A COMMUNITY OF LETTERS:
A QUAKER WOMAN’S CORRESPONDENCE AND THE MAKING OF
THE AMERICAN FRONTIER, 1791-1824

Barbara Kathleen Wittman
Dissertation

Approved:

________________________________
Advisor
Dr. T.J. Boisseau

________________________________
Committee Member
Dr. Lesley J. Gordon

________________________________
Committee Member
Dr. Walter Hixson

________________________________
Committee Member
Dr. Kevin Kern

________________________________
Committee Member
Dr. Kathryn Feltey

Accepted:

________________________________
Department Chair
Dr. Walter Hixson

________________________________
Dean of the College
Dr. Ronald F. Levant

________________________________
Dean of the Graduate School
Dr. George R. Newkome

________________________________
Date
ABSTRACT

Quaker women resettling west of the eastern United States in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries remade familial and community relationships by way of voluminous correspondence with female kin. Such correspondence in concert with the unique meaning that Quaker religiosity lent to notions of community and continuity in this period resulted in Quaker women being newly positioned within their families and communities in ways that scholars, assuming that all women experienced a decline in authority and autonomy as a consequence of their isolation in nuclear families on the frontier, have so far failed to appreciate.

My research discloses the vocabulary and cultural grammar that women used to explain the transformation of life the experiences – the reframing that their affections, their motivations and their relationships underwent in light of their changed circumstances as settlers. In communities where kinship networks, religion, and a highly structured church hierarchy reinforced each other, letters provide evidence of the Quaker principle of spiritual equality that expected women, as well as men, to participate fully in the development and reform of their faith communities. Late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Quaker women inherited an empowered and authorized position within hierarchical family structure that privileged men’s public and community status supplied a way to express their concerns and proclaim their solidarity as a group from Margaret Fell (1614-1702) and her daughters who had worked to systematize the early Quaker faith and formalize the roles that women would play as spiritual equals in the church. I argue that women lessened the strain of relocation by locating their families within a web of
connections that strengthened the integrity and the social cohesion of their communities. Perhaps even more historically significant is the extent to which the Quaker tradition of epistolary tradition was crucial to the development of a widely dispersed network that held Quaker families and communities together across geographic boundaries. Quaker Women in this period understood their letter-writing as a crucial vehicle by which they could satisfy their spiritual mission as women. Their letters document their progress in the search for a stronger personal faith and comprise a form of discipline meant to instruct others and ensure the writer’s place in family memory. The effect of their voluminous and dedicated correspondence with one another goes beyond these intensions to include a changed Quaker frontier family and community culture within which women as corresponders wielded a new and different sort of influence than they had practiced in the locales of their birth.

This study is based on a collection of two hundred letters preserved by Charity Rotch, (1766-1824), a member of an elite New England Quaker family who migrated from Connecticut to the Midwest in 1811 where she and her husband, Thomas Rotch (1767-1823) lived until their deaths in 1823 and 1824. As the titular head of a farming family in Ohio, Thomas Rotch’s commercial activities linked him formally with the wider economy of the Atlantic world in ways easily recognizable to historians. However, less recognizable has been the ways in which Charity Rotch’s relocation to the frontier and repositioning within a nuclear family context also broadened her world. Evidence drawn from letters written by and to Charity Rotch chart her active roles in the gendered spaces of the public sphere where she exercised what she believed to be her right and responsibility as a spiritual equal and as a Quaker women – that of shaping and sustaining the faith community from one generation to the next. Her ability to do so was largely a consequence of what I have termed the “community
of letters” that she helped to forge among Quaker women across significant distances. As a strong spiritual leader and role model for women Friends everywhere her letters went, she seized opportunities to remind women of the centrality of their faith in their lives, of the need for sacrifices to keep the faith, and of their responsibility for sustaining their faith in their communities.
DEDICATION

For Friends and Family,
Massillon Public Library,
University of Akron History Department
And
Frances Sorg Sauer
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This research could have never been completed without the inspiration of numerous friends and colleagues. Massillon Public Library Director, Camille Leslie and Reference Director, Sheri Brown encouraged me to utilize the library’s treasure of primary sources to situate Thomas and Charity Rotch in the history of early Ohio. Apart from brief mentions of Thomas Rotch as sheepmaster in two publications by Ohio historians in the 1990s, no accounting of the Rotches and their role in the settlement of Kendal had been attempted on any scale. It is to Camille and Sheri who have provided me with access to the collection, and Ethel Conrad, the Library’s previous director who spent over a decade archiving hundreds of letters and documents, that I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In November 1791, Charity Rodman Rotch wrote to her sister, Elizabeth Rodman,

I am convinced my dear sister that true friendship requires not the aid of outward eloquence to render its communications acceptable; & I feel a secret satisfaction in the confidence thou so tenderly expresses; however unmeritedly it might otherways have been bestow’d, I believe thou may safely rely on it.1

As the letters written between 1811 and 1823 by Charity Rodman Rotch and mailed back to locations on the east coast from her home in Massillon Ohio attest, Quaker women, like many settler women in this period counted their female kin as their closest confidantes and her kindred spirits despite the distances that emigration and relocation to the frontiers of an expanding United States created between them. Charity Rotch’s decision to move away from kin in her home city of Newport, Rhode Island was in large part an outcome of her marriage to Thomas Rotch in 1790, and the expanding opportunities for land ownership west of the New England states that opened up for those Americans with some capital in the period following the American Revolution. After a short stint living in the Rotch family home on Nantucket Island, the couple relocated first to New Bedford, Massachusetts (1974), then Hartford, Connecticut (1800), finally heading out to Ohio in 1811, where they were to reside until their respective deaths in

1 Friends Historical Society, Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. Charity Rotch letter to Elizabeth Rodman, December 12, 1791.
1823 and 1824. Strained by distance and emotion, Charity’s correspondence with kinswomen during her relocations reveal a depth of emotion both honest and frank and yet more studied and deliberate, that replaced the nuanced face-to-face exchanges that she had enjoyed prior to her separation from her family. Charity’s correspondence with her remote female kin over a period of twenty-three years illustrates the degree to which female letter-writing was capable of generating collective meaning and promoting strong same sex bonding. Rotch’s letters yield not only a wealth of information about her own experiences as a female settler in Ohio in the early national period, but also manifest a particular cultural grammar that Quaker women, in specific, used to communicate the quality of their everyday lives as well as the contours of their emotional and intellectual understanding of their experiences as female settlers. These letters serve as a lens permitting scholarly attention to focus upon the significance of the construction of personal relationships that were conducted at great distance. The richness and extensiveness of the extant letters written to and by Charity Rodman Rotch invite scholars to examine our assumptions and rethink our conclusions about frontier women’s experiences. It is the goal of this thesis to use this cache of letters to test general and sex-specific theories regarding the experience of settlers to this region in this period and to offer new insight into the ways in which Quaker women in particular carved out lives of meaning for themselves, specifically through the mechanism of letter-writing.

Insufficiently examined assumptions regarding women’s pioneering experiences have long undergirded historians’ views of the frontier in American history. William R. Taylor and Christopher Lasch argued, for example, that geographical separation destroyed the extended family network and adversely affected women as they migrated on to the American frontier in the early nineteenth-century. They write,

Women no longer found in the family a source of affection and understanding, of meaningful contact with other people. Migration and dispersal eroded all agencies of social cohesion and the family lost its economic and even educational functions; extended kin-groups broke down and as a result the family was driven in upon itself.\(^3\)

My reading of the letters of Charity Rotch bely this too easily arrived at assumption about women’s lives and settler family dynamics. Further, the evidence these letters supply compel me to insist that Quaker letter-writing was saturated with a particular sort of cultural power for those women who became the primary corresponders within their nuclear families. The heightened meaning attached to religious community and the spiritual obligations linked with family ties made the mechanisms by which those ties were maintained or newly cultivated of supreme importance within those Quaker families and communities that experienced the dislocation and separation resulting from emigration and resettlement in the west. As chief family correspondents, Quaker women consolidated their position within geographically scattered family networks as well as within their nuclear and marital relationships by taking control of communication between kin, a kind of kinwork that distance lent new power and significance. The evidence supplied by Charity Rotch supports the argument that dispersal clearly

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reshaped the contours of familial connections and had a marked impact on same-sex ties of kinship. In this thesis, I argue that from the Society’s inception in the seventeenth century Quakers constructed an organized system of communication that united Friends over vast geographical distances. Not only did the inclination to settle in already established communities of Friends likely lessen the trauma of migration, more importantly dispersal created new roles for women and lent new significance to their roles as guardians of their children, entrusted with ensuring that the faith passed from one generation to the next.

Evidence reveals that although geographic distance delimited women’s relationship to family, it did not eliminate the major function of kinship networks between women related by blood and marriage. The correspondents of the Rotch and Rodman circle read and re-read each other’s letters for advice, news, and for spiritual counsel, especially in times of trial and tragedy. The language of these letters, at once intimate and expository, is a point of entry into women’s direct thoughts and daily lives. An abundance of archival letters suggests that a virtual community was forged in correspondence between women separated by geographical distance, and by the experience of pioneering in the period 1800 to 1826. Elongated distances between family members does however underscore the particular value and strengthening force letter-writing had on women’s friendships and kinship ties in this period. Letter-writing in the nineteenth-century was widely viewed as the prerogative and the duty of women

4 See select letters, Quaker Letters and Epistles, Box F-14-1 through 37; for example F-14-8, Copy of a letter from Mary Peisely to Sarah Beale, Lancaster 2nd mo 11th, 1749; Extracts of a Letter from Sarah Tuke (Afterwards Grubb, when about 20 years of age. Transcribed by Hannah Coffin for her Friend Charity Rotch, 7th of 5th month, 1810. Box F-14-25.
who were held responsible for maintaining interconnections with their kin outside of the household. Archival caches of letters, written by and between women suggest that it was women rather than men who controlled the flow of communication between family members separated by distance. Pioneering, thus, created an opportunity for women to carve out a new role within the family, one that allowed them to shape, and perhaps even exert new control over long distance relationships.

Personal correspondence constituted a repository of communal memory and a spiritual and emotional haven for Quaker women that allowed an exploration of female identity and women’s domestic culture. Letters, like networks of interactive relatives and friends, intertwined and coordinated, supported and sustained women joined by blood, marriage, class, and religious culture. Friends also preserved private and personal papers and letters in order to provide spiritual guidance for offspring, children and grandchildren, and to memorialize particularly pious individuals and the dead.\(^5\) Letters were a way to build a protective hedge around their familial ties in an attempt to conserve deeply-held beliefs and values as the economic and social structures of their lives changed rapidly. Quaker historian Sandra Stanley Holton points out that personal letters were re-read and saved “to build an emotional storehouse, where the most important personal relationships for the living might be sustained and relived.”\(^6\) My research supports this argument, and further, suggests that pioneering women who shared strong religious belief were all the more likely, as well as culturally and psychologically

\(^5\) Mary Rodman incoming correspondence, from Samuel Rodman, 10\(^{th}\) mo 14 1793. Box A-10-2.
equipped, to sustain and nurture familial and even extra-familial ties to their points of origin.

The objective of this study is to explore an aspect of frontier history that has in large part formed a basis of assumptions about the American pioneering experience, but has suffered from a dearth of qualitative analysis. Frederick Jackson Turner’s narrative of the “frontier” as an open wilderness that encouraged a rugged individualism and shaped the American national character has been inundated with criticism by historians of the New Western History. They argue that numerous factors, economic, cultural, social, political and physical played equally significant roles in the creation of the west.

The Ohio frontier in 1811 was such a frontier characterized by contact, interaction and conflict between peoples who entered into complex relationships and communities across contested borders and geographical boundaries. These processes would disappear by the early 1820s when almost all Ohio public land had been brought up, cleared, and turned by the plow for commercial agriculture.

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For Thomas Rotch who came from an agrarian background and had some knowledge of the farming skills needed to succeed, Ohio country in 1811 was a land of yeoman farmers who could control their own agricultural means of production. His story is part of the agrarian myth of ordinary people who went into the wilderness with blinding optimism and ambitions to create a peaceful and productive life. For his wife, the implications of settlement were far less clear and not as well defined.

The letters of women such as Charity Rotch compel historians to consider the methods and strategies women employed to stay interconnected and interdependent, and to recreate community and reinvent what “family” might mean on the frontier. Quaker women on the American frontier used their diaries and letters to invent new same-sex cultural spaces, to create a women’s culture, and to find a language to evaluate daily occurrences and new situations in which they found themselves. While the lives of Quaker and non-Quaker female colonizers showed remarkable parallels, I argue that religion should be placed alongside of class, gender and race in historians’ analysis of frontier experiences. In part due to their high rates of literacy, but also as a function of their identity as a religious minority within the American polity, and their political convictions that often placed them outside general Protestant female institutions, Quaker women perhaps more than members of other religious denominations wielded the pen strategically and forcefully to recreate female community and preserve family memory.

Charity and Thomas Rotch selectively collected and transported numerous family papers and documents to Ohio in 1811 in order to provide a spiritual legacy, and to create

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an emotional storehouse for their own archive to be read, stored, and relived by subsequent generations of family. Rotch preserved his personal and business correspondence, his business records as a member of his father’s whaling and shipping enterprise in New Bedford, his farm records from Hartford, Connecticut, his business papers, and other organizational records including daybooks and memoranda that detail his commercial and religious activities in Ohio.

Extant letters written by Charity Rotch number sixteen personal letters representing a tiny fraction of all the letters she must have written. Also preserved are many of her spiritual memoirs, testimonials, spiritual autobiographies, and Quaker-related documents. Of her known female correspondents, fifty-two women wrote two

10 Karin Wulf, “Of the Old Stock”: Quakerism and Transatlantic Genealogies in Colonial British America,” in The Creation of the British Atlantic World. eds. Elizabeth Manche and Carole Shamas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 305-307. Friends as zealous record keepers saved records of births, marriages and deaths to reaffirm vitally important kinship ties including earlier connections to transatlantic Quaker ancestors. Wulf writes, “Kinship ties remained a crucial source of material and cultural support and a wellspring of identity. Genealogical efforts were important acts of cultural production and an overlooked source of evidence about how the writers tried to understand themselves individually and collectively” (307).

11 Arvine Wales, who accompanied the Rotches to Ohio in 1811 as their foreman and his descendents preserved the Rotch papers and extended and saved their own family papers for a century and a half until the entire Archival collection came to rest in the Massillon (Ohio) Public Library in 1963. The Rotch Papers are concerned with early settler society, agriculture and commerce at Kendal date from 1811 to 1824, while the Wales Family Papers take up continued Kendal and Massillon development through 1910.

12 In 2002, photo copies of letters written by Charity Rotch between 1791 and 1823 came into the possession of the Massillon Public Library from the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. Letters were addressed to Elizabeth Rodman (sister), Samuel Rodman (brother), and Thomas Rotch’s parents. Five outgoing letters in the Massillon Library Archives, Box B-226-1 through 5 were addressed to a sister, Elizabeth Rodman, November 30, 1787; B-226-2 dated September 11, 1801 and B-226-3 also not addressed is dated August 8, 1809; B-226-4 addressed to Thomas Rotch’s parents giving details of his death in 1823; B-226-5 a personal letter to Thomas Rotch in New York, year unspecified.
hundred thirty-nine letters to Charity between 1776 and 1824. Of this number, eight women who Charity counted as her closest intimates wrote one hundred fifty-nine letters between 1795 and 1824. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the ways by which these women became interconnected, to discern what forces over time helped maintain their interdependence, and shape their new identity as Quakers and as women during a time of dispersal and emigration.

My reading of Charity Rotch’s letters suggests that women recognized the significance of gender in their lives as they defined themselves collectively as women. The vocabulary and the cultural grammar that they used to reinforce kinship ties were crucial to building and maintaining their faith communities over extended geographic distances.

My research shows that women as members of the Society of Friends forged particular sorts of relationships through correspondence and that correspondence itself meant something particular to Quaker women as a consequence of the unique meaning that religiosity lent to notions of community.

Women of Quaker families systematically collected objects that served as testaments to ordinary and everyday life – those recipes, medicinal remedies, straight pins, and such highly personal items as locks of hair of departed family members. Business, commercial, and private correspondence and evidence of shared church

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membership in the form of memoranda, testimonials and poems were treasured as signs of identity and culture.\textsuperscript{14} The extent, variety, and intimate nature of this evidence is an invaluable window into the lives of both men and women on the frontier.

Although individuals might read letters alone, more commonly Friends gathered as a family, especially in times of illness, or emotional and spiritual trial to read and re-live important personal relationships together.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, this collection of papers that extends from the mid eighteenth to the early nineteenth-century provides an historical record and represents a memorial to a family connected by kinship, friendship and religion — the mechanism whereby their past was bound to their future.

Before the 1970s, few scholars took note of the historical nature of women’s letters, diaries and journals. It was not until feminists insisted on the gendered nature of experience and until the history of ordinary people and “everyday life” began to be written that women’s letters would come to be seen as historically significant. In the 1980s, the work of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Lillian Faderman, and other feminist historians, interested in the exploration of women’s experiences as women, recognized the importance of exploring more fully the religious and personal aspects of women’s lives including close friendships between women in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries.

Recent studies by historians have produced a framework for how women’s letters might be understood. Dena Goodman points out that letters and letter writing for women


\textsuperscript{15} Carolyn Steedman, \textit{Dust: The Archive and Cultural History} (Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Holton, \textit{Quaker Women}, 158.
were protected, private spaces that ensured confidentiality and transparency. She believes that women became conscious of themselves as gendered subjects through the act of letter writing, an activity that encouraged them to reflect on their own life experiences and to express and articulate their ideas in a private forum. Goodman writes, “Privacy was notaloneness, but control over who could enter and the power to remove oneself from the power of others.”

For Quaker women, letter writing served an additional purpose, that of religious instruction. From their beginnings in the seventeenth-century, Quakers believed that God had ordained that each individual should be instrumental in the salvation of others. Friends were encouraged to record their spiritual experiences in journals and letters that were copied and passed around as a source of spiritual instruction. In their private social and cultural life, Quaker women, writing for and to their co-religious used their letters as a focus for their spiritual challenge. In addition to accounts of family news, letters contained expressions of spiritual truth that the writer hoped would open the way to a fuller spiritual self-knowledge. Letters documented the writer’s spiritual journey and often contained biblical references that co-religious in the eighteenth-century

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18 Douglas V. Steere, *Quaker Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 24; See Ann Bull letter to Charity Rotch, March 17, 1814, Box B-238-2, an example of a multi-authored letter of faith describing a visit with Comfort Collins, aged 101, who was active in the women’s itinerant ministry in the late eighteenth-century.
understood. In her study of historical Quakerism, Spencer points out that the Bible as sacred text of the Quakers was not an external authority but an internalized authority, and “their language and modes of expression were almost entirely biblical. Quakers lived, breathed and were infused by the words of Scripture. It was the foundational of all their theology and spirituality.”

The conviction of being in the Light also shaped individual and collective Quaker identity. For Friends, the sense of community with family connections and kin obligations weighed more heavily than individualism. Booy explains, “Perhaps more than most people, Quakers did achieve through their faith a stability of self and an identity that was clearly defined, focused and understood.”

Lillian Faderman claims that women’s friendships were universally accepted, and “signified a relationship that was considered noble and virtuous in every way.” Many women felt that what they needed was a mate with whom they could share their joys and their struggles. She wrote, “To spend their lives with a kindred spirit had been the dream of countless romantic friends, and in the nineteenth-century, it was finally possible.” Husbands, however, were not likely candidates for such relationships.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg insists on the social acceptability of intense, passionate and intimate same-sex attachments as an integral part of women’s relations with each other.

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24 Ibid., 205.
other, even in societies where gendered roles appeared crystallized. She argues that the strict gender role differentiation that characterizes eighteenth and nineteenth century society encouraged physical and emotional segregation that, in turn, engendered various forms of same-sex bonding from supportive sisterhoods to the erotic alliances of adolescence to avowed love and devotion among mature women. Smith-Rosenberg explains, “The ties between mothers and daughters, sisters, female cousins and friends, at all stages of the female life cycle constitute the most suggestive framework for the historian to begin an analysis of intimacy and affection between women.” In disentangling commonly accepted blurring between sexuality and identity, Smith-Rosenberg has argued for the existence of and significance of intense emotional relationships between women, an affection described by William Rounseville Alger as “a

high personal passion with the exception that no physical influence of sex enters into it; imagination exalting the soul, instead of inflaming the senses.”

While it is true that Quaker women’s friendships like other women’s same-sex ties and attachments were an integral part of their relations with each other, Quaker women’s intimate friendships and connections formed part of the larger pattern of community life that was based on the bond of shared religion. Joan Cashin locates the model for women’s friendships within the family, between sisters, cousins, sisters-in-law, and other female kin who shared the same faith. She writes, “for every soul needed fellowship, and the Age of Romanticism glorified it, with its emphasis on intimate ties with peers.”

The letters of the Rotch and Rodman women support the contention of early feminist historians and permit a deepening of our understanding of the precise mechanics of women’s culture by illustrating the extent and ways in which women formulated notions of kinship and community via correspondence. Correspondence produced by Quaker women permits us to reconstruct the cultural and social setting that encouraged their emotional relationships.

Chapter II of this dissertation utilizes the letters, account books and will of Mary Rodman, Charity Rotch’s mother as a lens through which to explore the social landscape and trace the contours of social, kin and exchange networks in Newport’s community of

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26 William Rounseville Alger, *Friendships of Women* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885), 120.
interdependent shopkeepers immediately after the Revolutionary War. I discuss the Rotch and Rodman family lineages and how these families were formed through marriage.

Chapter III analyzes letters and diaries of non-Quaker female migrants to show how their notions of community differed and how religion defined their lives and choices on the frontier. I present further evidence that new female migrants to the frontier clung to traditional notions of respectability and true womanhood not out of a sense of passive endurance, but rather to control their circumstances as “good women” and “civilizers” in the untamed wilderness. This chapter also addresses the issue of how women of different backgrounds reacted and adapted to frontier homemaking and entrepreneurship, and whether women believed that they shared in the freedom, equality, and social and political opportunities that the frontier offered men.

Chapter IV examines the Rotch enterprises in New Bedford and Hartford, and the factors that contributed to Thomas and Charity Rotch’s decision to remove to the Ohio frontier in search of new opportunities in 1811. I also discuss the settlement of Friends west of the Alleghany Mountains that as a prelude to migration into Ohio was a significant historical event in the history of American Quakerism.

Chapter V utilizes very extensive primary material to reveal Thomas and Charity Rotch’s differing perceptions of the frontier. Kendal, the settlement founded by Rotch in 1812, is the ideal place to look for evidence of women’s rural history including how women responded to the frontier and how female culture shaped Charity Rotch’s perceptions of her experience in Ohio.

In Chapter VI, I examine and analyze letters as records of the emotional and spiritual lives of members of the Rotch and Rodman circle of women who selectively
chose other co-religious to share their temporal and spiritual lives and concerns. Quaker women with shared religious beliefs and spiritual needs recognized that biological realities bound them together in physical and emotional intimacy. I present examples to explain how the importance of the Quaker mother to her children was linked through an intensely biblical vision of resignation to God’s will that for women represented a continuous process of deeper intimacy with God.

Chapter VII reinterprets the lives of frontier women through their letters and through detailed accounts of their frontier experiences. This final chapter assesses the place of religion, domesticity and kinships in women’s lives and the strategies they used to encourage their interconnections and interdependence. Finally, I evaluate the utilization of letters that possibly allowed women to recreate a women’s culture that shaped and controlled long distance relationships. My research shows that Quaker women forged particular sorts of relationships through correspondence and that correspondence itself meant something particular to them as a consequence of the unique meaning that religiosity lent to notions of community.
CHAPTER II

“A TRULY VALUABLE FAMILY”

Charity Rodman, born in 1766, was the youngest of eight children of Mary Borden Rodman (1729-1798) and Thomas Rodman (1724-1766) of Newport, Rhode Island. Her family from old stock was part of a thriving Quaker mercantile community in which matters of faith, family, and business overlapped to fuel Newport’s economic growth.

Quakers began arriving in Newport in 1650, and by 1700 Friends made up half of the town’s population. Newport, founded by William Coddington was one of four towns including Providence, Portsmouth and Warwick, also known as Shawomut, that made up the colony of Rhode Island in the 17th century. In his study of colonial New England, Jack P. Greene points out that economic power in large commercial New England towns

28 Julia W. Rodman, “Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman, their Forebears and Associates,” Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches, no. 52, (April 1926), 5. Rodman and Rotch families, Pamphlets, Box H-14-5. Charity’s great great grandmother, Joan Fowle (1609-1688) emigrated to Rhode Island from Headcorn, Kent, England with her spouse, Richard Borden (1595-1671) in 1637. Captain Thomas Rodman, about whom little is known, was a descendant of John Rodman, a Quaker missionary of English descent who arrived in Barbados from Ireland in 1655 or 1656 after being banished for refusing to remove his hat in the Court of the Assizes.


was broadly based and did not permit concentrations of political power in a few families. However, in Rhode Island, political leadership for most of the eighteenth century was in the hands of Friends, and most Quaker wealth was concentrated in Newport until the Revolutionary War ruined income and property values in that town.

From the time of his arrival in Rhode Island from Barbados in 1675, John Rodman’s son, Thomas Rodman (1640-1727), a physician, positioned himself in spheres of influence and power within the political, social, and religious structures of Quaker Newport, holding the office of clerk of the monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings of Rhode Island for thirty years. Holding the most powerful office of the Clerk of the New England Meeting until 1718, Rodman chose committees and framed the order of business of the yearly meeting.

31 Jack P. Greene, Pursuits of Happiness, The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Greene acknowledges exceptions for a correlation between wealth and office holding, particularly in commercially oriented towns such as Newport where religious culture shaped power relations within the community (71); Julia W. Rodman, Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman, 5; Ezra Stiles, Extracts, describes the unequal distribution of wealth in Newport after the tax assessment of 1760. A small percentage of the community were very wealthy: 1000 of the 1,200 families in Newport were worth £2,000, 200 families were worth £40,000 to £500,000, and several were worth £150,000-200,000 (90); Elaine Forman Crane, A Dependant People, Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992) estimates that two-thirds of Newport’s population were considered middle or upper class (95). For her discussion of estimates for the poor in Newport see p. 98, n50.


33 Worrall, Quakers in the Colonial Northeast. Before the Revolutionary War, Quaker wealth was based in Newport where a small and select group of town leaders repeatedly served on a large proportion of committee assignments including the offices of clerk and treasurer of the Yearly Meeting, leaving a few men in leadership positions of New England Meetings for long periods of time (76).
Like other members of the Quaker spiritual elite and grandees who held longtime leadership positions within their meetings, Rodman built a house on the corner of the Parade and Thames Street opposite Washington Square.\textsuperscript{34} His sons, Samuel (1703-1749), and Thomas (1724-1766), Charity’s father, both followed the sea as a profession as owners, managers, and agents of property and ships.\textsuperscript{35}

Basking in commercial prosperity in the 1760s, Newport was a major center of international trade whose citizens were interconnected in relationships that worked to the benefit of all.\textsuperscript{36} The town’s fine sea breezes attracted wealthy families from the West Indies and the Carolinas who came to the town to escape the sweltering summer heat. Elizabeth Evans explains, “Women frequently packed their silver tea service, climbed into carriages, and rode over unpaved streets, past exquisite gardens and avenues of trees, to a cliff over the Narragansett Bay, where, sitting in elegant, laced gowns, they gossiped over teacups.”\textsuperscript{37}

With other Newport merchants, Barbadian planters, and English and African traders, Captain Rodman’s wealth was connected to the sea and the worldwide triangular


\textsuperscript{37} Elizabeth Evans, \textit{Weathering the Storm, Women of the American Revolution}. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975), 245.
trade. Slavery as an expanding institution along with trade in rum and molasses, ship
building, fishing, and foreign trade were behind much of the growing wealth of the
northern colonies, including Rhode Island and Newport. Between 1750 and 1760, Friends
who opposed slavery attempted to persuade slaveholding Quaker to stop buying slaves.
However, not until 1776 did the Society call for Friends to free slaves or face the
prospect of disownment. 38 However, the core of town’s economic life and wealth was
concentrated in the hands of politically elite merchant families who were directly
involved in the vast sugar, molasses and rum trade, and shipbuilding, all of which were
dependent on the traffic in slaves. 39

During Captain Rodman’s absences at sea, Mrs. Rodman as “deputy husband”
was permitted to expand the range of her husband’s commercial activities and assumed
control of his estate in order to keep his property in the family. 40 She could also take
court action, enter into contracts, inherit and will property, and retain earnings from her

business transactions. As manager of his business affairs, she probably had a detailed understanding of the value of her husband’s property. However, he retained control of any of his wife’s trading activities and any earning she may have garnished became his on his return. She was defined by law as a legal dependant who could not act independently of her husband. While gender relations were asymmetrical, expectations were that she would share in the management of his property, and in her role as his agent, she may have gained and exercised power.

While departing husbands might advise their wives to depend on male relatives for advice and assistance, women who handled their own household financial affairs

42 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives, Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750 (New York: Vantage Books, 1991). Ulrich argues that women were dependant and that gender restrictions were structural rather than psychological or ideological. As “deputy husband” of her husband’s estate, a woman could act in their family’s best interests, however, as assumed their husband’s duties and responsibilities without directly challenging the patriarchal nature of the New England family (38); Mary Beth Norton, Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996). Norton offers an alternative view of women’s status on the eve of the American Revolution. She argues that gender boundaries were well defined, and a hierarchical structure existed within the household. Society undervalued women who failed to question or defend the scope of their domestic roles. During the Revolutionary War, women became politically active and managed their family affairs independent of men but were viewed as inferior (18).
experienced a dramatic change in their traditional roles as they became economic actors in the commercial activity of the marketplace.\textsuperscript{44} With their husband’s approval, a wife might take on numerous tasks that furthered the good of their families. If a woman had a talent for business in her husband’s stead, a woman might gain experience and expertise in handling his affairs.\textsuperscript{45}

For women left to fend for themselves while their husbands were off on voyages at sea, their sudden independence could be a dangerous step for some women, and a strong incentive to earn a living for others. While they could recover debts, rents and profits of spouses absent for three or more years, a woman without family connections was at a disadvantage financially until her husband was declared dead or missing at sea.\textsuperscript{46}

In late eighteenth century whaling and shipping communities, women left on shore frequently formed mutually supportive interdependent economic relationships that enmeshed them in broader community networks.\textsuperscript{47} While they may have gained autonomy as “deputy wives,” women continued to subscribe to the cultural imperative of


\textsuperscript{46} Crane, \textit{Ebb Tide in New England}, 169.

female dependence on men. Lisa Norling writes, “Through sharing activities and concerns the women onshore sustained a dense web of relationships that bound together a community extended over thousands of miles and years of separation.”

Interactive networks that made survival possible for women were important, and the time and effort that went into finding and packaging goods for family proved the affection of the sender and reinforced reciprocal definitions of kinship and family. Even at a distance, the delivery of the mail as a new tool that facilitated women’s work arrangements linked women together in same sex and kinship networks. Charity wrote to Mary Rodman on Nantucket, “If the asparagus should have a long passage, please to put it directly in cold water – we please ourselves with the anticipation of seeing our dear sister very soon.”

When Rodman’s ship foundered off the Bay of Honduras en route to Jamaica on November 16, 1766, he left his widow and eight children with a house and several store buildings on the Newport wharf. Mary Rodman’s legal status as a femme coerte that

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51 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, 13; Julia Rodman, “Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman,” Box H-14-5 reports that the Rodman house to which Mary Rodman and her children returned in 1783 was still standing at the corner of Walnut and Second Streets in Newport in 1930(9); Robert V. Wells, The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) points out that in Newport in 1774, the average household of 6.3 persons included the domestic unit of parents, children and servants. 15.8% of households had at least ten members while 51.2% of the households had five to nine members (47-48).
identified her with her husband as one person was suspended. Widowhood changed her gender and legal status, and as femme sole, she received an economic identity of her own. Mrs. Rodman was now legally free of male control and completely responsible for her husband’s estate, his commercial and economic interests, her children, and the provisioning her household. In the final settlement of her husband’s estate, Mary Rodman inherited a third of his monies accorded her by law, £237.10. Her son, Samuel received £159.10, and surviving daughters, who normally received their bequests in goods or monies rather than land, received between £37 and £178.

52 For a discussion of the rules of coverture and property relations in Colonial America see Linda K. Kerber, “The Republic Mother and the Woman Citizen: Contradictions and Choices in Revolutionary America,” in Women’s America, Refocusing on the Past eds. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 121-123; Carole Shamas, “Early American Women and Control over Capital,” in Women in the Age of the American Revolution eds. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia:1990), 124-154; Femme coverture status meant that a woman lost the right to sue or be sued, to purchase property, to sign contracts or to earn or dispense wages once she married. She was entitled to spousal support during her husband’s life, and after his death, she was entitled to one third share of her husband’s estate. Once a child was born, her husband reserved the right to use any of her assets or properties brought to the marriage. Strict laws regarding inheritance were established by most states not so much to assure women’s legal rights but to prevent a drain by dependants on the public coffers.; Crane, A Dependant People, 73; Holton, Quaker Women, 17-18.


54 Carol Berkin & Leslie Horowitz, eds. Women’s Voices, Women’s Lives, Documents in Early American History (Boston: Northeastern University, 1998), 98. Women in Pennsylvania were granted femme sole status as early as 1718 which gave them permission to earn a livelihood in their husband’s absence. As femme sole traders, they could take legal action, could sue or be sued, and were responsible for their own debts. This act relieved local governments of the burden of support for indigent women and their families and also allowed creditors to collect family debts.

55 David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 569; Box E-2-11 Mary Rodman Business and Personal papers.

56 Mary Rodman Business and personal papers. Box E-2-11; Ulrich, Good Wives, 7.
The provision of at least one-third of a husband’s personal property and real estate was not meant to encourage the economic independence of his widow. Rather, it was meant to ensure that women did not become dependant on town charity for support.\textsuperscript{57} In towns such as Newport where seafaring families made up the majority of the population, family and friends formed the first line of defense for women and children left in poverty as a result of frequent or prolonged absences or accidental deaths of seamen.\textsuperscript{58} The legal system was weighed in favor of men, and women without family ties and stores of goodwill were forced to find alternative ways of circumventing gender-based inequalities that threatened their autonomy and economic status.\textsuperscript{59} Norton writes, “Faced with the alternative of subsisting on a tiny income from their husbands’ estates, coupled perhaps with humiliating charity, many widows decided to try to support themselves and their children through their own efforts.”\textsuperscript{60}

For women living in New England seaport towns, the death of a husband at sea could spell emotional and economic disaster, as well as social marginalization. Mrs. Rodman described her remorse to a friend in 1771. She wrote, “To recount my various exercises & trials since my last to thee (in parting with a kind good husband) would only give thee pain.”\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Norton, \textit{Liberty’s Daughter}, 137.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Crane, \textit{A Dependant People}, 171.
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Norton, \textit{Liberty’s Daughter}, 137.
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Mary Rodman letter to Esther Tuke, 3 mo 3d 1771. Box A-1-1.
\end{itemize}
Widows were expected to mourn the death of their husbands and also act like fathers, making important decisions about their children’s futures, their education, training especially for daughters, their marriages and their money.\textsuperscript{62} As legally and economically free and independent women, widows became responsible for payment of their own debts and taxes and could be sued.\textsuperscript{63} While sermons advised women to “supply the place of both parents,” women without family connections or the means to support their children alone had few prospects for personal autonomy.\textsuperscript{64} Some families were able to absorb widows without financial or emotional stress, while others with limited living space and financial resources could not.\textsuperscript{65}

Widowhood signaled a loss of independence for women and the cost of rendering assistance was felt keenly by all parties involved. Widows left without financial support frequently were considered economic dependants and often turned to their kin for assistance. The courts were generally sympathetic to the widows of property-owning men and felt morally obligated to provide support for women who had legally lost their property at their marriage. Thus, women understood the importance of cultivating lifelong kinship networks as an alternative to possible starvation or the poorhouse in old age. The Newport winter months were especially difficult for families left in poverty when men failed to return from the sea. People lived difficult lives of hunger, privation, privation,

\textsuperscript{64} Salmon, \textit{Women and the Law of Property}, 184; Crane, \textit{A Dependant People} In 1755 and 1774, children under 16 made up 40% of the population of Newport compared to 46%-49% elsewhere in the colonies (47).
illness and bitter cold. Charles Rappleye writes, “In that environment, fate was accepted as part of a grand design, beyond the ken of ordinary men.”

Poorhouse records and tax records reveal that women lost economic standing in New England on the eve of the Revolutionary era for several reasons including the difficulties of running a household alone and lack of access to land and real property. Women also had problems obtaining credit from merchants, and many women, especially widows who could not support themselves, became indentured servants or were forced on to public relief from the town treasury.

Landless or indigent women including newly-arrived European immigrants or freed slaves looking for work were watched by town leaders for signs of dependence, and were warned out of towns at the first sign that they might require public assistance from the already strained welfare system. Salmon writes,

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66 Charles Rappleye, *Sons of Providence, the Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade, and the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 75.

67 Crane, *A Dependant People*. Women headed 20% of Newport households in 1774; With fewer men of marriageable age in the town, young women with aspirations for social mobility though marriage left Newport for brighter prospects elsewhere in New England. A disproportionate sex ratio led to fewer marriages, declining birth rates, smaller families, and greater risk for poverty (70-71).


Unless a woman owned land, she had no guarantee that her share of the family estate would equal what she had put into it. After a widow’s source of support had vanished, the law continued to deny her the property she needed to maintain her standard of living.  

Newport’s service economy in the early 1770s was tied to and depended on the expansion of trade in the colonies which linked together people, goods, money, and ideas.

As she approached her new responsibilities, Mrs. Rodman had access to invaluable resources that would prove useful as she entered the world of commerce as a small shopkeeper: her status, her practical experience as ‘deputy husband,’ her property, and her extended kinship network. As a widow without her husband’s protection, she could trade, make transactions, and recover debts under his name. Literate and educated women displayed knowledge of business as the administrators of their late husband’s estate. In Carol Berkin’s view, propertied women who identified with the family to which they belonged derived power from their ownership. Such women, Berkin writes, “possessed a consciousness of self and a confidence in reason derived from their social class’s emphasis on individual rights and opportunities.”

However, Rodman remained dependant on kinsmen for financial advice and practical help which, as a mother she may have taken for granted. She wrote to her son, “Wilbur has been here, & desires thou

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71 Literacy was on the rise in the late eighteenth-century and studies indicate that fifty percent of women of ordinary means in Connecticut and Massachusetts could write their own name by the 1770s. see David W. Conroy, “An Inquiry into When and Why Women Learned to Write in Colonial New England,” *Journal of Social History*, XXI (1992):579-589.
would send the white Lead. He has glazed the garret window and mended others since thou had his account. I am much indebted to thee.”

Widowhood reconfigured Mrs. Rodman’s maternal identity and forced her to approach her family’s finances and economic interests in new ways. Her wage earning abilities, her increased familiarity with matters of money, greater public visibility, autonomy, control over her own property and her willingness to act independently complicate the picture of her participation in business and economic life at the turn of the nineteenth-century.

But even after twenty years of widowhood, she was still unable to accept her husband’s death in silence. Devotion and duty to her dead husband were important, and reaffirmed the belief shared by many widows in the proprietary hold that a husband had on a wife’s affections. Mrs. Rodman’s letter to her daughter, Sarah, suggests that despite patriarchal realities, she and her husband shared common goals and a loving partnership. His family’s livelihood depended on her networks and her ability to make decisions in his absence that would not prove embarrassing or humiliating.

Twenty-nine years after her husband’s death, she was still known through her relationship to her husband, as “widow Rodman.” She wrote to her daughter, “Yesterday, dear Sarah, was twenty years since I parted with thy father, who was one of the fondest and most

73 Mary Rodman letter to Samuel Rodman, Newport 6 mo 3d, 1789. Box A-1-2.
74 Hartigan-O’Connor, “Abigail’s Accounts,” 38.
77 Mary Rodman incoming correspondence from Elisha Thornton, 26th of 7th Mo 1795.
affectionate Parents. The rolling seasons have found me encompassed with solicitude
anxiety and care, and I pass many solitary and gloomy hours.”

The 1774 Rhode Island census reveals that fifteen percent of the state wide
population of 59,607 resided in Newport, while seven percent lived in Providence. Of
the two towns, Newport was the more prominent because of its connection to the sea and
the trans-Atlantic carrying trade. Examination of the cultural associations of the
nineteenth market confirms that in addition to being community focal points and places
of commerce where news about men at sea was exchanged and goods were bought and
sold, women were enmeshed in a highly gendered shore side exchange economy.
Communal work brought women into close daily proximity, and women often shared or
combined households with friends, neighbors, and kin. The market place was a positive
experience for women who as economic and discursive subjects, conducted business and
exchanged words and ideas in an environment often free of male.

Ledgers for 1775 confirm that Mary Rodman participated in the domestic
economy. Her contacts with people who supplied consumers with imported goods linked
her to the wider world of commerce and trade. She possibly took over management of
her deceased husband’s trading network. In 1770, she owned stores on the Newport Long
Wharf, and benefited from her ownership of his Brig, Dove, purchased in 1767, using the

78 Mary Rodman, Extracts from letters, Box A-1-1 Letter to Sarah Rodman, Newport,
February 25, 1786.
80 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “Daughters of Liberty” Religious Women in Revolutionary
New England,” in Women in the Age of the American Revolution eds. Ronald Hoffman
81 Hartigan-O’Connor, “Abigail’s Accounts,” 35.
82 Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, Box E-2-1
vessel to reduce shipping cost of goods and produce from family gardens and farms to consumers connected through the social practice of shopping.83 During the months of June through September 1775, she kept running accounts of her transactions, specifying the quantity of her purchases such as 25 pounds plus 2 loaves of sugar, 6 dozen eggs, 44 pounds of butter, 8 gallons of molasses, and more frequently, the weight of her purchases followed by the cost of the purchase. For example, she ordered “Chocolate 40 and lamb 55 for a total cost of £4.15, and bread 77 and fish 31 at a cost of £ 5.6. She also ordered tea, 1 ½ lbs, which became a staple in households before 1773.84

The “Daughters of Liberty” who organized in Newport in 1766 to support the colonial boycott of British imports and taxation of items named in the Townsend Act of 1767 including tea and textiles, abstained from tea drinking, and refused to patronize loyalist shops. While newspapers urged women not to drink tea, and a group of Newport women in 1769 reportedly “rejected the poisonous Bohea,” Rodman apparently did not join the organized nonimportation movement against British merchandise. Although the price of staples was high in the 1770s, middle class and elite consumers were in no mood to forego the purchase of luxury goods.85 Tea and the equipment with which to serve it

84 Mary Rodman Business and personal papers. Box E-2-1; Catherine Fennelly, Connecticut Women in the Revolutionary Era (Chester, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1975),19.
85 For discussion of the non-importation movement see Robert J. Chaffin, “The Townsend Acts crisis, 1767-1770,” in Greene and Pole, A Companion to the American Revolution, 134-150. The movement to boycott all products taxed by the Townsend Duties of 1767 began to collapse when Parliament repealed four of the five duties in 1770. The tax on tea remained in place, but by early 1771 imports had resumed throughout all of the colonies. A shortage of currency and growing unemployment
were rare in the colonies and Britain in the early 1700s. By 1776, tea was common on both sides of the Atlantic. Tea services, however, were high status items largely purchased by women that separated various classes, both below and above, from each other.\textsuperscript{86}

Newport’s greatness as an entry port came to an end in 1776 when British warships and transport vessels anchored at the town harbor.\textsuperscript{87} Sarah Howland reported to her cousin in April, 1776, “We are full of Soldiers here, cousin Redwoods house, J. Clarkes, Oldfields, Rivera’s Rome’s, J. Taylors & many other good houses have been full.”\textsuperscript{88} Marie Callender, another Friend who remained behind in Newport informed Mary Rodman that the poorer inhabitants of the town, mostly women with children without means to provide for themselves were reduced to eating scraps of bread, bran and water

influenced their decision to resume foreign imports; Joseph L. McDevitt \textit{The House of Rotch: Whaling Merchants of Massachusetts, 1734-1828}, Ph.D. diss. (The American University, 1978) writes that Boston and Providence merchants agreed to refrain from purchasing taxed items, but Newport merchants did not, and were widely criticized for their actions (165); Linda K. Kerber, “The Republican Mother & the Woman Citizen, Contradictions & Choices in Revolutionary America,” in Kerber and DeHart, \textit{Women’s America, Refocusing the Past}, 120; \textit{Providence Gazette}, Jan. 16, 1768; See “A Copy of the Agreement of the Ladies in this Town, against drinking Tea, until the Revenue Acts are Repealed” (January 31, 1770), \textit{Boston Gazette}, February 12, 1770 and “A Lady’s Adieu to her Tea Table,” \textit{Virginia Gazette}, January 20, 1774.  


