸⁷ But Hannah was neither a wife nor a mother.

Both Cott and Froide argue that the central support system of the single woman was other females.²⁸⁸ Froide goes so far as to say "one respect singlewomen differed markedly from their

²⁸⁴ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 39. Catholic nuns were in the colonies, but they are outside of the scope of this dissertation due to following the folk definition of a spinster.

²⁸⁵ Wulf, *Not All Wives* 39.

²⁸⁶ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 110.

²⁸⁷ Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 101.

²⁸⁸ Froide, *Single Women in the European Past*, 24, 26.

contemporaries: their emotional lives were often strongly centred on women.”²⁸⁹ Yet, several educated men starting with her father and her Harvard tutors, and later her mentors Reverend Thomas Prentiss, Ezra Stiles, Jeremy Belknap, James Freeman, John Adams, Joseph S. Buckminster, and William S. Shaw, surrounded, supported and encouraged Hannah’s educational aspirations despite (and potentially because of) knowing she was single and would likely never marry or have children. This section has explored Hannah’s educational path and her relationship with the men who became her nexus of support, Pitt and the boarders at her father’s home likely being the first.

Pitt was not Hannah’s first student. Hannah prepared at least two others for Harvard a decade earlier.²⁹⁰ But Pitt would become Hannah’s friend for life and was one of the few non-family members fondly mentioned by Hannah in her *Memoir* (on more than one occasion).²⁹¹ The fond feeling of friendship must have been mutual. Hannah is mentioned on several occasions both in Pitt’s autobiography and his recently discovered Harvard diary as well. Hannah summarized her relationship with Pitt in her *Memoir*:

One pleasing event occurred in this gloomy period, I had the satisfaction of teaching the rudiments of Latin and Greek to three young gentlemen, who resided in the vicinity. This was of some advantage to me. One of these young gentlemen was the Rev. Mr. Clark, of Norton, who pursued his studies with me till he entered Cambridge University, and has continued his friendship for me during life; and his uniform excellent character I have ever highly appreciated.²⁹²

Like Pitt Clarke, Buckminster and Shaw went above and beyond in supporting Hannah, illustrating yet another set of men surrounding and championing her. They edited and promoted her books. They vanquished her foe by critiquing and even demonizing her competition, securing

²⁸⁹ Froide, *Single Women in the European Past*, 26.

²⁹⁰ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 26.

²⁹¹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12.

²⁹² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12.

exclusive rights for her textbooks to be used within Boston school boards. They provided her financial security with a lifelong guaranteed income. They granted her access to the most extensive and exclusive collections in the country to conduct her research. The existence of Hannah's male-dominant support network, which included Reverend Pitt Clarke, Reverend Joseph S. Buckminster, and William S. Shaw, dispels the idea that single females, because they had no husband, lacked male succor. Her relationships with Stiles, Belknap, Prentiss, Clarke, Freeman, Adams, Buckminster, and Shaw also shows us that when never-married women did receive male support, it was not limited begrudgingly to male relatives like fathers, brothers, and uncles.

The deaths of Hannah's mother, sister, and aunt did not mean that Hannah did not have a female support network to hold her up. She still had a step-mother. She also had a living paternal grandmother (who resided with her until she was in her mid-thirties). Even when Betty died, Hannah had two younger sisters (also residing in the household). She also had several maternal aunts and cousins living close by in her very small town, not to mention sisters-in-law.²⁹³ But, instead of growing within and leaning on a female network drawn from her female relatives, or having a husband and leaning on his support and guidance, Hannah developed relationships with several deeply supportive educated clerical men. Hannah came to rely on this extensive male network who formed a web of spiritual, intellectual, and eventually financial support.

Hannah never mentioned Stiles, Prentiss, Adams, or Belknap in her *Memoir*. Oddly, to read it, one would believe Hannah was entirely and autodidactically responsible for her own education. She does, however, mention Pitt, Buckminster, and Shaw more than once. Even though she, for whatever reason, fails to acknowledge *all* the men who made up her male nexus

²⁹³ Tilden. *History Medfield*, 283-286, 354.

of support, they did not fail to acknowledge her. Stiles recorded his visit to Hannah in his diary, where he calls her an authoress, a historian, and one of the most well-read people he had ever met. His legacy beyond the accolade of “Yale President” was his ecclesiastical history, which is only published through Hannah’s work. Likewise, Prentiss wrote Hannah’s endorsement in her first publication. This endorsement is almost the only legacy of Prentiss in the historical record. Regardless of whether or not she wrote about her male mentoring support system, they were vital to her successes as an author, educator, historian and theologian.