\textsuperscript{88} Sarah Howland letter, Newport 19\textsuperscript{th} of 4 mo, 1776 in Quaker Letters and Epistles, Box F-14-9.
boiled together. The town, she wrote, “was full of the harsh disagreeable sounds of drums and fifes.”

In the autumn of 1775, Mary Rodman with her children and other Quakers sought safely inland at Smithfield and Leicester, Massachusetts where they remained until 1783. The invasion of the town was psychologically devastating for inhabitants who blocked the streets with every conveyance in their efforts to find sanctuary inland. The removal of a sizable segment of the town’s population was the beginning of a defection that eventually drained the town of its strength and spirit. Recalling her ordeal to a

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89 Marie Callender letter to Charity Rodman, May 10, 1776. Box B-239-1; Konstantin Dierkes, “Let me Chat a Little”: Letter Writing in Rhode Island before the Revolution, Rhode Island History Vol. 53, no. 4 (November 1995). Letter writing became a more common practice in the second half of the eighteenth-century with delivery of mail to the Newport post office doubling between 1749 and 1774. Dierkes believes that more people were probably receiving mail than post office records indicate since many writers of all social classes also sent letters opportunely by relatives, friends, and informal conveyance (103-120); Polishook, Rhode Island and the Union, 14-15; Worrall, Quakers in the Colonial Northeast, 151.

90 Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers. Box E-2-21, Newport Mercury, October 9, 1775.

91 Newport Mercury, October 9, 1775.

92 David S. Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760-1776 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1958), 187; Rodman, “Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman,” 11, also Box E-2-21; Worrall, Quakers in the Colonial Northeast, 148; Lynne Withey, Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth-Century (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 81; John R. Bartlett, Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Rhode Island. According to the 1774 census of Newport, Mary Rodman’s household including one male above sixteen, her son, Samuel Rodman, three females over the age of sixteen, including herself, daughter, Mary (b. 1757), another unnamed female above sixteen, five females below sixteen, (Charity, b.1766, Elizabeth, b. 1759, Anna, b. 1761, twins Hannah and Sarah, b. 1764) and one black female (27); Wells, The Population of the British Colonies found that just before the Revolutionary War, slavery was more common in Newport than elsewhere in New England (69-109).
friend in 1782, Rodman wrote, “Had I been told some years past of the various trials I had to pass through, it would have appeared impossible for me to survive them.”

Little is known about the education of Charity Rodman and her siblings who were schooled by their brother, Samuel Rodman, during their sojourn in Massachusetts in the 1780s. Charity would have been eleven or twelve years old, the age at which girls were taught reading and penmanship, most frequently at home by their mothers or at private academies. Although more women were taught rudimentary reading and writing in colonial America, only a few women of the elite class learned to read and write well. For girls of the elite class, training in calligraphy rather than composition was considered an attribute of a gentlewoman. Educated persons were expected to be able to write graceful letters, and penmanship became a means of self-expression for women who turned their skills to authorship in their diaries and journals. Thus, letter writing became a form of self-expression, a display of one’s handwriting skills, and a goal in itself.

While reading was considered an easy skill to teach, penmanship, the domain of men, was a skill to be utilized by white upper class males in a range of vocations from clerks to merchants and ministers.

After the Revolution, women with expectations that they would put such knowledge to practical use took advantage of the increased availability of courses in

93 Mary Rodman letter to her Daughter S.R. Nantucket 8th mo 9th 1782, Box A-1-1.
94 Fennelly, Connecticut Women, 22.
96 Holton, Quaker Women, 21.
97 E. Jennifer Monaghan, Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 373; Hobbs, Nineteenth Century Women, 8.
reading, spelling, basic arithmetic, and bookkeeping.\textsuperscript{98} With the inclusion of writing with reading in summer sessions open to girls, more middle class women in New England acquired literacy.\textsuperscript{99}

In addition to meeting their own economic needs, literacy became an important part of the transformation of culture for women entrusted with the responsibility of educating their children. Marriage after 1775 was invested with political meaning as women assumed the role of virtuous and self-sacrificing Republican wives and mothers who would influence their husbands and shape their sons into reputable and productive citizens\textsuperscript{100} As women’s literacy rose in New England, women committed to their families and the spread of literacy formed reading circles to improve their reading and conversational skills, and their social status. Martha Routh commented to Charity Rotch in 1802, “The reading society appears to go on very well. They have lately admitted Nancy Howland and their present number is six. They have concluded to limit it and receive no further additions, as it would render their meetings inconvenient to have a very numerous circle.”\textsuperscript{101}

**Kinship, Piety, and the Business of Marriage**

Returning to Newport in June 1783, Mary Rodman found a town much reduced and desolate in appearance.\textsuperscript{102} Quaker Meeting houses had been confiscated for military purposes, the town was stripped of wood and livestock and shipping came to a standstill.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{101} Martha Routh letter to Charity Rotch, 2\textsuperscript{nd} mo 7\textsuperscript{th} 1802. Box B-302-1.
\textsuperscript{102} Mary Rodman, Business and Personal papers, Box E-2-21; Hartigan-O’Connor, “Abigail’s Accounts,” 40.
Wharfs, farms and houses were destroyed, and food and provisions were scarce throughout the state.\textsuperscript{103}

The Rodman home on the corner of Walnut and Second Streets on Easton’s Point was one of the few to escape destruction in the town where business had come to almost a complete standstill.\textsuperscript{104} The British-imposed ban on shipping between the United States and the West Indies proved catastrophic to a community dependant on trade with the Caribbean. Trade-dependant Rhode Island had an internal debt of £ 150,000 for goods and services and salaries for soldiers incurred during the war. The burden of this debt precipitated economic depression and decline and rocked Newport’s post-war stability.\textsuperscript{105}

Britain’s determination to regain its dominant position in trade and the willingness of its merchants to extend easy credit exacerbated the flight of specie abroad, draining the new nation of hard currency (gold and silver). Without manufactured produce or surplus of agricultural goods, hard currency all but disappeared in Rhode Island by 1784, forcing cash strapped merchants to barter for goods and services or pay their employees in commodities.\textsuperscript{106} Barter became the acceptable mode of trade, rents were paid in corn, and shops were empty of goods with the exception of apples, matches, and coarse cloth.\textsuperscript{107} While British-made goods were in demand everywhere, the shortage

\textsuperscript{103} Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics, 185; Polishook, 1774-1795, Rhode Island and the Union, 46; Ezra Stiles recorded that by January 2, 1776, three quarters of the inhabitants of Newport had abandoned the town (Diary, I, 649).

\textsuperscript{104} Stiles, Diary. Vol. II, 427. Stiles estimates that 300 houses were destroyed, but the actual number was closer to 500; Evans, Weathering the Storm, 246-7.

\textsuperscript{105} Crane, A Dependant People, 161-165.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.,105.

\textsuperscript{107} Samuel Greene Arnold, History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations (New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1860), 528; Polishook, Rhode Island and the Union, 47, 104-106.
of specie precipitated an economic downturn throughout the northeast. In 1789, a foreign visitor remarked that Newport resembled “an empty place, the shops are miserably stocked and offer for sale only coarse cloth, packets of mates, baskets of apples and other cheap goods.”

In a letter to Esther Maud Tuke (1727-1794) who must be numbered as one the most influential Yorkshire ministers of her day, Mary Rodman revealed that during her family’s inland exile, two of her children, her eldest and only son, Samuel, and a daughter, Eliza had married the children of William Rotch and Elizabeth Barney Rotch. “A truly valuable family,” that House of Rotch dominated the New England whaling and shipping industry from their seat in New Bedford, and previously Nantucket. Julia Rodman, a family biographer confirms that gatherings of Friends at “ceaseless successions of weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings and upon every possible occasion between” were occasions reveled by young Quaker girls, “not only because of the religious significance, but because of the social opportunities.” She wrote, “Many a marriage was the outcome of the social intercourse established through these Meetings where Friends came from far and near to bear their testimony.”

108 Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, Gender in the Antebellum City (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002), 34-35.
112 Ibid.
In keeping with custom, Quakers extended hospitality to Friends from off the island during yearly meeting time in Newport, New England’s financial and commercial capital before the war and long the seat for Quaker political leadership. The Yearly Meeting of 1784 was an occasion for urban sophisticates and the rustics to network with each other for purposes of business and religion. 113 As mistress of a household, Mrs. Rodman opened her home to the Rotch family of Nantucket. Thus, Thomas Rotch and Charity Rodman, both of the same class and the same family, became acquainted as children. Both hailed from large and distinguished families, but of the two, the House of Rotch was by far the more stellar and had been since at least 1750. 114

During the eighteenth century, northeastern families of wealth and property increasingly put aside concerns for economic advantage and consolidation of wealth and acquiesced to the idea of marriage based on mutual love and respect. Blood ties and kin culture were important in the affairs of each individual and loyalty to family shaped the nexus of relationships at every level. Wealth, of course, helped to cement family ties, and Friends accumulated wealth in land and property for their children’s financial protection.

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114 William Rotch, *Memorandum written by William Rotch in the Eightieth Year of His Age* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916); McDevitt, *The House of Rotch*, 65-76, 143ff; Worrall, *Quakers in the Colonial Northeast*, 142, 151. William Rotch, Sr. owned more than a dozen vessels in 1783. His assets, holdings and investments in 1771 rivaled that of the John Hancock family of Boston. As members of the New England elite, appointments to leadership positions at all levels of New England Quakerism marked the boundaries of the family’s wealth and power in precise terms. As a member of the powerful New England Meeting for Sufferings, he administered funds and directed relief efforts for Quakers and non-Quakers in 1775 and 1776, and to Nantucket Friends stranded on the island until the end of the war in 1783 (160-175).

Literary magazines and women’s writings of the period suggest that personal happiness and companionate marriage increasingly replaced family considerations as motives for marriage in the minds of many well-to-do marriageable women.\footnote{Virginia Chambers-Schiller, \textit{Liberty, A Better Husband: Single Women in America, The Generations of 1780-1840} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 36; Holton, \textit{Quaker Women}, 65.} While the idea of companionate marriage was widespread by the middle of the eighteenth century, elite families often went beyond the limits of their neighborhoods to find a suitable group of family-approved young men for their children. Although periodic extended visits and letters sustained dispersed but interdependent and interconnected webs of family and friends, elite women were often expected to relocate beyond easy reach of their female circle after marriage. Joan Gunderson writes, “Courtship heightened family concerns about a wise choice.”\footnote{Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful To the World}, 42, 51.}

For Quakers, marriage was not left solely to the discretion of the courting couple. Before announcing their intention to marry, the perspective couple appeared before male and female overseers who were charged with the task of investigating the “clearness of like engagements with others.” If “the way seemed clear,” the couple publicly
announced their intention to marry before their Monthly Meetings. Their marriage was one of equals based on mutual trust, understanding, respect, loyalty, love and esteem resembling the “companionship of two souls.” Once the union was deemed acceptable to the families, the meeting and the community, the ceremony could then go forward according to custom in the meeting to which the bride belonged.

The Rotches and Mary Rodman understood that successive marriages of their children was an investment for the future that strengthened and deepened kinship ties and created bonds of mutual obligation, affection, and support. Harmonious relations were crucial to the advancement and protection of both families, and marriage between the siblings of each family widening the Rodman and Rotch female circle of in-laws.

Quaker families demanded special loyalty, and ties of blood, church membership, economic activity and the accumulation of wealth and power were at the center of family life. On the eve of the marriage of her daughter, Charity to their son, Thomas, Mary Rodman wrote to William Rotch and his wife, “As the union of our dear Children with the frequent demonstrations of your regard to me & family, has been a continued source of grateful acknowledgment.” Rotch gave his blessing to the union, responding from Nantucket, “And now as thou observes, a triple alliance is likely to take place, through

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120 Mary Rodman letter to W & E Rotch, 4 mo 4, 1790. Box A-1-1.
121 Holton, Quaker Women, 53.
Thomas & Charity, which meets our full approbation; we wish them all the felicity in this life and that they may be true help meets to each other.”

While the ceremony itself was simple, the process of Quaker marriage was extremely complex. Each step was recorded in meeting minutes before the couple set a date for the marriage. Meetings then appointed another committee to oversee the actual marriage ceremony to ascertain that proper custom and good order was observed. The marriage of Charity Rodman and Thomas Rotch went forward in the Yearly Meeting House at Newport on May 6, 1790. William Rotch, Sr., tied up with business in Boston and unable to reach Newport in time for the ceremony sent his son, William, Jr. in his stead. Charity’s entire family attended the ceremony. Their marriage certificate, signed by distinguished Friends and family who as witnesses to the union assumed responsibility for the success of the marriage was delivered to the clerk of the Monthly Meeting for registry before being returned to the newly married couple.

Other marriages between the Rodmans and the Rotches included Samuel Rodman who married William Rotch’s daughter, Elizabeth on 1 June, 1780 and William Rotch, Jr. who married Elizabeth Rodman on July 17, 1782. Hannah Rodman married wealthy Philadelphia Quaker Samuel Rowland Fisher, a descendant of John Fisher who accompanied William Penn to Pennsylvania in 1682. Both of these wealthy families, the Rotches of Nantucket and the Fishers of Philadelphia were members of the Quaker

124 William Rotch, Sr. incoming letter to Mary Rodman, 4th Mo 21, 1790 Box A-22-2.
125 Ibid.
127 Rodman, “Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman”, Box H-14-5.
grandees, that class of Friends who had prospered in northern cities and were comparable
to the merchant princes of Boston and the wealthy planter class in the South.128

The joining of prominent families in alliances of marriage (a Rotch daughter to a
Rodman son, and a Rotch son to a Rodman daughter) is an example of the importance of
marital links that provided the capital needed to launch whaling voyages and long
distance shipping ventures.129 Such ties between families in Nantucket, Newport and
Philadelphia linked kin locally and over distances into expansive supportive networks.
For the women, marriage into such families consolidated ties with female kin, eliminated
the option of self-sufficiency, and possibly decreased a woman’s dependence on her
husband.130

Thus, Friends utilized interwoven family supported by blood relationships to
secure personal and business interests. Women’s roles in the family enterprise were
crucial. Their visits, same sex activities, and letter writing were part of the horizontal
structure that assured that competent, capable closely-related kin remained tied together,
and that individuals were dedicated to the same goal of achieving mutual success. While
this strategy did not always succeed, intermarriage among members of the same faith
provided access to family connections and sources of wealth and almost inevitably were
linked to financial security and commercial success. James Walvin points out that
Quakers developed “a national network of others” that brought disparate groups of

128 Patricia U. Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven, Religion, Society, and Politics in
129 McDevitt, The House of Rotch, 528; John Gillis, A World of Their Own Making (New
130 Marilyn Ferris Motz, True Sisterhood, Michigan Women and their Kin, 1820-1920
Friends into contact for financial and commercial possibilities. Yearly Meetings which lasted seven days were particularly important venues where Friends came in contact with major metropolitan families and dynasties, “where deals were struck and opportunities pursued”\textsuperscript{131}

The extent of the Rotch and Rodman business acumen and the wealth the family would achieve over time grew considerably. At the time of his death in 1850, William Rotch, Jr. left an estate valued at $1,000,000. In 1852, William R. Rodman, son of Samuel Rodman, had an estimated wealth of $500,000. Charles W. Morgan, an iron works merchant and Samuel Rodman’s son-in-law, was worth $200,000, and James Arnold from Providence who joined William Rotch’s New Bedford firm and married one of his daughters had an estimated wealth of $1,000,000, partly received by marriage.\textsuperscript{132}

Women and Community in post-war Newport

Immediately after the Revolutionary War, the resumption of trade stimulated economic recovery on both sides of the Atlantic. During two decades of change, Mary Rodman took on a wide variety of roles usually performed by men, not only to survive but in order to achieve success and profit in the male dominated world of commerce.\textsuperscript{133} In mapping her experiences as a widow and administrator of her husband’s estate, this dissertation’s gender focus examines the boundaries of Mary Rodman’s post-war

\textsuperscript{131} Walvin, \textit{Morals and Money}, 81-82, 85, 89; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class} (London: Hutchinson, 1987), chaps 5-6 and 216-21.
\textsuperscript{132} John M. Bullard, \textit{The Rotches} (New Bedford, Mass: by the author, 1947), 81-82.
\textsuperscript{133} Gundersen, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 15.
topographical map. I argue that gender relations were integral to the continued mutations of life in an unstable economic, political and social environment. Gender as a lens through which to view Rodman’s experiences can reveal unnoticed areas of life in a “city of women,” and in consequence, the history of laboring women in Newport in the last three decades of the nineteenth century begins to look different.\textsuperscript{134}

The pool of women in Newport after the Revolution included a large number of widows and unmarried women who worked outside of their homes and ran their own businesses.\textsuperscript{135} While the war stimulated inland trade and brought new producers and consumers into the economy, it also changed the demographics of the town. The population of Newport declined from 9,200 in 1770 to 6,716 by 1790.\textsuperscript{136} Of the 5,540 people listed in the town census for 1782, most were previous residents, “carryovers from pre-war days,” with women outnumbering men, 30.6% to 17.6%.\textsuperscript{137} The reasons for the disproportionate sex ratio in Newport in the 1780s and 1790s are complex. Men and women proprietors abandoned Newport as the town lost mercantile ties to Europe. A steady flow of merchants, migrants, and seasonal laborers under pressure from the war and economic depravation abandoned coastal regions for inland areas and new centers of

\textsuperscript{134} For an analysis of working class women in New York City, see Christine Stansell, \textit{City of Women, Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

\textsuperscript{135} Matson, “Women’s Economies in North America,”281.

\textsuperscript{136} Robert V. Wells, “Population and Family in Early America,” in \textit{a Companion to the American Revolution}, 45; Also see Crane, \textit{A Dependant People}, 100-101n.75,76,166n10.

wealth and influence in Providence and New York.\textsuperscript{138} Men joined the military or migrated, and were not replaced by a population of immigrants.\textsuperscript{139} In the last two decades of the century, women who did not emigrate increasingly took advantage of opportunities to learn how to read and write. As they entered the work force in greater numbers, they expanded their work opportunities and commanded better wages. Gloria Main writes, “The growing ability of women to earn money and conduct business at the local store can be viewed as a positive good, giving them greater control over their own lives.”\textsuperscript{140}

Scholars are divided over the question of how the Revolution changed women’s role in the New Republic. Ruth H. Block argues that the Revolution did not fundamentally alter the deeply gendered definition of women as dependants and subordinates within the private and public sphere.\textsuperscript{141} Betty Wood believes that while women took an interest in politics and were increasingly visible, they experienced few changes in their status, roles, and daily lives.\textsuperscript{142} Linda Kerber points out that women’s activities during the war including their petitions, boycotts of imported British goods

\textsuperscript{138} Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor, “She Said she did not know Money,” Urban Women and Atlantic Markets in the Revolutionary Era,” \textit{Early American Studies}, (Fall 2006), 326.
\textsuperscript{139} Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, E-2-1. Providence, Newport’s rival, absorbed a small population of Quakers who fled inland to avoid the war’s destruction.; Wells, “Population and family in early America,” 45. The population of Newport in 1770 was 9,200 compared to 6,716 in 1790; Mark S. Schantz \textit{Piety in Providence, Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Antebellum Rhode Island} (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 35.
\textsuperscript{140} Gloria Main, “Gender, Work and Wages,” 60.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 62.
including tea and textiles, and efforts to produce homespun confirm that they were
critical of political systems, in the war’s aftermath, men, “rich or poor, white or black,
gained something from the system of domestic relations already in place: they had no
need to renegotiate it.”

Clearly, women’s exercise of power that came with property ownership and
responsibility for children was complex, and those women who found themselves in
positions of authority and made decisions in the absence of men renegotiated
relationships and employed strategies to achieve specific ends. As economic and

143 Linda K. Kerber, “The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen: Contradictions &
Choices in Revolutionary America,” in Women’s America, Refocusing the Past, eds.
Mary Beth Norton, Liberty’s Daughters, 160, and Founding Mothers and Fathers:
Scholars generally agree that white middle and upper class women gained greater
autonomy after the Revolutionary war. For a discussion of changes for women, see
Linda Kerber’s cautious analysis, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in
Kerber is optimistic about women’s status in general, arguing that republican ideology
infused political values into domestic life. The republican mother whose duty it was to
raise virtuous male citizens became the custodian of civic morality. Mary Beth Norton
argues that the Revolution was a decisive victory for women, and defining moment that
initiated a public dialogue on the subject of women and their proper roles for the first
time. “The Evolution of White Women’s Experience in Early America,” American
Historical Review 89, No.3 (June,1984): 593-619; Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood:
“Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835. (New Haven: Yale University Press,
1977); Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York:
in Revolutionary New England, ” in Women in the Age of the American Revolution eds.
Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Va. 1989), 211-43. Revisionist
interpretations of women’s social status after the Revolution are Mary Beth Norton,
Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800
(New York, Cornell University Press, 1996); and Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of
Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York, W.W.
Norton, 1985).
political actors with a more public face, women had the opportunity to do responsible work, not because they wanted to, but because their circumstances had changed.

As she faced new responsibilities, Mrs. Rodman had valuable allies and assets that she would put to work at the service of her family.¹⁴⁴ Unlike protestant families who depended on their communities for support, Rodman’s community of coreligionists were part of a network of kin on whom she depended for financial support and commercial advice.¹⁴⁵ While her taxable wealth is unknown, her financial position probably was one that did not support her and her children in a life of leisure. The marriage of her children to families with commercial interests and resources may have protected her from the uncertainties of the marketplace.¹⁴⁶ As a small retailer, Mrs. Rodman participated in a fluid female culture in which women exchanged goods, services and information, and visits and interactions were frequent and spontaneous. She wrote to her son, Samuel in 1789, “Oliver has just returned from Providence & has sent me a lb of Sugar at 1-3-25 price, & quality unknown as its not yet opened, received before the flour, tea & Linnen.”¹⁴⁷

Women who kept accounts and negotiated wages regularly assessed the economic value of their work and were acutely aware of the culture of the marketplace. Rent receipts, bills for goods and services that list those who did the work, and what they were paid confirm that Mrs. Rodman understood matters of money and finance. She also lent money at interest, and extended personal credit. On ⁴ᵗʰ month ²⁰ᵗʰ 1784, John Hubbard

¹⁴⁴ Mary Rodman, Business and personal papers, Box E-2-11.
¹⁴⁵ Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 31.
¹⁴⁷ Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, E-2-1.
promised to pay Mrs. Rodman “Five pounds seven shillings & two pense Lawful money on demand with interest till paid, it being for the balance due upon a lot of sd Mary Rodman to yr 20th of 2 mo last.”148

Rodman’s ledgers suggest that her domestic life was thoroughly interwoven with marketplace activities.149 She maintained close ties with kin through letters, same sex activities, and visiting and the benefits she accrued from her family network came bearing reciprocal obligations of kinship. William Rotch Jr. wrote to her in 1789, “I have sent to Boston for the Linnen but as the stage did not go down this week it could not be brought. I wish to know if any of our white sheeting is wanted as we have but little left.”150

Like other women who played important roles in an age of rising consumerism, her strategies focused on cooperation and the creation of relationships with kin, neighbors, traders, and merchants with whom she shared similar business interests.151 She wrote in her account book, “Settled all accts with Cousin Robinson to the 31 of ye 8 month 1787. The 1 of ye 9 month began 1 quart of milk a day.”152

148 Mary Rodman Business papers, 4mo 20th 1784, Box E-2-2; Rents paid with interest, 1793-1800, Box E-2-18.
149 Mary Rodman to Joseph Huntington, December 1793, Box E-2-19
151 Karin Wulf, “Women’s Work in Colonial Philadelphia,” in Major Problems in American Women’s History eds. Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003). In an era that historians have termed the “first consumer revolution,” shopkeeping “was an important source of personal and community identity” for women who circulated within a company of kin and friends connected socially, economically, and by similar religious obligations (66-67).
152 Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, Box E-2-3.
Laboring women, however, faced new realities and hardships. Small shopkeepers were vulnerable to shifting demand, and volatile currency, and had difficulty obtaining credit. Women frequently combined shop keeping or tavern keeping with boarding, and there is evidence that they lived in close proximity in patterns of female residency, and often on the same street. Mrs. Rodman paid for washing, which with food were part of the service provided by women who took in boarders, and she also paid for the services of a nurse, as medical care of a sick boarder was also the responsibility of women who provided lodging to the maritime population of workers for cash.

With American ports open to imports foreign and domestic, shop keeping enabled Mary Rodman to maintain her standing in her community and support her children. In a period of economic depression and decline for some, letters and account books reveal evidence of economic expansion and her role in the revitalization of the post-war economy. Between December 1785 and December 1785, she employed several women and men for domestic work including Violet and Sarah Jack to whom she paid 4.6 to wash clothes, and T. Robinson £12 for sawing and piling oak wood. She supported her church, renting a horse for transport to meetings, and paying for the Yearly Meeting’s butter and meat. There are several mentions of making and mending shoes, “1 pr for Sally Moor, 1 pr for mending, and 1 pr for Hannah,” which according to Lucy

153 Crane, A Dependant People, 161-165.
154 Ibid. 51; Hartigan-O’Connor, “She Said She did not Know Money,” 334.
155 Ibid, 331, 334.
Simler, “were debits against working women of all classes in this period.”\textsuperscript{158} She sold some products on a regular basis to select customers including Nathan Beebe who made regular purchases of snuff, allspice, molasses, coffee, eggs, buns, cinnamon, crackers, tea currents, rice, flour, bisket, sugar, cake, and ginger and Thomas Robinson purchased meal, rye and clams. Sugar, flour, bread, molasses, butter, eggs, various kinds of meal, coffee, and tea appear to have been the most desired items. Rusks, mentioned once in her ledgers, are twice-baked dry biscuits that evolved as a substitute for bread. Traditionally carried on safari and as part of ship provisions for dipping in tea or coffee, rusks are mold resistant if stored in air tight containers. Rodman also paid for the cost of making a bonnet, perhaps in exchange for other commodities or dry goods. Her state and town taxes, paid in paper money on 30, August 1787 were £2.16.\textsuperscript{159}

There are unmistakable signs in her account books that individuals were consuming and had access to a diverse range of domestic and imported goods during Newport’s post-war expansion. In addition to fresh meat, turkey, chicken, veal, beef, and mutton, varieties of fish including clams and lobster, she also ordered butter, Carolina potatoes, rhubarb, mustard seed, cranberries, quills, marjoram, eggs, milk, salt, cream, cheese, blackberries, and imported and ready-made items, coffee, chocolate, bohea tea. Women had more opportunities for tailoring which became common after the Revolution as imports of cloth grew and cloth became less expensive. Rodman’s list includes orders for a variety of cloth including dimity, calico, taffeta, muslin, linen, silk, and silk

\textsuperscript{158} Lucy Simler, “She Came to Work,” The Female Labor Force in Chester County, 1750-1820,” \textit{Early American Studies}, (Fall 2007), 437; Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, Newport, April 20, 1784. Box E-2-3

\textsuperscript{159} Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, Newport, April 20, 1784, 8 mo. 1787. Box E-2-3.
Feathers, mentioned in her account book, were highly sought after for featherbeds which were commonly passed on to the next generation. Rodman also paid for the spinning of candlewicks which were dipped into spermaceti oil candles for export to Europe, possibly on Rotch ships. While the person who did the spinning is not indicated, Hartigan-O’Connor believes that families allocating women’s labor as partial payment for certain imported items. For construction purposes and upkeep of her home, Rodman paid for mortar, rope to work on a well, sand, turpentine, lime, wood, linseed oil, boards, and nails. Other expenses included payment for the services of a nurse, for the mending of a clock, and for plates, cups and saucers, tea pots, butter cups, and passages to Providence. She also ordered international imports of Lisbon wine, and chinaware which entered the British market from the Far East before the 1740s.

By the end of the eighteenth-century, women from widely different backgrounds moved in and out of the labor force and assumed numerous roles in all phases of the new consumer economy. A woman might also have more than one occupation in her lifetime. Some women boarded or prepared meals for mariners or washed and ironed for other transients, or found employment as midwives, wet nurses, and servants. Women also

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162 For a discussion of candlemaking in Newport, see, Crane, *Ebb Tide*, 105. Also see Whale oil and Candle business accounts, 1787-1802. Box E-29-1 though 62. See Rotch ship invoices, 1791-1800, Box H-19.
163 Hartigan-O’Connor, “She Said She did not Know Money,” 344.
164 Mary Rodman Business and Personal papers, ibid., Box E-2-1, E-2-3.
taught school, ran inns and taverns and sold rum with or without a license. They leased out land, houses, warehouses, horses, and slaves and they lent money at interest.¹⁶⁶

Mary Rodman’s experience was probably not atypical of other middle class Quaker women who by necessity adapted to the changed circumstances of post-war Newport. She had chosen not to remarry and as head of household, she remained in control of her family’s assets. Mrs. Rodman apparently did not keep a diary, but evidence suggests that widowhood expanded her options and she exerted considerable influence over her financial assets and her own creation of wealth.¹⁶⁷ By all accounts she was a quite capable woman with superior talents whose life was intensely local but culturally diverse. Remembered by her family as a “rare personality” and a woman who was prepared to conquer all obstacles, the experience of the war changed her understanding of what is meant to be confident, competent, independent and self-reliant. A friend wrote of Mary Rodman, “The events of the Revolutionary War were ever fresh in her memory and many a tale of the olden time amused those who were permitted to share her society.”¹⁶⁸

While her feelings about control of her own space are unclear, a family biographer confirms that her early training prepared her for a difficult life, including the care and education of her eight children that devolved upon her as a consequence of her husband’s frequent absences at sea.¹⁶⁹ She managed her financial matters independently, and her account books are an example of the connection between women’s work and the retail world of Atlantic commerce. She developed strategies to survive by sharing

¹⁶⁷ Rodman, “Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman, Box H-14-5
¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.
¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.
expertise and labor in a community and culture with the support of kin and other women. She managed her financial matters independently, exercised control over her assets and engaged the legal system as the shopkeeper wife of a merchant trader.\textsuperscript{170}

In these ways, her experience did not differ significantly from the national experience of most middle class white women in the United States at this time, regardless of regional variations in their experiences.\textsuperscript{171} At age sixty-four in August 1793, Mrs. Rodman fell back on her family networks, transferring her remaining wealth to the household of her daughter Charity in New Bedford.\textsuperscript{172} Her will, drawn up on February 10, 1798 was a declaration of her personal possessions, household goods, capital, and property earned and conserved and given away. As such, it comprised a systematic exercise of empowerment.\textsuperscript{173}

Scholars differ on their approaches to the study of women’s wills and what wills reveal about their writers and women’s relations to each other. As an imaginative and a legal act, wills permitted women to single out particular gifts to individuals whom they held dear. Wills were also markers of class and status, and the act of making a will

\textsuperscript{170} Mary Rodman business papers, Box E-2-8 for example, in 1795, Mary Rodman received one pound two shillings from William Boroughs for rent (one year) of Lots No. 147 and 148 of the first division on Easton Point. See also E-2-2,5,7,20.
\textsuperscript{171} See for example, Fennelly, 36.
\textsuperscript{172} Morris, \textit{The Romance of the Two Hannahs}, 32; Martin Dribe, Christer Lundh, and Paul Nystedt, “Widowhood Strategies in Preindustrial Society,” \textit{Journal of Interdisciplinary History} XXXVIII, 2 (Autumn, 2007), 207-232. In 1800, Thomas Rotch sold Mary Rodman’s Newport house and adjoining lots on Easton’s Point to a nephew, Nathaniel Hazard of Newport for $1,100. Box E-2-16. Between 1793 when she left Newport and 1800 when the house was sold, Thomas Rotch rented Rodman’s house to Joseph Huntington for $30 to $50 per year with interest.
\textsuperscript{173} Pointon, \textit{Strategies of Showing}, 49.
revealed how women felt about the possessions they owned.\textsuperscript{174} Wills of widowers or widows frequently represented the last opportunity for providing for the family’s long-term financial well-being. Bequests of household goods could be used by beneficiaries to establish independent households, and gifts of land in urban areas could be worked or rented to further secure their daughters’ economic security.\textsuperscript{175} Marcia Pointon points out that the act of making a will “insured that the owners themselves played some part in the ways in which their possessions were described since they had the greatest personal and emotional investment in ensuring that no ambiguities ensued.”\textsuperscript{176}

Apparent in Mary Rodman’s will is the special significance that her female network held for her and the manner in which her bequests solidified women’s social relations and restated family memory.\textsuperscript{177} Gifts of material possessions, well known to both the giver and the claimants and mentioned individually often in great detail, were expressions of emotional and social obligations that preserved a networked family.

Studies of wills reveal that men and women had different attitudes regarding family relationships and disposition of their property. Men were responsible for establishing their children’s economic future by the provisions of their wills, and were more likely to address bequests of land, “with the occasional exception of a favorite gun


\textsuperscript{176} Pointon, \textit{Strategies for Showing}, 3.

\textsuperscript{177} Mary Rodman Will, 2 Mo 10, 1798. Business and Personal Papers, Box E-2-12.
or horse.” While men left land and money to their sons, women in the 1790s left gifts of property and money to a far wider range of female kin, children and grandchildren for whom they felt a sense of responsibility. Women also had greater latitude to bequeath more widely to a circle of kinswomen. Certain personal articles given by female testators had particular familial, friendship, and emotive values, or were markers and stabilizers of social hierarchy. Widows’ bequests reveal clues about the testator’s self-image, her personal and community identity, and how she viewed herself in relation to other people. Gifts given by women often had special significance attached. Pointon writes, “The act of giving places the giver and the receiver in a relationship of dependency. The gift is a sign of that relationship.”

Mrs. Rodman’s will was a matter of public record, however, it also had private significance. Her wealth appears to have been concentrated in a sizable legacy of cash and material culture including household possessions of commemorative value which she left to four daughters and several nieces. Unmarried daughters received gifts that marked rites of passage, to support them if they chose not to marry, including family furniture, quilts, bedding, linen sheets, glass tureens, wine glasses, silk mitts, and china. There is no

179 Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 26.
182 Wood, “Broken Reed,” 40; Conger, “If Widows, Both Housewife and Husband May Be,” 245.
mention of clothing, jewelry, or mourning rings which as objects of fashion aroused much feared and hated sexual passions among Friends, and was therefore “unscriptual” and forbidden.¹⁸⁴

The distribution of Rodman’s estate as visible symbols of her power and prestige also represented her contribution to the creation of her family’s wealth. Gifts of cash were probably important legacies that may have been given to mark important transitions in the recipient’s life, or to support women if they chose not to marry.¹⁸⁵ If given to single daughters, cash increased the likelihood of their successful marriage to men in good standing, or protected them from exploitation and from their husband’s creditors.¹⁸⁶ Jensen writes, “Wills reflect inheritance strategies through which families reproduced themselves- passed on power and wealth, and the role women played in that reproduction.”¹⁸⁷

Gifts listed in Mrs. Rodman’s will such as clocks, earthenware, cutlery, furniture, and window curtain were the products of the new industries of the eighteenth-century. Once produced only for the wealthy, such items ascribed with values of usefulness and civility, were available to a wider audience of middle class consumers by the 1770s.¹⁸⁸ Some gifts were imported, such as “6 large burnt China Cups and Saucers & plates, and 6 wine glasses.”¹⁸⁹ Other gifts including silver plate and finer furniture such as black walnut chairs and mahogany and cheery wood tables confirm that she was also active in

¹⁸⁴ Mary Rodman Will, Box E-2-12; Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 545-547.
¹⁸⁵ Holton, Quaker Women, 31.
¹⁸⁷ Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 22.
¹⁸⁸ Pointon, Strategies of Showing, 28.
¹⁸⁹ Mary Rodman Will, Box E-2-12.
the culture of the marketplace. Silver spoons inscribed with the initials of family members may have been made by well known goldsmiths.\textsuperscript{190} These items of refinement that were produced for the rising middle class by specialist craftsmen, cabinet and clock makers, and silversmiths in smaller centers such as Hartford, New Haven, and New London, Connecticut, or in larger towns such as Boston and New York.\textsuperscript{191}

Mrs. Rodman’s will is replete with gifts of bedding and furniture originally purchased to provide for her children’s spiritual growth and financial protection in a loving environment.\textsuperscript{192} To her daughter she gave “a fine English Blanket, 5 fine sheets, a bed with striped tick bolster & pillows, 3 old Russia sheeting sheets, a corded bedstead & a fine small blanket, the best suit of Curtains & spread, 1 coarse linen bolster case, 2 pr old pillow cases, a kersey blanket” and “a mahogany oval table, I cherry tree table, 2 common chairs, 1 of mother Rodman’s.”\textsuperscript{193}

Personalized gifts with emotional significance attached and used every day were also invested with associative value. Mrs. Rodman left a large tea kettle to her daughter, Mary along with “the Looking Glass that formerly hung in our Little Room.”\textsuperscript{194} By the eighteenth-century, tea drinking had become a social ritual, and her gifts of “6 large burnt China cups and sauces and plates, and 6 small blue and white cups and saucers and 6 wine glasses” were unmistakable symbols of social status that she intentionally chose to

\textsuperscript{190} Pointon, ibid. 43.
\textsuperscript{191} Fennelly, \textit{Connecticut Women}, 27; Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, Will, 2 Mo 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1798. Box E-2-12.
\textsuperscript{192} Levy, “The Birth of the “Modern Family,”” 49.
\textsuperscript{193} Mary Rodman Will, Box E-2-12.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
Certain bequests strengthened the broader kin base beyond the nuclear family and preserved family heritage. Provisions were made for the care of an infirmed Friend, Elizabeth Allen, leaving her “an old bed, two woolen curtains with old sheets, blankets, old quilt, and coverlid, and after her to Charity (as she is likely to have the care of her.)”

A daughter-in-law received a gilded turtle shell tea set, and to Elizabeth Allen, Rodman gave “a Round basket that was my mothers.”

The care taken to describe household and personal items confirms that for their use or economic exchange value, or as objects of affection, Mrs. Rodman’s gifts were intended to link herself with family, and especially kinswomen. She directed that the remains of her estate be given to “My beloved Children, Thomas and Charity Rotch in consideration of their attention, Kindness & expense in caring for me during my natural decay.”

Connecticut and Pennsylvania lawmakers expected children to support their dependant parents in the elder years. This interdependence worked for women of means who were honored in their families and in their church, but for poor women, this ideal of greater family interdependence in their elder years could prove a dangerous and burdensome hardship for women and their families. There is no mention in her will of gifts of parcels of land in her will, and it is possible that Rodman disposed of her Newport real estate when she relocated to New Bedford in 1793 to reside with Thomas and Charity Rotch.

195 Pointon, Strategies for Showing, 28.
196 Mary Rodman Will, Box E-2-12.
198 Mary Rodman Will, 2 Mo 10, 1798. Business and Personal Papers, Box E-2-12.
Her ledgers and will support the view that Mary Rodman participated in interlocking organizational networks that changed how and by whom goods were made and domestic chores were done. Society validated her right to make independent financial decisions, and by all accounts, she was a careful business-like woman who recognized that her female circle would continue to rely on kinship networks and male financial and legal support. By taking an active role in the disposition of her property, she took legal measures to preserve family history and memory and insure her family’s financial future by protecting her children’s inheritances of personal and household items and cash.\textsuperscript{199}

The papers of Mary Rodman paint the portrait of a small shopkeeper contributing to and adapting to emerging notions of personal freedom, property and market relations. Evidence presented here suggests that even as merchants were attempting to resuscitate the town’s pre-war economic dominance, Mary Rodman was quite well off, having made good for the financial and labor losses occasioned by her husband’s death. Along with shifting notions of deference, changes in post-war Newport directly affected her daily life and reordered the broad social practices of gender.\textsuperscript{200}


CHAPTER III

“RELIGION LOST ALONG THE WAY OR LEFT BEHIND:”

THE FEMALE EXPERIENCE OF WESTWARD MIGRATION

The writings of female migrants to the frontier show how Quaker and non-Quaker women’s notions of community differed, and how religion defined and influenced their lives and choices. Feminine religiosity linked most women’s lives and shaped them as a group in distinctive ways that set them apart from men, permitting us to answer the question: how did the outlook and world view of Quaker and non-Quaker women evolve during the course of their lifetime as writers, and how did social class and geographic location alter women of differing faiths who had such a complex set of experiences?

While migration and mobility had the potential to weaken family ties, the circumstances that enabled Friends to withstand the pressures of relocation included a dense network of family ties, a structured hierarchical meeting system and the tradition of women’s letters that preserved social cohesion and communities over long distances.

Over the last three decades, historians have attempted to include the perspective of women in their understanding of migration and settlement. In the 1980s, feminist

Historians recognized that women’s responses to the frontier differed from those of men and their observations, thoughts and experiences varied widely and required separate interpretation. Since 1985, historians have called for a multicultural approach to women’s history that emphasizes the realities and complexities of Native American, Hispanic women, as well as black and Asian women. While there is little doubt that women experienced hardships migration, the outward journey was but one phase of the longer term process of settlement over weeks, years or a lifetime. In order to undo stereotypes of women as reluctant emigrants and settlers who thought and acted alike and were incapable of adapting to new circumstances, feminist historians over the last two decades have attempted to come to terms with the daily realities of women’s lives that were shaped by ethnicity, race, work, and family concerns as women interacted with the land and other peoples.


In this chapter, I utilize non-Quaker women’s documents to reveal the variety of their experiences, their differing perspectives, and how and if religion shaped their responses to life on the frontier. For non-Friends, not linked by kinship networks or religious fellowship which drew families together into faith based communities, long distance mobility in America could weaken family ties and was more stressful than for Quakers who settled in communities linked by religious fellowship and a long tradition of mutual aid. Migration to the west also did not loosen cultural constraints and most women of the pioneer generation were not liberated from domesticity. While they performed various forms of work, and men’s and women’s workspaces might overlap, women retained their gender ideology and did not contest traditional gender roles.

While women shared family relationships and the everyday in their letters, church membership is a distinctive feature of Quaker women’s domestic culture and their letters. The focus here is to examine domesticity, kinship, and religion among non-Quaker women, and to ask if religion shaped and sustained their communities to the extent that it did for Quakers.


“The dreaded day has come at last”

Women on the overland travel

The instability of the frontier led to a fragile kind of existence for outbound men and women, most of whom a new environment and its inhabitants with mixed emotions. While some women hid their feelings in order to preserve their mental equilibrium in the new environment, others expressed their fears and anxieties in diaries and in letters to maintain their emotional stability. Some women participated only reluctantly in the frontier experiment. Elizabeth ‘Bettie’ Duncan confided in her diary in 1867, “The dreaded day has at last come, but I must and will brace up and fare the best I can.”\footnote{Katie H. Armitage, “This Far Off Land”: The Overland Diary, June-October, 1867, and California Diary, January-March, 1867, of Elizabeth ‘Bettie’ Duncan,” \textit{Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains} Vol. 12, (Spring 1989): 13-27}

As correspondents during the process of migration and settlement to the American frontier, women took up their pens and wrote to overcome fear, isolation, and anxiety, to strengthen and preserve family bonds, and to convince themselves that their families were whole and distance did not matter. They used their diaries and letters to comment on daily occurrences, the health and safety of their families, relational values, friendships, and their interactions with their fellow travelers and settlers, and especially with other women.\footnote{Lillian Schlissel, Women’s Diaries of the Westward Journey (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 13.} They mused on the adventure, voiced their opinions, and commented on the natural beauty of the landscape or the loneliness and dreariness of the journey.\footnote{John Mack Faragher, \textit{Women and Men on the Overland Trail} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 14; Stratton, 24.}
The decision to relocate was not taken lightly; it involved months of preparation and careful planning and required the cooperation of all family members.\textsuperscript{209} Family survival also depended on kin for favors, advice and capital, and kinship networks were particularly essential for families or couples that relocated in sections. Numerous men migrated alone in search of work or land for farming, leaving their wives in the care of parents and siblings with resources to share for support and protection.\textsuperscript{210} A wife might live with her parents or siblings until her husband’s return or until she joined him later.\textsuperscript{211} Families tended to migrate in groups and whole neighborhoods might join the westward movement. The advantage of familial networks were obvious. Kin could be reunited and find a place to live at either end of migration, and for those such as single men who might attach themselves to migrating trains, families represented the natural unit of social order.\textsuperscript{212}

Migrants planned carefully for a journey that would be lengthy, exhausting, and fraught with physical danger. The process of relocation depended on the full cooperation of women who learned new skills and developed new talents that would prove useful to the experience of homesteading and farming. Women were responsible for food planning and preparation, clothing, bedding, medicine and the cloth top for their wagon.\textsuperscript{213} They packed candles, flour, corn meal, dried fruits and assembled cooking pots and cutlery and a sewing basket. Women might be able to persuade or influence their spouses’ decisions,

\textsuperscript{210} Faragher, \textit{Women and Men}, 18.
\textsuperscript{212} Motz, \textit{True Sisterhood}, 125; Schlissel, \textit{Women’s Diaries}, 31.
\textsuperscript{213} Schlissel, \textit{Women’s Diaries}, 10.
but few had the authority to decide. Men usually made the final choice of a wagon, seeds, tools and farming equipment.\textsuperscript{214}

In addition to physical relocation, the process of migration involved the performance of daily chores and learning or honing new skills that would spell survival when settlers reached their final destination. Families were aware of the need to conserve the resources packed in their wagons. Women who previously depended on servants to prepare meals had to learn to cook for themselves under less than ideal circumstances, and some families were reduced to a poor diet of beans biscuits and coffee. Clothing could also be problematic for women who might be ill prepared for cold weather, or storms that tore the covers off their wagons. Long skirts were cumbersome when climbing in and out of wagons and were potentially dangerous around fires.\textsuperscript{215}

Gender is crucial in determining how women perceived relocation and migration. While they were aware of the push-pull factors that contributed to any decision to uproot one’s family and migrate to a remote place, an uneven power structure existed between the sexes.\textsuperscript{216} Men generally made the decision to migrate, often over the objections of women on whom they depended for emotional and practical support.\textsuperscript{217} Most women unequivocally feared for their family’s safety and survival and were uncomfortable with isolation. Fewer women may have elected not to migrate if given the option. But

\textsuperscript{214} Faragher, \textit{Women and Men}, 172.
\textsuperscript{215} Sarah Raymond Herndon, Diary, xv.
\textsuperscript{216} Push-pull factors included soil erosion, heavy taxes and other economic liabilities, poor health, opposition to slavery and the prospects of a more favorable climate, productive farmsteads, and economic improvement in the West.
\textsuperscript{217} Schlissel, \textit{Women’s Diaries}, 10; Faragher, \textit{Women and Men}, 172.
obligations to their spouses and commitments to the unity of family necessitated that they embark on trips that challenged their spirit and changed their lives in substantive ways.\textsuperscript{218}

For women, migration disrupted the domestic order, and meant hard work, intensified domestic labor, and social restriction.\textsuperscript{219} While many men were optimistic about relocation, the perceived difficulty of maintaining domestic standards in the wilderness in addition to separation from networks of family and friends was far less appealing to women.\textsuperscript{220}

Thus, numerous factors influenced the decision to relocate including age, marital status, available kinship networks, and limited options on the land left behind. Regardless of women’s reactions to planned migration which varied from acceptance, optimism, and support to bitterness, objection and outright rejection, men as breadwinners and heads of household decided how and where to produce income and expected their families to acquiesce to their decision.\textsuperscript{221}

In fact not all men or women completed the journey westward; some women died in childbirth, others were stricken by illness or accidents, still others were unprepared for harsh physical hardship and social depravation and were deeply discouraged and turned

\textsuperscript{220} Anne F. Hyde, “Cultural Filters, the Significance of Perception,” in \textit{A New Significance, Re-envisioning the History of the American West} ed. Clyde A. Milner II. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 183-4.
back.\textsuperscript{222} During their outward journey, memories of home, what it was and how it could be reconstructed shaped women’s responses to travel.

Women often commented on the natural beauty of the landscape. Charity Rotch detailed her short ramble in the woods while waiting to cross the ferry during her journey to Ohio in 1811. She wrote, “I amused myself with gathering flowers; which upon examining I found contain’d 12 different kinds & some of them the most delicate and beautiful I have seen at this season, nature having been rich in blessings”.\textsuperscript{223} Other women felt overburdened, embittered and depressed, expressed their feelings silently in their diaries and letters, and confided in their traveling female acquaintances, “fears and doubts too fearful to be spoken aloud to men.”\textsuperscript{224} Mary Richardson Walker described her feelings of isolation from her husband, her lone traveling companion in whom she could not confide. She wrote in her diary, “I cannot speak of him, or to him, & if I write I fear he will read. What grieves me most is that the only being on earth with whom I can have much opportunity for intercourse manifests uniformly an unwillingness to engage me in social reading or conversation.”\textsuperscript{225}

Whether or not women triumphed over the wilderness, their journey westward was probably not a liberating adventure. Margaret Van Horn Dwight wrote halfway through her journey from Connecticut to Ohio country in 1810, “We found the roads past

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{222} Luchetti and Olwell, \textit{Women of the West}, 27; Rebecca Hildreth Nutting (Woodson), “A Sketch of the Life of Rebecca Hildreth Nutting (Woodson) and Her Family, Dec. 6, 1835-1907,” Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA.
\bibitem{225} Luchetti and Olwell, \textit{Women of the West}, 70.
\end{thebibliography}
description, worse than you can possibly imagine. It has grown so cold that I feel we shall perish tomorrow. I have concluded the reason so few are willing to return from the Western country, is not that the country is so good, but because the journey is so bad.”

The outward journey was a test of inner strength and perseverance. Themes of endurance, and quiet resignation permeated letters and diaries, and women commonly wrote of being “homesick, discouraged and lonely, as but a faint description of my feelings.” Rebecca Ketcham recounted in 1853 that as she crossed the Burnt River, packs came off animals and were tangled in bushes. Rather than complain aloud which would compromise her standards and collapse gender boundaries further, she concluded “I will try to be cheerful and patient.”

As the genteel traveler struggling to keep her emotions in check after days of heat and dust, Esther Hanna reminded others of the feminine culture that she was transporting into the west. She wrote, “I have been thinking of home and dear absent friends but must not think too much! We expected to endure hardships and we must endure them like good soldiers.”

Some women accepted their overland travel as fate, while others silently blamed their husbands, brothers, and fathers for their disquiet, anxiety, anger and depression. Other women believed that their journey on the trail was a cross they had to bear, and

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227 Mrs. A.M. Green, *Sixteen Years on the Great American Desert: or, the Trials and Triumphs of a Frontier Life* (Titusville, Pa.: Frank Truedell, Printer, 1887), 8-31.
somehow perseverance would reap a heavenly reward. In 1828, Mary Lott wrote on her way to Ohio, “When this short voyage of life shall end, we shall be again reunited in that fair haven of eternal repose, where sorrow never comes and parting sounds was never heard.”

Despite religious injunctions, most women were helpless against the power of their unhappiness. Maria Beshaw wrote, “Thy will be done O God not mine, that I may receive a crown of righteousness at thy right hand.” Georgiana Bruce, lonely, depressed and awaited the birth of her first baby wished “for a congenial female companion with whom I could chat and be merry, sympathize and advise.” Women depended on each other rather than men, to protect them against isolation and loneliness. Bruce found a female companion in Mrs. Dryden, a minister’s wife who was also pregnant. She wrote, “as her husband was at San F. we slept together and had quite a cheerful time of it. I enjoyed the visit and feel better in consequence. On the 6th, sowed cauliflower, asparagus, rhubarb and onions and set out the strawberry plants.”

Many women used their diaries and journals to comment on the displeasures of travel that they found disorienting. Such breeches of civility and decorum produced

233 Georgiana Bruce Kirby diary, transcript copy. February 9, 1853. California Historical Society Library, San Francisco; Carrol Smith-Rosenburg in Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) argues that the nineteenth-century implications of “sleeping together” did not necessarily imply homosexuality. Rather, she writes, the sexes operated in separate spheres and women enjoyed close friendships with other women who “wrote unself-consciously of their passion for other women and showed their letters to husbands, daughters, and friends, neither they nor their families defined their emotions as sexually ‘unnatural’(36).”
anxiety and made many women feel out of place. Eliza Bridgham traveling from New England in 1818, wrote to her sister, “I wish you were here, if it is only to see the difference of manners & deportment in these people, from what we have been used to, not that we are very refined, in my estimation, but that they are most unfortunately rough.”234 Margaret Van Horn Dwight commented in her journal on the unsatisfactory state of accommodations for travelers during her journey to Ohio in 1810. Cook’s Inn in County West Chester was “very small & dirty. The air is so impure I have scarcely been able to swallow since I enter’d the house. The men have been swearing & laughing in the store under me this hour, & the air of my room is so intolerable.” 235 Her comments suggest that she was used to and anticipated better arrangements. While she resented the ill-mannered behavior of men “swearing and laughing” in the room below her, to publicly comment or reprimand men for their behavior would have collapsed gendered boundaries and threatened those standards of female gentility that she expected of herself.236

Women struggled to bridge the gulf of geographical separation and resented the effects of migration that temporarily broke, but did not completely destroy kinship networks. For women, the preservation of family ties took precedence over the search for wealth and riches.237 Mary Morton wrote to her cousin, Charity Rotch in 1820,

235 Dwight, A Journey to Ohio, 9.
236 Imbarrato, Traveling Women, 92.
237 Cashin, A Family Venture, 5; Schlissel, Far from Home, 31; Motz, True Sisterhood, 39.
It was truly pleasant to me to trace thy old-fashioned, genuine feelings, from subject to subject, & to comprehend, & share them all: New friends can hardly enjoy this pleasure in an equal degree, to that which community of feeling, habitual similarity of opinion, & a common circle of friendships confers upon those who have long known & loved one another.\textsuperscript{238}

Letters provide clues to how women reacted to their changed circumstances and to the isolation that confronted them in parts of the frontier. Fanny Cooley Angell, a mother and wife commented after the visit of her sister-in-law, “I am quite desolate without her. I had never realized before what a comfort ‘twould be to have another woman in the house, to talk matters over with and to feel that there was someone upon whom to call in case of emergency.”\textsuperscript{239}

Not all women were reluctant to leave home. Some women adjusted to separation from friends and family, others adapted and participated willingly in the process of migration and welcomed the expansion of the female sphere. Still other women anticipated a sense of high adventure and rejected the values of domestic culture and the cult of “true womanhood.” Other women may have willingly severed familial ties in order to gain more control over their lives and their futures. Regardless of their reasons for migration, all women faced economic uncertainty, the prospect of leaving the familiar for the unknown and the likelihood of no return.\textsuperscript{240} Mary Lott wrote to her sister from the Ohio frontier in 1830, “I must tell you that your letter gave me great consolation. I hardly know what to tell you about my coming to see you, but I can’t have the thought for a

\textsuperscript{238} Mary R. Morton letter to Charity Rotch, August 4, 1820. Box B-273-5.
\textsuperscript{238} Mary Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, February 3, no year. Box B-298-1
\textsuperscript{239} Fanny Angell to Mary Cooley, February 14, 1890. Thomas McIntyre, Michigan Historical Collections.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 46-47.
moment of never seeing you once more and again press you to this fond heart and relate some of the sorrows I have been called to face since I saw you last.”

Non-verbal expressions of affection such as shared attendance at church, social events and shared labor that formed the basis of relationships were difficult to reconstruct once families moved on. Sarah Regal wrote to her daughter, Jane, “It is grievous to have to resort to pen and paper to converse with my dear children. It does not remove the loneliness which has for more than two years overpowered my mind.”

Travel often blurred gender distinctions and offered women opportunities to question and modify old stereotypes and reconsider their attitudes and beliefs about their proper roles. Suspended between home and the frontier, women crossed gender boundaries and altered their roles, their notions of self, and home and community. The process of questioning and modifying old stereotypes which began almost immediately after leaving home did not always imply a redefinition of women’s spheres or an attempt to reorder gender power relationships. Twenty-four year old Sarah Raymond Herndon noted in her diary that women thought of themselves as emigrants rather than ladies and discarded their “trailing skirts, French kid shoes and hats of the latest style for sort dresses, thick shoes, and sun-bonnets.”

Herndon complained very little of hardships and held her emotions in check, perhaps to preserve her mental equilibrium, or more likely because women were expected

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242 Jane Sabin to Sarah Regal [undated], Regal Family Collection, Michigan Historical Collections.
244 Imbarrato, *Traveling Women*, 171.
245 Sarah Raymond Herndon, Diary, 47, 8,10-11,14; McLynn, *Wagons West*, 184-185
to defer to the wishes of others, uphold the high moral ground, and behave cordially.\footnote{Gayle R. Davis, Women’s Frontier Diaries, 10-12.}

Her religion, moreover, defined her character. A devout Methodist, the dominant theme in her diary is fortitude against adversity. She complained very little and she may have been using her diary to order and control the unpredictable experience of travel. Although everyone in her party of settlers was Christian, the Sabbath was not necessarily a day of rest. While some people took time to read their Bible on Sunday, others either left their religion at home or lost it along the way. Stopping for Sunday services exposed travelers to Indian attacks, and as summer gave way to fall, the chances of being trapped in winter snows increased significantly.\footnote{Schlissel, Women Diaries of the Westward Journey, 82.} Men might repair wagons or enjoy a game of ball. For women, washing clothes, sheets and pillowcases soiled by dust and heat was a necessity when rain barrels were full or water was available. Catherine Haun confirmed in her diary that women kept working wherever religious services might be held. She wrote, “There was no disrespect intended but there was little time for leisure or that the weary pilgrim could call his own.”\footnote{Ibid.,173.}

The arrival of itinerant ministers in the towns of tents and wagons that sprang up in the wilderness was an occasion for settlers to give thanks for their safe passage. Occasional religious services brought travelers together and served both a theological and a social function.\footnote{Sarah Raymond Herndon, Days on the Road, Crossing the Plains in 1865. The Diary of Sarah Raymond Herndon (Guilford, Conn.: Twodot), 12.} Mary Ann Hafen wrote, “The company stopped over on Sundays for rest, and meetings were held for spiritual comfort and guidance. At night, the fires were
lighted, and the camp looked quite happy. Singing, music, and speeches by the leaders cheered everyone."^{250}

Before churches were established to link settlers to their communities, itinerant ministers held services in homes or schools, performed weddings and baptisms, encouraged and comforted the weak and the sick, and gave a Christian burial to those who had died.^{251} While few preachers made a living as itinerants, they were usually considered an asset to those with whom they were traveling. Sarah Herndon wrote, "Rev. Austin is a member of the Chillicothe train. I am glad there is at least one preacher among us."^{252}

Women travelers were often critical of the apparent deterioration of religious tradition and the lapses in practice that they observed in their travels in Ohio. Traveling with her father, Samuel Willard Bridgman, a distinguished Congregational minister, Eliza Bridgman believed that churches and religion were a link to civilization and provided a moral tone for new settlements. The boisterous services and camp meetings of Methodist itinerant preachers who entered Ohio in the 1790s free of organized opposition from

other religious groups drew large numbers of converts and elicited Bridgham’s evaluation.\textsuperscript{253} She wrote in 1818,

\begin{quote}
The minister, who is a wandering Methodist, preached last Sunday for a bushel of oats, and the Sabbath previous, for two dinners, he had eaten a long time before!! What a shocking state of society is this! I never was more struck with the necessity & utility of Public worship. People here make their calculations, to avail themselves of the Sabbath for all ‘kinds of jobs.’\textsuperscript{254}
\end{quote}

The Female Experience of Homesteading

During the first half of the nineteenth century, isolated farms and small towns dotted the territory South and North of the Ohio River. After homesteaders filled these areas between 1800 and 1820, settlement shifted into the Trans-Mississippi west into Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas in the 1840s and 1850s. After 1840, California, Washington and Oregon attracted foreign immigrants, and Midwest and Northeastern migrants traveling as families.\textsuperscript{255} Migration temporarily interrupted networks on which families depended for support, and women were charged with re-establishing those connections through correspondence.

It is difficult to know how women fared in the early stages of frontier development because their experiences varied so widely. While most of their duties and interests were constrained by traditional ideology, some women moved beyond traditional gender roles to take advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862 that made 160

\textsuperscript{254} Bridgham, \textit{Diary of a Journey}, 18.
acres of land available to any settler over the age of twenty-one for a filing fee of twenty-five dollars.\textsuperscript{256}

Many women with the capital start up investment of five hundred to one thousand dollars in cash homesteaded successfully and saw it as an opportunity for personal growth and independence.\textsuperscript{257} But whether their successes translated into increased respect for all women is unclear. Elinore Rupert Steward believed that for women who had no fear of hard work, coyotes and loneliness, homesteading was the solution for poverty. She wrote, “Any woman who can stand her own company, can see the beauty of the sunset, loves growing things and is willing to put in as much time at careful labor as she does over the washtub, will certainly succeed; will have independence, plenty to eat all the time, and a home of her own in the end.”\textsuperscript{258}

Women living on the northern plains that were subject to floods, fires, bone chilling cold and snow seldom mentioned their physical surroundings in their letters, perhaps because they seldom ventured out of doors. Isolation on the northern plains was so pervasive that some women were sickened and died or went mad. Elizabeth Hampsten writes, “This loneliness, ostensibly attributed to their distance from family and friends,

\textsuperscript{256} The provisions of the Homestead Act wrote the government’s commitment to private property and family farms into law. Applicants had five years in which to establish residency and cultivate the land, or “prove up” before the final land claim was granted. Government policy steadily restricted Native American claims to their land and made vast tracts of land to homesteaders and the Railroad. The Dawes Act of 1887 directed surveyors to divide tribal land into 120 acre allotments for Indian homesteaders, 80 acres for cattle and 40 acres for normal living purposes. Any remaining land after surveying would become part of the public domain and sold to the railroad and settlers.

\textsuperscript{257} Faragher, \textit{Men and Women on the Overland Trail}, 18.

\textsuperscript{258} Quoted in Lillian Schlissel and Catherine Lavender (eds.) \textit{The Western Women’s Reader} (New York: HarperPerennial, 2000), 17.
was exacerbated by their manner of building dwelling places, each by itself on its own property, each a fortification against the out-of-doors.”

On homesteads and on farms throughout the West, the wilderness was primitive and threatening. Nature was defined as female, and in need of conquering. Sermons, laws and essays proclaimed that Mother Nature must be mastered and the virgin environment subdued. While women shared labor and constructed a broad range of social relationships, this may have been a powerfully liberating rather than a laborious experience. However, conditions on the frontier generated a dependency on men rather than female autonomy.

The outlines of a female-centered network emerged in rural areas where women farmed on their own as homesteaders after divorce or death of their spouse, or hired out as farm laborers. The farm household was a vital and fundamental part of the emerging economy where female farmers raised livestock including pigs and sheep for commercial markets in the West.

In addition to shared same-sex tasks such as the production of

259 Elizabeth Hampsten, Read This Only to Yourself, the Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880-1910 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 39.

260 Glenda Riley, Women and Nature. Saving the “Wild” West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 4; For further discussion of the metaphor of the west as female see Kolodny, The Lay of the land, 136-137.


262 Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, xiv.
soap, cloth, candles, and clothing, farm women worked together at harvest time and when male labor was in short supply and depended on female networks to assist with plowing, harvesting, digging cellars and canal, and erecting houses and fences. Soapmaking, a long and arduous process that often required the cooperation of several women, remained a home function on the frontier for many years. There is no evidence in women’s sources or newspapers that manufactured soap was available during the early pioneer period, and attitudes toward soap making varied widely.\textsuperscript{263} Butter making became a chief occupation for farm women who produced butter for urban markets to supplement their farm incomes. Jensen writes, “By 1910, women on the waterless plains of Montana were using money from the sale of butter to buy windmills necessary for survival on farms.”\textsuperscript{264}

Working together under less than ideal conditions cemented same-sex ties and offset the bitterest problem for women that accompanied settlement on farms and ranch lands in the West— isolation. Rachel Bella Calof wrote from Ramsey County, North Dakota in the 1890s, “I had no place to turn. There was no other homes to be seen on the vast expanse of the great plain. In just two brutal days the pioneer life had brought me to the brink of desperation. Where could I turn for friendship?”\textsuperscript{265}


\textsuperscript{265} Rikoon,\textit{ Rachel Calof’s Story}, 29.
Same sex networks and shared work such as quilting bees and wool-picking provided opportunities for female visiting and the exchange of information while turning unusable raw materials into finished goods. The production of cloth, for example, went faster if several women cooperated to card wool or comb flax before it was spun into threads and weaved into cloth. Woolen and linen cloth could be colored with indigo or vegetable dyes before being woven and marketed as stockings and caps, or cut, stitched and sold as pants, dresses or shirts.\(^{266}\)

Many rural women challenged traditional concepts of marriage and work roles and were eager to explore new opportunities as homesteaders for the same reasons as men, for self-dependence, adventure, health, and economic opportunities.\(^{267}\) While they were conscious of gender expectations and female norms of behavior, women confronted new situations and adapted to new ways of thinking and behaving and expanded their understanding of women’s place. While some rural women emerged as partners rather than dependants in the frontier experiment with men, this probably did not imply a changed understanding of gender or a change in existing gender power relationships.

Ownership of land also probably did not empower women. If some women had control over their households, most still could not influence family decisions. Women understood that family survival depended on flexibility, interdependence and ties that reached beyond the household. They embraced rather than feared the outdoors where

\(^{266}\) Bachar, *Life on the Ohio Frontier,* 39-40; Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds,* 34.

\(^{267}\) Susan Hallgarth, “Women settlers on the frontier; Unwed, Unreluctant, Unrepentant,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly,* (1989) 3 & 4, 24. The terms of the Homestead Act encouraged settlers to stay on their land permanently. They could chose a six month residency and pay $1.25 per acre, or a five-year residency at the close of which they received 160 acres without charge.
their husbands worked, their children played and they worked and considered it a part of
the domestic sphere. Women were involved in one-third to one-half of the total food
production on family farms, and well into the twentieth century, women on Kansas farms
looked after and tended large gardens, baked, cooked, butchered and canned. Farms were
dependent on the diversity of women’s production of food, clothing, and sale of surpluses
that usually went to buy more land for sons and daughters.

Most women went to lengths to reassemble the familiar in order to keep the world
they valued intact. In addition to managing their households and families, women were
family historians charged with producing family records in Bibles, quilts, wedding and
mourning pictures that marked milestones in a family’s history. Kinship ties extended
beyond the nuclear family and the arrival of relatives from afar, at times difficult for lack
of good roads became an excuse for a round of visits that reaffirmed bonds of kinship and
familial ties and obligations.

Although the arrival of guests created extra work for women and might strain
their larders, few actually complained. Visitors were a source of local news, and
entertainment and broke the routine of their work. For other women on isolated farms
or ranches, visitors were a welcome sight. Martha Farnsworth wrote in her diary in 1891,
“We camped tonight at Pettit’s Ranch and my father insisted on my going in to visit Mrs.
Petit who seldom sees a woman in her Ranch life.”

268 Riley, Women and Nature, 10, 11.
269 Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 91.
270 Riley, The Female Frontier, 12.
271 Riley, Frontierswomen, 64.
272 Marlene Springer and Haskell Springer, eds. Plains Woman, The Diary of Martha
Some visits were spontaneous and of short duration, while others combined business with pleasure and the opportunity for “good conversation,” or the discussion of intimacies deemed inappropriate in the presence of men. Where neighbors were distant or transportation difficult, visits were not always spontaneous. Fink writes that a Nebraska woman reported that she “would climb the windmill and tie a dishtowel to the top as a signal that she was free to visit if the other woman could come.”

Women usually discharged their social obligations together, and women frequently acted in response to the needs of others. Motz writes, “A woman’s kin network,” she writes, “held a right to some of her services, allowing her to claim an obligation on her time other than that made by her husband.” Mothers, daughters, grandmothers and cousins frequently visited in groups. Margaret Dow Gebby wrote on 15 November 1889, “Aunt Hannah, Grandma & I called at Mrs. Wrights, was not at home, then we called at Mrs. McBeths, spent a pleasant hour with her, stopped to see Lib Beaty who is still ill.”

Weddings and funerals were also occasions for visits with kin that marked milestones in family history. Family visits might be extensive and were detailed in women’s correspondence. Women left without resources at the death of a spouse were particularly aware of the need to reaffirm connections and cultivate affections of kin on whom she could depend for financial assistance and moral support. While some men might have considered visiting a frivolous matter, for women visits were an important

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link between families that reaffirmed identity and shaped family memory. Men and women experienced family life differently. Women developed interdependent and supportive networks with kinswomen. But regardless of developing interdependent relationships with other women, they did not attain the autonomy enjoyed by men, and as a gender, were dependent on them. Joan Cashin writes, “The family was of paramount importance, even for those who wished to escape it.”

In rural areas and in small towns, women’s networks were a major force in the movement to organize churches on the frontier. However, in sparsely settled regions such as the North Dakota prairie, churches frequently lost the struggle for survival against distance and a thinly spread population that could not adequately support their church.

Jennie Laughlin’s mother advised her daughter before leaving for North Dakota in 1884, “When you go to the new country, go to church. There probably won’t be a church of your own faith there but that does not matter, go to any church as there is no church that there isn’t good in.”

Women’s church work preserved religious and ethnic traditions, and helped individuals survive loneliness and isolation. If men had opportunities to relate to other men at local shops, the stockyards, livery stables or in the field, churches and church work provided opportunities for women to respond to community needs in same-sex social networks.

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work, prayer meetings, and Sunday schools. They opened their homes for religious
exercises, and extended hospitality to itinerant ministers and preachers in the absence of
permanent churches, hotels and inns. Before permanent settlements in towns large
enough to build and support a church, camp meetings met the needs of scattered settlers
and provided opportunities for spiritual renewal and social contact. In 1844, an Iowa
described a well attended festive camp meeting that lasted ten days. She wrote, “I cooked
by the fireplace and our one room served for the church, kitchen, dining-room, bedroom,
and study for the preachers. Sometimes we had three or four as they came from adjoining
circuits to help us thru the work.”

During a period of rapid economic growth and geographic mobility, churches
and religion helped settlers cope with the exigencies of life on the frontier. Churches
served as centers of cultural, commercial, and social activity, and symbolized civilized
society and community. Religion preserved gender expectations and gender
segregation, reinforced female moral superiority, propriety, piety, and godliness.
Ministers attempted to impose a top down discipline, preaching against alcohol,
wickedness, and idleness, and advocating those virtues and values that would define
membership within the middle class: self-control, morality and domesticity. Although
men regulated the affairs of the church, women, denied access to the pulpit, forged the
organizational activities upon which ministers depended for financial support. Women’s

280 Somerville, To Make A Prairie, 143.
281 Keturah Belknap, “Family Life on the Frontier: The Diary of Kitturah Penton
Belknap,” ed. Glenda Riley, Annals of Iowa 44, (Summer 1977), 43; Tryphena Ely
282 Schlissel, Women’s Diaries, 217.
283 Tina Stewart Brakebill, “Circumstances are Destiny,” An Antebellum Woman’s
Struggle to Define Sphere (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2007), 73.
activities contributed to the social order by stepping out of the domestic sphere and into the public sphere where women created space for their values, and participated routinely, and as equals in fundraising, church building and the selection of their pastors. Most women looked forward to religious gatherings and the proliferation of churches added to the complexity of their experiences. Although gender roles remained rigidly defined, Jewish women in the 1880s Upper Midwest moved into new areas of public service as community builders, fundraisers and advocates for the less fortunate. Linda Mack Schloff writes, “By describing their work in a language that fused caring for one’s family with caring for society’s unfortunate, both women and men could overlook some rather profound changes that were occurring in prescribed gender roles.”

Church affiliation was important in the nineteenth-century, particularly for women who were physically or emotionally isolated. Women in search of support and like-minded spiritual community that they could not find within their households sometimes attended services at different churches. Women viewed religion as a unifying factor in communities that were known for their diverse religious communities of Methodists, Jewish, Baptist, Congregationalists, Catholics, Mormons, Lutherans, Mennonites and Quakers. Early ministers, eager to build churches in new towns were given generous allotments of land by town corporations and the railroads. Church building, after all, was a sign of progress, stability and permanence, and church

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284 McCormick, *Farm Wife*, 180-181; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women,* “Civilizing the West?” Jeffrey points out that women gained power as fundraisers for inadequately supported missionary endeavors including church building on the frontier. She writes, “The minister might point out specific needs, but the women made the money and the decisions” (121).


286 Farnsworth, *Plains Woman, The Diary of Martha Farnsworth*, 156.
membership clarified one’s status as moral and emerging middle class.\textsuperscript{287} Faragher writes, “Keeping the Sabbath was a bulwark of propriety, and a barricade against the encroachments of male barbarism and irreligion.”\textsuperscript{288}

Men did not uniformly share the belief that religion identified a person’s character and church services symbolized the advance of civility and community progress. During hard times, they worked to establish homes and farms, and on occasion, they lost interest in religious observances in their communities. Many men resented a day of work lost to worship, while others spent the day hunting, fishing, card playing, or drinking.\textsuperscript{289} Others recognized that religious service had a social and a theological component. Trypena Ely White lists the names of individuals who attended Sunday meetings at her church. She wrote, “18, Sunday, I went over to Cooper Street to a Methodist Meeting, we went in our wagon and had for company Joseph and Polly M’Cracken and Mr Reed and his wife and child and Harold. Father went over on foot.”\textsuperscript{290}

Young people might attend several churches, and for them, its function was more social than religious. Nineteen year old Martha Farnsworth wrote in her diary in January 1885, “Began the “New Year” good by going to Prayer-meeting in eve, at Baptist church, with Rose Hooker, May & Belle & little Vella, and Susie Ferguson. Cousin Will Sapp came in eve to get me to go to a dance at his brother Nelson’s.”\textsuperscript{291}

Other women were eager to attend church services to bridge the gulf between their physical and psychological isolation. Churches also supported existing systems, and

\textsuperscript{287} Brakebill, “\textit{Circumstances are Destiny},” 73.
\textsuperscript{288} Faragher, \textit{Men and Women on the Overland Trail}, 96-97.
\textsuperscript{289} Schlissel, \textit{Far from Home}, 215-216.
\textsuperscript{290} Trypena Ely White’s Journal, 29.
\textsuperscript{291} Springer and Springer, \textit{Plains Woman}, 87.
reaffirmed local values that stabilized communities. Carrie Williams’s hopes for a family and community centered life were dashed after her arrival in Nevada in 1858. She willingly migrated from Wisconsin and anticipated a working partnership with her lawyer husband, Wallace. Her diary entries, rigidly repetitive and grounded in the concrete rather than the abstract, suggest that her husband was indifferent to her and her work, and her marriage was on the verge of collapsing. She wrote, “We go on day after day, without speaking a dozen words to each other some days. I feel more and more every day that this is not as it should be. What is going to become of our happiness at this rate.”292

Her strongest expressions of feeling was reserved for her husband who refused to participate in organized religious services which for her was an opportunity to interact with, and draw strength and support from the company of other women.293 Carrie wrote, “Sunday 6th I was up earlier than is usual in order to get ready for church, but alas! Wallace would not go, and then I cried about it.”294

There is no evidence to suggest that Williams suffered physical abuse at the hands of her husband, but Betsy Downey found that women in isolated settings far removed from family and kinship networks were at higher risk for battering, and found it more difficult to leave their abusers.295 Supporting this view, Riley writes, “family structure

292 Ruth B. Moynihan, Susan Armitage, and Christine Fischer DiChamp, eds. So Much to be Done, Women Settlers on the Mining and Ranching Frontier (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 100.
293 Carol Coburn, “Women and Gender in Kansas History,” Coburn points out that among the many opportunities for networking and socializing, quilt making as a gendered activity brought generations of women together “to create a legacy that many times outlived the creators” (37).
294 Carrie Williams Diary, in Moynihan, 97-98.
was, after all, patriarchal with its attendant implications of the male’s right to dominate a female, control her, and coerce, her.”

By the middle of the nineteenth-century, migration of young families westward began to take a different pattern, away from rural areas to towns and cities. Women relocated from farms to towns that offered them greater economic opportunities for employment in the trades as nurses, milliners, seamstresses, bakers, midwives, postal clerks, telegraphers, actresses, writers and prostitutes. In California gold rush towns, they partnered with men and moved into the commercial marketplace as successful entrepreneurs of tailor shops, laundries, boarding house and bordellos.

Other women living in or near mining towns considered themselves bearers of civility and respectability and endured a self-imposed isolation as a consequence of widespread social disorder, violence, and ‘the base carnal passions of men.’ As the moral superiors of men with distinct qualities and roles that set them apart from men, women sought out the friendship of other women with similar interests and social values. Jeffrey writes, “Women were the best companions for one another. The reality of many women’s lives undergirded female friendship. The separation of the male and female worlds and the shift in women’s status often gave women more in common with one another than with men.”

Although the ideal of true womanhood and the cult of domesticity remained their goal, woman undertook different strategies because of the diverse opportunities and

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296 Riley, The Female Frontier, 96.
297 Ibid., 128-129.
299 Jeffrey, Frontier Women, 18
options available to them on the frontier. As farmers, they traded their excess produce for needed essentials. In mining towns, they took in laundry and exchanged baked goods for gold dust, served as postmasters in their homes and took in single female boarders as domestics, seamstresses, nannies, and day laborers whom they integrated into their same sex domestic and social circles.  

Arguably, women’s experiences in the west were as varied as men’s. Seamstresses, milliners, cooks and washerwomen were in demand, especially in towns where their work was considered an extension of their domestic duties. Moreover, household production was crucial to the establishment of American hegemony and the economic and commercial growth of the West. The needle trades gave women an opportunity to earn added cash by supplying in-demand products such as gloves, children’s clothing, dresses, and hats. Millinery and dressmaking were marketable skills that brought women into contact with each other. The needle trades provided women with opportunities for visits, and encouraged networks of exchange and information that was crucial to their economic survival.  

Sixty-six year old Tabitha Brown, the widow of an Episcopal clergyman began a rugged journey to Oregon Territory from Missouri with her extended family including five children in 1846. Her diary entries and letters insert her voice into the larger narrative of the westward migration experience and suggest that her desire for self-

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300 Carrie Williams Diary, in Moynihan, 3, 102.
302 Kenneth Holmes, ed. *Covered Wagon Women, Diaries and Letters from the Western Trails, 1840-1849* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 49; For an account of Tabitha’s journey to Oregon see McLynn, *Wagons West*, 282-325.
dependence was always a major concern. After a long and rugged overland journey, she took a position as a housekeeper for a Methodist minister, saved her earnings, traded some of her old clothes for buckskin, and bought needles to produce gloves for market place sale.\footnote{303 Holmes, Ibid, Brown letter, 58.}

As a working woman, she understood that making money and her family’s interests were intertwined. As a merchant, Tabitha utilized her domestic skills to construct a broad range of interdependent relationships with other women that perhaps represented an alternative to inequitable relationships with males.\footnote{304 Cashin, \textit{A Family Venture}, 4.} She later endowed a private school with land, a house, a bell and $550 cash to be used to educate future Oregonians.\footnote{305 Oregon country gained statehood in 1859; Tabitha Brown’s journey over the Scott-Applegate or South Road trail which went hundreds of miles south of Oregon into Utah Territory and California before turning north towards Oregon has been well documented. In 1987, Oregon state legislature honored her distinctive pioneer spirit with the title of “Mother of Oregon.” \footnote{306 David M. Henkin, \textit{The Postal Age} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 22-23.} Tabitha Brown letter in Holmes, \textit{Covered Wagon Women}, 58; The Oregon Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 (a forerunner to the Homestead Act of 1862) provided each family migrating to the Pacific Northwest with 640 acres of land.\footnote{307}} She apparently had little contact with her linear family until the arrival of railroad in the 1869 that accelerated the delivery of mail and the dissemination of information.\footnote{306} In her letter that she expected would circulate through several hands, she wondered what her family would say and if they could understand how the move to Oregon had changed her life. She wrote, “I think I hear you and Margaret say: “I should like to see that Oregon Pioneer; I wonder if she is anything like what she used to be?”\footnote{307}
In the early years of settlement, children’s labor was more important to the success of newly established farms and homesteads than their education. However, as towns grew and communities developed, the demand for teachers exceeded supply as parents began to recognize the importance of education for their children. Teaching began as a male profession but as men moved on to better paying jobs, women in search of better pay and economic opportunities took on autonomous roles as teachers. Teaching did not offer comparable opportunities to women, but it offered them scope and influence and for married women, teaching was considered a natural extension of their maternal duties. For single women contemplating marriage or for women wishing to remain single, it was a primary occupation and offered women independence, socially and economically.\(^{308}\)

Women who made up the majority of teachers in the West, wanted and were willing to work for less wages than their eastern counterparts or males who moved on to better paying opportunities.\(^{309}\) College educated female instructors were also independent agents of change and enjoyed more freedom of movement in the thinly-populated labor-starved West where their skills were in demand.\(^{310}\)

While women encountered unexpected opportunities as teachers, evidence seems to suggest that few female instructors challenged gender assumptions or deviated from cultural expectations. They did, however, argue for female advancement and began the

\(^{308}\) Coburn, “Women and Gender,” 145.
\(^{309}\) Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, One-fifth to one-quarter of all women at one time or another in their lives were employed as teachers (112); Robert E. Riegel, *American Women: A Story of Social Change* (Rutherford, Va.: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1970), 156. Teachers’ salaries were low in the East and women earned half the amount paid to male instructors. In the West, salaries for teachers were higher, but women were still offered less pay than men.
process of creating culture on the frontier by establishing schools, founding literary
societies, libraries and addressing the problem of illiteracy among non-English speaking
women.\textsuperscript{311} Mary Staples recalled that in 1860, “Through the efforts of the ladies, a
purchase of 150 volumes was made as the beginning of a Free Library.”\textsuperscript{312}

Women faced numerous obstacles as they attempted to build communities and
create stability in the West. Families commonly relocated several times in their lifetime.
Ministers and teachers had difficulty supporting themselves as families moved on and
churches, libraries and schools fell into disrepair and disappeared overnight. Drinking
and gambling persisted. Young single men, often miners in search of quick wealth,
outnumbered families in most small towns where labor was in short supply. As visitors
from elsewhere with little money and no stake in a town’s future, they boarded
temporarily in rooming houses or hotels, worked for short periods then moved on.\textsuperscript{313}
Many farm women only reluctantly ventured into towns where they felt unwelcome in
predominantly male social spaces of pool halls, saloons and blacksmith shops.\textsuperscript{314} A
prominent Roseburg (Oregon) resident described “young men running in the streets, this
drink and gambaling, the chief amusements night and day.”\textsuperscript{315}

\textsuperscript{311} Riley, \textit{The Female Frontier}, 174-175.
\textsuperscript{312} Jeffrey, \textit{Frontier Women}, 107.
\textsuperscript{313} Susan Armitage, “Women and the New Western History,” \textit{Organization of American
Historians Magazine of History} 9, (Fall 1994), points out that women stayed behind to
run farms and businesses and supported men emotionally and financially while they
looked for prospects in the west, especially in the goldfields(22-26).
\textsuperscript{314} Fink, \textit{Agrarian Women}, 72-73.
\textsuperscript{315} Quoted in Jeffrey, \textit{Frontier Women}, 104.
Married men with families and wealth, while in the minority, resided in towns for long periods of time and were politically and culturally active in their communities.\textsuperscript{316} Sixty percent of the sixty-three member Helena (Montana) Board of Trade formed in 1877 by merchants and professionals to bring the railroad to the town were married with families and had lived in the town for ten years or more. Twenty percent of their members were Jewish merchants, who like Friends used their networks of co-religious to see their businesses through hard times. With access to alternative sources of cash and credit, Jewish merchants had a stabilizing influence on Helena’s sometimes volatile marketplace.\textsuperscript{317}

The wives of these successful professionals and business men were in the best position to work for the improvement of their communities. In mining towns such as Helena, Montana, women’s boundaries extended from their homes into their neighborhoods as they entered into reform movements against widespread gambling, prostitution and “men’s saloon-centered society.”\textsuperscript{318} While it is true that Montana’s rugged conditions and the unsettled nature of towns adversely affected some women who retreated into domesticity, other women discovered alternative dimensions to womanhood in church and reform work. Elizabeth Chester Fisk from Connecticut found herself isolated in her Helena household with few female connections and her husband frequently gone. Women depended not on their spouses, but on their female networks for

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 67.
protection against isolation and loneliness, and in assisting each other through life’s crises, they created a female-centered world apart from men. Fisk wrote to her mother that she had “come to the determination to be independent of any and everyone, to seek my own enjoyment where I can best find it, independent of all who would selfishly seek to oppose my plans.”\textsuperscript{319}

The ruggedness and isolation of life in the west and their dependence on men generated by frontier conditions relegated women to the domestic sphere. Except for teaching, domestic service and the needle trades, women had fewer opportunities for formal wage work in the west, with the exception of California, than did women in eastern cities. Most women needed to work, were economically dependant, and could not afford to separate themselves from their families. For most women, the frontier was a force for limited expansion for women’s opportunities as workers, managers, reformers, and activists in their communities.\textsuperscript{320}

Advantaged women, such as Elizabeth Chester Fisk were active in religious and social community building activities. As secretary of her women’s organization, she engaged in fundraising and church festivals. When she became disillusioned with poor church attendance, poorer sermons and petty jealousies and rivalries between church women, she withdrew from the church work and attempted to connect with other women in Helena of her social class. But another dilemma presented, that of transiency. Settling did not always mean putting down roots, and even after farming for several years, families in search of fresh opportunities and fertile land suddenly picked up and moved.

\textsuperscript{319} Elizabeth Chester Fisk letter to her mother, April 14, 1868. Fisk Family Papers, Montana Historical Society Library.

\textsuperscript{320} Petrik, \textit{No Step Backward}, 59, 75-76.
Women were prepared to move in harsh economic times, and unfortunately, their networks and friendships that bonded them to each other went with them. Elizabeth Chester Fisk wrote when a close female friend moved away, “When I think how much I shall lose in losing her kind friendship and society, I am almost determined never again to make a warm friend, a mere passing acquaintance will do.” During the Panic of 1857, Emily Austin relocated to a town in Illinois where her millinery skills were in demand by an affluence fashion-conscious population of consumers. She explained, “I depend on working at my trade for a living, and if I can’t get that to do, what can I do?”