Conclusion

In 1831, just one year before her death, at the request of several friends, a 75-year-old Hannah Adams sat down to pen her tenth, final, and most personal publication, her *Memoir*.¹ She wrote her *Memoir* from an apartment filled with flowers, where she boarded in Brookline, a small town near Boston.² Her last years had been plagued by frequent fevers.³ She could barely write a note to a friend due to a tremor plaguing her writing hand.⁴ However, she managed to jot down a brief but thorough 43-page overview of her long and fruitful life.

Looking back, she had witnessed many significant moments in American history: the French and Indian War (the Seven Years War), the American Revolution, and the War of 1812. She had lived through the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. She had also lived through two major religious revivals (the First and Second Great Awakenings) over which historians have spilled much ink. Nevertheless, she chose to leave out all of these significant events (save for the fact that the Revolution caused her to pause her research momentarily) from the pages of her *Memoir*.⁵

Instead, she focused on the many hurdles in her life. She lamented the early death of her mother, Elizabeth, a death that was quickly followed by that of her maternal-like maiden aunt Mary.⁶ She decried her life-long struggle with illness which kept her from school, and playing with childhood friends. She regretted her inability to outgrow her childhood stutter, her inability

¹ Andrew Norton and Joseph Tuckerman, "Introductory Note," iii-iv in Lee and Adams *Memoir*. According to Schmidt, Norton and Tuckerman were both Boston ministers (Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 348).

² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 105, 107.

³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 42.

⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 104.

⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 2-3, 12-13

⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 5-6.

to properly hold a pen, and a lifelong awkwardness around people.⁷ She bemoaned the loss of her family's finances due to her father's purported mismanagement and the fraud of his steward, a loss that thrust her family into a life of poverty.⁸ She mused over the unanticipated loss of her best friend and partner: her beloved sister Betty.⁹

Though her mother, maiden aunt, and sister died when Hannah was relatively young, how Hannah was still surrounded by a crowd of female relatives, yet bereft of a female family support network is a mystery. The vacancy of a typical female familial network, though unmentioned, was also another strike against her, especially considering how Cott, Smith-Rosenberg, Chambers-Schiller, and Froide emphasize the centrality of these female familial networks to a woman's survival, and arguably so much more for the survival of a woman without a husband.¹⁰

She never even mentioned these living female relatives that should have made up her vast supportive network. Hannah does not mention her grandmother, who lived with her in her natal home for years. She does not acknowledge that she even had a stepmother. Hannah does not mention her living full sister, Lucy, half-sister Mary, or any of her three sisters-in-law. She never mentions one of her mother's living sisters or their daughters who resided nearby in her same community.¹¹

Like she neglected the topics of wars and religious revivals, a hurdle that was not discussed by Hannah in her *Memoir* was her never-married status. Being sickly, single, poor, and without a female familial network, Hannah should have been written off as an absolute familial and societal liability. However, this dissertation has demonstrated that Hannah was no liability.

⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3, 6, 52.

⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 6, 54.

⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 17-19.

¹⁰ Froide, *Never Married*, 51, 65; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 168, Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World," 8-10, 13-14, 17-18; Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, a Better Husband*, 127.

¹¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 282-284, 354.

Alongside her challenges and losses, Hannah discusses her many victories in her *Memoir*. When girls were not allowed to attend school past writing school, Hannah highlights how she was empowered by her father to obtain a rare classical education.¹² When women could not step foot on a Harvard campus, let alone teach there, she recalls stepping into the role of tutor to several young men taking their Harvard entry exams.¹³ She describes the victories (and perceived losses) around the research and publication of her first book, then all six of her subsequent books.¹⁴ In her *Memoir*, she boasts of her admission as the first female permitted within the walls of the Boston Athenaeum, her invitation into the elite, male, literary circle of post-revolutionary Boston, and her merging and cultivation, at least for a lengthy season, of an all-male elite support network.¹⁵

Her *Memoir* concludes with the death of two favourite men—her father, Thomas, and her friend, Joseph Buckminster.¹⁶ They died when Hannah was in her early 50s. She was 75 when she wrote her *Memoir*. This leaves a 20-year gap in her autobiographical tale. Her life seemed to end with them, but it did not.

Hannah Adams was undoubtedly a proverbial underdog, and America loves its underdog stories. However, few know about the accomplishments of Hannah Adams. I discovered her in Tomoko Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions* where she was given one line and a footnote.¹⁷ Why is history silent about her? We know about great American married women from this era, women like Mercy Otis and Abigail Adams. So why not Hannah?

¹² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 3, 8-11, 52-54.

¹³ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12, 55.

¹⁴ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 13-15, 19-21, 22-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33.

¹⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 38.

¹⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 40-41.

¹⁷ Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 55n, 58-59.