This chapter argues that migration was often precarious for families and especially women who migrated without benefit of networks of kin and fewer contacts with family of origin. For women without kinship connections or religious fellowship long distance mobility was probably more disruptive and weakened or even destroyed ties with linear family. As the next chapter reveals, Quakers maintained contacts over great distances through correspondence and did not break with their family networks. With few exceptions, and especially before 1800, Friends migrated shorter distances to communities already established by other Quakers, not uncommonly from the same neighborhood, village or town. With more financial resources on average than most migrating families, and an awareness of ties that extended far beyond the household, Quakers experienced far less disruption or destruction of family ties and networks than did non-Friends. While migration and mobility had the potential to weaken family ties,

321 Elizabeth Chester Fisk to her mother, May 17, 1868. Montana Historical Society.
the circumstances that enabled Friends to withstand the pressures of relocation including
a dense network of family ties, a long tradition of mutual aid, a structured hierarchical
meeting system and the tradition of women’s letters preserved social cohesion and
communities of Friends over long distances.
CHAPTER IV
CHARITY AND THOMAS ROTCH IN NEW BEDFORD AND HARTFORD:
1791-1810
A LIFE OF PARALLELS?

After their marriage in 1790, Thomas and Charity Rotch lived briefly in the Rotch family home on Nantucket. There Charity enjoyed the company of several of the Rotch women including Thomas’s sisters, Mary, Elizabeth, and Lydia who helped Charity, newly separated from Newport kinswomen, adjust to her new life. For women, marriage signaled their entry into a defined kinship system that included female members of the nuclear family as well as extended aunts, cousins and other assorted female kin. The practice of living with female kin shortly after marriage was an opportunity for adjustment that also encouraged familial relationships and led to lifelong relations between kinswomen.323

323 Holton, “Family Memory, Religion and Radicalism, 164; Joan E. Cashin, A Family Venture, 25; Carl Degler, At Odds, posits that newly married women switched their allegiances from their family of origin to the family of procreation after marriage (vi-vii and 3-9); Motz, True Sisterhood, argues that women understood that marriage could not always provide the lifelong security of a kinship network. Family networks were at times fragile, and unforeseen circumstances such as dissolution of marriage, illness, death of parents or a spouse, or economic disaster increased women’s dependence on their female network of kin. In consequence, such changes in familial obligation did not always occur (5).
In the spring of 1791, the couple removed to the port city of New Bedford to join Thomas’s brother William’s rapidly expanding firm. The town, burned to the ground in 1778, was rebuilding to accommodate the growing shipping and carriage trade, and other businesses dependant on the whaling industry. William Rotch established a candle factory and a general store in the town, selling commodities transported on company ships or manufactured by the family firms including candles, whale oil, and cordage to East Coast merchants in New York, Philadelphia, Newport and Providence. Thomas Rotch acted as bookkeeper and handled the correspondence for his brother’s firm that imported cheese, coffee and chocolate from Providence, sugar from Boston, flour from Philadelphia, watches from London, and ribbons, silk stockings and umbrellas from France.

By 1794, New Bedford overtook Nantucket as the busiest whaling port in New England. By the turn of the century, the Rotches held substantial tracts of land, several wharfs and buildings in addition to whaling vessels. The family established banks, and built numerous mansions, schools, a rope walk, the first Fairhaven Bridge.

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324 Norling, *Ahab’s Wife*, 121; Joseph Rotch of Nantucket, Thomas’s grandfather relocated the family whaling enterprise to New Bedford in 1765 primarily because the town’s deep harbors could accommodate larger whaling vessels.


326 Ibid., 21.

327 Ibid., 17; McDevitt, *The House of Rotch*, 393, 403; Rodman, *Notes on Rodman Genealogy* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1887), 40; In 1800, few people in New Bedford paid over $10 in taxes. William Rotch, Sr. paid $552.50, William Rotch, Jr., $778, Thomas Rotch, $402 and Samuel Rodman, $344. Three individuals in New Bedford had a net worth of $100, 000: Samuel Rodman, William Rotch, Sr. and William Rotch, Jr.
In 1791, Charity Rotch was surrounded by her kinswomen as she prepared for motherhood. In the eighteenth-century, childbirth was women’s particular domain.\textsuperscript{328} Physicians or midwives might oversee prenatal care and officiate at birth, but female kin, acting as a family unit, attended the expectant mother during and after delivery, and often assumed responsibility for the welfare of each other’s children even before they were born.\textsuperscript{329} Her first and only child, born on July 29, developed quinsy, a form of diphtheria that periodically affected the children of New England, and died on November 19, 1791.\textsuperscript{330}

In early 1800, Thomas Rotch withdrew from active participation in his family’s lucrative New Bedford whaling firm and transferred monies including gold and silver to a bank account in Hartford, Connecticut.\textsuperscript{331} He apparently considered relocation as early as 1798, “from a religious concern to plant there the principles of Quakerism.”\textsuperscript{332} Until

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{328} Ulrich, \textit{Good Wives}, 126-145.
\textsuperscript{329} Motz, \textit{True Sisterhood}, 89.
\textsuperscript{330} Death dates served no legal function and were not recorded in Quaker Meeting Records. The following notice of Charity’s child’s death was recorded on the reverse of the Rotch’s Certificate of Marriage of May 6, 1790. “Thomas Rotch Born the 29\textsuperscript{th} of the 7\textsuperscript{th} mo. 20 mn past 3 O’clock 6th day Morning 1791 Died the 18\textsuperscript{th} of the 11 Mo. 45mn after 2 o’clock in the morning 6 day of the week 1791.”Box M-1-4, Documents and Papers.
\textsuperscript{331} The 1800 census for New Bedford, Connecticut locates Thomas Rotch, his wife, one male below the age of 16, possibly Jeremiah Winslow who joined the household as Thomas’s apprentice, one female between the ages of 16 and 25, probably Betsy Swain who assisted Charity with housework, and another female over 45, Elizabeth Allen an elderly friend of Mary Rodman’s cared for by Charity Rotch. Box E-20-6 and 18. McDevitt, \textit{The House of Rotch}, 396 ff; Bullard, \textit{The Rotches}, points out that Thomas Rotch was the only member of his family to withdraw from the financially troubled whaling industry until the second quarter of the nineteenth century (98-99, 109-110).
\textsuperscript{332} Samuel Rodman Jr. to James B. Congdon, James B. Congdon Papers, New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford, Mass. August 25, 1856, and confirmed by James Mott, letter to Thomas Rotch, June 6, 1799 Box B-125-3; McDevitt, \textit{The House of Rotch}, observed that long standing discord over the family’s activities in the major events of the
\end{verbatim}
1784, settlers in Connecticut were required to pay a tithe to the Congregational church, the official state church until 1818, regardless of their religious orientation. When this requirement was finally relaxed in 1784, Quakers “looking for new fields,” relocated to Connecticut to establish new meetings in areas of the state where no more than a dozen meeting houses existed. Land shortages in New England and the expanding market revolution of the late nineteenth century with its new entrepreneurial and technological opportunities also generated a maelstrom of intergenerational tensions. McDevitt writes, “Although the move was for his wife Charity’s health, it also allowed Thomas who had grown tired of whaling to devote time to other pursuits. He wanted to raise merino sheep and take an active part in the Quaker ministry.”

William Rotch, Sr. had hoped that his son would continue as a partner in the family firm. The decision to quit his father’s business may have been a blow to the elder Rotch who remained as family patriarch as long as he retained control of the family enterprise. Moreover, as a devout Quaker who never lost interest in the Society of Friends and rarely missed a meeting, William Rotch may have been pained by his son’s departure from the Monthly Meeting. Elder Friends were considered “Nursing Mothers and Fathers,” whose role as nurturers was to instruct, admonish and support the

1780s and 1790s and “forces beyond their control” led the family into the midst of controversy for almost two decades (166).

333 Brakebill, Circumstances are Destiny, 9.
334 Bullard, The Rotches, 85.
336 McDevitt, The House of Rotch, 411; Memoir of William Logan Fisher, Wright Collection at Fox Hill Farm, Jamestown, Rhode Island; Moses Brown Papers, Vol. 9, p. 73, Rhode Island Historical Society.
337 McDevitt, The House of Rotch, 411.
338 Ibid., 513.
young.  

Frequent correspondence, however, lessened the tension between the two men, and Thomas’s departure did not contribute to the family’s changing fortunes. The elder Rotch’s letters, always conciliatory, kindly and fatherly, offered business advice and also kept Thomas apprised of individual family members. He wrote to Thomas from London in 1785, “Be carefull to keep out of all unprofitable company, be diligent in thy business, but above all attentive to the great counsellor in thy own bosom, which will reprove thee when thou does wrong and speak peace to thee when thou does well.”

While Thomas Rotch was eager for independence and the chance to seek fresh opportunities for community building, the move to Hartford for his wife meant isolation and the breakdown of valued same-sex affiliations. Families in the nineteenth-century ideally lived near one another, and not wishing to weaken family ties, Quakers usually migrated short rather than longer distances. While she regretted “leaving beloved friends and relatives at N. Bedford,” Charity would relocate one hundred thirty miles distant from her female network not because she wanted to, but because social

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339 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 513-515.
340 McDevitt, Ibid., 412.
341 William Rotch, Sr. letter to Thomas Rotch, 8th 2d, 1785. Box B-163-1; An account of William Rotch’s property, 1828, MS., Rotch Family Papers, Box 1, Massachusetts Historical Society. William Rotch died on 16 May, 1828 at the age of ninety-three. His estate valued at $39,980 was divided among his children, to whom he had transferred monies for their projects in previous years. McDevitt, The House of Rotch, The family’s wealth remained concentrated in whaling until petroleum became available in 1859 (522). Whalebone was the forerunner of plastic. “Once petroleum, electricity, and steel became available,” writes McDevitt, “the demand for whale products dropped drastically; the industry’s death knell was sounding” (524).
expectations and a sense of family duty left her no choice.\textsuperscript{343} Resigned to the removal only in part and not in spirit, she expressed her dissatisfaction with the move in a letter to a friend of 1801. She wrote, “There is nothing I more desire than to pass every day as tho it were my last for me thinks there can be no greater consolation at this awful period.”\textsuperscript{344}

Hartford was a thriving town in 1800, situated on the Connecticut River which enabled vessels to sail into Long Island Sound and onward to other Atlantic ports of call. English dissidents led by Thomas Hooker from the Bay Colony and Plymouth Colony of Massachusetts settled Hartford in 1636. The town’s economy, initially based on agriculture, evolved into an important trading center on the Connecticut River. By 1800, Hartford was filled with wide streets, substantial brick houses, and shops stocked with a wide variety of imported consumer goods including china cups and saucers, dry ink bottles, Lisbon wine, sugar, sleigh bells, imported bowls, and coffee.\textsuperscript{345} William Rotch informed his brother in 1802 that he had a large shipment of bohea tea, “45 half chests and between 30 & 40 quarters only 3 or 4 whole,” that Rotch might consider selling in this in his Hartford store.\textsuperscript{346} He wrote, “I shall send thee 2 pr out of 12 of excellent sheetings, 18 papers of thread, 1000 quills, 500 of 2 qualities. The Chinese lanterns and Tea urn also go.”\textsuperscript{347}

\textsuperscript{343} Note by Charity Rotch, Box F-24-1; Also Box B-282-3 letter from H. Penrose to Charity Rotch, December 22, 1807. Penrose remarked on Charity’s “lonely situation, lonely I say because you are deprived of that social intercourse with those you love, & whose loved society would end to strengthen, & animate you on your way.”

\textsuperscript{344} Charity Rotch letter to an unnamed friend, September 11, 1801. Box B-226-2

\textsuperscript{345} Thomas Rotch accounts payable, 1800-1806 (Hartford) Box E-7-1 through 159, esp. Box E-7-110.

\textsuperscript{346} William Rotch letter to Thomas Rotch, 3 mo 10 1802. Box B-164-8.

\textsuperscript{347} William Rotch letter to Thomas Rotch, 3 mo 22, 1802 Box B-164-9. Also see Accounts payable, 1807-1812 (Hartford ) Box E-8-1 though 139.
At West Hartford, twenty miles outside of the town, Rotch rented a house and four acres of land from Miss Eunice Wadsworth for $160 per year on which to raise pure bred Merino sheep.\textsuperscript{348} He set up a woolen factory, a slitting and oil mill, and a general store that stocked tea, chinaware and watches from Europe and spermaceti candles that were manufactured and transported with other goods to Hartford on Rotch owned vessels.\textsuperscript{349} To save shipping costs and underwrite the expenses of establishing himself in business, he retained partial control of the family’s lucrative whaling and shipping business. His father, William wrote to his son in 1810, “By Capt Butler I send thy Trunk which contains a box of sperm candles, and in the same trunk is thy wig in a small box, also one of thy brother Rodman’s old wigs sent by request of thy wife for some needy person.”\textsuperscript{350}

The Embargo Act of 1807, a series of laws passed by Congress between 1806 and 1808 to force Britain to change its damaging trade policies, halted imports from abroad and closed America for business with the world.\textsuperscript{351} The Act reduced competition for domestic woolens and created a demand for fine wool. As the price of domestic wool rose sharply and the internal demand for fine woolen cloth climbed to astronomical levels, Rotch began upgrading his flocks by crossing domestic sheep with pure-bred Merinos imported from Spain. Most farmers originally showed little interest in the

\textsuperscript{348} Conrad, \textit{Invaluable Friends}, 24.

\textsuperscript{349} McDevitt, \textit{The House of Rotch}, 400; Conrad, \textit{Ibid.}, 27.

\textsuperscript{350} William Rotch, Sr. letter to Thomas Rotch, 8\textsuperscript{th} mo 11\textsuperscript{th} 1810. Box B-164-49.

\textsuperscript{351} Hurt, \textit{The Ohio Frontier}, 227.
Merino breed that did not produce good meat. The fine, thick wool of the animal was only a byproduct of farming.\footnote{352}{Thomas Rotch Sheep Accounts, Hartford, Connecticut, 1808-1811. Box E-39-1; Thomas Rotch outgoing business correspondence, letter to Jacob Barker, \textit{9\textsuperscript{th} mo 9\textsuperscript{th}} 1810. Box A-29-9, also see Thomas Rotch sheep records and accounts (Hartford), 1808-1811. Box E-39-1 through 23.}

By increasing the quantity of wool per animal without greatly diminishing the quality of wool, Rotch succeeded in adopting a system of agriculture oriented toward the manufacture of raw wool to the finished product, fine wool and woolen products.\footnote{353}{Conrad, \textit{Invaluable Friends}, 27; Merchant, \textit{Ecological Revolutions}, 187-189; Otis K. Rice. \textit{The Allegheny Frontier, West Virginia Beginnings, 1730-1830} (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 309; A.J. Langguth. \textit{Union 1812}. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 134, 228-229.} His enterprise thriving, he informed Jacob Barker in 1810, “I yesterday sold my excellent Merino Ram for something less than a thousand dollars. I now have it in contemplation to send off to New York to be sold at auction about 40 or 50 Rams, they are all marked and numbered. Have them advertised immediately, and the sale to take place the 25\textsuperscript{th}.”\footnote{354}{Thomas Rotch outgoing correspondence, Business, letter to Jacob Barker, \textit{9\textsuperscript{th}, 9\textsuperscript{th}} 1810. Box A-29-9.} Able to handle all phases of his business affairs, he listed his address as “Thomas Rotch, Merchant, Hartford.”\footnote{355}{Bullard, \textit{The Rotches}, 85; Conrad, ibid., 25.}

Charity, meanwhile, was ill several times in 1806, but miraculously escaped a “spotted fever” that presented in the Hartford area in 1807.\footnote{356}{Conrad, \textit{Invaluable Friends}, 31.} In January 1808, she complained of headaches, weakness of several days duration, and “icy coldness” in her breast. Her poor health became a matter of growing concern among her family. Ann Mifflin advised garlic to relieve her discomfort, writing in 1808, “Try a clove of garlick
three mornings successively, have them ready at the bedside, then stop three, & so on till
thou hast taken 9 large cloves. It is very good for complaints of the Lungs.”

In 1808, her physician, Eli Todd advised that Charity seek further medical
attention from Dr. Benjamin Rush (1746-1813) in his Philadelphia office. Dr. Todd
wrote, “It will afford me a substantial satisfaction to learn on her return, (if her health
shall not be much improved) that she has taken the advice of the much & deservedly
celebrated Dr. Rush.”

Despite administrations of wine and broth for hydration purposes and the
administrations of laudanum for pain and discomfort, Charity again fell ill in January
1809 with spotted fever that claimed the lives of various neighbors and friends who died
within days and hours of each other. Constrained to her chamber for seven weeks, she
“came very near closing this earthly scene.” Charity requested that kinswomen not
make the journey to Hartford to be at her bedside during her illness. Her sister, Elizabeth
wrote, “It has been very painful to consider a situation so detached from relatives, as for
it to be totally out of their power to lend any assistance.”

Religion in the late eighteenth-century encouraged women to resign themselves to
God’s will rather than changing their condition. After another severe bout of life-
threatening sickness, Charity concluded that her suffering was divinely ordained and was
something that she should accept rather than resist. She wrote, “the most perfect peace to

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357 Ann Mifflin letter to Charity Rotch, 6 mo 1808. Box B-270-1.
360 Quaker Letters and Epistles, Box F-14-24. Notebook; also see Letter from Thomas
Roch to Eastus Newhall, Hartford, 3m 29th 1809. Box A-30-3.
361 Elizabeth Rotch Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, 3rd mo 17th 1809 Box B-292-7.
362 Norton, Liberty’s Daughters, 127.
which we can attain in this miserable life consists rather in meek and patient suffering
than in an exemption from adversity.”

While the date of Charity’s consultation with Rush in Philadelphia is unclear, he
did see her and prescribed bloodletting to relieve symptoms of fever and weakness. The
practice of bleeding, while controversial, was not uncommon in the nineteenth-century to
relieve a variety of diseases lead to anemia, weakness and mental confusion. Bleeding
unfortunately exacerbated rather than relieved the symptoms and took many lives. Sarah Rotch Arnold confirmed that her uncle’s treatment with blood letting “reduced
him, but only produces temporary relief of the pain. He looks quite pale and is confined
to the house.”

Dr. Rush, a Presbyterian and a signer of the 1776 Declaration of Independence,
publicly supported Quaker writer John Woolman’s two essay “On the Keeping of
Negros” (1754, 1762) against slavery and the slave trade. While Rush often associated
with Friends, he did not always agree with their politics. He had an almost god-like
authority over his patient, and he alone determined what Charity ate, how she spoke, her
level of activity, and even her demeanor. He advised that she continue to bleed herself
and repeat it if symptoms were not relieved or there were any signs of inflammation. He
wrote, “Avoid long, and loud speaking & reading. Contrariness must be prevented by

365 Sarah Rotch Arnold letter to Charity Rotch, 11th no 11th 1821. Box B-233-10.
diet, or medicines.”

Charity’s response to Dr. Rush’s medical regimen is unclear, but she apparently had confidence in her doctor and regained sufficient strength to accompany her husband to Ohio in 1811.

“No Maps, No Roads, No Outposts:”

Quakers in Western Pennsylvania

The settlement of Friends west of the Alleghany Mountains was a significant historical event in the history of American Quakerism. In the 1720s, James Logan, an Irish born Quaker and provincial secretary of Pennsylvania granted Scotch Irish immigrants an extensive tract of land in Chester County on Pennsylvania’s southeastern border for settlement. Logan believed that the Scotch-Irish had the qualities needed to build the colony. His fellow countrymen took up land around Philadelphia, some crossed into New Jersey and Maryland, while others settled in Western Chester County. As immigration increased, the Scotch-Irish migrated further west toward the Susquehanna, often squatting illegally on land, settling in the inclusive communities among their own people, and mixing little with their German neighbors. However, the practice of squatting by Scotch-Irish and other settlers had the potential to undermine William Penn’s good neighbor policy between Native Americans and settlers who negotiated common spaces and tolerated each other at a local level during a period of “Long Peace” that lasted through the 1750s.

By the 1750s, southeastern Pennsylvania was populated with market-oriented and mobile communities of Friends, Scotch-Irish, German, Anglican, Swedes, Fins and

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368 Benjamin Rush letter to Charity Rotch, May 2, [nd] Box B-304-1
German immigrants who were not isolated from each other. In the next two decades, agricultural productivity led to a rise in household wealth in all income groups. Wealth and land became concentrated in the hands of fewer elite Quaker families, tenancy on farms throughout the Valley increased, and less than one third of Quaker families in the older counties such as Bucks and Chester Counties to the south of Philadelphia owned the soil-rich land on which they farmed. For wealthy Friends with resources who were less inclined to relocate, the Delaware Valley in the eighteenth-century was “the best place for health and wealth.” The tendency was toward increased inequality with a growing underclass of the poor at the bottom of society in the Valley.

The acquisition of farmland in soil rich Pennsylvania was critical for Friends intent on creating religious community and ensuring the future of the next generation. Networks of kith and kin were important wherever Quakers settled, and family groups that often relocated in chain migrations to join other kin became the building blocks of back country communities. While a few Quakers migrated beyond the mountains

371 Yogg, ibid., 69.
374 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 571-572.
376 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 634-638; Specht, Ibid, 34; Fischer defines the backcountry as a vast concentration of land that included western Pennsylvania, the western parts of Maryland and Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Across the entire area, geographic migration which in some cases meant short-distance covering only a few miles was very high (634); Yogg, “The Best Place,” points out that
before 1780, Friends remained safe in the Delaware Valley, or followed the mountains south into Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas, rather than risk moving westward into hostile territory during the French and Indian War (1755-1758).\textsuperscript{377} The protracted war between the English and Native Americans and their French allies who promised the return of land taken from them by settlers, and particularly the Scotch-Irish, temporarily ended the westward migration of settlers across the mountains into western Pennsylvania.

With the return of peace in 1763, settlers from southeastern Pennsylvania began crossing the mountains to purchase land from the newly established land office opened for the sale of lands in 1768.\textsuperscript{378} After the Revolutionary War and the acquisition of western lands by the federal government, settlers including Quakers in large numbers pushed into the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio.\textsuperscript{379}

In the 1780s, Quakers from Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Delaware settled on small farms near rivers long the Monongahela Valley in Fayette and Washington Counties where they planted orchards, raised livestock, ran small stores, or pursued small trades such as blacksmithing or

\begin{enumerate}
\item while Friends from Bucks County migrated short distances in the 1740s and 1750s, many more single families and individuals with assets, in kinship or neighborhoods groups, freed servants, and a few poor without family support migrated westward to southwest Pennsylvania in the 1780s and 1790s before moving into Columbiana County, Ohio near the Ohio River and the Pennsylvania border in 1800 (144-145, 160, 169).
\item \textsuperscript{378} Ron Chepesiuk, The Scotch-Irish, From the North of Ireland to the Making of America (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2000), 127.
\item \textsuperscript{379} Yogg, “The Best Place,” 166.
\end{enumerate}
furniture making. Women’s work was tied to housewifery and home manufacturing that provided regional economic opportunities for the sale or exchange of home made products to supplement family incomes. In networks of mutual dependency, women shared heavy outdoor labor with men, felling trees, clearing forests and working in fields at harvest time. While women might control their economic activity, this was not necessarily evidence of gender equality. Aside from home manufacturing and farmsteading, women had little access to formal paid labor on the frontier. Marital status was the main factor in women’s labor market participation, and unmarried women and widows faced poverty and were forced to become domestic servants to survive.

Ideally, Quakers attempted to live in spiritually clustered close knit “loving neighborhoods” where they worshiped and worked together and attempted to separate themselves from the experience of wider social and cultural life of their neighbors. Friends tended to migrate in family and neighborhood groups to already established Quaker communities. This pattern of short range migration ensured that Quaker families traveling in groups could re-form and still maintain family connections over distances.

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380 Yogg, Ibid, 161; James L. Burke and Donald E. Bensch Mount Pleasant and the Early Quakers of Ohio (Columbus, Ohio Historical Society, 1975), 3.
383 Ibid., xxi.
384 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 577; Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 12. By 1784, the population of Washington County swelled to 24,000 inhabitants, ten percent of whom were Friends although exact estimates are unclear. Other denominations included Presbyterians, Lutherans, German Reformed, Methodists and Baptists (115, n26).
Communication from family and kin reached Quakers through their meetings which served as a second family for the flock, passing along information, preserving kinship associations, and lessening the disruption of relocation.\textsuperscript{385} Monongahela Friend Levi Miller wrote to his niece in 1796, “We have bought a small place lying near quarter of a mile from said river and a mile and an half from Westland Monthly Meeting. We have the best neighbours in the world loving sympathizing people ready to help to their utmost.”\textsuperscript{386}

To reinforce social cohesiveness and protect the Society’s internal purity, the Quaker establishment continued to insist on disciplinary intimacy within self-sufficient households.\textsuperscript{387} Marriage was spiritualized, a religious form of domesticity in which children were socialized in the tenets of Quakerism disciplined the household, and women were charged with creating strong internal bonds and protecting children from worldly temptations.\textsuperscript{388} Epistles issued from Yearly Meetings instructed parents on the perils of allowing their children to marry non-Friends, and parents in turn might use the threat of disinheritance to ensure that their children understood the consequences of exogamous marriage: “good children” who married within the meeting would inherit, while “bad children” would be left penniless and disowned.\textsuperscript{389}

\textsuperscript{385} Yogg, “\textit{The Best Place},” 201.
\textsuperscript{386} Levi Miller to Mary Shaw, 9M/29/1798, Shaw Papers, MSS, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, College.
\textsuperscript{387} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 577.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid., 485-490,666.
\textsuperscript{389} London Epistle, 1777 Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives (Pickering College, New Market, Vertical Shelves; Levy, \textit{The Birth of the Modern Family},” 43; Neva Jean Specht, “\textit{Mixed Blessing, Trans-Appalachian Settlement and the Society of Friends, 1780-1813}.” Ph.D diss. (University of Delaware, 1997) Chapter Three.
The density of Quaker populations largely determined how religious communities of Friends fared in the frontier environment. Meetings for worship and business were designed to stabilize communities and multiplied wherever Friends settled. As a practical system support, they assured that new settlers needing neighbors had a working network of others on whom they could depend to borrow tools, trade labor, and call upon in a spirit of mutual helpfulness to raise a barn, finish a cabin, or plow a field at harvest time.\footnote{Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 216.} Elizabeth Shaw who settled among Friends in western Pennsylvania in 1799 wrote that on her arrival, she received the use of a cabin, milk, and cash loans from other Quakers.\footnote{Elizabeth Shaw to Sarah Shaw, 11 M/1799. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, PA.}

Long distance removal presented challenges for Friends struggling to reconstruct institutional religious life and maintaining traditional practices in an area of Pennsylvania that was known for its religious and cultural pluralism.\footnote{Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 759; Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 223.} The presence of military on the frontier and neighboring Scots, Irish, German, Presbyterian, and Baptists with competing beliefs and practices were perceived as external threats to Quaker order.\footnote{Specht, “Removing to a Remote Place,” 64; Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 177-180; Schwartz, “A Mixed Multitude,” 292-302.} Continual Scotch-Irish incursions onto Indian country threatened to destabilize the backcountry and undermine the ruling Quaker oligarchy’s policy of pacifism toward Native Americans.\footnote{Jane Merritt, *At the Crossroads, Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 202; Bononi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 169.} Settlers and local Indians had a history of engaging in trade and exchange, and negotiating their differences during a period of peace that lasted through the mid-
In the mid 1760s, the Scots-Irish Paxton Boys slaughter of Conestoga Indians brought years of toleration to an end and singled out all Indians as “savages” who posed a threat to settlers interests. While Quaker officials took steps to make amends for mistreatment of Indians, violence escalated between Native Americans and the Scotch-Irish, who dismissed all Indians as savages, felt no remorse for their actions.

Faced with increasing concern for the dispersal of the membership to “remote places,” eastern Pennsylvania meetings began sending itinerant ministers or “Weighty” Friends to guide the spiritual lives of members, to monitor the progress of new meetings, and to ascertain that they functioned uniformly. Touring the backcountry in the 1770s through the 1790s, itinerant ministers reported a lack of religious solidarity and community cohesiveness that characterized meetings in Eastern Pennsylvania and New England. Ministers concluded that backcountry Friends required emotional support as well as “special attention and spiritual guidance.”

Religious services were irregularly

395 Ibid., 1,4.  
396 Ibid., 197.  
398 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 30. As acknowledged leaders or long standing members of meetings, who assumed positions as elders, clerks, overseers and elders, “Weighty” Friends comprised an oligarchy that determined the direction individual meetings would take. These members held positions of authority and were charged with monitoring the spiritual well being of the membership (104). An example of a minute to send Friends on concern see, Friends Preparative Meeting, Kendal, Ohio Box F-7-1.  
399 Box F-8-8, Thomas Rotch notes of Friends’ Meetings, Hartford 12th of 1 mo 1809; T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers, Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 7. Between 1800 and
held or were not well attended, adherence to the Discipline was lax, marriages were “out of order”, and the drift into worldliness was eroding the Society’s values. John Smith, an aged minister from Marlborough, Pennsylvania wrote, “true humility was less apparent, and meetings in general were not so lively and edifying.”

In a letter to Thomas Rotch, itinerant minister Joshua Evens observed that the health of Quaker communities in the backcountry did not look good. He wrote that Friends had come over the mountains “to settle for the sake of this world’s treasure. Many of them appear to have obtained this, and are eagerly pursuing after more.”

Over ministers’ concerns for distance, diverse membership, and isolation of meetings, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1785 approved the establishment of Westland Monthly Meeting, the first meeting for worship west of the Alleghany Mountains to accommodate Friends migrating westward into trans-Appalachia from meetings in the south, and eastern and central Pennsylvania. To maintain control over an increasingly dispersed membership, and especially endogamous marriage which was rigidly enforced, the Society began the practice of granting certificates of removal to

1836, the “West” for Quakers meant territories in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, and to a lesser extent, Tennessee and Michigan.


Minutes of the Warrington and Fairfax Quarterly Meeting, 6M/19/1789, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College (microfilm LDS History Center, typescript), 328; Joshua Evans quoted in Rufus M. Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), 386; See Box F-8-3 for a list of Quaker families visited by Public Minister, Joshua Evans in 1794, including Thomas and Charity Rotch.

Nothing could stop the flow of Quakers westward. See Jones, Chapter XI: “The Great Migration.”
Friends relocating to new meetings. The certificate system was an outgrowth of the practice of requiring itinerant ministers traveling beyond their home territory to carry certificates attesting to their good character and their legitimacy as a minister. In addition to symbolizing the Society’s values and distinctiveness, the certificate system was a way for Quakers to recognize one another. Certificates also attested to the applicant’s spiritual soundness, church attendance, and his or her marital and financial status including any indebtedness. Certificates also included a general recommendation for or against inclusion into the new meeting.

Despite ministerial activity designed to visit members and pursue disciplinary problems, meetings were increasingly confronted with external forces that the faith community could not withstand. More than one half of all disciplinary proceedings brought against Friends in Pennsylvania meetings addressed problems of courtship and exogamous marriage. Tensions also developed between those in meetings who would enforce strict discipline and the exclusivity of the group, and those who sought broader outside connections that would increase the viability of their communities. The ecclesiastical system that defined the lives of most Quakers increasingly came under attack from Friends who rebelled against the Society’s attempts to control their movements and sexual agency. Less devote Quakers found the insistence on

405 See for example, Mary Ridgway’s Certificate from the Women’s monthly meeting for Mountmellick (Ireland) signed by 60 members, 10th of 4 mo, 1789 addressed to “Friends in America.” Box F-8-1.
406 Specht, “Removing to a Remote Place,” 54.
407 Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 486.
408 Specht, “Women of One or Many Bonnets,” 38.
409 Ibid., 27.
exclusivity, strict Discipline, and close scrutiny of their conduct too intrusive. When Leah Lazador married outside of meeting in 1788, members of the Westland Women’s Meeting were “informed by her mother that she had no desire to see Friends.”

Faced with increased exogamous marriage, the Society adopted a backward-looking approach characterized by moral rigidity and the assumption that as the true church, it could not include all men in the membership. Church reformers, very devout and intensively spiritual, thought exogamous marriage would weaken the spiritual integrity of the community. They elected to retain the internal purity of the household and the Society, and to disown or disinherit all those who married out of meeting.

While poorer Quakers without financial resources lost more of their children to disownment, women who entered into exogamous marriages may have concluded that the advantages of marriage to non-friends were greater than remaining single.

Exogamous marriage was considered the equivalent to adultery, and devote Friends who believed that purifying the Society began with family life took steps to deal with exogamous marriage. Between 1739 and 1811, the Redstone Monthly Meeting in western Pennsylvania disowned one hundred four members, mostly women, who either refused or were too embarrassed to appear before the women’s and the men’s meeting to admit their sins. The practice of posting the names of those at risk for disownment to

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411 Frost, The Quaker Family in America, 218.
412 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 133.
414 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian. 69.
415 Miyakawa, Protestant and Pioneers, 61; Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 223.
embarrass them publicly also failed to stop the fragmentation of the membership.⁴¹⁶

Esther Hunt wrote in 1802, “The life of religion is mournfully low amongst us here at poor Redstone.” ⁴¹⁷

The society had attempted to build protective hedges around its members, but Quakers eager for participation and integration with the world found themselves isolated and separated from their neighbors.⁴¹⁸ Friends had hoped that shared religious life and intermarriage of their children would create strong kinship connections, but disownment increased, and wherever they lived, Friends found themselves increasingly in the minority.⁴¹⁹ Anna Hazard wrote of her daughter’s marriage to a non-Quaker in 1809, “How little do children consider the various ways they involve their parents when thus pursuing their own inclinations.”⁴²⁰

In their letters, Quaker women expressed their disapproval of the practice of disownment which rose to epidemic proportions and in some cases seemed unjustified. Sarah Rotch Arnold wrote that in her view, the Spirit of Truth was not limited to Quakers alone. She wrote, “I cannot see why its pure and holy influence may not be supposed to operate just as powerfully in Mary Newhall’s mind now, as before she was disowned. She did nothing worthy of disownment.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁶ Walvin, Quaker Morals and Money, 133.
⁴¹⁷ Hunt Papers, 4M/1/1802. Hunt MSS. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, PA.
⁴¹⁸ Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 186; Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 135.
⁴¹⁹ Levy, Quakers and the American Family, 16-17, 248; Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 422-423, 429, 486.
⁴²⁰ Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, 10 mo 12, 1809 Box B-260-6.
While accused men who wished to remain in their meetings and communities were required to acknowledge their transgressions only before the men’s meeting, Quaker women who married out of order faced both the men’s and women’s meeting. Jane Hollinshead’s acknowledgement before her meeting in 1815 contained an element of shame for her misdeeds. By admitting her error and asking for forgiveness, she hoped to remain in the membership. She wrote, “I freely condemn as an error in me, and desire friends may pass it by, and continue me a member, hoping by futer conduct may render me worthy.” This possibly suggests that members’ standing in the Society was based on gender, wealth, and patriarchy that existed within meetings and within families.

Although Quaker communities in western Pennsylvania were economically integrated and prospering by 1790, Friends were struggling to define themselves collectively as Quakers. Members of the Society of Friends who had interacted with their neighbors and discovered that they shared similar social and political concerns were interested in participating in the affairs of the world found themselves wedged between their faith community and the wider society in which they lived. Still other Quakers believed that they had not formed geographically or spiritually cohesive communities in an area of the state where Friends were in the minority. In response to the decline in the size of landholding for their children’s inheritance, Friends began moving across the

422 Specht, “Women of One or Many Bonnets?,” 34-37.
423 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 69.
426 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 142.
Ohio in a series of chain migrations in search of a fresh start, more land to farm, and a sense of community that they had not been able to achieve in Pennsylvania’s pluralistic society. While migration over long distances often destroyed kinship relationships, Quakers defied this tendency. Their close-knit communities of interrelated kinship groups connected through their hierarchical meeting structure, their widely dispersed contacts and their ability to preserve ties and retain social cohesion over long distances reinforced the broader sense of community and linked strangers into a far-flung family of kin.

428 Schwartz, “A Mixed Multitude,” 9; Harper, The Transformation of Western Pennsylvania, 29-39; United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial ed. (Washington, D.C., 1975), According to the 1790 census, 35 percent of Pennsylvanians were of English descent, 33 percent were German, 11 percent were Scotch-Irish, 9 percent were Scottish. Other groups included people of Irish, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, French and Welsh descent as well as Blacks and Native Americans in small numbers (pt. 2, p. 1168).  
429 Levy, Quakers and the American Family, part 1.
CHAPTER V

“THEY SPOKE OF GOING TO THE OHIO:”

COPING WITH AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The movement of settlers into Ohio country began as a trickle before the Revolutionary War. The completion of the Northwest Ordinance (1787), the Battle of Fallen Timbers (1794), and the signing of the Treaty of Greenville (1795) drew settlers from western Pennsylvania, New Jersey, northern Virginia and Kentucky who pushed into the Ohio Valley in search of material betterment and cheap, fertile tracts of land for farming. The opening of land after the Revolutionary War beyond the Ohio River attracted Friends from the South, and from Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Virginia, and the Delaware Valley, many of whom joined the migration into Ohio through the Pennsylvania back country.

Before the 1780s, violent conflict between Indians and Americans continued on and off from the 1750s for more than a half century and closed off Ohio to large scale

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settler migration. Quakers with hopes of establishing themselves as independent farmers moved in a series of one or two steps, for example, a family considering removal to Ohio might settle temporarily in western Pennsylvania to avoid the break with brethren on whom they could depend for resources and spiritual fellowship. However, after 1780, population densities in much of Pennsylvania had increased to the extent that most families could no longer acquire enough land for farming. Longer range migration became the only option. While a few Quakers settled near Wheeling, Virginia in 1796, by the end of the 1790s, movement across the Ohio for land and wealth accelerated.

Roads leading through the Monongahela Valley were reportedly congested with wagons and families traveling on foot, on horseback, and horse or oxen-drawn wagons waiting to cross into Ohio country. Quakers from New England and New Jersey, with Friends from Virginia and North Carolina joined the westward migration into the Ohio

432 Yogg, “The Best Place for Health and Wealth,” 162.
434 Ibid., 161-162.
436 Specht, “Mixed Blessing,” 212.
437 For a description of travel over the Alleghenies by Moravian missionaries, Abraham Steiner and Johann Heckewelder in 1789 see Paul A.W. Wallace ed. Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 236-243; Bartless, Keeping House, xv.
Valley. Repugnance of slavery and the Society’s disownment of Quaker slaveholders forced Friends who numbered in the thousands in South Carolina and Georgia in 1800 to sell out and relocate into western Ohio and Indiana by 1809. Migration for most settlers was a family activity that required months of preparation and the capital to successful complete the journey. Quaker early arrival in new areas where they took up the best lands, coupled with their wealth, was an asset. Michael E. Yogg writes, “Their wealth afforded them the luxury of migrating if, when, and where they chose, thus making it easier to preserve their community and family associations.”

For migrating Quakers, ties and connections to the larger community of Friends provided reassurances of a shared religious experience and world view as well as practical advice and assistance with housing, cash loans, food, livestock, and supplies. The availability of land would ensure that sons and daughters could remain near their parents, and families and their values would be preserved. The Pittsburgh Gazette reported in 1795, “We are informed that the banks of the Monongahela, from M’Kees

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438 Albert Cook Myers, *Immigration of the Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania, 1682-1750* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969), 179, 184-185. Friends migrating into Ohio from southern slave states acquired maps to lead them North to Quaker settlements and meeting houses in Ohio Country. The surveyor and designer of these maps, Horton Howard, originally from the Core Sound Monthly Meeting in Carteret County, North Carolina, was one of two delegates sent by the meeting in 1799 to survey land in Ohio for Quaker settlement.


441 Yogg, “The Best Place” 144, 202.

442 Healey, *From Quaker to Upper Canadian*, 15; Specht, “Women of One or Many Bonnets,” 34.
Port to Redstone, are lined with people intending for the settlement on the Ohio and Kentucky.”

Quaker settlement occurred in three areas of Ohio in the early years of the nineteenth-century. One concentration of Friends settled along the Little Miami River in the southwest part of the state, another in the upper Ohio Valley in the present counties of Belmont, Harrison, Jefferson and Columbiana, and a third group settled south of the Mahoning River and east of the Muskingum in Salem, Middleton, Short Creek, Mount Pleasant, Concord, St. Clairsville, and Stillwater. By the end of 1800, an estimated 800 Quaker families had migrated and settled in Ohio from the Carolinas, Maryland Georgia, Virginia, and southwestern Pennsylvania. By 1826, eight thousand Friends resided in Belmont, Jefferson Harrison and Columbiana Counties in eastern Ohio.

Around 1800, reports of the availability of millions of acres of inexpensive land in Ohio began circulating in New England Quaker communities. After several bouts of debilitating spotted fever, Thomas Rotch decided to heed the advice of doctors and try a

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443 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, November 21, 1795.
444 For a discussion of the impact of early Methodism which preceded the arrival of Quakers in Ohio, and also offered communal discipline and an economic and social safety net for early settlers see John Wigger, “Ohio Gospel, Methodism in Early Ohio,” in Cayton and Hobbs, *The Center of a Great Empire*, 62-81.
change of climate where winters were less severe.\textsuperscript{449} By 1810, the settlement of the state was proceeding with unprecedented speed and thoroughness.\textsuperscript{450} Quaker settlement patterns in Ohio and Indiana were so successful that by 1820, twenty thousand or more Quakers had settled west of the Alleghany Mountains around Mount Pleasant, Salem, Damascus, Waynesville and New Vienna in Ohio, and Bloomingdale, and Richmond in Indiana.\textsuperscript{451} Henshaw writes, “The Quaker population of the country had so shifted westward that by the last half of the nineteenth century more than half of it was located in the Middle West.”\textsuperscript{452}

In January 1811, the Rotches left Hartford to investigate the availability of land for settlement in the warmer climate of Ohio Country.\textsuperscript{453} Traveling hundreds of miles by carriage from Philadelphia over the partially constructed Pennsylvania State Road from Philadelphia, they arrived at Pittsburgh before traveling on to Wheeling, the starting point of Zane’s Trace. Originally an access road connecting Wheeling, Virginia to Limestone, Kentucky, Zane’s Trace by 1811 could accommodate wagons and carriages and was the main route across southeastern Ohio. The Rotches followed the road as far as Chillicothe, and from there, they turned west to Lebanon and Cincinnati then veered north through

\textsuperscript{449} Thomas Rotch outgoing correspondence, personal letter to his brother, 2 Mo 5\textsuperscript{th} 1817. Box A-30-13.
\textsuperscript{450} Andrew Cayton and Stuart D. Hobbs, eds. \textit{The Center of a Great Empire, The Ohio Country in the Early American Republic} (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 16; Frederic Austin Ogg. \textit{The Old Northwest: A Chronicle of the Ohio Valley and Beyond} (London: Oxford University Press, 1920) The earliest settlers traveled over the Alleghenies to Pittsburgh, then down the Ohio River by flatboat. In 1811, construction began on a National or Cumberland (Maryland) Road to Wheeling, Virginia to ease the way across the Appalachian barrier into the Upper Ohio Valley, Indiana and Illinois (97-109).
\textsuperscript{451} Miyakawa, \textit{Protestant and Pioneers}, 61.
\textsuperscript{452} Henshaw, \textit{The Carolina Quaker Experience}, 146, 149.
\textsuperscript{453} Thomas Rotch letter to Benjamin Rotch, 2 Mo 5\textsuperscript{th} 1817. Box A-30-13.
Dayton and Urbana before looping back to Chillicothe and the return to the east via Zane’s Trace. Rotch wrote to his brother, “such was the Mildness of the season that we affect it with great pleasure and passed on to the Ohio River at Pittsburgh.”

Charity Rotch recorded her initial impression of Ohio country in a travel journal that was part observation and part critique. The tone of her writing was determined by the expected audience, her immediate family and close friends back home. With its emphasis on movement, the journal and her travel into Ohio country marked an exceptional moment in her life.

As she took in new sights and conditions, she wrote herself into the frontier history. Perhaps she understood that she was participating in an historic event, or she may have written to make sense of whatever apprehensions she may have felt about her own relationship to this new world. The act of keeping a travel journal was also part of a family’s history, to be kept, re-read and passed on through generations.

Charity used her journal for self-reflection and to clarify her own feelings about relocation. She recorded her observations and impressions of the physical world, new surroundings, unusual sights, and the challenges posed by the rigorous physical demands of frontier life. The domestic sphere had always been at the center of her imagination and from this vantage point, she critiqued the social and civic landscape of small towns and villages, including those where Friends lived. Her journal entries were driven by the

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454 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, 34; Travel Journal of Charity Rotch, Massillon Museum Foundation (Massillon, Ohio); Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, January 16, 1813. Box B-247-27.
gendered experience of domestication and repetitious observations about weather, road
conditions, food, lodging, and local customs. Whenever possible during their “long
journey,” the Rotches lodged with Friends and attended Meetings for worship wherever
they were held.457 As an arbiter of social codes, Charity noticed manners and sought
evidence of gentility and decorum in towns and villages throughout the Ohio Valley. She
was delighted to find a developing consumer economy in the small Ohio River town of
Cincinnati. Taking tea and “the lace worn by females” appealed to her New England
upper class sensibilities, so much so that she could have remained there, “with a few
Sincere friends.” She wrote,

The landlady invited me to take tea, and later we dined on excellent fish, I
believe, perch taken out of the River. The people in most places dress as well &
are as fashionable as in larger cities, lace etc worn by the females. With a few
sincere Frds, I could quietly spend my days, I think in it. There is a fine market, &
everything to be attained that is necessary. the river furnishing this market from
remote parts with many good things, cider & apples cheap, the latter are sold for
half a dollar pr bushel.458

Charity’s journal also reveals how mobile and opinionated women transferred
their cultural and religious values across the frontier. At the sight of “as many as 22
human beings in slavery” at Wheeling, (Virginia), Charity forgot cultural expectations of
female gentility and genteel manners and mounted a harsh critique of slavery, “resolving
to die rather than live in a slave state.”459

The origin of her abhorrence of slavery is unclear. She may have been exposed to
the institution and its associated violence as a child in Newport, or she may have been
aware of the Zong case of 1781 in which Captain Luke Collingwood, in command of a

457 Conrad, “Touring Ohio,”142-143.
458 Charity Rotch Travel Journal, Massillon Museum Foundation.
slave ship sailing from Africa to Jamaica threw 132 sick slaves overboard to conserve supplies, or Thomas Clarkson’s 1785 *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African.* 460 The Zong incident caused a firestorm in Britain and galvanized public opinion against the slave trade. Over the next half century, a network of abolitionist organizations in Britain produced an unprecedented number of books, verses, and poems on the subject of slave trade, bombarding the reading public with the details of human suffer and calling for the abolition of the trade. 461 Three poems transcribed for young Charity Rodman in the 1780s detail the suffering of slaves and call on female consumers to boycott the use of slave made products, especially sugar. 462

By April 1811 while still in Ohio, Charity’s health, while not fully restored, had shown some improvement. 463 Encouraged by her progress, Rotch wrote to his brother, “As might be expected every enquiry was excited to ascertain the most advantageous situation for sheep and the establishment of Woolen Factories. From the evidence of the benefit resulting from this Journey, I settled my determination to close my business, visit my friends at N Bedford and remove.” 464 Charity’s part in the decision to quit New

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462 The author or authors of the poems are unknown. Titles include, “On viewing a ship in the harbour of Boston bound to Africa to make slaves of men,” “The Negro’s Hymn” and “On Sugar.” Poetry and other writings, Charity Rotch, Newport Notebook. Box F-17-47.


England for Ohio, whether she was enthusiastic or reluctant about relocation is unclear.\textsuperscript{465} But the thought of severing her emotional ties and attachments to kinswomen in the New England, possibly for life, must have weighed heavily on her mind. She struggled with conflicting emotions as she considered her options, but the reasoning behind her choice was logical. The adventure and romance of emigration may not have appealed to her, but at her doctor’s insistence, she would emigrate for health reasons and the prospect of a better climate, and then only reluctantly.

Returning to New England in the late spring of 1811, the couple began preparations for permanent relocation. Although Quakers had a long history of mobility and migration, the experience of physical and psychological separation from kith and kin with similar social values and customs could be as difficult for men as it was for women.

The outward journey, traumatic for those departing and family left behind, involved weeks of preparation and leaving-taking, and was usually a solemn and sad affair. Separation from aged parents might have been especially painful.\textsuperscript{466} Finally, there was the realization that unlike the move from New Bedford to Hartford, this move over a vast distance must have seemed to Charity as the undoing of family bonds and her closest connections, possibly forever.\textsuperscript{467}

\textsuperscript{465} Conrad, \textit{Invaluable Friends}, 32.
\textsuperscript{467} Lillian Schlissel, Gibbens, and Hampsten, \textit{Far From Home: Families of the Westward Journey}, 237.
Taking up the Land

Prior to 1800, only a small portion of land available in the Northwest Territory which included Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and parts of Minnesota had been sold by the federal government at public auction at land offices in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. Terms of the sale required buyers to purchase a minimum of 640 acres, paying for one half their land at the time of sale with the remainder due in own year.

To attract buyers to the Northwest Territory, the federal government changed the terms of purchase. The Harrison Frontier Land Act of 1800 enabled people of modest means to purchase 320 acres of land at two dollars an acre. Terms of payment required one quarter down in cash, and remainder in three yearly installments. This amount of cash was difficult for many buyers who came to Ohio with little capital. In 1800, land offices established at Steubenville, Marietta, Chillicothe, and Cincinnati were inundated with settlers eager to take advantage of changed terms of sale of public land. 50,000 acres was sold at public auction in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh for $2.00 per acre, and at Chillicothe alone settlers purchased 99,058 acres during the first three weeks of sale. The scene was one of excitement according to an official at the Steubenville land office. He wrote, “Crowds appeared in the little town a full two weeks before the opening of the sale. Settlers came in large numbers, hoping to acquire land at the minimum price.”

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470 Bell, *Ohio Lands*, v.
But many poorer farmers, unable to improve their land or pay for it with cash lost their land to speculators. Eric Hinderaker writes, “The results of the land scramble in Ohio were sobering. By 1810, only about 45% of Ohio’s adult males owned land, while almost a quarter of its real estate was held by 1% or taxpayers.”

The cessation of trade as a result of the War of 1812 made the establishment of manufacturing a priority in the new nation. The end of the war reduced the threat of Indian attacks, confining remaining Native Americans to reservations in the Northwest corner of the state. The return of peace stimulated Ohio commerce, agriculture and industry and produced a tide of migration into the state. Vast quantities of public land came on the market for the first time, and by 1815, the best federal land in eastern Ohio and the Scioto Valley had already been bought up, much of it on credit.

Quakers arrived early in the Seven Ranges region, surveyed in 1785 by Thomas Hutchins. The Seven Ranges included parts of Summit and Mahoning Counties, and all of Stark, Columbiana, Carroll, Harrison, Jefferson and Belmont Counties. Hilly and difficult to plow, the region was largely ignored by farmers who preferred land further inland along the Miami River Valley near Chillicothe in central Ohio and near

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472 Knepper, Ohio and its People, 111.
473 Cayton and Hobbs, The Center of a Great Empire, 16; Knepper, Ohio and its People, 131.
475 Bell, Ohio Lands, viii-ix; Knepper, Ohio and its People, Virginian Bezaleel Wells, founder of Canton, established Steubenville on the abandoned site of Fort Steuben in 1797 (57).
As first purchasers, Friends attempted to create regionally distinctive homogenous communities. Because of the great influx of Friends into Ohio after 1800, this pattern of settlement was short lived. Migration continued apace, the homogeneity of the meetings lessened, and Friends from all regions joined meetings throughout the state.477

Friends from western Virginia and Pennsylvania intent on establishing mills and hoping to provide for their children’s inheritance bought up large tracts of public land in Belmont and Jefferson counties where timber and countless streams for the development of water power were plentiful within a mile or two of the Ohio River.478 When he arrived in Jefferson County in 1809, Friend Jacob Everhart planted 7 acres of corn and 12 in wheat, mostly by himself. By 1815, he estimated that because of a chronic shortage of labor, he had paid out less that fifty dollars in labor costs during his six years of farming in Jefferson County. His property value had risen significantly in six years. He wrote, “When I came I had only One eight of a Dollar, now I estimate my property at Three Thousand Dollars.”479

476 Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 152-153.
479 Thomas Rotch, Miscellaneous Notes and Memoranda, Jacob Everhart acct of his progress in well being in Ohio. Box F-11-10.
Quaker surveyor Horton Howard who migrated to Ohio around 1802, attempted to persuade Thomas Rotch to settle with Friends in Township Seven in the vicinity of Steubenville. Pointing out the disadvantages of settlement in Stark County including seasonal agues and fevers, and sheep intolerance to certain grasses, Howard pointed out that even if he managed to overcome these obstacles to settlement, Kendal was far removed from other Quaker settlements and the Rotch and his wife “would to be destitute of that kind of society which is desirable to you.” Howard continued, “In Belmont County there is many thousand acres of Congress land as it is called. extending from within two or three miles of the Ohio, and in Jefferson County many thousand more, and between St Clairsville & Marietta I suppose there is enough to Pasture all the flocks of Sheep in Spain.”

After traveling the state in search of land with suitable water sources that would support woolen mills, Rotch purchased 480 acres of land in Stark County from Bezaleel Wells, the founder of Steubenville and Canton, (Ohio), at $2.00 per acre. Rotch’s property was located eight miles east of the county seat at Canton, a thriving community of 250 people with several stores, taverns and houses in 1811.

The first year of his experience was predictably difficult. Social contacts were few, labor was in short supply, and neighbors might be miles away. Rotch and his

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480 Horton Howard letter to Thomas Rotch, 11th mo 15th 1811. Box B-95-1.
481 For a list of land owned by Rotch in his lifetime see Conrad, 73-74; also Bell, Ohio Lands, 177.
482 Knepper, Ohio and its People, Canton with Wooster, Ashland and Mansfield were developing as the dominant towns in Stark, Wayne and Ashland counties in 1811. Stark County supplied with water sources and soils of clay and sandy loam was established on February 13, 1808 and was one of the richest agricultural areas in the state (113).
483 Knepper, Ohio and its People, 134.
wife had not moved as part of a family group, nor were kin or relatives waiting to assist them in the process of building a new community. Although many travelers imagined the frontier as an extension of the eastern metropolis, Ohio bore little resemblance to the world they left behind. Rotch wrote retrospectively in 1817, “Although at that time we were frontier settlers, the country was pretty thickly inhabited sixty miles west and northerly of us.” However, many settlers felt isolated and regretted separation from family, and for many women without an immediately apparent avenue for long distance communication with loved ones, dispersal of their families was much like death.

Illuminating Charity’s daily existence and her new roles in Ohio without benefit of a diary or personal records is somewhat problematic. The female experience of the frontier was a working one for virtually all women, and their labor constituted an important part of the family economy. Unlike her shorter removal from New Bedford to Hartford in 1800, Charity’s journey to Ohio was a life-altering event with unclear long term consequences. How she perceived herself, her changing understanding of gender, and her roles in this new setting that was characterized by older forms of family organization including domestic patriarchy and strong generational ties and kin networks is difficult to ascertain. What she thought she owed herself is less apparent, and ironically, she may have contributed to this obstacle.

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484 Imbarrato, Traveling Women, 94.
486 Cashin, A Family Venture, 45.
487 Miller, “My whole enjoyment,”123.
For unclear reasons, Charity chose not to keep a diary, which for most women in the nineteenth century was a way to construct an identity and a sense of self.\textsuperscript{488} Keeping a diary was also a way to save one’s experiences while mediating between the experience of settlement and the ‘civilized’ lifestyle left behind.\textsuperscript{489} Fortunately, limited documents in Charity’s own hand have survived to provide a fragmentary view of her as an individual with her own concerns.\textsuperscript{490} I would argue that a diary only in part was a substitute for the irreplaceable female friendships that for Quaker women were extremely important, often life-long and emotionally close. For this reason, Charity may have chosen to write letters not only because they represented decades of devotion, but also because letters were considered family records and written with the expectation that other family members might read them, usually soon after their composition.

The delivery of a letter to the addressee was the beginning of an extended journey, the first of many stops that included readings aloud in circles of friends and family. Sociolinguist Basil Bernstein identifies two types of language codes in nineteenth-century correspondence that aid historians in the analysis of men and women’s letters and diaries. Men’s letters contained commercial intelligence, news of family and spiritual advice. The “restrictive code” most often used by men was characterized by unelaborated prose, “emphasizing the how rather than the why with implicit rather than explicit meaning, while the “elaborated” code that typified women’s writing, “takes as its subject not a group but individuals (the ‘I’ and the other), places a

\textsuperscript{488} Margo Culley, ed. \textit{A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Woman from 1764 to the Present} (New York: Feminist Press, 1985), 8-9, 3-26, esp. 3-6
\textsuperscript{490} Charity Rotch, Outgoing correspondence, personal, Box B-226-1,2,3,4.
premium upon empathy, and is in general most often associated with a people-oriented content.”

In a letter to her mother, Hannah Rodman Fisher complained of the vagaries in a letter written by her brother, William. She wrote, “Our late account was a letter from brother Wm dated the 18th by which we made no discovery contrary to your being in Normal health except his little Mary & Tommy’s having the Hooping Cough (tho the letter appear’d to be wrote hasty, & was not so particular as I wish’d.)

Women’s letters followed a consistent pattern, beginning with an opening that acknowledged the receipt of the writer’s most recent and “acceptable” letter. The correspondents focused on personal relationships and her own busy schedule rather than political or national events, and many women apologized for not writing sooner. “My beloved Aunt” wrote Sarah Fisher in 1822, “I hope in future to be more attentive in that respect; but my engagements of different kinds, often prevent when I feel an inclination to take up my pen.”

Other writers understood that personal matters shared with other women allowed them the latitude to write as if they were engaged in intimate conversation with a close confidante. Charity’s sister, Hannah dispensed with the usual salutation and greeted her sister with the line, “I have long felt in debt to my absent, Present sister, for though absent in body, thou art present in mind.”

492 Hannah Rodman Fisher to Mary Rodman, 1st mo 29th, 1798. Box A-5-7.
Letters also had an advantage over conversation in that they provided time for adequate reflection in order to choose the right words to inscribe onto paper. In 1809, Anna Hazard revealed that her daughter had married out of the faith. She wrote, “The affection and sympathy which dictated thy acceptable letter was received as a cordial to my afflicted mind having the tribulated path to travel alone, and mourn over the deviations of a dear child without one to partake or lighten the Burden.”

The body of letters often contained information about family and friends, births, deaths, illnesses, health related issues and comments on the ordinary that for women made up their daily ritual. Friends were required to dress plainly and to avoid bright colors and all but the simplest styles. Plainness and simplicity in apparel and address was an important testimony for Friends which separated them from larger society. The plainness testimony that originated among Quaker in the seventeenth-century functioned as a leveling influence, and was also a sign of one’s inward grace. Remarkling on the gay dress of her future son-in-law’s sisters, she hoped that “they may increasingly discover that the adorning of a “weak & quiet Spirit” is preferable to all outward adorning.” While Friends adhered to the Discipline regarding dress which for women required grey or oat-meal colored poplin or muslin, Quakers also found ways to identify themselves as members of families with greater resources. Anna Hazard wrote in September 1821, “In reply to thy enquires about Anna’s dress, I believe was a deep blue

495 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, New Bedford 10 mo 12, 1809. Box B-260-6
496 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 101-102.
497 Hannah Fisher letter to Thomas Rotch, 5th Mo 1st 1817.
498 Healey, Ibid., 102.
Riding dress, and very much trimmed, leghorn hat and white kid gloves, no doubt she appeared in a more splendid dress after her marriage.”

Women’s letters commonly commented on an endless round of Quaker meetings for business and worship, and especially Yearly Meetings that drew hundreds if not thousands of Friends and itinerant ministers from as far away as England and Ireland. The Yearly Meeting at Philadelphia was the focus for all Quakers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and parts of Maryland and Virginia who gathered for business, worship and fellowship as well as rounds of tea-drinking and games. Hannah Fisher described the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of 1817, “Our Yearly Meeting was large, we had the company of Mary Haftil (from Europe), Jonathan Taylor, & his companion from Your state, and divers others form New York & Baltimore Yearly Meeting, whose labors of love doubtless were refreshing & strengthening to many minds.” For younger Friends, annual meetings were an opportunity to become acquainted outside of their homes, to take in each other’s appearances, and evaluate the worth of potential marriage partners.

Yearly Meetings were a stabilizing influence that lent cohesion to the broader community and encouraged contact between families over great distances. However, they were often reached only with great peril and inconvenience. Traveling with companions from Philadelphia to the Canada Yearly meeting in 1808, Hannah Fisher wrote, “we were overturn’d in our Carriage and had a rough time crossing both ferries, so that apparently

499 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, New York, 9 mo 8th 1821. Box B-260-10.
500 Yogg, “The Best Place,” 110.
502 Pointon, Strategies for Showing, 2.
we were in considerable danger, also the extrem badness of the Roads, round the lake, mudholes, hills etc were sometimes truly humbling to our minds.” Correspondents frequently made queries about the health of family members and requested news of progress in business, farming, and domestic activities. Letter-writers filled paper to the margins with news the recipient might want to know, and included messages that reaffirmed kinship ties. Anna Hone wrote to Charity in 1816, “Mother is now reconciled to living among us, & to us it is a satisfaction almost inexpressible to have our parents near us in their declining years.”503

Finally, the ritualized closing included a farewell from the extended web of kin of both genders who were connected by blood and marriage. The inclusion of the names of family members, male and female, in the closing lines of a letter reminded readers that they were drawn together by religion, trade, and family ties. Rather than being separate and detached, as kin they were at the center of things and their inclusion in the family came with reciprocal obligations. Sarah Fisher wrote to Charity in 1820, “Father, and William, and Deborah, desire their love to you, in which I unite, and conclude thy truly attached niece, Sarah Fisher.”504

Business letters, usually written by men, offered fewer opportunities to reaffirm family ties. The final salutation of a letter, “I remain Thy Friend,” “I am very respectfully thy Friend,” or “Assured Friend,” was extended to family and strangers alike as Quakers believed that everyone was equal in the sight of God, and therefore names and titles were

503 Anna Hazard Hone letter to Charity Rotch, 2nd mo 22, 1816. Box B-264-1.
504 Sarah Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 11 mo 1st 1820. Box B-250-4.
superficial and unnecessary. As members of the human family, Quakers addressed everyone as “friend.” In a business letter between men of the same family, the closing might read, “I am thy affectionate cousin,” or for closer kin, “I have therefore only to add mine, Eliza’s familys love to thee, Charity, & Sisters.” Personal letters between family members were especially sympathizing in cases of the deaths of children or a spouse. In their supportive role as “nursing mother and father,” whose function it was to instruct, support, council, and advise their children, William Rotch, Sr. and his wife, Elizabeth wrote to Charity after Thomas Rotch’s death in 1823. Addressing her as “Our dear Daughter, Charity” the elder reaffirmed their unbreakable family ties and assured her of their continued support. He wrote, “The separation is severe, but I trust we have no cause to mourn, believing our dear Son, thy dearer Husband has entered that City whose walls are salvation. I have not strength nor fortitude to say more, than that we are thy very affectionate and sympathizing Parents.”

Quaker men could be as consoling as women concerning death which for Friends was a deep sorrow to be shared with others. Elias Hicks describes his remorse over the passing of Mary Rodman’s daughter, Sarah in 1793. He wrote, “Yet consider, my dear

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505 Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 63.
506 Thomas Rotch incoming business letter from Celb Greene, 10th mo 5 1801. Box A-181-2; Benjamin Hadwen letter to Thomas Rotch, 6 mo 15th 1801. Box A-182-1.
507 William Macy letter to Thomas Rotch, 12 mo 6, 1794, Box A-258-2; Samuel Rodman letter to Thomas Rotch, 6 mo 1791. Box A-302-3.
508 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 513-514.
509 William Rotch, Sr. letter to Charity Rotch, 10th mo 28, 1823. Box B-300-5.
Friend, in order to mitigate thy sorrow, that thy loss, and our loss is her unspeakable gain.”

Women used coded language within their correspondence as a private occasion or an intimate moment to write the unsayable or other painful details of their lives. Thomas Rotch’s sister wrote in 1812. “If only we could have some kind of telegraphic intelligence between here & the Ohio which would give us a view of each others busy scenes.” Writers sometimes gave specific instructions on how sensitive information should be treated. Expecting that their letters might be read by numerous close kin, some correspondents requested that they be consigned to the fire. Lydia Rotch Dean, sympathizing with her aunt’s separation from New England kinswomen wrote, “It must seem difficult I think for thee to realize this new scene, of attempting to change the wilderness into a garden, but still more so to be reconciled to those needful separations while you are effecting it. Burn this, my dear and let me hear from thee.”

While Charity’s exchanges with female kin took a domestic form, letters also suggest that frontier circumstances generated fragile social and emotional relations. Her correspondence suggests a separation from part of herself and a mutual longing for her

510 Mary Rodman Incoming Correspondence, letter from Elias Hicks, 5th of 12th mo 1793. Box A-6-1; also see Peter Yarnall letter to Mary Rodman, 1st mo 28th, 1794. Box A-13-2; Samuel Rodman Letter to Mary Rodman, 10th mo 14, 1793. Box A-10-2; William Almay letter to Mary Rodman, 10th mo 13th, 1793. Box A-2-1.
511 Lydia Rotch Dean letter to Charity Rotch, July 7, 1812. Box B-241-11.
512 Lydia Rotch Dean letter to Charity Rotch, April 7, 1812. Box B-241-10; Sarah Rodman to Charity Rotch, May 15, 1823. Box B-250-10, a note on the reverse of the letter in Charity Rotch’s hand reads, “An interesting letter from SF not to be burnt yet.” Lydia Rotch Dean letter to Charity Rotch, January 19, 1809 in which the writer reports the deaths of several friends, Dean wrote, “do conceal & burn this sad scrawl.” Box B-241-8.
kinswomen. As her letters will reveal in a later chapter, this longing framed her attitudes and experiences far more than it did her husband.

“Changing the Wilderness into a Garden:"

Working Lives at Kendal

While Charity spent the winter months of 1811 in Wheeling with New England Friend, Patience Graham, Rotch constructed a hastily-built cabin on his property where for lack of adequate sleeping room, he “suspended a hammock by four strong ropes about 5 feet above the floor, and constructed a rope ladder by which he climbs up every night, and there swings and slumbers it out until morning.”

Rotch brought his wife to Stark County after constructing a substantial log house on his property in the spring of 1812. Unlike most settlers, Rotch arrived in northeast Ohio with ample capital for investment, four hundred Merino sheep valued upwards of $100,000, and several wagons filled with household goods, combs, clocks, needles, shoes and other merchandise for a general store that Rotch intended to open. He ordered a shipment of clocks and clock weights plus a trunk containing clothes be sent to Pittsburgh, a gateway city which in 1800 had 1,500 inhabitants and numerous specialty shops and general stores which enabled settlers to restock their wagons before moving westward.

514 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, 39.
515 Miscellaneous notes and memoranda, Memorandum of sundries to be procured E. of the Mountains,” Box F-11-53.
Charity faced a dilemma common to most outward bound women: what to take and what to leave behind. Her belongings represent the details of settlement that provide some indication of how she adapted culturally to her new environment. Unlike poorer women who for lack of space in small wagons brought along only necessities such as spinning wheels, eating utensils, beds and cooking pots, Charity selected symbols of her family’s continuity, her silver, china, fine linens, books, twelve Empire-style chairs, an English carpet, a copper tea urn, several silver dishes, tankards and other items of sentimental value.\(^{517}\) She would attempt to build a life by recreating the old world in a new setting. Cherished treasures perhaps were also a way for her to cope with her isolation. They were also a part of her civilizing mission to communicate moral and cultural values to the untamed frontier, and to shape Kendal’s identity and character.\(^{518}\) In addition to cushioning her adjustment, artifacts and material possessions were representative markers of her class and the standards of respectability, decorum, and behavior that Charity hoped to recreate at Kendal.\(^{519}\)

Thomas Rotch seems to have grown increasingly comfortable with the challenges of life in Ohio and with the distance between himself and New England.\(^{520}\) He came into the wilderness self-invited and was determined to establish himself in Ohio as he apparently had not been able to do in New England. From the time of his arrival in Ohio,


\(^{518}\) Conrad, Ibid., 63; Jeffrey, *Frontier Women*, 14, 15, 49, 100.

\(^{519}\) Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 73.

Rotch implemented specific strategies to ensure the success of the Kendal community. Quaker networks of mutual aid and resources stretched over long distances, and by encouraging the migration of New England Friends Alexander and Charles Skinner, Aaron Chapman, Hezekiah Bull, Daniel and Betsey Richmond from Hartford, James and Patience Austin from New Bedford, Nathaniel Ray, Matthew Macy, Micajah Macy, William Mott, Charles Coffin and Mayhew Folger from Nantucket, Rotch hoped Kendal would become an important manufacturing center and one of the leading Quaker meetings in Ohio.\textsuperscript{521}

In January, 1812, Friend Seth Adams of Zanesville notified Rotch that word of his fine quality wool had reached members of the Ohio Legislature who wished to see samples of his cloth for themselves. Adams wrote, “They are in want and I believe you may sell considerable to them.”\textsuperscript{522} On April 20, 1812, he laid out a village of 99 lots and two commons, Union Square and Charity Square in the pattern of New England villages and named the village Kendal, for a town in the English Lake District that was famous for its woolen goods.\textsuperscript{523} By July, forty Kendal houses were ready for occupancy, and his family anticipated that Rotch “was likely to become a very Rich man.”\textsuperscript{524}

Removal to distant places posed other problem for Friends whose first concern was to establish a meeting structure to support the needs of their developing communities. The establishment of local meetings was a unifying element that filled an

\textsuperscript{521} Friends Preparative Meeting, Kendal, Ohio; Box F-7-1; Thomas Rotch Daybook, Box H-21, pp.85-89.
\textsuperscript{522} Seth Adams letter to Thomas Rotch, Jany 17th 1812, Box B-1-1.
\textsuperscript{523} Bullard, \textit{The Rotches}, 88; Mrs. Barton E. Smith, \textit{Upon These Hills, Massillon’s Beginnings and Early Days} (Massillon Daughters of the American Revolution, Massillon, 1962), 17.
\textsuperscript{524} Hannah Rodman Fisher to Charity Rotch, 7th mo 31, 1812 Box B-247-26.
emotional vacuum for Friends who otherwise might be divided and isolated by distance.\textsuperscript{525} In 1815, Rotch received permission to form a Preparative Meeting at Kendal. As the smallest meeting of Friends, the preparative meeting provided a useful blueprint for community development and was an expression of a community’s faith.\textsuperscript{526} After prefacing meetings with prayers for divine guidance, the meeting took up matters of business and made decisions at the local level. It also implemented the Discipline and provided supportive and spiritual care to the settler flock.\textsuperscript{527}

For first generation settlers, Friends who attended preparative meetings commonly assisted new settlers with the demands of establishing farms in the wilderness. Young men and women from the same or neighboring meeting who attended cooperative efforts such as barn raisings and harvesting had the opportunity to interact outside of their meetings and evaluate perspective marriage partners. Thus, intermarriage of first generation settler families strengthened and expanded local and longer distance kinship networks from which families were drawn.\textsuperscript{528} Healey writes, “The marriages that occurred between previously unconnected families were a natural extension of shared location and faith.”\textsuperscript{529}

\textsuperscript{525} Rohrbough, \textit{The Trans-Appalachian Frontier}, 60-63.
\textsuperscript{526} Healey, \textit{From Quaker to Upper Canadian}, 28, 96.
\textsuperscript{528} Ibid., 52-32, 66.
\textsuperscript{529} Ibid., 66.
Within the Preparative Meeting, Rotch held the position of Overseer of the Poor for Perry Township.\(^{530}\) Established by English Friends in the late seventeenth century, the office of overseer collected money informally to aid widows, orphans, the sick and aged, and other Friends who found themselves without other family support. In 1818, Rotch paid the medical expenses of Sally Helmick who “was ill for 9 weeks and was unable to help herself in any way.” In addition to physicians’ and nursing bills, he paid for “clothing to make her fit to remove,” 5 yds of cotton for a gown and the cost of ‘carrying Sarah to Warren Township where she was a legal resident.’\(^{531}\)

By April, 1815, the number of lots for sale and ready for construction climbed to 147.\(^{532}\) The terms of sale stipulated that owners must build brick frame or stone houses in the New England style. Describing the advantages of settling at Kendal, Rotch wrote to Nathan Harkness in the East, “There are streams in this neighborhood, and this I consider important as we are contiguous to the Lakes by water, where there will probably always to an outlet for our Manufactures and Surplus produce.”\(^{533}\)

Made of the stuff of action, Rotch embraced individualism and threw himself into a range of economic ventures. By 1813, Kendal began to resemble a market town that would serve the agricultural hinterland. Rotch built a general store and filled it with consumer products from the East, and established a saw mill and a pottery kiln. He planted hundreds of apple and pear fruit trees and mowed ninety acres of meadowland

\(^{530}\) Thomas Rotch, Friends Preparative Meeting, Kendal Ohio, Records F-7-1 and 2.  
\(^{531}\) Thomas Rotch, Overseer of the Poor Box F-6-1 through 9.  
\(^{532}\) Rotch Documents, Box M-2-1,2,3,4.  
that he sowed it with timothy and rye for his sheep.\textsuperscript{534} Rotch’s daybooks which record his business correspondence and accounts suggest that like other members of his family, he was an able manager who handled money matters gracefully.\textsuperscript{535} He enquired of Michael Crable in 1818 if he might take some of Rotch’s earthen ware, “such as milk crocks, bowls, pitchers, jugs, on the following conditions: we will deliver the ware at thy house and allow a commission of twenty percent for retailing, payment to be made when the ware is sold.”\textsuperscript{536}

While Rotch continued to clear more of his pasture for grazing, he let out some of his sheep on contract to other Quakers and near-by farmers for a period of three years.\textsuperscript{537} He received annually one-half the wool from his animals, two thirds of the lambs and as many of his original flock as possible.\textsuperscript{538} Distemper, heavy lamb mortality in wet weather and predation by wolves and dogs posed a significant threat to sheep.\textsuperscript{539} Despite the fact that farmers under contract met with varying degrees of success and several tenants asked to be relieved of their agreements, Rotch himself remained optimistic about Ohio’s potential as a “fine country for sheep when the cultivated grasses are introduced.”\textsuperscript{540}

\textsuperscript{534} Thomas Rotch letter to Jacob Barker, August 12, 1814. Box A-29-17.
\textsuperscript{535} Thomas Rotch Daybook, 1816-1823. Box H-21.
\textsuperscript{536} Thomas Rotch Daybook, H-20, Kendal 2 mo 10\textsuperscript{th} 1818.
\textsuperscript{537} Thomas Rotch letter to Aaron Chapman, July 18, 1815. Box A-29-19.
\textsuperscript{538} Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 227.
\textsuperscript{539} Thomas Rotch Legal Documents. Box F-2-10. Rotch appeared before a Stark County justice of the peace with a wolf scalp that entitled him to a bounty established by law of four dollars.
\textsuperscript{540} Hurt, Ibid., 226-227; 360; Box B-252-1 William Flanner letter to Charity Rotch, September 10, 1813  Box B-292-5 Elizabeth (Rotch) Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, October 6, 1808. Rodman reported that Thomas Buckly sold his flock of Merino sheep at
In March, Rotch applied for permission to establish a post office at Kendal that would be located “about half a mile from the Tuskarawa and through which the Post riders passes weekly from Lisbon to Worcester.” A month later Gideon Granger, the Federal Post Master General, appointed Rotch the Kendal Post Master and sent him a copy of the “law for regulating the Post-Office, a key for opening the mail, and forms and directions conformable therewith.” The delivery of mail in the early nineteenth-century was unpredictable and subject to delays. Most individuals, with the exception of merchants who used the mail for business purposes, found the cost of sending a letter prohibitive. David M. Henkin, arguing that that personal correspondence in the early nineteenth century was infrequent writes, “Throughout the first third of the century, most Americans (with the significant exception of merchants) neither exchanged mail nor organized their daily lives around the expectation of postal contact.”

As a prominent Quaker merchant, Rotch had numerous business contacts throughout Ohio and New England. If visits of family, friends, and business acquaintances to Kendal were infrequent, the volume of correspondence the Rotches preserved while in Ohio suggests that their contact with the wider world was anything but thin. With the growth of transportation systems that linked the Atlantic seaboard colonies with the interior of the American continent, the postal system grew with fits and starts.

$15 each rather than have “the perplexity of their being killed by dogs.”; Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 9th mo 28th 1813. B-247-31.
541 Thomas Rotch letter to Gideon Granger, 3rd mo 24th, 1813. Box A-29-13. Merchants routinely kept copies of their business correspondence. See for example, Thomas Rotch Daybook, H-21.
542 Gideon Granger letter to Thomas Rotch, 19 April, 1813. Box A-179-1.
543 Henkin, The Postal Age, 17. The cost of letter postage was based on distance and the number of sheets enclosed.
and eventually would become faster and more reliable. However, correspondents worried about privacy and those who might take liberties with letters. Mary Rotch wrote to Charity in early 1812, “My last letter was directed care of M.G. Wheeling Virginia. I imagine that letter is still wandering in pursuit of thee. I hope it will at last find thee as I should be sorry for it to go to the general post office there finally to be opened by I know not whom.”

The spread of literacy, the availability of writing paper and the reliability of the postal system worked in favor of families in newly settled areas who depended on a network of postal connections to sustain and support their endeavors. Letters and their contents proved to be an invaluable source of practical support at a time when banks were few and individuals depended on family capital to finance business ventures. Charity was sensitive to the importance of letters from kinswomen with whom she shared church membership. She preserved 270 of letters, using the postal service to restore emotional ties over long distances. Thomas Rotch used the mail to restore financial and personal bonds, preserving 669 business letters from 276 individuals, and 564 personal letters from 148 kinsmen and close acquaintances.

544 Ibid., 17; Elizabeth Brown Pryor, Reading the Man, A Portrait of Robert E. Lee through His Private Letters (New York: Viking), xiv.
545 Mary Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, 2nd mo 27th 1812. Box B-297-4.
547 Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 64.
548 See Boxes A-29 through B-224. See Thomas Rotch Daybook, Box H-21 Rotch kept duplicate copies of some of his business correspondence in his Daybooks. In 1816, he corresponded with 80 persons. Over time, his practice of recording every letter in duplicate seems to have fallen off, perhaps because time simply would not permit. The Kendal Post Office was located on the south east corner of State and 11th Street N.E. in
Charity’s leadership in her church shaped both her self and her communal identities. However, she defined and redefined her gender roles in the Society that accepted and encouraged the participation of women as equals in matters of church governance. Her religiosity, something she cherished within herself, set her apart from non-Quaker women who settled on the frontier. Patience Graham wrote to her Friend in 1813, “Thy presence is so necessary to our getting along lively with the business we seem when out of meeting to have no head. The papers get scattered and we need a rallying point and Charity for its centre.”

While the Society of Friends provided opportunities for women to move beyond their traditional gender roles, letters contain evidence of women’s struggles to maintain their place in the Society’s ecclesiastical order. Within their monthly meetings, women traditionally controlled certain aspects of their community, including oversight of marriage. While women’s meetings were considered the spiritual but not social equivalent of the men’s meetings, women kept their own records and treasuries and disciplined errant women Friends. In their role as recognized representatives of the Church, members of the women’s meeting collected money for charity, and had decision-making authority over how funds were disbursed. They also inspected couples for marriage, and determined, based on one’s character, financial assets, family networks,

present day Massillon. Daybook, H-21, Arvine Wales letter to Francis Rotch, October 26, 1825. Wales writes that in 1827, mail arrived twice weekly “and a stage is to start the 1st of next April.” The Kendal Post Office opened by Rotch in 1813 was replaced by the Massillon City Post Office in 1828 and closed in 1829.

549 Patience Graham letter to Charity Rotch, September 10, Box B-259-4  
and standing within the Society, which males might be admitted or excluded from their meeting and their community.⁵⁵¹

Rotch and his wife would remain active in the Yearly Meeting of Friends at Mount Pleasant through 1823. As spiritual leaders and as members of the leadership class of Friends, they donated $5,000 for the construction of the Meeting House, a sixty by ninety feet two-story brick building constructed in 1814-1815.⁵⁵² In 1821, Rotch purchased pipes and tobacco, eggs, oats, sugar, wood, salt, nutmeg, candles, cinnamon, butter, tea, beef, fowl, hay, cucumbers, eggs and 141 pounds of bacon to accommodate the large gathering of Friends expected at the Yearly Meeting Boarding House.⁵⁵³

By the end of 1816, Rotch’s pottery factory and his major business enterprise, his woolen mill, were in operation.⁵⁵⁴ With the resumption of trade with Britain, woolen imports flooded the American market and the price of pure Merino wool dropped from $2.75 per pound in 1814 to $1.00 per pound in 1816.⁵⁵⁵ Unlike other sheepmen who found themselves in debt when the sheep industry collapsed, Rotch was debt free and continued to produce wool for Ohio and eastern markets. He had succeeded in laying the

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⁵⁵³ Thomas Rotch Friends Meetings, 1789-1821. Purchased for the Yearly Meeting Boarding House, 9 mo 1st 1821. Box F-8-19.
⁵⁵⁴ Conrad, *Invaluable Friends*, 46; Letter to David G. Seixas, 3rd mo 4th, 1818. Box A-29-33. Rotch made numerous inquiries about techniques for the production of fine white china. Lacking knowledge of the techniques for producing it, he settled on the production of earthenware bowls, crocks, pitchers, platters and jugs which he sold in his store at Kendal. Also for a detailed inventory of goods sold in his Kendal Store, see Thomas Rotch daybook, 11th Mo 8 1811 to 9 mo 2 1813. Rotch Wales Papers, found February 11, 2008.
ground work for what would become a successful commercial enterprise. His brother, visiting from New England, wrote to family in New Bedford, “Kendal was the pleasantest spot in regard to situation and improvement I have seen in the whole state and should certainly prefer it to any other spot in the Western country.” Charity added a note of her own to the letter. She wrote, “If any of you can come in the future it would be truly congenial to our hearts. So different do we live from what would be to us desirable.”

By 1817, Rotch’s woolen products were increasingly tied to expanding markets in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Zanesville and Dayton. Rotch’s invoice for $1558.86 worth of cloth included several hundred yards of superfine drab and black wool, mixed cashmere and cassinetts. He accepted a range of commodities including sugar, tallow, linen, beeswax, bacon, clover seed, leather, goose feathers and butter as partial payment for his cloth. However, cash, a scarcity in the frontier economy, was the preferred form of payment. He understood that his enterprise was part of a dynamic marketplace, and that international events and decisions made by merchants and bankers in Philadelphia, New York and London could impact local markets in Ohio. Moreover, the increase in the state’s population from 230,760 in 1810 to 581,434 in 1820 led to a shift in political

556 Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Letter, Benjamin Rodman and Charity Rotch to Samuel Rodman, June 29, 1815.
557 Thomas Rotch Box H-21 pgs. 90-102. “Invoice of clothes forwarded to Pittsburgh to Allen & Grant for sale on Acct of Thomas Rotch, 11 mo 14, 1815.”; Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 359, 372; Francois Andre Michaux, Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains, reprinted in Ruben Gold Thwaites, ed. Early Western Travels, III (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Co, 1904), 199-204. In the early nineteenth-century, Pittsburgh was a major urban center and an ideal location from which to move manufactured goods by barge down river to market towns along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers (157-160).
558 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, 40, 52.
power away from a small group of speculators and surveyors to merchants and farmers attracted by a growing globally connected agricultural economy.\textsuperscript{560} Describing the difficulties of early settlement during a time of war when attacks by Indians and house burnings were a constant threat, Rotch wrote, “It would be improper for me to attempt a delineation of what I have passed through, but now there are about Forty or Fifty Houses in the Village where in the year 1812 it was hunting ground for the Indians.”\textsuperscript{561}

Satisfied with his progress that exceeded his initial expectations for Kendal, Rotch summed up his thoughts in a letter to Nathan Harkness in September 1816, explaining that he had traveled all over Ohio and settled on Stark County where water sources for the manufacturing were plentiful. He wrote, “We are contiguous to the Lakes by water carriage except three miles in the Spring and Seven Portage in the other seasons of the year, where there will probably always be an outlet for our manufactures and surplus produce.”\textsuperscript{562}

The frontier experience was a masculine adventure, and Rotch seemed eager to circumvent the predominant socioeconomic patterns of the East in order to achieve a measure of independence and economic success in the developing market economy. The social periphery beyond his homestead was dynamic and reflected variegated identities. An ambitious sheep-farmer and merchant, he had expectations of economic self-sufficiency and formed close ties with neighbors and shared community with other men. As a small manufacturer, he believed that he had a role to play in the development

\textsuperscript{560} Cayton, \textit{The Center of a Great Empire}, 16.
\textsuperscript{561} Thomas Rotch letter to Benjamin Rotch, 2 Mo 5\textsuperscript{th} 1817. Box A-30-13.
\textsuperscript{562} Thomas Rotch letter to Nathan Harkness, 9 mo 12\textsuperscript{th} 1816. Daybook, Box-H-21, pp 61-62.
of commercial agriculture in Ohio. He described his vision for the state’s future to his brother in 1817. Commenting on his plans for a cotton factory and his pottery factory, he wrote, “In the choice I have made ensures at some future period the enjoyment of privileges, the improvement of which will doubtless make this a place of great notoriety.”

Charity’s response to the westward move differed markedly from that of her husband. Rotch’s expectations for economic self-sufficiency did not apply to his wife for whom only dependence was possible, a fact that Charity knew and accepted. While she would develop self-dependence, her identity was bound by kinship, and she seemingly had a greater need than did her husband to repair the break in community and preserve familial ties in expectation of future need.

She seems not to have thrived on hardship nor did she have the soul for adventure or geographic isolation. She came into Ohio country looking backward, clinging to the only way of life she had known. It was not love at first sight, nor was it an odyssey she relished. For Charity, the frontier enterprise put unusual strains on relationships. As letters came and went, writing became a hedge against loneliness and isolation and a way for Charity to bridge the distance and keep her female family intact.

Thomas and Charity had grown up in large families of children, and perhaps they had hoped for children of their own. They knew from experience that the family rather than the individual was the most common unit of economic survival. For Friends,

563 Thomas Rotch letter to Seth Adams, 4th mo 13th, 1816. Box A-30-12.
564 Motz, True Sisterhood, 80.
moreover, marriage widened and deepened kinship bonds, confirmed status, consolidated resources to support economic goals, and facilitated the concentration of wealth and real estate that could be passed on to children.\textsuperscript{566} Had she been a woman in her twenties, the prospect of migration to Ohio might have seemed exciting. But at the age of forty-five, Charity was approaching the time of life when most women of her class were retiring from active life rather than leaving their settled homes to create new ones on the frontier. She had expectations of growing old with her female kin and the idea of making a comfortable home in the wilderness was a daunting task that probably appealed less to her than it did to Rotch.