Her four-plus-page obituary, attached to the conclusion of her *Memoir*, lauds her as a significant early American figure: "Died at Brookline, near Boston, on the 15th inst. Miss Hannah Adams, age seventy-six. Her literary labors have been long before the public and have made her name Known in Europe as well as in her native land; her first work, the 'View of Religions,' was published at a time when the country had few authors and when a book from a female hand was almost without precedent."¹⁸

Josiah Quincy Jr., a member of the Massachusetts State Legislature, chose Hannah Adams and Emily Marshall for his chapter "Two Notable Women" in his 1883 *Figures from the Past from the leaves of old journals*. Quincy said the following about Hannah: "When I call Miss Adams a famous authoress, I speak in a language of a time when she had absolutely no competitors. Her 'Dictionary of Religions' went through four editions in this country, and was published in England,-- a high honour in the days when British scorn was poured on all American books."¹⁹ Lobbying for a commissioned painting of Hannah by local artist Harding for the Boston Athenaeum to be returned and redisplayed in its intended home, Quincy laid out his argument: "I feel sure they would all agree that the women of old days are entitled to at least one representative in that hall; and that Hannah Adams, the pioneer of feminine culture in America, should be there to smile upon her sisters who have beaten a broad path where solitary footsteps once trod."²⁰

Likewise, in 1887, historian William Tilden records the following about Hannah in his *History of Medfield*: "HANNAH, 1755-1831; the distinguished authoress. She wrote the *History of New England*, *Letters to my Nieces*, *Truth of the Christian Religion*, *History of the Jews*, and

¹⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 105-106.

¹⁹ Quincy Jr., *Notable Figures*, 328.

²⁰ Quincy Jr., *Notable Figures*, 333.

the *Dictionary of Religions*. Her books were, some of them, published by subscription. The *Dictionary of Religions* went through four editions in this country, and was republished in England,-- a very high honor in those days when English people scorned everything America"²¹ Tilden also claims Hannah was "entitled to be called the pioneer of feminine culture in America."²²

What did Tilden and Quincy Jr. mean when they called Hannah the pioneer of feminine culture in America? Their characterization is reminiscent of Ann Douglas's observation about the "feminization of American culture." Douglas's argument revolves around the idea that American culture has increasingly embraced traditionally feminine values, which have influenced various aspects of society, including literature, education, and consumerism. These values include emotional expression, nurturing, community orientation, and a focus on personal relationships rather than competition and individualism. As American culture became more secular, Douglas argues that traditional religious values, which often emphasized patriarchal authority and hierarchical structures, began to wane. In their place, values associated with femininity—such as empathy, nurturing, and emotional expression—gained prominence. This shift allowed for a cultural environment that increasingly valued personal relationships and community over strict religious dogma. Douglas notes that even within religious institutions, there was a feminization of spiritual practices. Women became more prominent in church activities and organizations, often emphasizing the importance of emotional and personal connections to faith rather than doctrinal rigidity. This shift illustrated how feminine values began to infiltrate areas traditionally dominated by masculine authority.²³

²¹ Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283-284.

²² Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 283-284.

²³ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, (New York, 1977).

Both Quincy Jr. and Tilden were writing around 1820 and 1875, the period Ann Douglas famously depicted as the era of the “Feminization of American Culture.” One could make reasonable connections between the Tilden-Quincy label of Hannah and Douglas’s framework. Tilden does land marginally outside this timeframe; his *History of Medfield* was published in 1886/7. Yet, he was likely was compiling it within the framework.²⁴ However, while Douglas’s depiction of feminization is directly connected to Unitarianism and the liberal secularization of the church—particularly in Boston—I argue otherwise.²⁵

Douglas’s feminization was catalyzed squarely in 1833 with the end of public funding for the official state church (disestablishment).²⁶ At the same time, she argues, women gained soft power by becoming the primary consumers of books, magazines, and Sunday sermons. Thus, in order for ministers to stay culturally relevant—and, frankly, to earn a paycheck to support themselves and their families—they adapted their preaching and writing to appeal to their predominantly female audience.²⁷ These women became not only the main customers of these literary-ministers, but also their main competitors in bookstores and at magazine stands, though not in the pulpit.²⁸ Douglas explains that this reciprocal relationship “bound the minister and the lady together,” which could at least, in part, explain Hannah’s relationship with Buckminster, and even why Tilden and Quincy might call her the pioneer of feminine culture in America. There are, however, significant gaps in connecting Tilden’s and Quincy’s title for Hannah to the feminization of America as described by Douglas.

²⁴ Douglas, *Feminization*, 6.

²⁵ Douglas, *Feminization*, 17-18.

²⁶ Douglas, *Feminization*, 8.

²⁷ Douglas, *Feminization*, 8.

²⁸ Douglas, *Feminization*, 8-9.

Perhaps, the most glaring discrepancy is the timeline. When the major push for disestablishment occurred, Buckminster, Shaw, and Hannah were already dead. Buckminster died in 1812—two decades before Douglas’s catalyst for feminization. Shaw, who was not a minister and arguably falls outside Douglas’s argument, died in 1826, nearly a decade before disestablishment reached Boston. Hannah died in 1831, two years before disestablishment. The exception might be James Freeman, who outlived them all, passing away in 1835, though he had long since retired by the time of church disestablishment in America. Furthermore, Douglas’s first solid example of a minister illustrating the transition to feminization is a sermon given by Unitarian minister Charles Follen in 1838.²⁹

Even though the dates do not align, one could argue that Tilden and Quincy Jr. were interpreting history through the lens of feminization. However, Douglas contends that “American Calvinism possessed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a toughness, sternness, an intellectual rigor which our society then and since has been accustomed to identify with ‘masculinity.’”³⁰ Looking back to chapter five, when I compared Hannah’s education and extensive reading list to Pitt Clarke’s at Harvard, did either seem to lack toughness, sternness, or intellectual rigor? If these qualities were considered masculine, then Hannah’s education and intellectual pursuits—far more rigorous than Pitt’s—should classify her as “masculine” rather than feminine by Douglas’s definition. Were any of her copious works in the slightest regard sentimental? Even Lydia Maria Child, writing during this supposed era of feminized America, claimed that Hannah had “unsexed herself by her learning.”³¹ Would that not imply that she was no longer feminine but masculine—or at least gender-neutral?

²⁹ Douglas, *Feminization*, 18.

³⁰ Douglas, *Feminization*, 18.

³¹ Child, *Letters*, 131-138.

Let us turn from Hannah to Buckminster (since we are discussing minsters bound to ‘ladies’). Could Buckminster—whom Wolff describes as “widely recognized as a brilliant scholar”—be depicted as lacking sternness, rigor, or mental toughness? He quite literally studied himself to death while attempting to learn German to translate the bible he discovered in Europe, intending to rationally disprove the doctrine of the Trinity. What about all the volumes he sent back to Shaw to fill his library and the countless hours he and Hannah spent quietly studying together over months and years? Would *that* imply a lack of intellectual rigor and sternness? Quite the opposite. According to Wolff in *The Culture Club* and even Lawrence Buell in *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution through Renaissance*, these highly intellectual, fervent men—along with Hannah—sought to establish an intellectually rigorous Renaissance in Boston, at least in part to counteract accusations of post-revolutionary America being backwater.³²

The somewhat tenuous connection to Douglas may be more substantial than it initially appears, particularly in light of Schmidt's observation that, toward the end of her life, Hannah took on the role of mentor to several female writers. Among those she guided were her biographer, Hannah F. Sawyer Lee; Eliza Buckminster Lee, Buckminster's sister; and Sarah Savage.³³ Hannah took Sawyer Lee under her wing after her husband had died, leaving her as a widow alone to support herself.³⁴ Despite her mentorship, she mentions none of these female writers in her *Memoir*.

According to Douglas, during this time, “women writers gradually flooded the market,” and, much like Hannah had, these female writers “exerted their ‘influence’ chiefly through

³² Wolff, *Culture Club*, 7-9; Lawrence Buell, *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution through Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12.

³³ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 2, 353.

³⁴ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 2.

literature.”³⁵ However, the literature flooding the market in the feminized America depicted by Douglas was not rigorously academic like Hannah’s. Douglas instead describes the output of these female writers (and editors) as “small-scale,” featuring “intimate scenes,” a “chatty tone,” and set against “a domestic backdrop.”³⁶ Does this description align with Hannah’s work in any way?

American religious history scholar Ann Braude goes as far as to find fault with employing the term ‘feminization’ in connection to religion when it comes to this Victorian era in America, calling it “a misnomer when applied to religious demographics.”³⁷ Braude claims the concept was used to join together “the rise of domesticity and the rise of liberal theology in Protestantism.” Hannah was anything but domestic. I agree with Braude that the purported connected motifs of “declension, feminization, and secularization” or “the historical claims that religion declines in the colonial period, was feminized in Victorian America, and gave way to the secular order in the twentieth century,” from “an empirical perspective” are misrepresentation to say the least, and should be treated with caution, if not reexamined through a gender lens (which she does in her chapter).³⁸

Clearly, the feminization of American culture that Douglas describes does not neatly map onto Hannah’s intellectual contributions, despite Tilden’s and Quincy Jr.’s characterization of her as the pioneer of feminine culture in America. Rather than fitting within the feminization framework, Hannah’s life and work seem to challenge the assumptions it is built upon.