The distance between Charity and her female circle to whom she had always turned for emotional support, “so far off, so many mountains rising between us & the name of your settlement so unknown,” was a form of emotional separation that Charity could never fully accept.\textsuperscript{567} Rachel Todd wrote in July 1813, “I have suffered much from the want of a friend like thyself, my dr C. & I have dwelt more & with deeper regret on thy absence.”\textsuperscript{568}

Thomas Rotch thought of himself as a self-made man, but he recognized that his success depended upon his wife’s support and the organizational skills that she brought to the Kendal household. Charity’s was a different communal experience from that of kinswomen in the East, and her ability to anticipate and respond resourcefully to happenstance and the unexpected measured her worth as a wife and companion. Working alongside her spouse as a partner in less than ideal circumstances may have altered the

\textsuperscript{566} Miller, “My whole enjoyment & almost my existence depends upon my friends,” 127.\textsuperscript{567} Lydia Rotch Dean letter to Charity Rotch, July 7, 1812. Box B-241-11.\textsuperscript{568} Rachel Todd letter to Charity Rotch, Farmington, July 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1813. Box B-311-20.
carefully constructed separation of the sexes and cemented rather than eroded their relationship.\textsuperscript{569} While Charity passed along pieces of her everyday existence, trivial concerns, and sentimental feelings and commented on the economic facts of frontier life in her letters, in return she requested and cherished seeds, small mementos and news of home that taken together bore the tracks of a woman’s culture spanning generations. The frontier experience was a challenge and hers was a life of self-discovery shaped by the region in which she found herself as she adapted to new roles and new tasks. Within her all-absorbing domestic sphere, she tried to fulfill the roles upon which the well-being of her household depended. As a pious women, Charity was a model for other Quaker women to emulate. While she integrated her secular and religious activities, the cult of domesticity and the ideal of true womanhood remained her goal.\textsuperscript{570} While she was not economically self-sufficient and had limited opportunities for independent action, her work was productive, and Thomas Rotch leaned on her resourcefulness. As a member of an interdependent economic unit, she modified and adapted to her new circumstances and was doing what need to be done of her own volition.\textsuperscript{571}

But conditions on the frontier promoted her dependence on her husband, and she knew and accepted this fact and apparently did not question her subordination. As Rotch’s economic partner, she organized her work life and directed her energies toward productive labor. While her activities differed from that performed by women in urban areas, and her work was as valuable as that of her spouse, the frontier experience

\textsuperscript{569} Peavy and Smith, \textit{Pioneer Women}, 91.
\textsuperscript{571} Jameson, “Women as Workers,” 3.
increased and deepened her dependence on her spouse.\textsuperscript{572} She was by all accounts a partner to Rotch, but only a junior partner.\textsuperscript{573}

In the early stages of settlement at Kendal, Charity’s organizational skills, her willingness to work and her productive responsibilities were profoundly gendered. She became responsible for household manufacturing and feeding her spouse and his farm hands. Whatever she and Thomas lacked, she contrived in her kitchen.\textsuperscript{574} Water fetched from nearby springs or from Sippo stream had to be put to the boil for drinking, cooking, washing, and bathing. Laundering soap was produced from a combination of wood ashes boiled with the entrails of hogs.\textsuperscript{575} Management of poultry was also women’s work. Rotch noted in his daybook in 1815, “4 mo 27\textsuperscript{th}: found a duck sitting under ox stable-supposed to have set 3 days. Up to this day we collected in all 82 Duck Eggs.”\textsuperscript{576} Chickens had to be tended, and eggs were collected daily to ensure a steady supply of bread and other baked goods.\textsuperscript{577} Surpluses of eggs and butter were sold for cash or

\textsuperscript{573} Gillis, \textit{A World of Their Own Making}, 158.
\textsuperscript{574} Charity Rotch Estate Accounts. Box F-26-66 an extensive list of kitchen inventory including pans, bowls, plates, cutlery, glasses, and utensils that informs on Charity’s individuality as full-time farm wife and the extended farm family of full and part time laborers for whom she was responsible. Also see Riley, \textit{The Female Frontier}, Chapter 3, esp. 56-59 for a discussion of women’s domesticity on the frontier.
\textsuperscript{575} Bartlett, \textit{Keeping House}, 32. In addition to laundering, housewives produced a finer soap for bathing made from white ash and sheep tallow and a hard brown soap for housekeeping (32). Riley, \textit{Frontierswomen}, 65.
\textsuperscript{576} Thomas Rotch Daybook, found February 11, 2008. Rotch Wales Papers, Massillon Public Library.
\textsuperscript{577} Jensen, \textit{Loosening the Bonds}. Poultry rarely appeared in inventories the 1770s. In the last quarter of the century, accounts of ducks, geese, turkeys, and hens are mentioned in inventories in connection with the production of feather beds which became a sought after item in colonial households (48). Charity Rotch’s estate inventory mentions bolsters
exchanged between neighbors for other produce. The availability of certain commodities such as cream, eggs, milk and butter were subject to seasonal weather patterns. “Farm wives,” McCormick writes, “had no choice but to adjust their spending patterns to seasonal fluctuations for they were forced to accept what the market offered for their perishable commodities.”

Charity influenced the preparation of food which took days, weeks and months of advanced planning to collect, pickle, process, grate, settle or gel. Her collection of recipes in the form of newspaper clippings or handwritten on loose scraps of paper reveal the complexity of her existence. Recipes allude to the autonomy and authority she may have gained as she established a self-sufficient household. Recipes also provide clues to the values and beliefs about domestic life transported from New England, and illustrate how women developed and reaffirmed relationships and stayed connected through the exchange of culinary and medicinal knowledge in same-sex spaces. Susan Leonardi posits that recipe exchange was a shared act of trust that connected women and affirmed their affiliations. Janet Theophano argues that recipes preserved family memory and informed on webs of women’s relationships within and beyond their households. She

and bed covers, but not featherbed mattresses which were common in most households by the turn of the century.

578 McCormick, Farm Wife, 91; Faragher, Women and Men on the Overland Trail, 115.
579 Thomas Rotch Recipes and Remedies, “A recipe for painting with milk” Box F-10-31; “A white wash for the outside of buildings.” Box F-10-33; “Summary of the method of treatment to be used with persons apparently dead from drowning etc.” Box F-10-42; “A good family beer” Box F-10-36.
580 Thomas Rotch, Household recipes and remedies, Box F-10-24. “A Recipe for making paregoric Elixir given in Dr. Peter Yarnal’s handwriting.”
writes, “Exchanging recipes in letters was one way family and friends separated by
distance could continue to share the details of their day-to-day lives, the discovery of a
new dish, or interest in and concern for one another.” 582

Like other frontier women, Charity looked forward to and applauded the
transformation of the environment. She requested seeds from her New England family
and transferred tokens of home to a garden. The act of planting an annual garden which
provided vegetables for the entire year domesticated the wilderness and made the
physical world more hospitable to her.583 At summer’s end, she began the time
consuming task of harvesting vegetables such as potatoes, onions, cabbage, sweet corn,
beans, peas, tomatoes and peppers that could be canned or pickled for winter use.584 Fruit
from Rotch’s orchards were baked into pies, or turned into dried fruit or jams and jellies
for year round use.585 Apples were turned into cider for commercial sale. Mixed with
honey, sweet cider was consumed by everyone in large quantities.586 Numerous fruit
trees including sugar maples were tapped for syrup in early spring. Sugaring required
few tools and in its final form as cakes, it was a trade item and used as an essential in

582 Janet Theophano. Eat My Words, Reading Women’s Lives through the Cookbooks
They Wrote (New York, Palgrave, 2002 ), 47.
583 Riley, Women and Nature, xiii.
584 McCormick, Farm Women, 77.
585 Cookbooks were rare before the mid-nineteenth century and settlers often had to
adjust to foods not available in New England. For an account of the domestic life of a
Quaker women from Maryland who settled in Columbiana County, Ohio in 1812 see
Foster, Emily ed. The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology of Early Writings (Lexington,
University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 164-166.
586 Bartlett, Keeping House, 99.
curing and as a sweetener.\textsuperscript{587} Charity’s recipe for sugaring called for “four men with sixteen kettles, 15 gallons each to produce four hundred pounds of sugar from the sap of trees in four to six weeks.”\textsuperscript{588}

Butter needed to be churned until all moisture was removed. It was then shaped into molds or pots and stored in a cool springhouse that was built into the side of a hill.\textsuperscript{589} Oysters were pickled, and vegetables and beef were salted for winter use. Salt and sugar were sometimes scarce and expensive, and farm wives resorted to herbs from their garden to season food. Fowl was readily available but had to be caught, cleaned and prepared in the most important utensil in the kitchen, the large stewing pot or kettle. Haying and harvest time was work intensive, and he hired part-time workers to cut hay and corn which would then be ground into meal. Workers were usually fed as part of their contract. Eliza Barker wrote to her Aunt in October, 1812, “I was apprehensive least thy exertions would have been too much for thee as we heard several times last winter of your having a large family of workmen and but little help.”\textsuperscript{590}

\textsuperscript{587} Sally McMurry, \textit{From Sugar Camps to Star Barns, Rural Life and Landscape in a Western Pennsylvania Community} (University Park, PA.: The University State University Press, 2001), 14.
\textsuperscript{588} Thomas Rotch household recipes and remedies, Box F-10-34 recipe for making sugar; Thomas Rotch farm accounts, 1812-1822. Box E-41-6; Rotch receipt of the purchase of 185 apple, 10 pear, 4 may duke, and 4 red cherry trees from David Walton 3\textsuperscript{rd} mo 20\textsuperscript{th} 1813. E-41-10 receipt to 32 grafted trees assorted, 39 natural trees assorted and 64 peach trees some of which were planted on Spring Hill adjacent to his farmhouse.
\textsuperscript{589} Jensen, \textit{Loosening the Bonds}, 97-98. See Jensen, Part II, Chapters 5 and 6 for discussion of the trade, churning and butter technology; Riley, \textit{Frontierswomen}, 60. Thomas Rotch Farm Accounts, Box E-41-12; In addition to horses, oxen, sheep and a bull, Thomas Rotch owned six dairy cows as early as May, 1812.
\textsuperscript{590} Eliza Barker letter to Charity Rotch, 10\textsuperscript{th} 15\textsuperscript{th} 1812. Box B-235-2; Thomas Rotch farm accounts, 1813-1822. Box E-41-1 In 1813, Rotch hired 20 men on the 12\textsuperscript{th} of July; 13 men on the 14\textsuperscript{th}, and 12 men on the 15\textsuperscript{th} to reap wheat. On the 16\textsuperscript{th} of July, 13 men harvested rye. On July 12\textsuperscript{th} he hired 6 men to assist with a 4-day hay harvest.
Charity’s flower and herb garden needed tending every day, and was possibly fenced to keep out chickens. Berries were picked and baked into pies, quince wine was laid down, meat was stewed in kettles and bread was baked in an oven built into the wall of a basement floor kitchen.\footnote{See Charity Rotch Estate Accounts: Kitchen inventories, Box F-26-66. Thomas Rotch farm accounts, 1812-1822. Receipt for Rotch’s purchase of one pair of black and white steers, Box E-41-11; one cow and a calf, Box E-41-13; 3 steers, 3 heifers and 1 bull, Box E-41-14; one pair of steers, Box E-41-15; one red cow, a red calf with a white face, and two merino sheep, Box 41-16.} Life in Ohio on the edges of civilization where the elements always seem to be in control was marked by mishaps, disease, sudden death, and shortages of medicines.\footnote{William D. Howells, \textit{Stories of Ohio} (New York: American Company, 1897), 158-162.} Herbs were grown especially for medicinal purposes for ailments such as rheumatism, the bite of a mad dog, the bite of a serpent, foot corns, sore throat, diarrhea, abdominal pain, shingles, inflammation, and kidney stones.\footnote{Charity Rotch, Recipes and Remedies. Box F-10-2 through 28.} Refined women wore hand made caps, night and day to maintain and retain their feminine qualities that were under attack by the harshness of the frontier environment.\footnote{Maryan Wherry, “Women and the Western Military Frontier, Elizabeth Bacon Custer,” ed. Catherine Hobbs, \textit{Nineteenth Century Women Learn to Write} (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1995), 224.}

Evidence in letters confirms that several of the Rodman women made and sold caps to augment their personal incomes. The act of sewing, like exchanges of recipes, was collaborative and interactive and anchored women’s work to their families, and to the larger repository of family memory. Sarah Rotch Arnold informed her aunt that several of the caps she had ordered were finished. She wrote, “E Hyer is here at work, we have enquired her price (without letting her know on what account) and she thinks 5 dollars is as low as she could possibly do them for; but if thou inclines to send them, my
mother thinks she could get the common one done by another person for 4 dollars, & we will very willingly take charge of them."^595

Textile production of linen yarn was also at the center of Charity’s work. Charity and her mother, Mary Rodman, left gifts of homespun cotton or linen sheets, table cloths, towels and napkins, curtains and spreads to daughters and nieces in their wills.^596 Women’s labor was at a premium in the early nineteenth-century, and as the primary producer of a large quantity of food and textiles and manager of the domestic space, Charity participated in the developing agricultural economy and in the consumer revolution of the early nineteenth-century.^597 Like many first generation settlers, the complexity of her work also encouraged economic relationships with other women and neighbors. While she was not economically self-sufficient, she modified and adapted to her new circumstances, and Rotch leaned on her resourcefulness. Working in close proximity with her husband through pressing need, her role as manager of the domestic space became more important.^598

The Rotches set themselves apart from their non-Quaker neighbors on issues of slavery and their refusal to support military campaigns against local Native Americans.^599 Quakers prided themselves on years of peace with Native Americans. Even after Friends

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596 Mary Rodman Estate Papers, Box E-2-12. Will of Mary Rodman, New Bedford, 2 mo 10, 1798. Charity Rotch, Estate and legal documents, Box F-25-1a.  
597 Prescott, Gender and Generation, 97; Riley, Frontierswomen, 67-76; Ricky Clark, George W. Knepper, and Ellice Ronsheim, Quilts in Community: Ohio’s Traditions (Nashville, Tenn., Rutledge Press, 1991), 58.  
598 Jameson, “Women as Workers,” 3; Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 49; Prescott, Gender and Generations, 17.  
599 Susan S. Forbes, “Quaker Tribalism,” in Friends and Neighbors, 171; Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 484; Tolles, Meeting House, defines Quaker tribalism as “the sense of being a “peculiar people” called by God to be separate from the “world”(230).
in Pennsylvania withdrew from government in the 1760s and after the Revolutionary War as they lost influence in the affairs of governance, Quakers increasingly turned their attention to “civilizing” Native Americans. Indians, moreover, thought of Quakers as advocates and friends and continued to call on them to represent their interests at official treaty signings.

Thus, Friends, settlers, and Moravian evangelists who followed Native American refugees into the frontier supported Thomas Jefferson’s view that Indians, impoverished and on the verge of extinction, could be assimilated into society if they disposed of land needed only for hunting and adapted a settled way of life as farmers. Indian gender roles should be realigned to resemble Euro-American views regarding the appropriate roles of men and women in society. In place of hunting, considered incompatible with a civilized life, Native Americans should live like Europeans. Indian men should be taught farming techniques and could own their own property and Indian women should be confined to the household rather than to the fields. Excess Indian land no longer

600 For discussion of shared Indian and Quaker dreamworks, see Gerona, Night Journeys, 223-226.
601 Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, As a consequence of William Penn’s humanitarian policies, Friends and Indians lived peacefully alongside each other in Pennsylvania since the late seventeenth-century. But when Penn died in 1718, the Pennsylvania legislature granted the Iroquois hegemony over other tribes, largely to control Indian interactions between the tribes and English and Dutch traders (39-40).
603 Specht, “Women of One or Many Bonnets?,”29
604 Stephen Aron, “Pigs and Hunters, Rights in the Woods” on the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Contact Points, American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the
required for hunting would be ceded to the federal government for sale to settlers. White women on the frontier, unused to work outside of the home and garden were horrified at the heavy work performed by Indian women. They hoped to offer Native American women both civilization and salvation, but were frustrated by Indian unwillingness to adapt and emulate white standards of domesticity. While divorce, sexual freedom before marriage and polygamy were common in some Native American society, these traditional practices offended white women’s sensibilities and their middle class beliefs about morality, female chastity, and marital fidelity. Indians thought of land not in terms of land sales and ownership, but in terms of communal stewardship. Farming was linked with women’s reproductive roles and was the work of women who planted corn, beans and pumpkins and controlled the use of land and crop production, while men hunted and cleared fields. Most Indian males refused to farm, and attempts to reverse traditional gender roles were tantamount to emasculation.

Rotch apparently believed that as more land came under the plow, Indians if given the incentive would willingly adapt to permanent settlement and farming. While the exact date of their settlement in Stark County is unclear, the Delaware were already established in semi-permanent villages along the Tuscarawas River three miles to the west of Kendal

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606 Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 24.
well before Rotch’s arrival in 1811  

Rotch recalled that large tracts of land were already destitute of wood and Kendal was a hunting ground for the Indians. He wrote, “The plains having been annually burnt in the spring by the Indians from the longest time of their tradition to improve the hunting which renders the aspect of the country much more agreeable and more easily improved.”

In a new country, Rotch believed that he had a role to play in the Quaker efforts to acculturate Ohio Indians. He solicited funds to support his efforts to teach practices, receiving $100 from his brother, William “for your fund for civilizing the Indians.” In 1818, Rotch reported to Quaker sponsors in Ireland, “Their progress in agricultural pursuits has exceeded our expectation and the general aspect of the concern affords encouragement to preserve in the work.”

The War of 1812 challenged Quaker pacifist beliefs and brought armed conflict to the Kendal neighborhood. After the surrender of General Hull’s army to the British at Detroit in August 1812, Rotch and his foreman, Arvine Wales warned neighboring Delaware of the approach of half-starved troops that were “slaughtering all that came in their way.” Wales recorded that the Delaware to the west of Kendal along the

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609 Thomas Rotch letter to Benjamin Rotch, December 29, 1816. Box H-21; 86-89.
611 Thomas Rotch letter from William Rotch, Jr. 1 mo 18th, 1820. Box B-164-24.
613 Massillon Museum Foundation, ca. 1813, *Spring Hill Historic Home, Massillon, Ohio*.
Tuscarawas River “hurriedly broke camp and as they left, the squaw gave their friend this ladle. It will be observed the “totem” of the tribe a lizard is carved on the handle.”

In October 1812, General Wadsworth’s Army with one hundred men and sixty wagons camped nine miles from Canton, by Rotch’s account to his parents, “had taken almost everything from the neighborhood that their wants required.” Rotch agonized over the army’s impressments of his oxen which would be “put to their wagons, or for the slaughter,” and the need for rations, forage and grain for their horses that required twelve hundred and fifty bushels of oats for their daily rations. He concluded, “As I have never put anything out of the way except weapons applied to the taking of life, I do not know what I shall do.”

After the return of peace in 1815, the Delaware submitted a request for compensation to the federal government for property damages to their villages incurred by marauding armies. While Delaware did not completely adopt the economic values of the Europeans, they did not completely reject every aspect of the economic market. Like other Native Americans, they had different ideas about land use and accumulation of goods, and as Ohio’s earliest farmers, they relied on agriculture and developed strategies including trade to solidify alliances and improve their economic lot.

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614 Ibid., Ladle and accompanying account by Arvine C. Wales, Massillon Museum Foundation, Spring Hill Historic Home, Massillon, Ohio, ca. 1812.
615 Thomas Rotch letter to his parents, 10th mo 27th 1812. Box A-30-8.
616 Ibid.
617 Thomas Rotch Daybook, Thomas Rotch letter to the Committee on Indian Concerns for the Yearly Meeting of Ohio, 10 mo 21, 1816. Box H-21 pgs 76-77; Aron, “Rights in the Woods,” Native Americans also adapted livestock into their economies because of over hunting which decreased the supply of game (190).
After they received no reply to their request for reimbursement of their losses, Rotch inventoried the ruins of two Delaware villages at Greentown and Jerometown in Stark County and presented his list to the Ohio Committee on Indian Concerns “to take to the City of Washington, June 21, 1815. Rotch estimated Delaware losses at $3,235.25 for “standing corn on 50 acres 30 bushels per acre, 1500 bushels, and 30 bushels of wheat were burnt. In addition, Carl Bay’s troops burned 22 houses, many bark houses. Troops killed or stole 5 horses, 9 head of young cattle, 1 large steer, and 100 head of hogs.”

Farm implements valued for their usefulness and not easily produced taken or destroyed included tools valued for their usefulness and not easily produced including augers, chisels, grindstones, weeding hoes, axes, bridles, 2 ploughs, 6 steel traps, 2 chains and 2 sets of gears, and 13 iron. 5 brass kettles and pots may have been used to process maple sugar. While Rotch’s intervention on their behalf is perhaps evidence of intercultural relations between neighbors with similar economic interests, most settlers desirous of Indian land continued to see Native Americans not in terms of a middle ground where Indians and Americans met and negotiated their differences, but in terms of us and them that was nonnegotiable.

Amid accusations that Quakers were soft on Indians and slow to join the defense of the frontier, Friends began the practice of sending representatives to treaty signings to engage Indians directly, and to assure them of their good intensions which in the case of

618 Thomas Rotch Day Book, letter, 10 mo 21, 1816 to the Committee on Indian Concerns for the Yearly Meeting of Ohio. Box H-21, pgs 76-78.
619 Ibid, 76; Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 25.
farming and trade might coincide. \(^{621}\) As an observer at the signing of the Treaty of St Mary’s (October 6, 1818) which ceded Indian land in Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois to the government and opened territory to westward bound settlers, Rotch wrote, “I renewed my acquaintance with divers of the Sandusky Chiefs who recognized me at first glance to my astonishment. Their minds appeared prepared to meet any endeavor that may be attempted to aid them in agriculture.”\(^{622}\)

Charity’s description of the treaty signing confirms that Indians clearly understood the implications of their subordination and the seizure of their traditional lands. She recorded that about four thousand Indians from fourteen tribes including numerous women who participated in decision making at treaties, but did not sign official documents were present at the event. \(^{623}\) She wrote, “How did my mind sink at different times, when following the perturbations of theirs, in every motion expression and look. For the space of 20 minutes I stood gazing, with every faculty awakened in sympathy.”\(^{624}\)

\(^{621}\) Merrill, Ibid., 266-267.
\(^{622}\) Thomas Rotch letter to the Committee on Indian Affairs, 10\(^{th}\) mo 10\(^{th}\) 1818. Box A-30-18.
\(^{624}\) Thomas Rotch report to the Committee on Indian Affairs, 10\(^{th}\) mo 10\(^{th}\) 1818, Box A-30-18.
In his report of the treaty signing, Rotch implied that Native Americans understood that the policy of the treaty was to remove Indians westward across the Mississippi. The federal government made it clear to Wyandots, Delawares, and Miamis in attendance that the resolution of the treaty and confiscation of expanses of their lands depended on their cooperation with the government, that would treat them respectfully as long as they deferred to white authority. After the presentation of the government’s terms, a Wea chief approached Rotch and said, “I am sick and will go home and lay down.”

Thomas Jefferson began the practice of addressing Native Americans as “My Children” or “my son” in the early years of his Presidency. He believed that as products of America, Indians were equal to white men and should be included in the American nation. He greeted members of the Miami, Potawatomi and Wea nations in 1802 as “brothers, “Made by the same Great Spirit, and living in the same land with our brothers, the red men, we consider ourselves as of the same family; we wish to live as one people and to cherish their interests as our own.”

In his paternalistic role as the benevolent protector of Indians, Jefferson proposed to visiting delegations that Indians give up hunting, learn the arts of agriculture, intermix with the white population, and forfeit unused land to white settlers. He wrote in his

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625 Thomas Rotch personal correspondence, Box F-8-14.
626 Drinnon, Facing West, 88.
628 White, The Middle Ground, 474.
second inaugural, “humanity enjoins us to teach them agriculture and the domestic arts.” 629

In 1803, Jefferson continued his policy of conciliation and assurances of friendship with Indians, while advocating their removal and colonization across the Mississippi. 630 Over time, he would come to see Indians as children who either resigned themselves to the wishes of white officials, or would not listen to reason and deserved to be exterminated. Jefferson’s justifications for destruction of Indian culture were both racist. Richard Drinnon writes, “first, childish Indians were especially prone to manipulation by tyrannous outside forces; second, Indian savages were merciless. And if their violence was especially merciless, could whites not exterminate them in good conscience?” 631

Quaker attempts to instruct Native Americans in farming, however well intended, met with little success and were abandoned in the 1830s. 632 Ohio’s population, meanwhile, increased four hundred percent from 231,000 in 1810 to 938,000 by 1830, and with this increase, farmers eagerly sought Indian land that was selling for far less than land in the East. 633 The federal government forced a series of removal treaties on the last Native Americans in Ohio, the Wyandot of Upper Sandusky who left northwest

630 Drinnon, Facing West, 84; White, The Middle Ground, 473-476.
631 Drinnon, Ibid., 96.
632 Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 364-365.
Ohio for the territories west of the Mississippi in 1842. Ohio historian George Knepper points out that Moravians, Presbyterians, and Methodists also attempted to instruct Indians in the arts of sciences of agriculture in the hope of assimilating them into white society as farmers. But pressure for fertile and inexpensive land frustrated the best intentions of these well intended groups. He writes, “One frustration piled upon another to defeat this initiative.”

A Final Return to New England

Early in 1820, merchandise of all sorts was cheap and plentiful in New England. William Rotch, writing from New Bedford, advised his brother to consider sending his clothe to local markets closer to Kendal than to markets in the Atlantic states.

Rotch took his brother’s advise, sending his cloth to Zanesville, Steubenville and Wheeling. While the money and banking crisis of 1819 decreased agricultural prices, caused widespread forclosures, bank failures, and unemployment, Rotch managed to exchange his clothe for such items as “ten thousand Sigars of the best quality”, which were to be sent to his agent in New Philadelphia. Rotch wrote, “I am frequently either going or sending cloths there to him. My flannels are in great demand for women’s

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634 For discussion of the history of Quaker interaction and intervention on behalf of Native Americans see Norton, Chapter 7:164-203. (Copy: Massillon Public Library); Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 1-4; Knepper, Ohio and its People, 116.
635 Knepper, ibid.
636 William Rotch letter to Thomas Rotch, 1 mo 18th, 1820. Box B-164-24.
638 Thomas Rotch letter to Daniel Christ, Kendal 1 mo 4th 1819. Letterbook H-21, p.139; Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, 348; Knepper, Ohio and its People, Debtors who originally borrowed money on credit, found themselves unable to repay their loans and lost their land to bank foreclosures. As prices of land and goods collapsed, thousands of Ohioans lost their land and found themselves on the edge of poverty while others who could, moved westward for a fresh start (141,143).
dresses they come at from 87½ to $1 per yard of a sinamon Colour which is much admired.” Other Friends who had barrowed from banks were unable to pay off their loans and lost their land to foreclosure. In 1818, Hannah Fisher, Rotch’s sister-in-law requested that Rotch should try to sell Mary Witchel’s land “as soon as possible, as they want to get ready to sail for England, and have met with disappointments & losses and are in want of the Money. They have lost by putting some of these property in Manufacturing.”

Confident of his future prospects, Rotch departed Kendal with his wife on the 25th of October 1820 for a long anticipated visit to New England to celebrate William Rotch Sr.’s eighty-sixth birthday with family. The census of the village of Kendal done in their absence recorded twenty-one heads of households and a population of one hundred forty persons. While in New England, Charity’s old complaints mimicking bilious colic reoccurred. She and Rotch departed New Bedford on March 7, 1821 with a stop in New York where Thomas indulged Charity’s love of luxuries and creature comforts. Reformers of the late eighteenth-century attempted to raise awareness of the contradiction between the accumulation of wealth and property and transcendent religious values which seemingly were competing for Quaker loyalties. However, most

639 Knepper, Ibid.
640 Hannah Fisher letter to Thomas Rotch, 1st mo 6th 1818. Box B-56-10.
641 Thomas Rotch diaries and memorandum books, Box F-9-9.
642 U.S. Census, 1820 United States Census, Kendal, Stark County, Ohio. roll M 33-94, p.186A.
643 Letter, August 26, 1821: Sarah Rotch Arnold to Charity Rotch, Massachusetts Historical Society.
644 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, Rotch purchased shoes, cotton fabric, spices and tobacco for his store and dyes for his woolen mill, and a barometer and books for himself. Charity bought gloves, hose, handkerchiefs and yard goods (59).
Friends saw no contradiction between the material wealth and spiritual worlds and threw themselves into business pursuits while professing to have only a passing interest in the temporal world. Friends held a similar view toward slavery and the slave trade. Wealth and slavery were possible evils, but when used properly, both were more or less tolerable and acceptable.  

Back in Kendal in the late spring of 1821, Rotch built a carriage house and a cider press and began the construction of a larger frame house on Springhill overlooking the plains of Kendal. Within his new farmhouse, Rotch enclosed a narrow staircase leading upward from the basement to a crawl space beneath the eaves of the roof. According to legend, a large sugar barrel concealed a door leading to the roof where he sheltered fugitives fleeing from Virginia and Kentucky to Canada and freedom.

Wilbur Henry Siebert who published the first academic history of the Underground Railroad (1898) lists Thomas Rotch as a station agent on the northeast Ohio Underground Railroad. Siebert posits that Quakers who pioneered the criticism of slavery were among the first to agitate against the institution and “had a hand in helping slaves to escape from the beginning.” Ohio historian George Knepper points out that free blacks, a few whites, and religious groups of Presbyterians, Methodists,  

646 Conrad posits that Rotch’s first farmhouse was ready for occupancy in February, 1812, however, the date of the larger and last farmhouse possibly completed while the Rotches were in New England is uncertain.
647 Ibid., 56; Wilbur H. Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (New York, Russell & Russell, 1967). Evidence to support the view that slaves were hidden within the Spring Hill farm house rather than elsewhere on his property, (e.g. in the spring house, outbuildings or in adjacent fields) is difficult to substantiate.
Congregationalists and African Methodist Episcopal churches also organized informally to assist runaways.\textsuperscript{649} While the recapturing of fugitive slaves was covered by the federal fugitive slave laws of 1793, the law was only arbitrarily enforced and ignored by Ohioans who were harboring runaways as early as 1815.\textsuperscript{650} Lax enforcement of the laws was not indicative of an emerging antislavery movement in the state. Rather, failure to enforce the “Black Laws” worked in favor of white communities that expelled some blacks while selectively utilizing others as a cheap source of menial labor.\textsuperscript{651} Safe houses and stations were located ten or twenty miles apart, and once arrived at a designated depot, the fugitive would signal his or her arrival by a knock on a window, door or gate, and would be given a meal, before begin taken into the house to be hidden in a secret room in a basement or attic, or sequestered in barns, fields, or springhouses until it was safe for onward travel by foot, wagon, or canal boat the next night.\textsuperscript{652}

Historians agree that while Ohio served as a major conduit for passage of slaves north from Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, Delaware, Maryland and the western part of


\textsuperscript{650} Knepper, \textit{Ohio and Its People}, 207; also see David M. Potter, \textit{The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861} (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), 135-137 with footnotes.


\textsuperscript{650} Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, 12 mo 4\textsuperscript{th} 1821, Box B-260-11.


Virginia, the operations of the railroad and those who aided freedom seekers, clandestine and surreptitious by their very nature, are notorious difficult to assess. Knepper acknowledges that Ohio was a “trunk line” of passage to Canada, but he is skeptical of the romanticized interpretation of the legacy of the railroad. He writes, “It is now impossible to separate fact from fancy in reporting this romantic theme. Nearly every Ohio town boasts an old house or building that, the local will insist, once concealed fugitives.”

Quaker historian Christopher Densmore, writing on the history of the railroad in eastern Pennsylvania also urges caution, arguing that separating fact from fiction regarding the history of the Underground Railroad is problematic at best for historians. He writes, “Popular legends of the Underground Railroad tell of secret rooms, tunnels, and codes. Stories of this sort are associated with locations in Chester County, but all appear to date from the twentieth century, long after those who were actively involved had passed from the scene.”

Although Quakers believed that all men were created equal, Friends were not in agreement over the issue of abolition, how slavery should be ended, or if blacks could be

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653 Ibid., 207; Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*. Most blacks who remained in Ohio lived in towns along the Ohio River or Scioto River Valley. Kentucky slaveholders regularly advertised in town newspapers along the Ohio River, offering substantial rewards for the return of fugitive blacks (387). Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005). Ohio’s population of blacks doubled from 1,890 in 1810 to 4,523 by 1820 perhaps because the state’s discriminatory black laws, irregularly enforced by the courts were an insufficient deterrent to settlement.

assimilated into society.\textsuperscript{655} The Philadelphia Yearly meeting agreed to permit blacks to become members in 1796. However, they were seated in the back or on side benches of meeting houses, and were discouraged from speaking in meetings. Few blacks joined the Society, nor did Friends encourage them to apply.\textsuperscript{656}

Thomas Rotch apparently believed in a gradualist approach to the assimilation of blacks into white society. For many Friends, slavery was a social rather than a political issue. While he supported the idea that if given education and moral training, blacks “could become by degrees as they emerge from the state of degradation to which they have long been subjects, useful members of Civil Society,” Rotch, like other Christians who were morally outraged by the cruelties of the slave trade who were eager to ameliorate the conditions of enslavement, may not have been a proponent of racial equality.\textsuperscript{657} He also may have been mindful of the Haitian Revolution of 1791 in which black slaves commanded by Toussaint Louverture defeated French, English and Spanish colonists and soldiers and freed themselves.\textsuperscript{658} David Brion Davis writes, “In the light of

\textsuperscript{655} Margaret Hope Bacon, “Quakers and Colonization,” \textit{Quaker History} 95, no.1(2006), 26.  
\textsuperscript{656} Ibid., 27; Despite Quaker distaste and moral abhorrence for slavery, members of the Society of Friends held black people in bondage throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Alan Tully, “Patterns of Slaveholding in Colonial Pennsylvania, Chester and Lancaster Counties, 1729-1758,” \textit{Journal of Social History} 6, (Spring 1973):284-305.  
these circumstances, abolitionists had to argue that only well-managed emancipation could prevent such destructive slave rebellions.”

Roth’s thinking on slavery was probably influenced by John Parrish, a prominent Philadelphia abolitionist who published a pamphlet, Remarks on the Slavery of Black People in which he argued that if given the same opportunities, blacks could achieve as much as whites. Rotch was also close friend of abolitionist Elias Hicks, an opponent of the American Colonization Society and supporter of the Underground Railroad who attempted but failed to visit Kendal after the Quaker Yearly Meeting at Mount Pleasant of 1819.

In 1815, Rotch queried Ohio and Indiana Friends regarding the possible settlement of three hundred black people freed by the will of Samuel Gist who died in Virginia. Nathan Guilford, Secretary of the Western Emigration Society suggested that an area for settlement might be found in Ohio or Indiana, but he suggested that racial harmony was unlikely. He wrote, “Most of Ohio’s land bordering on large rivers was already taken up and if blacks colonized along the rivers, they would inevitably be embroiled with their neighbors, if not kidnapped.”


In 1806, Parrish forwarded 25 of his pamphlets to Rotch in Connecticut for distribution to other abolitionists. John Parrish letter to Thomas Rotch, Philadelphia, 1806. Box B-135-1

Elias Hicks letters to Thomas Rotch, B-87-5. 12 Mo 28th 1819. Box B-87-5.

Letter from Nathan Guilford to Thomas Rotch, Cincinnati, Ohio July 16th, 1817. Box B-75-2; Also see William F. Wickham letter to Thomas Rotch, Richmond, Virginia, 14th Nov. 1817. Box B-211-1. For a discussion of the Gist bequest see Philip J. Schwarz, Migrants against Slavery: Virginias and the Nation (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 122-148.
John Dillon, a member of the Ohio legislature, pointed out that most Ohioans feared an influx of freed blacks into the state from neighboring Kentucky, Virginia and Maryland. Moreover, the gradual emancipation of former slaves evoked a dramatic rise in racism in northern states, and most Ohioans viewed the notion of racial mixing and a multiracial society unfavorably. Dillon personally was not in agreement with other Quakers over the issue of slavery and found the idea of promoting the welfare of blacks unacceptable. He wrote to Rotch, “Notwithstanding I could not agree to ingraft them into Religious, consequently civil, society with the whites, yet if I know myself at all, I do feel as much interested, and would go to a great lengths to promote their civilization and welfare, as perhaps any other person in my circumstances.”

The problem for Indiana Quakers who had migrated out of the South to distance themselves from slavery was not a question of abolition, but how abolition should proceed. In response to queries regarding the settlement of freed people in Indiana

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663 Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 204-208.
665 John Dillon to Thomas Rotch, Zanesville, 9 mo 3d, 1817. Box B-47-2
666 Louis Thomas Jones. *The Quakers of Iowa*. (Iowa City, The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1914), 133-137. For a more recent discussion of Indiana Quakers and the anti-abolitionist movement in Indiana see T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers, Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 77-119; also Julie A. Mujic, A Border Community’s Unfulfilled Appeals, The Rise and Fall of the 1840s Anti-Abolitionist Movement in Cincinnati, ” *Ohio Valley History* (Summer 2007), Vol. 7, No. 2:53-70; For a recent discussion of Friends’ position on slavery and resettlement of slaves see Margaret Hope Bacon, “Quakers and Colonization,” *Quaker History* Vol. 95, 2006:26-43. Bacon points out that early abolitionists believed that blacks might be trained up and educated gradually into white society. Friends only reluctantly invited blacks into their meetings in 1796, and although the Society established schools for blacks, they were not admitted into Quaker schools. Quaker Historian Rufus Jones points out that from 1813 when the Ohio yearly Meeting was established, until 1821 when they acquired a Yearly Meeting of their own,
territory, Isaac Gardner, writing on behalf of Quakers in Indiana wrote, “We find ourselves unable to encourage the settling, of them people in this State, respecting the residence of the unfortunate people of Colour. We therefore must leave the matter where we found it.”

The first group of 350 black people emancipated by Samuel Gist’s will arrived in Brown County twenty miles east of Cincinnati for settlement on two tracts of land in November 1818. One or two years later, another group of Gist slaves were settled south of upper Sandusky. They returned to Virginia because of inadequate provisioning, malaria, mosquitoes, poor land and hostility from white settlers who threatened to set the Wyandot Indians on them. By 1820, Friends overseeing their welfare were reporting numerous problems with settlement including inadequate provisioning on land unsuitable for farming. Schwarz writes, “If the beginning of the Gist settlements in Brown County was only half as troublesome as this report indicates, the future did not look good.”

Charity Rotch similarly objected to the enslavement of blacks, but she also may have viewed them as an inferior race. Her reference to bondsmen in a letter to her sister Indiana Quakers were members of the Ohio Yearly Meeting which may account for some of Gardner’s animosity in his letter to Rotch.

Isaac Gardner letter to Thomas Rotch, Franklin County Indiana, 12th mo 28 1818. Box B-67-1.

Schwarz, Migrants Against Slavery, The first 350 blacks to settle in Brown County included members of the following families: Anderson, Baker, Cluff (Clough), Cumberland, Davis, Ellis, Gist (Gest, Giss, Guest, Guist), Hariss, Hudson (Hodsgon, Hutson), Johnson (Johnston), Toler, and Turner families. Of the two tracts of land on which they settled, one is near the town of Fincastle, Eagle Township, the other is five miles southwest of the Eagle settlement and nine miles north of the Ohio River in the town of Wahlsburg, Scott Township (132).

Ibid.,132.
as “Negro-like, apparently happy” suggests that she viewed blacks as a childlike and incapable of foresight. She wrote,

Night before last we had a consignment of two negro men and a little boy fleeing for their liberty to Canada; poor things, they excited much sympathy and so prey upon my feelings, that I should be glad to have but little of their company. We procured a man to go with them last night to put them on their way, the day having been mostly spent in providing food for them. About half an hour after they went a person knock’d at the door & who should it be but another negro of the same description; he was anxious who very much fatigued to overtake the others & after provisioning another decoy we posted them away & were truly glad to be released so soon. This last man said he had been sold & was put on board a boat to go to New Orleans with a little boy of 10 years; the water was low in the river & at night he got off the boat undercover & traveled north. We were informed by one of the persons that went, that he overtook the first party & they were traveling on, Negro-like, apparently happy. He provided provisions to last them to Paynesville if they are only prudent. A very lamentable trait in the character of a free people is the circumstance of the poor negroes in this land, but I fear they will not be much better off in Canada. 670

Closing the Parentheses at Kendal: 1823.

An outbreak of an affliction similar to malaria affected numerous people in Kendal in August 1823 but did not deter Rotch from traveling to the Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends in Mount Pleasant, Jefferson County. 671 While at Mount Pleasant, he collapsed and lay prostrate for a week until he died in the home of William Judkins on September 14, 1823. 672

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672 Box B-291-6 Eliza Rodman to Charity Rotch, September 30, 1823.
Rotch’s death brought an era of development at Kendal to a close. Charity’s life also came to a sudden stop. He was buried according to custom in an unmarked grave in the Quaker burial ground at Mount Pleasant. His elderly parents in New Bedford “bore the shock as well as could be expected.” William Rotch, Sr., who had devoted his life to Quaker principles believed that all things were divinely ordered for purposes unclear and beyond human comprehension. With calm resignation, he wrote to Charity in October 1823, “I trust you have no cause to mourn believing our dear son, thy husband has entered that city whose walls are salvation, this in the midst of tribulation. I am sensible thou will endeavor with us for resignation.” remembering He that gave has a right to take away ‘blessed be his name.’

Charity fell into a deep depression after Rotch’s death, for no one could replace him as her closest companion and confidante. When family received word that she “was more indisposed than usual for some weeks,” they urged her to “come forward to Philadelphia to be with us under the prospects of it being best for thee.” She grew more sickly with age and by June 1824, she was too ill to travel. She died on August 6,

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673 Conrad, *Invaluable Friends*, 65; Box B-291-6 Eliza Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, September 30, 1823; Hurt, 205-206, 301; Mt. Pleasant, a town fifteen miles southwest of Steubenville was established as a Quaker community in 1807 by Friends from North Carolina. In 1814, Friends constructed the first permanent Yearly Meeting House west of the Appalachians; Burke and Bensch, *Mount Pleasant and the Early Quakers of Ohio*, estimate that two to three thousand Friends attended the first Yearly Meeting of Quakers west of the Alleghenies in August, 1813 (12-13).

674 Eliza Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, 30 September, 1823; Box B-291-4. Thomas Rotch was preceded in death by his sister, Lydia Rotch Dean on 10 March, 1822, and a brother, Francis Rotch on 20 May, 1822.

675 William and Elizabeth Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, 28 October, 1823. Box B-300-5

1824 and was buried in the Kendal Quaker cemetery in Massillon, her grave marked by a small stone bearing the inscription, ‘CR’.

In this chapter, I have argued that the move to Ohio did not change but transferred Charity Rotch’s gender roles to a new environment. Charity believed in gender differences and attempted to reinstate standards of eastern domesticity and gender ideals at Kendal. While she was detached from the industrial economy of New England cities and town, Charity continued to identify with the values and the culture of consumption of her class. As a first generation settler in an often unpredictable environment, she did not completely break with tradition, nor could she match her daily life to her class aspirations. An egalitarian relationship possibly emerged as the lines between her and Thomas Rotch’s shared labor blurred in the face of need.

We do not know what Charity’s expectations were in 1811, or how she came to understand them. However, the conditions of settlement seemed to have created significant differences in her life and possibly altered her understanding of her self-identity. As a farm wife and partner to Thomas Rotch in the Kendal experiment, she adapted to new work realities, and her productive labor may have enlarged her sphere of personal independence. As was the case with all nineteenth-century women, her human capital was not rewarded.