Nevertheless, the designation could be connected to her mentoring role in the growing sea of

³⁵ Douglas, *Feminization*, 8-9.

³⁶ Douglas, *Feminization*, 10.

³⁷ Brekus, *Religious History*, 1, 12; Ann Braude “Women’s History Is American Religious History.” In *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, 1st ed. Edited by Thomas Tweed, (University of California Press, 1997), 87–107.

³⁸ Braude, “Women’s History,” 94-95.

female writers, perhaps mentored by those Hannah mentored. They wrote more domestic-leaning and sentimental prose, but like Hannah, used literature to imprint upon and exert influence over their now feminized cultural landscape.

Hannah was among the few women in the colonies to be classically educated. Though she was sick and single and considered herself to be poverty-stricken (though due to her advantaged position earlier in her life, she was able to avoid hard labour), she published seven books in her lifetime. Some of these books were published not only in America but also in Europe, and one was even translated into another language.³⁹ When women were not allowed on university campuses, Hannah prepared men to take their exams and even worked on a textbook to potentially be used in one.⁴⁰ When women were forbidden to be preachers, she published several theological works used to train and prepare the preachers of several denominations.⁴¹ She garnered friendships and mentoring relationships with the presidents of prominent universities and even the president of the country.⁴² Nevertheless, she has been ignored by the academy and even by women's historians.⁴³ Why?

After doing a deep dive into Hannah's life through her *Memoir* and the relationships she earmarked as crucial to her in her *Memoir*, I believe Sherry Schwartz was correct- this might have been due, at least in part, paradoxically to Hannah's single status. I say paradoxically because I do not believe that Hannah would have had the same opportunities and therefore have accomplished so much if she had been married and had children. At the same time, the stigma

³⁹ Quincy Jr., *Notable Figures*, 328; Tilden, *History of Medfield*, 284.

⁴⁰ Adams, "Shaw Account" 195. In her account to Shaw, she claims "In 1793 I engaged in writing the Summary History of New England, which was originally intended for the use of schools." She is, however, unclear about which schools (195); Letter from Ezra Stiles to Hannah Adams, June 12, 1794, Adams Papers, NEHGS. See also Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 71.

⁴¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 51-53.

⁴² Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 37-40.

⁴³ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 17.

connected to singleness was associated with deficiency, often to both physical and mental illness, two topics that warrant further exploration.⁴⁴ For example, other historical figures with whom Hannah had relationships, such as her brother Louis, as well as Buckminster and Shaw, were similarly unmarried and often labeled eccentric. Like Hannah, a recurring theme in their biographical records is the presence of childhood illnesses or disabilities, which may have shaped their social trajectories. Did these ailments lead to singleness by limiting their participation in conventional social structures? Or did singleness itself become a culturally acceptable explanation for their status, masking other motivations? While it is likely that illness disrupted their socialization, making them more inclined toward solitary lives, it is also possible that narratives of illness were later employed to rationalize their choices.

The single woman, however, was associated in Hannah's day with sickness, contagion, and even with mental illness. After her death, several narratives about Hannah's proclivity to "eccentricity," which seemed to be a nice way of pointing to mental decline, circled the country. Quincy Jr. related tales about Hannah's constant forgetfulness, habit of muttering to herself, and seeing ghosts:

I was well acquainted with Miss Hannah Adams, who was as intimate with my father's family as a person so modest and retiring could be anywhere. She often stayed with us at Quincy, where she was held in awe by the servants from her habit of talking to herself. This seemed to them a very weird and uncanny proceeding; but our guest had penetrated a world where they could not follow her, and her lips unconsciously uttered the thoughts that it suggested. There was a story illustrative of this habit of hers when confined to a sphere of wholly mundane considerations. A divinity student, who was going to Andover to Boston, though himself in great luck in securing a seat on the stage next that to be occupied by Miss Adams. A *tete-a-tete* journey with the great authoress was a delightful prospect; and the young gentleman was determined to turn his opportunity to the best advantage and to get fresh installments of the wisdom which had instructed him in her books, Alas! The fates were against him[.] It chanced that the lady was travelling with an unwonted amount of baggage, and the fear of forgetting any of its component parts continually haunted her mind. In

⁴⁴ Schwartz, "Pioneer Intellect," 17.

vain the divinity student tempted conversation with well-framed questions. The answers were short and mechanical; but as soon as they were given were heard the words, "Great box, little box, bandbox!" This refrain was uttered in a tone of the deepest interest, and was repeated at short intervals throughout the journey; and this was really all that this young inquirer after knowledge could get from his ride with the famous Miss Adams. "Great Box, little box, bandbox!" Could it be that the rich and varied contents of the lady's min[d] were less interest to her than the contents of those mysterious parcels she had in charge? Whether the embryo minister extracted any moral from his experience the story does not mention: but it is not impossible that in some future sermon he said that, if was all had Miss Adams's habit of speaking out our thoughts, too many of them would be found fixed upon mere boxes and bundles we carry along the journey of life, only to drop at the end of it. Those noble powers of mind which should be used for the benefit of others crushed and paralyzed by the pressure of these miserable packages.⁴⁵

Like Quincy Jr, writing just twelve years after Hannah's death in May of 1844, Lydia Maria Child not only retold an earlier iteration of Quincy's account of the carriage ride with the young minister and his Hannah's purported history of sighting ghosts, but she also shares a similar degrading story about Hannah's disheveled mental state in the second volume of her *Letters From New York*:

A friend was one day visiting at a house where some stranger guests expressed great curiosity to see Hannah Adams; and to gratify them she offered to go and invite her to tea. The old lady accepted the invitation with the simple gladness of a child and was soon ready to accompany her kind guide. The wind was in rather an active mood, and nearly blew off her bonnet. When they entered the house, they passed into a room, on one side of which were mirror-windows. The lady, perceiving that Miss Adams's cap was awry, led her up to the mirror to adjust it. But she was so little accustomed to view her own face, that she supposed a stranger stood before her, and bobbing a little child-like courtesy, she said, in all simplicity, "How do you do, ma'am?" "I want you to look and see if your cap is right," said her friend smiling. But Miss Adams, supposing herself introduced again, dropped another courtesy, and repeated, "How do you do, ma'am?" It was some minutes before she was enabled clearly to comprehend that she stood before a mirror, and was curtseying to her own image.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Quincy Jr., *Notable Figures*, 329-330.

⁴⁶ Child, *Letters From New York*, 132-133.

Child admitted, "Such indications of an absent mind, though they were not of frequent occurrence, were busily repeated and often exaggerated. For in those days, intellectual accomplishments were so rare, that a woman who had fitted several boys for college, was considered as great a prodigy as the learned pig, that could spell its own name."⁴⁷ Child also posited that, "The prejudice against literary women was then so much stronger than now. Someone happened to remark that they wondered why Hannah Adams had never married, for she was really a very sensible and pleasant woman. 'Marry Hannah Adams!' exclaimed a gentleman, who was present; 'why I should as soon think of marrying my Greek Grammar'."⁴⁸ It is little wonder that Kerber, the only women's studies scholar of Hannah's era that includes Hannah in her record dismisses her as an eccentric spinster.⁴⁹

When I first began to research Hannah, I almost did the same. Had I not myself been a single woman curious about the stigma attached to singleness and celibacy, I would have possibly dismissed Hannah and passed her by. As a person who is both single and Christian, I was even more intrigued as to the development of the xenophobic trope of failed femininity because I was keenly aware from New Testament scripture that both Jesus and Paul were single and celibate and that Jesus claimed that celibacy and singleness for religious means was a unique call and gift from God. However, even in my church circles, singleness past a certain age was looked down upon, and the culture of the family was almost idolized as epochal.

In his story, Jesus made an extraordinary place for a lifelong, never-married female. Just before his death, a single female approached him during an all-male dinner party. Hearing him

⁴⁷ Child, *Letters From New York*, 133.

⁴⁸ Child, *Letters From New York*, 132-133. This comment about Hannah being a "Greek Grammar," or a "Walking dictionary," appears to be almost proverbial. It was not just Child that relayed this story but also Hannah's biographer Lee mentions it in the *Memoir* in her section entitled "Notices," (Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 49).

⁴⁹ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 227.

predict and explain his impending sacrifice (though his disciples had yet to understand it), she ran home and fetched her dowry (that was in the form of an expensive perfumed oil). Returning to the party, she wasted that dowry at Jesus's feet. As an offering, she gave Jesus all her chance of marriage, which, in Jewish culture at the time, was everything. The dowry was worth over a year's wage. Jesus's apostles complained, saying the perfume could have been sold and the money donated to people experiencing poverty. Jesus rebuked them, saying they had no idea what she had done for him, that just as he was about to give his life for her, she had given her life, her future, to him by offering her dowry to prepare him for his burial. Jesus said that as a reward, her story will be told wherever his story is told.⁵⁰

Since 2019, singleness has been on the rise amongst working-age people (ages 25-54) in America.⁵¹ Celibacy is also on the rise.⁵² Never-married people have risen exponentially since 1990 (from 17% in 1990 to 33% in 2019).⁵³ This gap has yet to be accounted for by couples living together but choosing not to marry.⁵⁴

Yet, there is still so much stigma surrounding singleness. Where do these stigmas come from? Are there any common threads that connect single people today with single women in the past? In this dissertation, I have studied these enigmas. Like William Hayley, I would make a

⁵⁰ Matthew 26:1-16; Mark 14:1-10; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-12. What she did was so important there is a version recorded in all four gospels.