Charity’s will, the inventory of her estate, and her bequest of funds for the construction of the Charity School at Kendal for poor children provide us with some understanding of her perceptions of her own life. These documents suggest that she claimed a domain within her household and enlarged her sphere of authority and influence within her community.
Aside from live-in employees Mary Kimberley and Charlotte Addams, Charity’s letters do not indicate that she formed an intimate domestic circle with like-minded female friends or companions at Kendal. Even in their everyday encounters, most Quaker women observed the principle of exclusivity and did not stray beyond their circle of kin co-religious. While women at Kendal probably established neighborly relationship and interconnections that were based on reciprocity, their friendships, however utilitarian and practical may not have supported Charity’s weariness of spirit.

If Charity would have been surrounded by her own children at Kendal, her most intense emotional ties would probably have been with her nuclear family rather than with her linear family in New England. She was apparently firm in her desire for a female centered life with kinswomen, and it was to them, even at a distance, that she turned in earnest for emotional fulfillment. Her daily life at Kendal was full, she was part of a cohesive economic unit, and she created a community within her home by continuing the practice of cementing family ties. Her partnership with Rotch was a joint venture, and she lent cohesion to the Kendal community that she and Rotch were building together.

CHAPTER VI

LETTERS FROM THE FRONTIER:

DEFINING THE QUAKER FEMALE SELF

The women of the Rotch and Rodman families used their correspondence as expressions of their spiritual experiences and beliefs, and also to understand and analyze the scale of their happiness and their discontent.\(^{679}\) As the daughters of elite Quaker merchants who had acquired substantial fortunes, most were leisured and literate but constrained by the limits placed upon them by their gender.\(^{680}\) While elite Quaker women learned the arts of language and letters as actors in their respective class, they absorbed the prerogatives and worldview of their class and understood that their status would be dependant on their husband’s wealth.\(^{681}\) Literacy, letter writing and gender thus contributed to class formation. Class distinctions, gender roles and especially, propriety constituted the standard ideal of young Quaker women of the Rotch and Rodman circle.\(^{682}\) The roles of women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century were rigidly defined. Female propriety was considered vital for a well-ordered state and verbal

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modesty was a life’s work for women who were excluded factually and legally from the political public sphere.\textsuperscript{683}

Quaker women’s roles as teachers, moral advisors, and guardians of their family’s well being and wealth underscores the highly gendered quality of religious life in the late eighteenth century. Women were expected to prepare their daughters for marriage to suitable members of the propertied class with whom they shared similar economic and religious interests and familial ties.\textsuperscript{684} Friends understood that successful marriages strengthened intergenerational kinship ties and created mutual bonds of obligation, affection, and support that advanced and protected both women and their children, economically, emotionally, and socially.\textsuperscript{685} Women understood that marriage shaped their identity within the family, and as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and cousins, they were bound in reciprocal relationships by ties of mutual obligation and support.\textsuperscript{686} Hannah Prior Rodman wrote to her aunt in 1822, “My dear SR unites in the expressions of love to our dear Aunt from whom we are always pleased to hear and whose distance from us we regret.”\textsuperscript{687}

For Quakers, the family was most important and religion was part of the private realm of the household. Women provided moral instruction and care of children, pastoral

\textsuperscript{685} Motz, True Sisterhood, 7.
\textsuperscript{686} Cotts, Bonds of Womanhood, 176-177.
\textsuperscript{687} Hannah Prior Rodman letter, New Bedford to Charity Rotch, Kendal. 2\textsuperscript{nd} mo. 20, 1822. Box B-293-1.
care, and oversight and protection of marriage.\textsuperscript{688} The Society’s internal structure which resembled the organization of the family encouraged women to work toward collective goals and gave them important responsibilities. Women’s meetings created a focus for collective experience that linked Quaker women of various social ranks to each other.\textsuperscript{689} Organizational work with female kin provided women with a sense of collective power and informal access to the male power structure through their husbands. I argue that as members of cohesive female networks, women gained limited autonomy within their meetings and within their marriages. Correspondents referred frequently to meetings for worship and business that strengthened same sex networks and reaffirmed gender power relationships. The Quaker meeting structure as an example of denominational religiosity that extended over great distances dictated the outward behavior of Friends of both sexes. Meetings at the local, regional and colony-wide level also joined Friends into an intricate web of communication that could be rapidly mobilized to promote political goals.\textsuperscript{690} Ann Mifflin wrote in 1808, “We attended 8 meetings in the 7 days, & got back to New York first day meetings, & so onward; I proceeded on to 5 Monthly meetings in succession in


\textsuperscript{689} Barbour, “Quaker Prophetesses,” points out that the new function of the women’s meetings, oversight and approval of perspective marriage met with fierce resistance from some male Friends who objected to autonomous women’s meeting except in their roles as administering charity to the poor (73).

\textsuperscript{690} Bonomi, \textit{Under the Cope of Heaven}, 169.
the Jerseys, & two others & then reached the next day our west town Quarterly Meeting for the Acting Committee held here twice in the year.”

Child-raising as a duty arose from a religious imperative that separated their values and purposes from those of other American families. Familial love and childrearing as ideals derived from seventeen-century Quaker beliefs of the ideal of the family as God’s spiritual sanctuary on earth. As the spiritual equals of men, many Quaker women considered it their right as well as their responsibility to instruct their children in the tenets of the faith and encourage their spiritual growth. Hannah Fisher wrote of her nieces, Sarah and Eliza, “I often think of them as precious plants, and they feel to me so much like my own children that I think I shall rejoice nearly like a Mother in knowing that they are so conducting as to lay a foundation for present and lasting peace and happiness.”

Quaker women recognized “womanly” in gendered terms. Marriage, pregnancy, and childbearing, discussed at length in women’s letters, defined the purposes of most women and legitimized them socially as adults. Mary R. Rotch wrote to her Aunt in Kendal,

I trust to my dear Aunt which is the glad tidings of our dear Caroline’s being the happy mother of a lovely boy. This event took place on sixth day last, about 2 o'clock. My mother was called to her at 7 in the morning. Sister Sarah, the Nurse & Physician about 9. her sufferings were very severe towards the last, but no difficulty presented, & she supported the whole with great fortitude.

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691 Ann Mifflin letter to Charity Rotch, 6 mo 1808. Box B-270-1.
692 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 485.
694 Mary R. Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, 2nd mo 3rd [nd] Box B-298-1.
The belief in female spiritual equality had important implications for women who believed it was their right and responsibility to shape their lives and those of their family around the tenets of godliness. 

Hannah Rodman Fisher wrote in 1799, “Tell my beloved nieces arrived to the years of Religious sensibility, that I earnestly wish them to join the Noble band who are declaring themselves by their conduct, & appearance to be on the Lord’s side.”

In Quakerism’s formative period in the late seventeenth-century, George Fox and Margaret Fell strove to create a collectively owned identity and a collectively lived experience. Their marriage was a model of equal partnership which they hoped all Quakers would follow. In addition to establishing a social infrastructure and a system of separate meetings in which members were concerned with matters specific to their gender, Fox and Fell encouraged and expected women as the spiritual equals of men to be active participants in the development of their communities. While Fox initially envisioned conservative roles for women such as raising money to assist persecuted Friends, Fell, who was largely responsible for defining the roles that women would play in Quakerism encouraged the formation of separate women’s business meetings and

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697 Hugh Barbour, “Quaker Prophetesses and Mothers in Israel,” eds. John and Carol Stoneburner, *The Influence of Quaker Women in American History* (New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1986). From the time of George Fox and Margaret Fell, women’s roles as preachers, ministers, and “mothers-in-Israel” often overlapped. Barbour points out that Margaret Fell and other women who organized through the network of their meetings for the care of the sick, imprisoned Friends, and the Quaker poor were known as “mothers in Israel” (58).

698 Healey, *From Quaker to Upper Canadian*, 111.
women’s supervisory role over marriage. Margaret Fell also oversaw the missionary activities of traveling Friends, rendered aide and support to imprisoned Quakers, and at Fox’s side, she assumed a leadership role in the formative period of the Church.

Fox and Fell exercised central control over the growing movement and established hierarchical structures of authority that linked Friend across Britain into a wider network of friendship, kinship and religious community while regulating and evaluating the spiritual and personal behavior of the membership. In the earliest days of the sect, a collection of “advices” was created to enforce uniform standards of behavior. In 1700, The Yearly Meeting began the practice of sending down queries to subordinate meetings to monitor the behavior and spiritual health of the community. Soon after queries were adopted, rules of behavior were codified into the Book of Discipline. The Discipline was supplemented by Epistles that advised the faithful on all aspects of Quaker life, including dress, speech and marriage. Usually originating in Yearly Meetings, Epistles were the primary form of communication between the faithful at a time when Friends in remote areas had limited access to books. Copied in quantity and handed down to subordinate meetings for dispersion to the membership, Epistles

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699 Gerona, Night Journeys, 60.
700 Healey, ibid, 24-25.
702 Ibid., 29.
703 Ibid., 201; Barry Levy, “Tender Plants,” Levy points out that Quakers described their leaders in terms of their spiritual achievements with honorary titles such as “elder”, “weighty Friends,” “ancient Friend”, or “nursing mothers and fathers.” These individuals most of whom were members of the gentry class dominated the meeting structure as arbitrators of disputes, disciplinarians, marriage investigators and visitors to Quaker families (131).
704 Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 77.
were part of the tradition of print culture that defined who Friends were and spoke to Quakers wherever they lived, on issues of importance to the faith community.\textsuperscript{705}

Women entrusted with maintaining the Society’s internal purity and sustaining the faith from one generation to the next might utilize epistles to informally instruct their children in the tenets of faith.\textsuperscript{706} Sarah Rodman (1764-1793) perhaps drew strength from an Epistle of 1746. Directed to young Friends, minister John Haslam wrote, “Being much concern’d for those that are young, I do tenderly advise such to an earnest seeking to be acquainted with the great Minister of the Sanctuary who teaches to deny ungodliness & the worlds lusts, to live soberly, righteously & Godly in this present.”\textsuperscript{707}

The Society’s high standards of behavior also applied to recreation. Scattered neighbors including non-Quakers might come together for social mingling and community events such as harvest, huskings, barn-raisings, weddings, and funerals.\textsuperscript{708} But if liquor was present, such gatherings could become problematic. Nineteen year old John Rogers was reprimanded by his meeting in 1815 because he had “so far disregarded good order as to join with a noisy company shooting off guns at the time called New Year.”\textsuperscript{709} Friends also shared tea and conversation as well as ice skating, sleighing, fishing, and hunting. While killing for the table was permitted, killing for sport or

\textsuperscript{705} Gill, \textit{Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community}, 76-111.
\textsuperscript{706} Ibid., 77-79.
\textsuperscript{707} Quaker Letters and Epistles, Box F-14-9. “To Friends in Pennsylvania and New Jersey in America, Handsworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, 6 mo 12\textsuperscript{th} 1746”.
\textsuperscript{708} Myers, \textit{Immigration of the Irish Quakers}, 208-209.
\textsuperscript{709} Yonge Street Preparative Meeting of Friends, 1804-1862. 11 May 1815.
pleasure was forbidden. Fischer writes, “the Society warned that Friends who continued
to hunt would be “dealt with.”710

Most Quakers were gardeners and had an avid interest in botany and science, and
many Friends had collections of scientific books. Thomas Rotch’s collection of books,
donated to the Kendal Social Library after his death, included diverse titles such as
Morse’s Universal Geography, Life of Cromwell, New England Farmer, Davy’s
Agricultural Chemistry, Mills on Horses and Cattle, and Billies Morbid Anatomy.711
While paintings were forbidden as Friends considered them ostentatious and felt no need
to display self-images, the Quaker testimony did not object to the creation of silhouettes
of the spiritual elite among Friends such as the Rotches.712 Unlike portraits that were
expensive and time consuming to complete, cut outs were inexpensive, could be
produced in a matter of minutes, and were more in keeping with the Quaker plain and
simple life style. The only known silhouette of the Rotches was cut out of dark paper at
Charles Willson Peale’s (1741-1827) Museum in Philadelphia sometime after 1802.713

According to Thomas Rotch’s unpublished history of Friends in New England,
all Quakers were forbidden to bear arms, or pay for the maintenance of hired ministers.
Differences of opinion and disagreements among Friends were to be speedily resolved,

710 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 552-555.
711 Quaker Epistles, Box H-5-27.
712 Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 62.
713 Frost, The Quaker Family, 210; See the cover of Ethel Conrad, Invaluable Friends:
Thomas and Charity Rotch. (1991)
and individuals were cautioned to “not spend their precious time in drinking & smoaking in tipling Houses.”\textsuperscript{714} Rotch continued in his history,

All young & married people should to be kept out of the corrupting friendships of the world, and were to be careful, not to make any motion or procedure one with another, upon the act of marriage without first acquainting their parents or guardians therewith & if such have not Parents or guardians, let them acquaint some friend or friends therewith before they proceed, & also that friends be careful, not to make too early & unsavory proceedings in second marriages, after the death of husband or wife.\textsuperscript{715}

At weekly meetings, Friends worshiped in meeting houses designed with a system of sliding partitions to separate the sexes from each other. Men or women who were inspired to speak spiritually were considered ministers, and could be issued licenses to travel and preach wherever Quakers worshipped. The history of preaching in the Society dates back to its founding in the mid seventeenth-century. Quakers believed that they were God’s chosen people, and this belief in the voice of God speaking through men or women differentiated them from other Puritan groups and the Church of England that rejected women’s preaching and their participation in church organization. Preaching, moreover, was not under human control and it could not be learned.\textsuperscript{716}

Preaching happened spontaneously through God’s intervention rather than the speaker’s. Hannah Fisher wrote to her sister, “The Select company met yesterday and a minute was read from our Monthly Meeting, expressive of our belief that Hannah Evans

\textsuperscript{714} Thomas Rotch, Materials toward the History of Friends in New England, nd. Box F-8-21.
\textsuperscript{715} Ibid. Box F-8-21 Materials toward the History of Friends in New England. Thomas Rotch, Notes of Friends Meetings, 1789-1821.
had received a Gift in the Ministry. She has appeared several years at times with acceptance and I am glad the matter is thus resulted.”  

Quakers ran a religious organization in a business like manner. Births, deaths, marriages, memberships and transfers of memberships to other communities were recorded in the Monthly Meeting, and Friends were buried in the meeting burial ground that was enclosed and restricted to members of the Society. Quarterly meetings authorized the formation of monthly meetings. Elders whose duty it was to foster the spiritual life of the meeting were expected to ascertain that Friends “kept out of the customs fashions and language of the World, avoid sleeping in meetings, make their wills whilst in health to prevent inconveniences, and to send their children only to Quaker schoolmasters rather than non-Quaker schools “where they are taught corrupt ways, manners, fashion and language of the World.”  

Historians are divided on the question of whether Quaker women gained, accepted, resisted, or complicated male authority and power in their meetings. Phyllis

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718 “Epistle from the Yearly Meeting, London, 23rd day of the fifth month 1768 to the 28th of the same.” Box F-18-2.  
720 Gareth Shaw, “The Inferior Parts of the Body”*: The Development and Role of Women’s Meetings in the Early Quaker Movement,” *Quaker Studies* 9/2, (2005), 193, and Mack, *Visionary Women*, argue that the separate women’s meeting was “a cradle not only for modern feminism but of the movements of abolitionism, women’s suffrage and peace activism, all of which were, and are, enlivened by the presence (even predominance) of Quaker female leaders”(349); Mary Maples Dunn, “Latest Light on Women of Light,” in *Witnesses for Change, Quaker Women over three Centuries* eds. E.P. Brown and S.M. Stuard (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 75; For a contrasting view, in *Women and Quakerism in the Seventeenth-Century*, p. 81, Christine Trevett argues that “to the modern student of Quakerism what is most remarkable about the Women’s Meetings (after the fact of their existence) is the lack of power associated

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Mack argues that while Quaker women became idealized in gendered terms as “mothers of Israel” who were expected to act as parents to younger women and children and to provide a home environment where Quaker ideals could be cherished, women utilized this designation in their separate meetings to exercise authority over men. However, Helen Plant points out that men concentrated power in their meetings and defined the limits of authority of the women’s Meetings which in their view was both subordinate and dependant. Thus, the Quaker belief in spiritual equality and the seed of God residing in each person, did not imply social equality. Plant writes, “The institution of the women’s Meeting in a thoroughly subordinate capacity to the men’s placed the official disciplinary work of the Society’s female spiritual leaders, technically at least, under male control.”

While women were responsible for the spiritual growth of their children, of equal concern was the accumulation of wealth that guaranteed that resources would be distributed and redistributed between families and households. Hannah Rodman Fisher wrote, “I may also tell you that our dear Thomas Gilpin continues a precious hopeful Youth, Religion I think has evidently polished and improved his natural and


723 Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 12; Barry Levy, “The Light in the Valley: The Chester and Welsh Tract Quaker Communities and the Delaware Valley, 1681-1750” (Ph.D diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976), 182; Marietta, The Reformation of American Quakerism. Marietta found that Quaker meetings in Pennsylvania were losing control of their young people as early as 1750. By 1760, 20% of the membership had been owned out, most for violating marriage rules (71).
acquired qualifications. I consider him & dear Hannah as blessings to all their connections.”

Quaker scholar Jean R. Soderland argues that while female Friends controlled the female half of the Society, they were not competing with men for autonomous female power, and their status within the Quaker church was not in any sense diminished. Rather, the meetings worked together to keep Quakers loyal to the faith. Soderland writes, “Women played a more central role in the history of Quakerism than has heretofore been acknowledged. However, accomplishments and failures of the Friends were the work of both genders.”

If the Society took steps to reduce women’s autonomy, strengthening the family was the intent of these actions. Women played a unifying role within the Society and Quakerism created positive roles for women and encouraged their interdependence and celebrated female autonomy. While Friends accepted the spiritual equality of men and

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724 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 12th mo 9th 1799. Box B-247-3.
726 Mack, Visionary Women, 287.
women, religion defined and shaped women’s daily activities but did not liberate them from traditional gender roles.\footnote{Specht, “Women of One or many Bonnets?,” 33.}

Although women’s freedom was challenged by the men in their lives, Quaker women gained status and wielded power as a group in two critical areas of Quaker life, the ministry and their women’s meetings. While women had a greater formal role in the affairs of the church than women in other Protestant sects, as the Society became more complex and hierarchical, authority and power became concentrated in the men’s Meeting to the exclusion of the subordinate women’s meeting.\footnote{Plant, “Subjective Testimonies,” 310; Naomi Baker, “Broken-Hearted Mothers: Gender and Community in Joan Whitrow et al, The Work of God in a Dying Maid (1677),” Quaker Studies 7/2 (2003), 139; Helen Plant, “Patterns and Practices of Women’s Leadership in the Yorkshire Quaker Community, 1760-1820,” Quaker Studies 10/2 (2006), 225.}

Thus, while Friends carved out a semi-independent gender specific role for women within the church’s organization structure, women’s and men’s meetings were contested spaces in which gender issues could be divisive.\footnote{Christine Trevett, Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century. (York: Sessions Book Trust, 1991), 81; Mack, Visionary Women, 293-304; William Braithwaite, The Second Period of Quakerism, eds. Henry J. Cadbury, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1961), 251-323; Arnold Lloyd, Quaker Social History, 1669-1738 (London, 1950), 107-120; Richard T. Vann, The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1969): 88-121; Women’s meetings existed since the 1650s, but were not established on a wide scale until the early 1670s.}

In the earlier tradition of Quaker women who expressed their faith and challenged authority publicly, women believed that as educators, ministers, mothers, moral overseers, and disciplinarians, they had the responsibility and authority to write, not only to make known their concerns to the Society’s male dominated hierarchy, but also to communicate their resistance to
subordination to the wider audience of Friends.\textsuperscript{730} Women argued that as instruments of God’s authority, it was their right to defy or deny the male authority of the Society.\textsuperscript{731} Some Friends objected to female preachers in accordance which St. Paul’s biblical command to the Corinthians that called for women to be silent in churches.\textsuperscript{732} Other Quakers were offended by the perceived arrogant, immodest or brazen behavior of female traveling ministers. After her address to the Men’s and Women’s Meeting at Lynn in 1822, Cornelius Howland rebuked minister, Content Breed for “her unruly conduct.” She believed that as an instrument of God authority, she was clothed with divine grace. She replied, “I count not your favors. I am cloth’d with that which fears not the face of man but fear to offend my God and am constrained to preach this doctrine to the world.”\textsuperscript{733}

The Women’s Meeting was responsible for issuing certificates of travel to perspective ministers and regulating the reproduction of their communities by interviewing perspective couples who wished to marry.\textsuperscript{734} While women’s authority over marriage was a contentious issue within the church, separation of tasks that emphasized

\begin{footnotes}
\item[731] Sheila Wright, ‘Gaining a Voice’: An Interpretation of Quaker Women’s Writing 1740-1850,” \textit{Quaker Studies} 8/1, (2003), 50; Women also wrote testimonials to deceased Friends. See Quaker Testimonies and Memorials. See Box F-15-1 through 35.
\item[732] I Corinthians 14:34-35.
\item[733] Elizabeth Rodman Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, 2d mo 25 1822 Box B-295-3.
\item[734] Thomas Rotch, Accounts & Notes of Friends’ Meetings, 1789-1821. Women’s Month Meeting for Mountmeluk, 10 of 4\textsuperscript{th} mo 1789 signed by upwards of sixty members, Mary Ridgway’s certificate. Box F-8-1.
\end{footnotes}
the spiritual importance of the Quaker mother also created spaces for a spirituality that was distinctly feminine.\textsuperscript{735}

Women contended that their knowledge of the circumstances of marriage qualified them to assume some responsibility for conjugal issues.\textsuperscript{736} It was necessary, moreover, to ascertain that couples were clear of other obligations, that they had their parents’ approval and that their relationship was free of any irregularities.\textsuperscript{737} Elizabeth Rotch Rodman wrote, “There appears to be a mutual attachment between my dear Anna & A. Robinson, & being a young Man of respectability & of an amiable disposition they have our full approbation for a union, which will probably take place the last of fifth month.”\textsuperscript{738}

The men’s meeting had oversight over the women’s meetings, however, the men’s meeting could not overrule decisions by the women’s meeting which oversaw the behavior of female members.\textsuperscript{739} Leaders of same-sex monthly meetings came from the ranks of well-respected Friends who served as church elders, overseers, clerks and treasurers for life or until they were removed from office.\textsuperscript{740} Wealth went hand in hand with full participation in church affairs, and as elders who came with age and money,

\textsuperscript{735} Catie Gill, \textit{Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community} (England: Ashgate, 2005), 167; Gunderson, \textit{To Be Useful to the World}, 111.
\textsuperscript{736} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 428; Mack, \textit{Visionary Women}, 337-341; Gill, \textit{Women in the Seventeenth-Century}, 167.
\textsuperscript{738} Elizabeth Rotch Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, 1\textsuperscript{st} Mo 21\textsuperscript{st} 1810. Box B-292-9.
\textsuperscript{739} Gunderson, \textit{To be Useful}, 96.
\textsuperscript{740} Frost, \textit{The Quaker Family}, 211.
meeting leaders were responsible for oversight of the discipline, pondering policy and marriage.\footnote{Rodman, “Samuel and Elizabeth Rodman, Box H-14-5; Rotch Rodman family documents. Box M-1-3. The signature of William Rotch, Sr. appears at the top of the list of guests who witnessed the marriage of Samuel Rodman, son of Thomas Rodman, late of Newport, deceased, and Mary his wife, and Elizabeth Rotch, Daughter of William Rotch, of Sherborn, in the County of Nantucket, and Elizabeth, his wife.(June 1, 1780). Witnesses thereafter included twenty-six men of the Rotch, Starbuck, Macy, Folger, and Barney families and their wives. Also see the Will of S. Barney, (B-241-6, and Lydia Rotch Dean letter to Charity Rotch, February 14, 1808), an aunt of Charity Rotch who died in 1808, leaving gifts to the Rotches, Macys, and Starbucks who were interrelated by marriage.}

In addition to their role as guardians of a godly household, Quaker women were producers rather than merely consumers of the Society’s doctrine. Their roles would continue to change and expand to comply with shifting definitions of Quakerism.\footnote{Mack, Visionary Women, 311.} If the responsibility of acquisition of material wealth and land fell to men, women were responsible for the spiritual growth and development of their children. In their roles as nursing mothers, women were often called upon to lend spiritual counsel to younger Quaker women.\footnote{Berkin, First Generations, 95.} Amy Otis’s mother Sarah thanked Charity Rotch, a church elder and highly respected minister for supplying advise and spiritual guidance to her daughter. She wrote, “I salute thee, and acknowledge with gratitude thy tender and instructive communication for our dear Amy which I believe has been very strengthening and comforting to her often dejected mind.”\footnote{Sarah Otis letter to Charity Rotch, 10\textsuperscript{th} mo 9\textsuperscript{th} 1801. Box B-280-1.}

Quaker women’s lives were circumscribed by their attendance at monthly meetings where they cultivated new friendships, offered and received support, tended to the welfare of one another, and applied their powerful leadership skills to the welfare of
the church.\textsuperscript{745} Women’s involvement in a range of activities and responsibilities led them to question their social and political subjugation as they gained self-confidence as negotiators within the larger Quaker community.\textsuperscript{746} As women acquired organization skills in the process of organizing their own meetings, women adopted the symbols and rhetoric of the dominant discourse and redefined their roles as Quakers for themselves.\textsuperscript{747} As a unifying force within their families and in meetings, women acquired a power base and a channel of influence that would translate into the public sphere as they took up roles as political and social reformers and philanthropists.

However, the meeting system with its requirements for strict code of behavior masked a complex and volatile inner life bordering on comprehensive repression. Quaker women were raised from childhood with expectations that as spiritual equals to men they could convey their opinions and have their views considered. In 1813, Patience Graham explained to Charity Rotch that the more powerful men’s meeting dissolved the women meeting, perhaps to diminish women’s communal authority. She wrote, “Our poor little meeting is gone. They have taken it from us by stealth when we were not there to attend it though it was very small.”\textsuperscript{748}

\textsuperscript{745} Plant, “Subjective Testimonies,” 298.  
\textsuperscript{746} Bacon, \textit{Mothers of Feminism}, 42-45, 54.  
\textsuperscript{747} Ibid., 13, 15; Yogg, \textit{“The Best Place,”} 199; Holton, \textit{Quaker Women}, Women had no standing in the governing body of the church from the earliest period. They could send representatives with their concerns to the Men’s meetings, but ultimate power was located in the Men’s London Yearly Meeting, and its executive committee, the Meeting for Sufferings (11).  
\textsuperscript{748} Patience Graham letter to Charity Rotch, 9 Mo 10\textsuperscript{th} [nd]. Box B-259-4.
The meeting system organized as early as 1671 could be supportive and repressive and these two functions were sometimes linked. Individuals who were willing to conduct his or her private and public life according to Quaker tenets created stores of good will and received the meeting’s emotional support. Friends who committed offense such as drinking, gambling, exogamous marriage, slander, attending dances, joining the Free Masons, being inoculated for small pox, or incursion of excessive debt were warned out and as a last resort, disowned from the formal membership in the Society.

While some women may have revolted against the disciplinary apparatus but were careful to support the dominant gender order, others rejected the saintly mother-in-Israel figure as a male-invention that celebrated women as apolitical, asexual, longer suffering and self-sacrificial. As a mother who embraced an orthodox female identity and adhered strictly to the church’s tenets, Anna Hazard bore the responsibility for directing her daughter in piety and religiosity and for teaching her daughter her true domestic destiny. Her child’s marriage to a non-Quaker was perceived as a personal failing, an affront to her family and a transgression of religious ideology. In 1809, she described her “painful vicissitudes which have fallen to my portion none has exceeded this. My mind is not yet

749 Mack, Visionary Women, 285. Earlier women’s meetings extant in London and Bristol since 1659 were known as the “box meeting” because women collected funds for poor relief and kept these monies in a box. [Irene L Edwards, “The Women Friends of London: The Two-Weeks and Box Meetings,” Journal of Friends Historical Society 47, no.1 (Spring 1955):3-21; Susan Juster, Disorderly Women, Sexual Politics & Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), (Table 2) Church Discipline of Various Offences, by Sex, 1771-1830. In the late eighteenth-century, the persona of sin was gendered female regardless of the sex of the sinner. While Quakers disciplined both sexes for transgressions, evangelical churches in New England targeted women as the root of disorder in their institutions (150-151).  

fortified to sit with composure and hear the judgment of our meeting against her for this grievous misstep.”

As mothers and overseers of marriage, Quaker women shared control of membership and played an important role in maintaining a family-based community within the Society of Friends. Mack believes that Friends adopted a feminine identity, that of “mothers-in-Israel,” a category that invoked notions of caring and nurturing, and imposed a conservative model of female identity that could be regarded as apolitical and private while valorizing the physical and domestic experiences of women. Arguably the “mothers-in-Israel” category with its strong emphasis on motherhood and women’s centrality in the family was also symbolic of female suffering and heroism. Mack argues that Quaker women endeavored to create a disciplined community with their weekly meetings as a focal point that facilitated the survival and the growth of the Society of Friends. By emphasizing moral centrality, mothers articulated a maternalist discourse centered around motherhood and maternal duty. As mothers who shouldered the burden for childrearing, women created a church within their households, where as guardians of purity, they were expected to pass on women’s and community values to their daughters. In a society that to a certain extent dismissed women’s concerns, the traditional wife and saintly mother dignified by the title of “mother in Israel,” was crucial to this creative process.

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751 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, New Bedford 10 mo 12, 1809. Box B-260-6.
753 Mack, Visionary Women, 245, 285; Also Barry Levy, Quakers and the American Family, 193, 205, 231-262.
Young women learned early from their mothers that men and women were so different from each other that mutual understanding between the sexes was rare. Women were aware that they should expect little emotional support and understanding from men whose lives were oriented to the work, business, and patriarchal control within the household. The spirit of submissiveness, designed to prevent domestic discord was important to the success of any marriage. As consumers of Quaker ideology, women internalized an older, deeply gendered Quaker identity that emphasized maternal and moral duty toward family and church.  

Before the age of five, children were not expected to contribute to the work process. By age ten, they had learned to sew and spin, but with the rise in schooling in the early nineteenth-century, education took precedence over other obligations. Mary Kimberley wrote in 1821, “Charlotte goes to school all she can. She has not found time to spin one thread all winter.”

At their mother’s side, young girls took their place as apprentices in their mother’s household where they learned to curtail their personal ambitions and internalize their anger and dissatisfaction in order to become ‘a good woman.’ As future mothers and daughters who would influence the course of their family’s spiritual life, girls were encouraged to keep spiritual diaries in which to examine their inner lives. In order to cope

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754 Frost, The Quaker Family, 209; For example, see Box F-15-33; “Some account of the last illness & disease of Elizabeth Whitfield.”  
755 Mary Kimberley letter to Charity Rotch, 2nd mo 11,1821. Box B-268-1  
756 Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 38-43. Jensen points out that the labor of young girls not of the elite class who worked for others during the winter doing housework, spinning, sewing and weaving, and during the summer to assist with harvest work in exchange for room and board made up an important part of the population that has escaped the attention of historians. She argues that young women with landless parents were highly mobile and moved from one farm to the next in search of work. Landless workers did not appear on tax records because their incomes were too low to assess (71).
with life’s many adversities, and particularly the deaths of children, resignation of God’s will was impressed on young women at an early age. Hannah Fisher wrote after the death of Charity’s child in 1791, “We were glad to hear thou supported it with a degree of Christian Fortitude, but hope you were favoured with a degree of resignation to the will of Him who gave him to you.”

Some women of marriageable age were occasionally skeptical of men, and for many women, marriage was a sacrifice rather than an opportunity. Others found disappointment within marriages to men who were unkind or were unable to manage their financial affairs successfully. Eliza Southgate explained to her male cousin in 1800, “I may be censured for declaring it as my opinion that not one woman in a hundred marries for love.”

Women might resist marriage because they believed that Quaker theology that espoused gender equality and partnership was being subverted by hierarchical marriage. Other women contended that marriage spelled the end of liberty and denied them the opportunity to gain control over their lives and form an individual identity. Others formed households with other women, and their rejection of marriage did not imply a rejection of family. A Michigan woman wrote to a friend in 1820, “it would be splendid for you...

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757 Myers, Westering Women, xix.
758 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 11th mo 1791. Box B-247-1.
760 Clarence Cook, ed. A Girl’s Life Eighty Years Ago: Letters of Eliza Southgate Bowne (New York: Charles Schibner’s Sons, 1887), 37-41.
and I to set up housekeeping together, wouldn’t we have splendid times with our books and music, and our cats.”762

Most women hoped to find a friend, a lover, and partner for life, and looked carefully at perspective suitors during courtship.763 Still others believed that marriage should be companionate, directed by God, and that decisions should be made by consensus.764 If this ideal could not be realized, perhaps marriage should be avoided altogether. “He cried almost the whole night, but I would not give up. I think a great deal of him,” Martha Farnsworth wrote, “but not enough to stay here and marry him.”765

While motherhood was often looked upon as a God-ordained travail, mothers, as the quintessential expression of femaleness, provided the emotional glue to the family and prepared daughters for the life activities of adult womanhood.766 Hannah Rodman Fisher described her responsibilities to her nieces and nephews who she characterized as “precious plants” in need of special care and parental oversight. She wrote, “I think I shall rejoice nearly like a mother in knowing that they are so conducting as to lay a foundation for present and lasting peace and happiness.”767

762 Unsigned to Carrie, January 18 [1820], Whittemore Family Collection, Michigan Historical Collections; Gunderson, To Be Useful to the World, 46. Three of the Rodman-Rotch women did not marry, including Mary Rodman (1757-1835), an “invalid” according to Julia W. Rodman, p. 6; Sarah Rodman (1764-1793), twin sister of Hannah died of consumption, and Mary Rotch (1777-1848), daughter of William Rotch, Sr. who cared for her father until his death at age 94 and inherited the bulk of his estate in 1848; Bullard, The Rotches, 92-97; Holton, Quaker Women, 18.
763 Chambers-Schiller, Liberty, A Better Husband, 36.
765 Martha Farnsworth Diary, 45.
After 1740, the practice of parental control of courtship and marriage weakened. While Friends of the middle and upper classes married for religious unity and for dowries, most marriages were formed voluntarily on love. Spiritual concerns were of utmost importance in choosing one’s marriage partner followed closely by one’s wealth, financial status and character. Daughters who as single young women socialized, traveled and churched together were expected to acquiesce to woman’s lot and marry well-placed members of the propertied class, hopefully for love. For Quaker women, marriage affected their reproductive history and their health and defined their social position within the family, the community, and the church. While women hoped for a fortunate marriage, they understood that regardless of their social training and status, marriage marked the end of their independence and was an essential relationship that many women had to suffer through.

By the 1770s, the “ideology of Single Blessedness” which celebrated women’s usefulness and service to their families and encouraged avenues for education, autonomy, and close friendships with other women outside of marriage emerged alongside the more traditional Cult of Domesticity. While wealth could mitigate the circumstances of propertied women, the trend toward singleness that began among the daughters of the elite was a better option than marrying the wrong man for the wrong reasons, and also

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768 Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 162.
provided women with the space to develop their human faculties and their self-esteem.\textsuperscript{771} Single women often maintained relationships with family throughout their lives and female networks constituted a part of the late eighteenth-century family.\textsuperscript{772} Kinship networks often accepted parentless children into female households to prepare them to become godly Friends. Above all else, children were taught that their faith took precedence over all other aspects of their life.\textsuperscript{773} Bula Hills wrote in 1812, “Dear Suky, her afflictions are so very great, she is left alone except some dear little ones, but she is not without Friends. I think Rachel will keep the two little girls she has with her, she says they are good Children and she loves them full as much as she desires.”\textsuperscript{774}

Catherine Maria Sedgwick of Massachusetts believed that motherhood and wife was the role deemed most appropriate for women. Her decision to remain single was influenced by her observations of relatives and friends who were pressured into unhappy and unfulfilling marriages.\textsuperscript{775} Sedgwick contested the marginalization and perceived powerlessness of unmarried women, insisting in 1827 that “marriage is not essential to the contentment, dignity, or the happiness of woman.”\textsuperscript{776} In attaching herself to her

\textsuperscript{773} Healey, From Quaker to Upper Canadian, 74.
\textsuperscript{774} Bula Hills letter to Charity Rotch, January 16, 1812. Box B-263-1.
\textsuperscript{775} Mary Kelley, “A Woman Alone: Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s Spinsterhood in Nineteenth-Century America,” New England Quarterly LI, (June, 1978), 211.
\textsuperscript{776} Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Hope Leslie or, Early Times in Massachusetts (New York, 1842/1827), II, 260.
brothers and their children, Sedgwick took on the role of surrogate sister, wife, mother, and aunt without giving of herself totally to familial intimacy. She wanted autonomy and intimacy and she could achieve both without the emotional and sexual intimacy or the burdensome daily care of children, husband, and household. However, autonomy for some women who chose not to marry could be a problematic, anchorless existence that at the end of the day left them alone and without emotional or practical support.\textsuperscript{777}

Single women were expected to be of service to their families and communities, however, some unmarried women felt marginalized and less respected than their married sisters.\textsuperscript{778} Other single women were reluctant to give up their unmarried state, fearing the dangers of childbirth or the possibility of marriage to a man incapable of managing financial affairs successfully.\textsuperscript{779} Unmarried Quaker women regardless of their age were limited by a meeting structure that considered it inappropriate for single females to inspect their contemporaries for marriage or dispense charity to Quaker men and their families.

Family bonds, however, were not to be broken. Although single women might embark on different paths to define themselves as useful members of their families and communities, they were never relieved of their obligations and responsibilities to their networks of kinswomen. Hannah Fisher wrote in 1807, “Where there is Eleven in the family as we now have (including a Son of brother Mier’s who boards, & lodges with us)

\textsuperscript{777} Kelley, \textit{A Woman Alone}, 224.
\textsuperscript{778} Wood, “Broken Reeds,”422.
\textsuperscript{779} Holton, \textit{Quaker Women}, 18.
besides comers & goers, the Mistress of a house, concern’d for the right ordering of it, must have her exercise. Yet I desire not to complain.”

Single women of the elite and middle classes, closed out of church administration and governance, formed a women’s culture that organized, managed, and raised money for charitable and voluntary associations. Men’s public activism with its emphasis on maleness, courage, and energy in the service of the state was replaced in the 1780s and 1790s with a new female public spirit that cast women as caretakers of domestic morality and civic virtue. In the 1790s, numerous mitigating circumstances, including the inability of poor women to read or write, threw families, and particularly women into poverty. Impoverished people made up one third to one half of Philadelphia’s population. The laboring poor who found themselves in unskilled low paying part time jobs were followed closely by the permanently destitute population of the elderly, ill, widowed, disabled, and an increasing population of black and immigrant poor. Motivated by religious zeal, women understood that sin was not solely responsible for poverty. While Charity was a basic obligation for Quakers, it was an emblem of power, as well as a mark of one’s social standing in the community.

782 Margaret Morris Haviland, “Beyond Women’s Sphere: Young Quaker Women and the Veil of Charity in Philadelphia, 1790-1810,” The William and Mary Quarterly 3rd Series Vol. LI, No.3, (July 1994):423; Also see Christine Stansell, City Of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Stansell points out that the social and economic upheavals of the new republic fell heavily on poor women dependent on men who were increasingly unable to support their families (18).
783 Haviland, “Beyond Women’s Sphere,” 417-446; Bruce Dorsey, “Friends Becoming Enemies: Philadelphia Benevolence and the Neglected Era of American Quaker History,” Journal of the Early Republic 18, (Fall 1998), 400-417; For discussion of scholarly
Shared public activism increased the visibility and status of women, and produced a new intellectual class that would inspire the movements for abolitionism and women’s suffrage. However, benevolent work that provided an outlet for women to express their piety and religious duty did not lead to a self examination of traditional gender roles that excluded women from much of public life. With few exceptions, most Quaker women gave up public benevolence for the responsibilities of conjugal life and did not question the socioeconomic system that continued to mire poor black and white women in poverty. Hannah Rodman Fisher wrote to her sister in March, 1812, “My heart was often penetrated last winter (part of which has been severely cold) with the Crys of the poor, & distresses of the needy. If a renewed supply of clothe is still prohibited, the sufferings on that account in another cold season must be great, particularly in large Cities.”

Haviland argues that despite Quaker women’s reluctance to challenge or question the definitions of women’s traditional sphere, “they did go beyond it, ”as partners with Philadelphia’s leading citizens and city government in their effort to care for and


785 Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, 39.

786 Haviland, Beyond Women’s Spheres, 445.

ameliorate the living conditions of the city’s poor.\textsuperscript{788} Female benevolence at the close of the eighteenth-century signaled a reexamination of traditional gender assumptions of men and women’s moral capacities. Berkin writes, “Women were lauded as the sex more open to religious sensibilities and more sensitive to moral nuances. This new view of women was fully elaborated in the middle-class world of the nineteenth century.”\textsuperscript{789}

For Quakers, marriage and the politics of marriage was a time-consuming and delicate business matter. The ritual established in England and transferred intact to America, was designed to ensure the Society’s continuity with a dose of community control.\textsuperscript{790} The resolve to marry involved sixteen stages, the first being an announcement by the couple before the women’s meeting, followed by a joint announcement before the men’s meeting. After obtaining the permission of both sets of parents, if either of the couple claimed membership in another meeting, the men’s meeting was obliged to acquire a “certificate of cleanliness” from that meeting. After a period of waiting during which any Quaker might voice their objection to the union, the men’s meeting formally announced their approval for the wedding to proceed. The wedding itself occurred only after a period of elaborate planning that included a formal announcement of the date and time to family and friends. The actual marriage ceremony was very plain and proceeded much like a meeting for worship. Guests could rise and say whatever they wished. Some spoke at length while others sat quietly for extended periods of time. After the couple declared their intentions to each other in their own words, witnesses signed the marriage

\textsuperscript{788} Haviland, Beyond Women’s Spheres, 445-446.
\textsuperscript{789} Berkin and Horowitz, Women’s Lives, 126.
\textsuperscript{790} Levy, Quakers and the American Family, 32.
certificate before quietly drifting homeward. After the ceremony, the couple stayed with the bride’s parents for a short period. They received visitors almost daily, and their return visits signaled a willingness to have a continuing association with some Friends to the exclusion of others. Quaker marriage, then, created stores of goodwill for the future: it was an agreement not only between two people, but also between families and the community.

While most Quakers subscribed to the ideal of spiritual equality, many did not escape conventional early nineteenth-century prejudices against women, and many more struggled with the problem of authority within the family. While partnership in marriage was an ideal and a reality in colonial New England, disputes could test the limits of male power. For numerous reasons, husbands could be sources of physical or psychological pain and many women expressed fears about the future of their marriage, and for many women marital happiness based on intense spousal relationships seems to have been the exception rather than the rule. Sexual betrayal that publicly humiliated the husband and threatened the legitimacy of his children more than other infractions upset the balance of power within marriage.