⁵¹ Richard Fry and Kim Parker, "Rising Share of U.S. Adults Are Living Without a Spouse or Partner: On Key economic outcomes, single adults at prime working age increasingly lag behind those who are married or cohabitating," *Pew Research Centre*, (2021): 5. Accessed June 12, 2024 https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/10/PSDT_10.05.21_unpartnered_adults_report-1.pdf; Bethany Bray, "Growing Percentage of American Adults Living Single," *Counseling Today*, December 1, 2021, <https://ctarchive.counseling.org/2021/12/growing-percentage-of-american-adults-are-living-single/>. Accessed June 12, 2024.

⁵² Nicholas H. Wolfinger 2003, "Is the Sex Recession Over," *Institute for Family Studies*, May 23, 2023 <https://ifstudies.org/blog/is-the-sex-recession-over>. Accessed June 12, 2024; Zoe Heller, "How Everyone Got So Lonely," *New Yorker*, April 4, 2022 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/04/11/how-everyone-got-so-lonely-laura-kipnis-noreena-hertz>. Accessed June 12, 2024.

⁵³ Fry and Parker, "Rising Share," 3.

⁵⁴ Fry and Parker, "Rising Share," 5.

case that historically, this single motley crew has been overlooked amongst American history's most marginalized and stigmatized groups.⁵⁵ This dissertation has established that despite being demonized in colonial and early America, single women like Hannah Adams were not liabilities but contributors. It has already been established by Amy Friode and Lee Chambers-Schiller that they were not lonely, but rather had deep, intimate friendships, often with other single women or sisters.⁵⁶ However, through the unique sighting of Hannah Adams, this dissertation has demonstrated that these deep, intimate relationships were not confined to other females; they could be with men, like fathers and even male friends.⁵⁷

Hannah was typically born surrounded and supported by women, as embodied by her mother, Elizabeth, aunt Mary, and sister Betty.⁵⁸ She also typically died surrounded by women. Nevertheless, most of these women remained unnamed in her *Memoir*.⁵⁹ When she lived, however, she atypically lived, and thrived, surrounded and supported by non-familial elite men like the father of a unique American religion Reverend James Freeman, president of Yale College Ezra Stiles, founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society Jeremy Belknap, President of the United States John Adams, and the co-founders of the Boston Athenaeum, William S. Shaw and Joseph S. Buckminster. Notably, even the women who were near and dear to Hannah while she approached death's door were not familial females or an extension of the familial female network but women with whom she became acquainted and connected through the introduction and encouragement of her dearly departed male elite friendship with Joseph

⁵⁵ Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids* vol. I, xv.

⁵⁶ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 10; Froide 83-86; Chambers-Schiller 127-130.

⁵⁷ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 12, 20, 27, 31, 34, 37-41.

⁵⁸ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 5-8.

⁵⁹ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 41-42.

Buckminster.⁶⁰ Thus, the new female network that she leaned on at the end of her life resulted from her non-familial-elite male network.

Hannah Adams has been forgotten by history primarily because of her single status. However, other factors at work catalyzed the said neglect. These other factors include male historians (religious and national even during her lifetime) who frequently heavily borrowed from her works, often without proper attribution, whose works overshadowed and outsold her publications.⁶¹ This gendered overshadowing was perhaps compacted by the issue that though Hannah was an exceptional researcher, her writing style was not particularly engaging—I will be the first to admit, she was boring and hard to read, which may have further diminished her influence over time, and perhaps discouraged women's history scholars from spending any serious time on her work.

Other factors contributing to Hannah's neglect may include that women's studies scholars such as Ann Braude and Catherine Brekus have argued that feminist scholars, religious scholars, and women's historians have often overlooked women in Christian religious history, in part due to the persistent association of Christianity, misogyny, and patriarchy.⁶² As a result, the contributions of women, like Hannah, to religious history have been frequently passed over because they do not align with prevailing historical narratives. In 2007, Brekus still was claiming

⁶⁰ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 41-42.

⁶¹ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 290-291; 252-253; 331-332. For example, David Ramsay in *Universal History Americanized* (1819) drew directly from her *History of the Jews* but never cited her directly—though it was published by his children posthumously and no other authorities were cited properly. Similarly, Thomas Brown took Hannah's work from *History of the Jews* nearly verbatim and simply slapped it together with some letters by Joseph Priestley in his *History of the Destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem, and the Ruin and Dispersion of the Jewish Nation* (1825). In London, Thomas Williams published not one but three editions of Hannah's work as his own, with marginal edits, under the title *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations*, with no mention of Hannah on its title page or money going to Hannah from its publication. He does give her credit for an essay she wrote that he also graciously includes in the work (331). Thomas Robbins performed a similar stunt in America in 1823, taking credit for Hannah's work in his name in *Religions and Religious Ceremonies* fusing it with another work by William Ward—Schmidt claims many of the entries were taken from the fourth edition of her *Dictionary*. Nowhere in Robbins's work did he credit Hannah (332). These are just a couple of many examples.

⁶² Brekus, *Religious History*, 1; 12; Braude, "Women's History," 92.

that after “more than thirty years after the rise of women’s history alongside of the feminist movement, it is still difficult to ‘find’ women in many book and articles about American religious history.”⁶³ In a similar vein, Braude claims that religious scholars ignore women’s roles.⁶⁴ Hannah, however, was not one of these female historians who neglected women’s history in the field of religion. Instead, she recognized the role of women in shaping religious thought, including at least five female founders of Christian denominations in her *Dictionary of All Religions*—as well as one transgender founder, whom she identified as female. In contrast, male-authored religious dictionaries, such as those by Broughton and Defoe, mention only one woman.

Hannah, nevertheless, deserves to be remembered for her scholarly, political, and religious achievements. She provides us with a view of early modern American women that shows diverse ways of surviving and thriving. Women did not have to be confined to women’s networks – they could build connections with men and even men of different social and economic classes. The life of Hannah Adams teaches us that women in New England could contribute to academic, political, and religious life beyond their proscribed roles and spheres.

Despite not having a substantive familial female network of support through most of her youth and early-middle adulthood, at least none that she mentions in her *Memoir*, I would be remiss not to mention the few female names that appear in Hannah’s *Memoir*, but who I have not had the chance to explore within the framework of this dissertation. Sarah Dearborn and Elizabeth Bowdin Winthrop appear on the scene after her beloved Buckminster’s sudden demise. Of these few female friends, she says:

⁶³ Brekus, *Religious History*, 1.

⁶⁴ Braude “Women’s History,” 92.

Mr Buckminster has been so kind as to introduce me to a number of his acquaintances, who treated me with that genuine kindness which is the essence of true politeness.

Among the number of those excellent friends, to whom Mr Buckminster was so kind to introduce me, I would particularly recognise Mrs Dearborn, and Mrs Winthrop, who shone in the circles of polished life, and adorned their eminent stations by their engaging manners, and highly cultivated minds; and still more, by their Christian virtues. They were blessings to those around them; for a course of years favored me with their attention, and kind offices. When they were removed by death to a higher state of existence, I deeply mourned the heavy and irreparable loss I sustained.⁶⁵

Even Hannah's friendships did not seem to develop on their own accord. Hannah credits the friendship of these two women, friendships that did not seem to develop until the early twilight of her life, not once, but twice, to her beloved Buckminster. But can we even call them friendships? According to Schmidt, at least in the case of Sarah Dearborn, the case for a genuine friendship is tenuous. Schmidt, who seems to have spent much time and effort analyzing Hannah's correspondence, claims Hannah's and Sarah's relationship was "polite, interested, but perhaps not passionate friendship." Despite having relied on a substantial group of well-connected and attentive men throughout much of her life—men who are often overlooked, much like she would eventually be in the annals of history—Hannah appears to have cultivated a vibrant circle of female friends during her later years.

Schmidt claims, though unmentioned by Hannah, her correspondence reveals that though they never met in person, she had a lengthy friendship through correspondence with Hannah Moore. Amongst her friends who shared time with Hannah in her winter years in person, were of course Hannah Sawyer Lee, Sarah Savage (of Salem), Catherine Hay (who had a portrait miniature made for her), Caroline Howard, Helen Curtis Loring, Eliza Guild, and of course there was the woman responsible for her initial annuity, Elizabeth Shaw (closely connected with

⁶⁵ Adams and Lee, *Memoir*, 41-42.

Hannah's friend William).⁶⁶ It was ultimately, and ironically, a pair of female friends, Loring and Howard, who convinced Hannah to publish her *Memoir*, according to Schmidt.⁶⁷ In 1827, an anonymous group of ladies raised the funds to purchase and later donated to the Athenaeum's first gallery, which shows the famous portrait of Hannah painted by Chester Harding.⁶⁸ It was a fitting tribute to a strong woman whose influence extended to both women and men.

⁶⁶ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 280, 281, 283-284, 286-287, 316-317, 319, 344-345, 353.

⁶⁷ Schmidt, *Passionate Usefulness*, 348.

⁶⁸ Wolff, *Culture Club*, 67.

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