Within Quaker families, gender-role differentiation led to emotional segregation of men and women, and encouraged same-sex intimacy between mothers, daughters,

Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 488-489; Julia Rodman, 16-17. Box H-14-5  The marriage vow of Samuel Rodman to Elizabeth Rotch (June 1, 1780) reads, “Friends, I desire you to be my witness that I take this, my friend, Elizabeth Rotch to be my Wife, promising by the Lord’s assistance to be unto her a try and loving Husband, until we are by death separated.” The signatures of prominent Friends in their capacity as witnesses solemnized the marriage. William Rotch, Sr. was the first to sign followed by members of the Rotch, Starbuck, Macy, Folger, and Barney families.

sisters and other female kin. Women developed ties across and within generations, and daughters learned household management from their mothers. The roles of mother and daughter shaded into each other and their identities bound women together in physical and emotional intimacy.794 From early childhood, they learned reciprocity and their exchanges, whether large or small, created a women’s world within the confines of the family.795 Hannah Rodman Fisher wrote, “Rachel keeps a small shop with our consent and assistance, she commenced Housekeeping with a young woman who had learn’d the bonnet making business which they follow together. Rachel seems well satisfied in being mistress of the family.796

While some women considered their household chores burdensome and distasteful, they nevertheless felt obligated to prepare their daughters for the life expectations of a female. Daughters recognized that their mothers had hard lives, and marriage was based on male dominance. Sarah Stuart Robbins wrote of her “patient mother’s hourly martyrdom,” while another commented on her mother’s “tottering under her burden of care.”797

Some women purposely put off training their daughters in order that they might enjoy a carefree adolescence.798 While this could be interpreted as a lesson in motherly

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795 Cashin, Our Common Affairs, 43.
796 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 7th Mo 5th 1814. Box B-247-34.
797 Sarah Stuart Robbins, Old Andover Days (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1908), 125.
798 Theriot, Mothers and Daughters, 75.
sacrifice for family, in reality it reinforced the expectations of adult womanhood, and prepared daughters for the same sacrifice.  

While their mothers sang the praises of hierarchy and sexual dichotomy, young women of the early nineteenth-century increasingly recognized that marriage often meant physical separation from their female network with whom they had socialized, traveled and churched. However, their responsibilities as sisters and daughters basically remained unchanged even after they assumed new duties as wives and mothers. Throughout their lives and regardless of physical separation, women maintained close ties with female family beyond their own households.  

Hannah Fisher wrote in 1816, “If thou should see or hear anything of the Hoyle family, we should like to have any interesting particulars.”  

As primary correspondents, women took the lead in requesting aide and mobilizing family resources for kin in need of assistance. In addition to their connections with their nuclear family, they also had access to resources beyond their households and could bring social rather than legal pressure to bear in order to protect the integrity of themselves and their families. 

Most women’s letters, journal entries and poems were copied, passed around and read by select individuals provided an opening for sustained meditation on the subject of

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800 Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” *Signs* 1, 5-8.


802 Motz, *True Sisterhood*, 52.
marriage, womanhood, suffering and death. Letters validated voices, kept track of the family’s pulse, and created same sex spaces for discussion of topics that correspondents considered highly private. Charity’s description of her mother’s “sufferings” is an example of how a letter might travel in a circuit. “It was read in our little domestic circle, and where it excited the throb of tender sympathy in hearts allied to yours, & in unison with them on the subject of your present anxiety.” “By being together,” Mary Morton added, “your participation in the same sorrow lightens the individual portion of each.”

The image of suffering womanhood expressed in their letters had a collective appeal for women. In accepting physical suffering, especially the pain of childbirth and even death over which women commonly presided, women gained spiritual power in their families and in the community of women. The idealization of suffering associated with “female troubles” and the pain of childbirth became symbolic of women’s claim to moral superiority and their devotion to others. Charity’s description of her brush with spotted fever in 1809 suggests that in suffering, she was performing social expectations of the prescribed feminine role. Speaking to religion and gender, she characterized her resignation to God’s will as “the most perfect peace to which we can attain in this miserable life consists rather in patient suffering and he that has most learned to suffer will certainly possess the greatest share of peace.”

803 O’Brien, An Evening When Alone, points out that while most women wrote with the expectation that their journals would be read by other family members, for other women, journals grew intimate and became a space for self-exploration and self-awareness (3).
804 Mary Robinson Morton letter to Charity Rotch, December 1, 1797. Box B-273-2.
805 Theriot, Mothers and Daughters, 65.
While women were often separated by geographical distance, they were not necessarily emotionally distant from one another. Susan Huntington wrote to a female friend in 1819, “Your long and confidential letter gave me great pleasure. We have not suffered exactly alike, but we have suffered; and that circumstance has made us love each other better than we did before.”

Writers anticipated and invited a response to news of courtships, marriage, births, sickness, and deaths that filled women’s letters and connected them textually. Nursing and health care were considered women’s work and a central aspect of their domestic role. In this era of kin-based welfare, it was important to be cared for by virtuous, orderly, and devoted kinswomen who could be relied upon protect the family from intrusions by strangers and the world. Anna Hazard apologized for not writing sooner. She explained that she had nursed her husband, “who has been confined to his bed with a carbuncle upon his thigh which is a mortification of the past and considered dangerous especially if they come upon the body.”

Women’s lives were shaped by passages through a series of character-defining life-cycles of bodily change. They understood the unrelenting work of nursing and caring for aging relations, and childcare and infant death that shadowed childbirth, and their letters contained lists of physical ailments familiar to the period that bound women together as familial caregivers. While most men understood the importance of women’s relationships when childbirth was suddenly upon them, women were more aware of the proximity of death to the genesis of life than men, and were bound together in a specific

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807 Wisner, *Memoirs of the late Mrs. Susan Huntington of Boston, Massachusetts*, 189.
808 Motz, *Mothers and Daughters*, 106.
809 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, December 22, 1823. B-260-19
female culture to which men had little access. Motherhood was a sacred obligation and provided more public recognition than anything else women could do. Although women believed that death of their children was part of God’s plan and that families would be reunited in heaven, nothing softened the reality of losing a child. Anna Hazard wrote to her sister after her son died in November 1822, “How doth every worldly consideration flee before these awful dispensations. Long hath the enjoyments of this sublunary scene been faded until at times life seems a burden.”

This chapter has argued that through their correspondence, Quaker women created a gender-specific culture to maintain ties of kinship in spaces where all intimacies were permissible. Entrusted with the task of preservation of their families, Quaker women carved out a measure of power to determine familial relationships as a result of being correspondents in a situation in which correspondence was the only way to re-secure and reconstitute family ties.

810 Faragher, Women and Men, 126.
811 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, November 6, 1822, Box B-260-15.
CHAPTER VII

“NO DISTANCE CAN SEPARATE US”

MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIPS OF QUAKER WOMEN:

The letters of the Rotch and Rodman women suggest that Quakerism offered women membership in a sisterhood of sensibility and a sorority of understanding, sympathy and consolation to which they turned as an alternative to emotional anarchy. Taylor and Lasch posit in their study of New England families that organized religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served as a substitute for the family but did not consistently bind together its followers into a community of sympathy, consolation and understanding. I argue in this chapter that Quakerism created collective traditions of religiosity and bonds of mutual obligation and support that assured the Society’s insularity, its solidarity, and its strength. Even in everyday their everyday encounters, most Quaker women observed the principle of exclusivity and did not stray beyond their circle of kin co-religious. Correspondents, moreover, recognized boundaries of mutual obligation, and women’s letters reveal the factors that determined those boundaries.

Smith-Rosenberg argues that women turned to one another for comfort when facing the frequent and unavoidable deaths of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her work supports evidence in Quaker women’s letters cited in this study that within a
dense web of kin relations, women played roles in each other’s lives as instructors about the female life process, menarche, menstruation, contraception, abortion, pregnancy, miscarriage, confinement, delivery, death, and knowledge about childcare and children. Smith-Rosenberg writes, “Such mutual dependency and deep affection are a central existential reality coloring the world of supportive networks and rituals.”

In a society defined by home and church where religion and family were intertwined, Quaker women observed specific kinds of visiting customs that controlled the channels of communication within the family and tied generations of women together. A woman’s confinement as she awaited the birth of a child was an opportunity for kinswomen to tend and comfort the expectant mother. While doctors manipulated the bodies of women during the birthing process, women reserved the spiritual meaning of birth for themselves. Tomes writes, “The practice of social visiting, that endless trooping of women to one another’s homes” for ceremonial and social purposes to tend a friend in crisis, or “to mark some change in an individual’s life that warranted community notice” bound women into working networks from which they expect to derive emotional, practical and possibly financial support.

Women in colonial New England did not need to be reminded of the risks of childbirth that was always shadowed by death. Apprehension clouded the joy of expectancy, and women depended on their mothers, aunts, sisters, and midwives to guide them through labor. John Gillis writes of the anticipation of birth and delivery, “The flurry of activity was consistent with the traditional understanding of the body as subject

815 Tomes, “The Quaker Connection,” 178.
816 Ibid.
to natural and supernatural forces beyond human control.”\textsuperscript{817} Hannah Rodman explained that her female circle “awaited the termination of the event with great anxiety and the minds of her friends have been filled with apprehension for her, now happily relieved.”\textsuperscript{818} A family member who attended Charity’s dying infant son in 1791, “watch’d that night and at 3, our kind Patience came in to take my place from which time he seemed to rest more quietly.”\textsuperscript{819}

When her son died in infancy, Charity Rotch experienced one of the most common and devastating events for parents in the eighteenth-century.\textsuperscript{820} The death of a child challenged the perpetuation of the family and decreased membership in an extended network of kin and caregivers. After losing eleven children before they reached age ten, Quaker Thomas Chalkley described the anxiety of many parents during the early months of a newborn’s life.\textsuperscript{821} He wrote, “And consider the first month after thou wert born, oh the care and tender concern, the watching, labour, and charge, cannot easily be

\textsuperscript{817} Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 161.
\textsuperscript{818} Hannah Prior Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, February 20, 1822. Box B-293-1
\textsuperscript{819} Sarah Rodman letter to Mary Rodman, November 1791. Box A-15-1
\textsuperscript{820} Richard W. Wertz and Dorothy C. Wertz, Lying In, A History of Childbirth in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 19, 24, 44; Earnest Caulfield, “Some Common Diseases of Colonial Children,” Proceedings of the Colonial Society of New England 35, (April, 1942). Between 1750 and 1810, trained midwives, male and female, attended normal deliveries while doctors were called to difficult ones. Deaths of stillborn, miscarried or short-lived infants were not consistently recorded in the eighteenth-century. While historians have estimated that as many as ten percent of children in early months died of infectious disease rather than birth damage, accounts of the deaths of young children mentioned by letter writers in this study would suggest that previous estimates may be low (4-65).
\textsuperscript{821} Throughout the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, children commonly succumbed up to the age of five to whooping cough, worms, pneumonia, teething, and tetanus.
expressed! What running to the physician upon every symptom or suspicion of being ill, or out of order.”

While the deaths of children were not unusual in the eighteenth-century, the frequency did not lessen the impact of their losses. In an era of kin based welfare, women turned trustingly to each other for a kind of support that was structured around the exclusive same-sex ritual of childbirth. Thus death became domesticated and womanly suffering and the telling of suffering took on symbolic meaning and became idealized. In accepting physical suffering, women gained spiritual power in their families and in the community of women. Grief became feminized as women assumed the task of mourning. The death of a child was not infrequently attributed to a wrathful God who favored humble and pious women, and punished women who loved their child too much, placing their whole affection on the child rather than a merciful God.

There is little indication in Charity’s correspondence that in her grief for her dead child, she rebelled against God’s will. She had done her duty and was prepared to turn her back on the living to withdraw into parental mourning. Charity described the depths of her sorrow at the loss of a child for whom she had apparently yearned. She wrote, “Language can convey but a faint Idea of the feelings of a poor desolated mother,

823 Theriot, Mothers and Daughters, 65.
824 Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 214.
825 Craig Friend, “Little Eva’s Last Breath: America’s culture of death,” Paper presented at the Southern Historical Association Meeting, Richmond, Virginia, November 2, 2007. Women were expected to grieve one to two years for their children, however fathers resumed work immediately.
deprived as in a moment of a hopeful sweet engaging little Darling on whom indeed my heart was too much set”

The death of children for women represented the ultimate test of their faith. I submit that the details of the death of a child and the choice of words which women infused with meaning and feeling strengthened and over time, stabilized their ties with each other and psychologically equipped them to deal with shared tragedies. Maria Imlay described the death of a cousin’s infant who by the time the Doctor and nearest neighbors arrived “was breathless in her mother’s arms.” Maria included the time of the child’s death, “about one o’clock on 3d day morning,” a record of the burial “on 4th day,” and “the funeral was very large and several testimonials were borne by our friends.” Maria described the scene to Mary Rodman in 1777,

“Her mother sat in the room in an easy chair the whole time. Cousin H desired me to write these particulars, to remember her in the tenderest manner. She bears this, as she has done every other adverse stroke of which this life has been so full, with the most perfect resignation to the will of Heaven; scarcely a sign gives vent to her full heart, not a murmur, not the least impatient expression escapes her lips. 7th day Cousin H is still bitter.”

When Charity’s child died in 1791, her letters suggest that she had painfully ferried him from one life to the next and her sacrifice marked an epoch in her consciousness. Charity’s mother emphasized the spiritual importance of the Quaker mother and counseled her daughter on the practice of piety that for Quaker women was more

826 Charity Rotch letter, Swarthmore College Quaker Library, letter, collection 9-1. no date
827 Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood, 90.
828 Mary Rodman, Personal Correspondence, letter from Maria Imlay, Newport, 18th of the 7th Mo 1777. Box A-14-1
important than a mother’s maternal grief and her child’s earthly status. God as patriarch accepted children into heaven and familial reunion would follow in the afterlife. Mary Rodman wrote to her daughter, “The dear little innocent, thou was lent a short time to thy affectionate mother and recalled to thy everlasting Father in whose presence there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are rivers of pleasure and that forever more.”

Her sister, Hannah Rodman Fisher elevated Charity’s sacrifice to the level of the divine, writing that she hoped Charity was “favoured with a degree of resignation in offering up your only Son to the all wise disposal & will of Him who gave him to you.”

Letters from her closest female intimates, her mother, and sisters allowed Charity to revisit scenes of her son’s death with resignation and a sense of peace. There is little indication in Charity’s letters of a personal struggle with the wilderness within. She seems to have accepted the redemptive power of sacrifice, believing that her son’s death was part of God’s larger plan. How she measured her worth after the death of her son, or whether her subsequent barren state eroded her sense of self-worth in a society that considered motherhood a sacred occupation is unclear. Her letters reveal that she valued and was thankful for the outpouring of solace from the rich emotional relationships shared with her female circle of sisters, cousins, nieces and longtime friends.

829 Mary Rodman Personal Correspondence, 1753-1793. Box A-1-1
830 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, November, 1791. Box B-247-1
831 Jeffrey, Pioneer Women, Children were an asset on farms and were encouraged to be useful and work. They were also symbols of a woman’s lifetime work and reaffirmed the importance of woman as mothers (89).
that extended beyond her household and domestic life. She wrote, “If any of you can come, & be so at any future period, it would be truly congenial to our hearts.”

Journal and memorials recounting the writer’s spiritual struggle over the secular served as positive models of the Quaker life for young women and girls. When Charity Rotch’s sister Sarah died of tuberculosis in 1793, her family viewed her virtues of self-denial and renunciation as evidence of her holiness. Her brother Samuel Rodman asked if after perusing his dead sister’s diary, his mother might return it for copying. Sarah’s diary with “its beautiful contents” was a sign of a special relationship for a family that idealized the deceased as an example of a saintly woman “whose goodness and purity seemed to claim what our partial fondness would have called an Indulgence.” In copying her diary and re-reading it as a memorial, Hannah, who died young, became an idealized example of a good woman who had lived the faith well. Samuel Rodman explained that his intent in copying the diary was to provide a model for the Quaker life for his children. He asked for the diary’s return, “that I have opportunity of fixing in the minds of my tender family, a lasting impression of the important value of an early devoted life to the truth and its religious guidance.”

Such memorials with epistles and letters were models for the Quaker life and reminders that the responsibility for sustaining the faith was the responsibility of

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832 Benjamin Rodman and Charity Rotch to Samuel Rodman, June 29, 1815. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, PA
833 Healey, *From Quaker to Upper Canadien*, 78.
834 Samuel Rodman letter to Mary Rodman, 10th mo 14 1793. Box A-10-2.
835 Also see “Some account of the religious case and exercises of Sarah Rodman as appears by minutes found amongst her papers, 1785-1793” by Hannah Fisher. Quaker Testimonies and Memorials. Box F-15-11.
women.\textsuperscript{836} Gathering where memorials were read for an audience of close kin reaffirmed family and religious values such as piety and resignation to God’s will, and preserved bonds of kinship “despite physical separation and the passage of time.”\textsuperscript{837}

Quaker scholars Carole D. Spencer and Phyllis Mack posit that for Quaker women, the death of children and the spiritual importance of the Quaker mother were intimately linked. Spencer argues in her essay on Quaker spirituality that Friends “had an intense and thoroughly biblical vision,” that for them, represented a continuous process of deeper intimacy with God.\textsuperscript{838} Mack also argues that a mother’s care for her child contained a spiritual metaphor: “the paradigm for the experience of spiritual striving and ultimate union with God was the relationship between mother and her infant child.”\textsuperscript{839}

Letters of kinswomen support the argument that Quaker women with shared religious beliefs and spiritual needs recognized that biological realities bound them together in physical and emotional intimacy. Writing of the deaths of their children in 1800 and 1806, Charity’s sisters defined their roles as Quaker mothers and articulated their resignation to God’s will. As sisters committed to the maintenance of their circle, religion for women was a source of consolation, and the decision to honor the tenets of their faith encouraged a reexamination of each woman’s own spirituality. Letters attest to the significance that kinship ties had for women whose responsibilities to each other remained unchanged and were unaltered by distance or death. Letter writing in the

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\textsuperscript{836} Healey, “Building, Sustaining, and Reforming,” 7.\\
\textsuperscript{837} Holton, \textit{Quaker Women}, 2.\\
\textsuperscript{838} Spencer, “Holiness: The Quaker Way of Perfection,” 154.\\
\end{flushleft}
epistolary tradition that placed the responsibility for training up children in the tenets of the faith on women enabled correspondents to think about who they were in relation to each other, and to examine and articulate selves in ways that perhaps they had not done before.\textsuperscript{840} Hannah Rodman describes the arrival of a letter from Charity within days of losing her second child within ten days of the first. Letters themselves were cherished, saved and preserved, and represented the physical presence of the absent writer. She wrote, “why then hast thou not favoured me with another of thy sympathizing letters which have often been as “a Brook by the way?” When somebody knocked at the door, and handed in one from thee. I have endeavored to lay hold of the consolation attendant on the afourance, that our precious Lambs were of the number happily prepared for a better inheritance.\textsuperscript{841}

While correspondence was not a substitute for personal contact, writing was a personal form of conversation for women who tried to establish a sense of intimacy within their letters. Writers often demonstrated their commitment to each other by expressing their affections more freely and in intimate terms. Anna Hazard recalled, “since the day of our parting, my mind has been much with thee. A tear of tenderness stole frequently down my cheek, it was a feeling of affection justly due to a beloved sister, and had it have been at my control I had not a wish to check it.”\textsuperscript{842}

There are no indications in Charity’s letters of her understanding of her sexuality, or her expectations for future pregnancy.\textsuperscript{843} Women were expected to bear children and

\textsuperscript{840} Healey, “Building, Sustaining, and Reforming,” 6-7.
\textsuperscript{841} Hannah Rodman Fisher to Charity Rotch 3d Mo 3d 1800. Box B-247-5
\textsuperscript{842} Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, April 7, 1821. Box B-260-9.
\textsuperscript{843} Lydia Rotch Dean letter to Charity Rotch, April 14, 1813 Box B-241-12.
pregnancy and maternity were considered events in a women’s life that just happened. Few women in eighteenth or nineteenth century New England understood the physiology of human reproduction, the timing of ovulation was unknown, and methods of birth control were unreliable. How the Rotches managed their sex lives, whether they practiced a birth control method such as coitus interruptus that was known in Europe but condemned in the Bible, or whether they adopted periodic or prolonged periods of abstinence is unclear. Many Friends considered sex spiritually corrosive to a proper marriage. Abstinence for extended periods was apparently common, and as a consequence of practicing some type of birth control, Friends in the Delaware valley and on Nantucket controlled fertility within marriage. Numerous factors might explain the fall in birth rate throughout society in southern New England at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth-centuries. Births and deaths were not always recorded accurately by town clerks, infant mortality may have been higher than recorded, women may have breast fed longer, and the births of children may have been spaced rather than

844 Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 158-159.
845 Laurinda S.Dixon, Perilous Chastity, Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment Art and Medicine (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). In the nineteenth-century, women were “placed under the protection of their husbands or fathers in the name of good health and were instructed to bear as many children as possible” (237).
846 Gloria L. Main, “Rocking the Cradle: Downsizing the New England Family” Journal of Interdisciplinary History, XXXVII,1 (Summer 2006), 49, 50; Frost, The Quaker Family, 70; Robert V. Wells & Michael Zuckerman, “Quaker Marriage Patterns in a Colonial Perspective” William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser. Vol. 29, no. 3 (July, 1972). Wells and Zuckerman have shown that Quakers began to limit the size of their families by the late eighteenth century. They argue that fertility rates for all women declined, as Quakers began to use some method of birth control to decrease their family size. Before the war, the average family size was seven children compared to 5.3 or 6 children after the war (415-442).
848 Main, Ibid., especially pg. 58.
stopped. Fischer writes, “How they managed to do so remains unknown, perhaps
unknowable.’”

Women rarely discussed marital intimacy in their letters even with their closest
female relations, and their feelings regarding pregnancy were known only indirectly.
Charity’s sister asked in 1812, “I should also like to know whether there is a prospect of
any addition in the family way.” If she was pregnant, she apparently never mentioned
her disappointment to any of her kinswomen. Cousin Mary Robinson Morton broached
the subject of her daughter’s possible pregnancy carefully, intimating in a letter that “dear
Hannah is again in trouble: patience is undoubtedly the best & most indispensable of all
marriage portions. I believe experience as well as observation convinces most Women of
this.”

Studies confirm that women sometimes avoided sex because they feared the
physical consequences of pregnancy and childbirth. Other women engaged in sex
because they believed that procreation rather than pleasure was the purpose of intercourse
and pregnancy reconfirmed a woman’s worth as a wife and mother. In her study of
Varina Davis, the wife of Jefferson Davis, Joan E. Cashin writes that Varina’s status in
elite southern society increased after she married and bore children. With the birth of her
son in July 1852, “Varina Davis received her due as a wife when she became a mother,
proving herself, as it were, after seven years of marriage.”

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849 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 502.
850 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, seventh Mo 31st, 1812. Box B-247-26
851 Mary R. Morton letter to Charity Rotch, November 20, 1797. Box B-273-1
852 Cott, “Passionlessness,” 172.
853 Joan E. Cashin, First Lady of the Confederacy, Varina Davis’s Civil War (Cambridge:
Women often viewed themselves as passionless in order to limit fertility with sexual abstinence. Nancy Cott argues that “Passionlessness” as an attribute of “true womanhood” was impressed upon women in an era when birth control was not effective and the risks of childbirth were high. Secular literature, contemporary sentimental fiction and ministerial sermons increasingly advocated a view of middle and upper class women as chaste, powerless, content, passive and dependent, a shift that Cott believes signaled “a pivotal point in the transformation from external to internal controls of sexual behavior.”

As women embraced the maternal ideal, they could justify turning their attention away from sexual relations to the rearing of children. Nancy M Theriot writes, “Within the maternal script, women defined themselves as child-centered and basically asexual, so that the child, not the husband, was to be the “good” woman’s life commitment.” Whether one accepts one or either of these views, it is clear that the cause of Charity’s fertility problems and the reasons for her childlessness may never be known.

Charity apparently did not keep a journal or diary, and therefore much of Charity’s relationship with Thomas Rotch must remain theoretical, and in the realm of the social rather than the personal. While very little is known about the complex dynamic that transformed their divergent roles into a structure for a marital relationship, their

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854 Cott, “Passionlessness,” 162-81.
856 Theriot, *Mothers and Daughters*, 42.
letters as artifacts suggest that in their frontier adventure and in their departure for parts unknown, they became inseparable partners. They seem to have deeply loved each other and were able to form a strong union. Quite possibly the Rotches adhered to beliefs about sexual restraint and abstinence even within marriage that were common among some Quakers. Fischer writes, “even between husbands and wives, the Quakers urged restraint in the exercise of “animal passions.”

While Friends were not of one mind on the matter of sex and most did not believe in celibacy, many believed that sex was inherently sinful, and lust was the enemy of the Inner Light, that basic precept of Quakerism whereby God presented a means of salvation to each individual. Others believed that sex was inherently sinful and a strong physical relationship between husband and wife posed a threat to the spiritual foundation of a sound and proper marriage.

The Rotch marriage appears to have been a companionate one, based on parity, respect, and cooperation rather than coercion. Quakers believed that marriage should contribute to the piety of the couple and the union ideally should be a one of sweethearts, a “silken Cord of Mutual Love and Tender sympathy and Affection” and a union of

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857 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 501.
858 Forbes, “Quaker Tribalism,” 145.
859 Fischer, Ibid., 501.
860 Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800. (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1977), 102-105,135-142, 154-156., 95-202. Stone argues that as a consequence of the advent of the nuclear family and “affective individualism” in the eighteenth-century, men could no longer ignore the property rights of women. In his view, a companionate ideal could not exist if women’s needs were ignored, and in consequence, the decline of patriarchal marriage was linked to willingness of men to recognize the property and income rights of their wives.; Salmon, Women and the Law of Property, Cpt.1, pp. xvi, 84-87); Amy Louise Erickson, “Property and widowhood in Early Modern England, 1660-1840,” in Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (London: Longman, 1999),154.
Souls based on Christian love, virtue and honor rather than romantic or physical attraction, carnal lust or the quest for wealth. The married couple ideally should be “affectionate friends, bosom companions, participators in enjoyments, sharers in sorrow for as long as life shall render such friendly Offices necessary.” Their children’s happiness, according to the new representation of republican ideology, sermons, and sentimental literature of the 1780s and 1790s, should be put above social ambitions and monetary gain. Ruth H. Bloch explains, “The marital relationship was idealized as voluntary and equal, a metaphor for the relationship between citizens in a republic. And the future of the nation depended on the capacity for mutual love that was best learned in marriage.”

Charity and Thomas’s letters to one another, plainspoken and rich in mutual affection indicate that they shared many practical burdens and a bond of dependence grew up around them. The warmth of their relationship, an indication of how they perceived their marriage and the place it had in their lives is evident in one of Rotch’s few extant letters to his wife. His letter contains the purely personal and private at the same time that it conveys a certain sweetness of character verging on passion. Henkin

862 A. Jocelin to his daughter, September, 1788, Giles Family Papers, no. 3301, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A Father’s Advice to his Daughter on the subject of marriage, Philadelphia, Sept. 1788.
writes, “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an elaborate mythology of epistolary privacy surrounded the exchange of letters.”

In 1800, Rotch addressed his wife as “My tenderly beloved,” and concluded even more effusively, “with more affectionate tenderness than I can express and salute thee my endeared bosom friend and am thy Husband, T Rotch.” While he appears to have deeply loved his wife, their correspondence suggests that their dependence on each other was complex. Charity was his confidante, his best friend, and he was her first line of defense in the new wilderness. While men in the eighteenth-century often wrote passionately of their love to their wives, men and women were not equal partners in marriage, and love of a man was not a guarantee of power or empowerment for a woman. Rarely apart from one another, Rotch wrote to his wife in 1821, “don’t be concerned about me but take all the care of thyself and don’t worry about the business. let all go as they may until I may get home, very affectionately, Thy Thos Rotch. I expect the Carriage tonight.”

Quakers in New England and Virginia shared common assumptions with seventeenth and eighteenth-century society in New England and Virginia about the subjection of women in marriage and their unsuitability for life in the public sphere. Peace and tranquility were highly valued, and couples shared the love of home and

864 Henkin, The Postage Age, 99.
domesticity. Men’s roles as head of household and loving husband, if correctly balanced, would almost certainly ensure domestic bliss and social acceptance.\textsuperscript{868} 

In her study of the correspondence of married couples, Laura McCall found that rather than relationships that were based on male dominance, men and women insisted upon partnerships based on devotion, loyalty, companionship, and cooperation.\textsuperscript{869} Other historians point out that a body of eighteenth-century proscriptive literature extolled the marital state and romanticized the tender relationship between husband and wife. Such literature, especially novels, set standards and reinforced guidelines for appropriate heterosexual behavior.\textsuperscript{870}

While their letters suggest that the Rotches were inseparable companions and partners, there is no indication of private struggles between them. The precise nature of power relations, rarely discussed in correspondence, and the manner in which they resolved their personal conflicts are unclear. There are hints of reservation regarding the decision to relocate to Ohio, and quite possibly, isolation on the frontier threw Charity’s anxieties into sharp relief. Letter writing for her was a socially acceptable way to express her discontent and hold her emotions in check. Her removal to Ohio dominated the correspondence with kinswomen for several years. She wrote to express her interest in her preservation and for her “uninhabited place of establishment.” Mary Rotch wrote to

\textsuperscript{868} Wilson, \textit{A Marriage Well Ordered}, 78, 85.  
\textsuperscript{869} Laura McCall. “Not So Wild a Dream”: The Domestic Fantasies of Literary Men and Women, 1820-1860,” in \textit{A Shared Experience: Men, Women and the History of Gender} eds. Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone (New York: New York University Press, 1998),177.  
\textsuperscript{870} Crane, \textit{A Dependant People}, 225.
her aunt in 1811, “The idea of building looks formidable, and we cannot think thy health equal to the unavoidable care attendant on the latter.”

Female culture shaped the way women perceived their circumstances and provided them with the means and methods to establish new identities in a new environment. Her responsibilities which included household management and protection of religious tradition, while stereotyped and assumed to be secondary to those of her spouse were no less important than his. As residential isolation and her hermetic existence in Ohio limited her social opportunities, Charity’s connections to female kin through correspondence only intensified. Letters became an emotional luxury in a turbulent landscape, a way for separated kin to possess each other, and a source of constancy and predictability that helped shape family life. For a woman with a capacity for deep attachments, letters reduced Charity’s isolation and represented a civilizing and humanizing influence in a foreign, if not self-contained environment. Letters were equally symbolic of a deep, mutual and unchanging bond that offered a space for exploration and expression, and a source of protection through adversity.

In their study of women’s literacy in the nineteenth-century, Judy Nolte Temple and Suzanne L Bunker point out that at a time when women were “culturally muted” in the public sphere, letter writing in the private sphere was a way for women to see themselves. If they were geographically isolated, women were textually connected. Temple and Bunker write, “It is clear that the world they inhabited, its gender ideology,

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872 Riley, The Female Frontier, 8.
873 Henkin, The Postal Age, 99.
its images drawn from religious and sentimental literary text – was itself the text upon
which they drew to record and recreate their lives."874

Letters and the dialogues within them extracted emotional costs when mails were slow and irregular, and women were anxious for news of friends and relatives at a distance.875 Anne Bull likened Charity’s departure for Ohio in 1811 to a separation from some part of herself, and while mountains, valleys and rivers separated them, Ann felt “the freedom and relief in believing your feelings to be for me like that of a sympathizing Sister or Mother.”876 Bull wrote that she had often conversed with her absent friend in her mind, and “laid open all my heart to you but like airy visions it ended in nothing for I could not have in return your soothing counsel and conversation.”877 To preserve a sense of community with absent kin, Lydia Dean requested details of Charity’s activities and settlement. She wrote that she wished to visualize their friend in her new environment. She missed their “interchange of thoughts, views and hopes. If only we could have some kind of telegraphic intelligence between New Bedford and the Ohio which could give a view of each others scenes.”878

In a world of kinship that revolved around female relatives, the intensity and intimacy of their letters suggests that women shared secrets and sustained closer ties with their female friends than perhaps they did their spouses. In 1811, Margaret Izard Manigault described letter writing as a private activity and a delightful invention for

875 Jeffrey, Frontier Women, 93.
876 Ann Bull letter to Charity Rotch, October 12, 1812. Box B-238-1.
878 Lydia Dean letter to Charity Rotch, July 7, 1812. Box B-241-11.
women. She wrote, “The security which a little wafer affords to an intercourse of the most secret kind is a striking instance of the advantage of civilization. Is it not admirable that at the distance of thousands of miles we should be able to disclose with safety, secrets of the utmost importance?”

Rachel Todd of Farmington, Connecticut with whom Charity corresponded for sixteen years informed her absent friend that she was amusing herself at her spinning wheel which had become her constant companion since Charity’s departure. She wrote, “I intend to keep close to my spinning & try to dispel those gloomy reflections that have haunted me of late. I have never been able, since your departure to realize in the smallest degree that I should ever have the satisfaction of residing near you again.”

Studies of Quaker women’s visiting patterns in Philadelphia confirms that older women who were confined by sickness, old age and curtailment of movement often felt a sense of loss or disconnect from the face-to-face daily contacts that were central components of social activity in women’s lives.

Letters between Charity and her sisters, Hannah, Anna, and Elizabeth, several sisters-in-law, and nieces were predicated on unconditional love and contained confessions of loneliness and continued emotional dependence on one another regardless of their age, or the distance from each other. For women, the familial ties initiated in

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879 Margaret Izard Manigault to Georgina Izard Smith, August 8, 1811. Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.
880 Rachel Todd letter to Charity Rotch, October 6, 1816. Box B-311-18
881 Tomes, “The Quaker Connection,” 181.
882 Jeffrey, Frontier Women, found that loneliness and pleas for family and friends to emigrate was a common theme that ran through frontier women’s correspondence (93). Ann Bull letter to Charity Rotch, March 23, 1822 Box B-238-4, Bull wrote that in her imagination, she “had held frequent converse and laid open all my heart” to Charity.
childhood remained intact through adulthood and beyond the grave. Hannah Rodman wrote in August, 1813, “I was so ignorant of Geography; that I had no Idea when you removed, that Ohio was a Frontier Country. I rather supposed it would be a peaceful retreat from the Sound of the Trumpet, the Alarm of War. So let us know the Truth of your situation.”

Women who had learned to forge deep personal relationships in childhood, continued to do so in their adult lives. Letters became a form of extended conversation, taking up where the writer previously left off, giving insights into personal development and commenting on how certain events affected them and their female circle. Hannah Rodman Fisher wrote in 1813 and 1814 that not a day passed that she hadn’t greeted the friend and companion of her youth. More than anything else, women wanted the presence of other kinswomen to see and touch, and if this was impossible, they wanted to be able to visualize their kin in their new surroundings. She wrote to her sister in 1814, “Believing though distantly separated in body, we shall be enabled Mentally to visit each other, to sympathize with, to salute each other in Spirit and to comfort one another in that Union which tends to build up in the most Holy Faith.”

Without being more specific she wrote, “to tell you the truth, I have been depressed in mind for some time past, owing partly to temporal and partly to spiritual concerns.”

883 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 8th mo 15th 1813. Box B-247-30
884 Hannah Rodman Fisher died at age 56 on September 12, 1819. For extracts of her journals and letters, 1775-1819 and a notice of her death see Anna Wharton Morris, “The Romance of the Two Hannahs” A Paper read before the Society August 20, 1923. Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, No. 46, October, 1923.
There seems little doubt that the move to Ohio altered Charity Rotch’s network of obligations, reciprocal service and affinities with her female kin and co-religious, and accentuated her feelings of loneliness that could be construed as a form of suffering. While the community of Friends in which she lived in New England reinforced traditional gender roles, frontier life included non-traditional gender experiences and presented new opportunities that extended and tested the limits of Charity’s previous experiences. Upper class women in New England (with the assistance of servants) visited, shopped, and churched in close community. Farm women, in contrast, worked in the fields and assumed roles that did not entirely conform to women’s lives in urban East.

As Rotch’s partner and an indispensable member of the household unit, Charity attempted to reinstate a culture of domesticity on the frontier. A partial list of goods in her kitchen closet included “one copper kettle, 3 baskets, 1 of each of the following: cedar churn, cider mill, a small wooden bucket, dipper, large and small clothes horse, biscuit pans, 2 iron holders, course dishes, a wooden bowl, a large tub with cover, 1 small and large oval platter, 1 large and small square platter, a stone pot, 16 bowls, a larger tumbler, 2 bottles, a coarse jug, a pail, glue pot, frying pan, tin candle box, painted, a box of sugar with top, and a bench. The forces of commercialization and the new market revolution in which she participated had changed her economic life. Although she apparently did not have aspirations for her own economic autonomy, she had worked out new roles for herself by necessity, fits and starts, and trial and error. Her work as a farmer’s wife broadened her family’s economic interests and broke down gender

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886 Myres, Westering Women, 7.
segregation and afforded Charity a measure of independence and a separate status from her husband.

Charity’s religious practice seems to have been foremost in her mind. Religion had always defined her life and influenced her choices, and she believed that she could be instrumental in the salvation of others. She kept her spiritual accounts very strictly, and for her, religious beliefs were connected to all of her household activities. However, in Ohio she lacked participation and religious exercise with kinswomen who in the past had helped her establish and carry out family and community traditions.\(^{888}\) While she had the companionate marriage she wanted, she seems to have had limited expectations for personal happiness, nor could she match her mother’s ability to recover in a reasonable amount of time from depression or discouragement. There is little mention in her letters of Ohio’s good climate or healthy way of life, how she felt about her personal accomplishments, or whether she was empowered as she assumed roles usually reserved for men. She perhaps accepted the company of women not of her faith to relieve the burden of work, however there is no mention in her correspondence of sociability with women in neighboring households, or women’s community social occasions such as quilting circles.\(^{889}\) Although women’s activities may have been considered so routine

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\(^{888}\) Maria Imlay letter to Charity Rotch, February 28, 1809. Box B-266-3. This letter suggests that Charity may have been a Quaker minister or spiritual mentor to others, giving religious instruction in her home, which may account for the respect accorded her by other Friends. Imlay wrote, “I fear it may almost appear as presumptive in me to let in a belief that I should ever be thought the least qualified to join with thee in religious labour.” Fischer points out that Quakers elders were considered “nursing fathers and mothers,” and “pillars in the house of our God” whose function was to advise, teach, caution and nurture other Friends (513-515).

\(^{889}\) Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, 7\(^{th}\) mo 5\(^{th}\) 1814 B-247-34 , confirms that Charity was overburdened with work and hired Mary Kimberley from Salem, Ohio.
that they didn’t deserve mention in letters, Charity seems to have reserved her deepest affections for those kinswomen she left behind in New England. Her marriage to Thomas Rotch and the nuclearity of her existence in Ohio insulated her to a far greater extent than had life in New Bedford where, surrounded by her sisters, mother and other kinswomen, she received and exchanged advice, support, humor and understanding on a daily basis.

In early 1815, the Rotches anticipated a journey to New England, but Charity fell ill and was near death with spotted fever in the summer of that year. Hannah Rodman Fisher’s carefully crafted letter to Rotch reveals how after contemplation, a correspondent might speak with a particular motive. As women entrusted with sustaining the faith, Charity and her sister were connected emotionally in ways that Rotch was not. Anguishing over her sister’s near death from spotted fever in 1809, Hannah Fisher wrote to Thomas Rotch, “I don’t feel capable of writing much at this time, my mind being much cloathed with solicitude, for she is near & dear indeed to my natural and Spiritual life.”

Hannah Rodman later used the language of politeness to create a sense of solidarity with Rotch before admonishing him, however indirectly for putting his

“who entered upon her duties in the Family on 2 Mo 13th, 1815.” Hannah writes, “I am grieved that thou should have to toil so for the want of help as it is indeed trying at thy time of life, and thy infirmities to have the drudging past of family business upon thee and altogether improper if it could be avoided.”; Conrad argues that despite the hire of Mary Kimberley in 1815 and Charlotte Addams in 1818 to assist with housekeeping, Charity was depressed and physically and emotionally exhausted “with the cares and business of the day” (58) Whether the flurry of activity and domesticity added up to depression is difficult to assess since women’s definitions of their gendered experiences on the frontier varied markedly. In her study of Petersburg, Virginia, Susan Lebsock points out that unmarried women able to acquire waged labor could remain autonomous and free of male subordination. On the western frontier, however, unmarried women who faced a life of poverty if they chose to remain single frequently hired on as domesticas as wage labor was scarce and difficult to acquire. Kimberley married Arvine Wales sometime around 1820 and died in childbirth in September, 1823.

890 Hannah Rodman letter to Thomas Rotch, 2nd mo 5th, 1809. Box B-56-2.
personal ambitions above his wife’s frail health. She wrote, “Should our beloved be removed, I shall be a real sympathizer with thee, my dear brother. I have remember’d that thy first excitement to remove to that Country, was to promote her comfort, as thou believed under right direction.”

By September 1815, Charity partially regained her strength and was eager for the companionship of her female circle. While she valued close ties with her male relations, letters with kinswomen were a temporary substitute for personal contact and a form of intimate conversation that preserved the cohesion of her same-sex networks. She wrote, “If any of you can come, & be so at any future period, it would be truly congenial to our hearts, tho’ before I have felt as I scarce could welcome my dear friends; so different do we live from what would be to us desirable.”

Studies suggest that same-sex visits occupied a central place in the social activity of Quaker women. Some visits were structured around rituals such as childbirth, but most visits were spontaneous and served as an outlet for women’s emotions. In addition, visiting instilled a sense of one’s membership in kinship networks that for women began early in life, increased with age and did not end even after death. In her study of the visiting patterns of Quaker women in Philadelphia, Tomes argues that

891 Susan Harding, in “Women and Words in a Spanish Village,” in Toward an Anthropology of Women ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975) found that while feminine language preserved social norms and afforded women a limited degree of power, it also strengthened patriarchal authority (283-308).
892 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter, Philadelphia to Charity Rotch, 4th Mo 2nd, 1815. Box B-247-38;
894 Cashin, A Family Venture, 81.
women’s visits represented an investment in rituals that created reciprocal relationships between women that could be drawn on especially on as women grew older. Widows in debt and elderly women might turn to her kinship circle for financial assistance.  

Nuclear families could be destroyed by financial disaster or the death of parents, but women’s lifelong responsibilities to each other as sisters were secure and unchanged by marriage, motherhood, or relocation.

1815 may have been a turning point for Charity Rotch, for in that year she revealed the extent of her discontent to Friends outside of her immediate circle of confidantes. A niece, Sarah Fisher included the remarks of Samuel Smith and his wife to whom Charity had written regarding her circumstances in Ohio. Samuel Smith did not flinch in his support of Thomas Rotch, perhaps because he considered it his duty to support his friend’s endeavors. Sarah wrote, “Samuel Smith said he was pleased to hear that you had no reason to doubt the propriety of your being at Kendal. His wife seemed to unite, adding that she thought Charity was not behind him.”

Sarah Fisher did not comment on Mrs. Smith’s remark, but its inclusion suggests what intimates and others of her New England circle had already suspected. Despite her attempts to embrace the ideals of womanhood and convince herself and others, Charity’s heart was not really in it. Mrs. Smith acknowledged, however, that while Charity had grave reservations about relocation to the Ohio, Rotch was still “the only object which could in all that Country deeply interest her heart & affections.”

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896 Sarah Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, January 3, 1815. Box B-250-3. Sarah Fisher was the daughter of Thomas Fisher, a Quaker merchant and Sarah Logan of Philadelphia.
897 Mary Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, February 27, 1812. Box B-297-4.
It is difficult to know how Rotch viewed his wife’s adjustment to life in Ohio or whether she fully supported his efforts. If he was sensitive to the difficulty she faced during the transition from settled life in New England to the frontier, he made little mention of the subject in his letters. Kinship relationships were crucial to the formation and preservation of Quaker communities, and quite possibly, Rotch’s brief mention of Charity before turning to a discussion of the economic advantages of the Erie Canal did not imply in any way that he undervalued her work or her domestic concerns. Although Charity was subordinate to Rotch, as an upper class woman, she enjoyed geographic mobility and had more access to horses than did women of the poorer classes. He wrote in 1817, “My dear CR whose health much depends on riding has gone to the Lake and will probably return in a few days. The opening a communication from the N River to Lake Erie by Canal is an interesting Subject, should this be effected it will greatly facilitate the conveyance of heavy goods to a very great extent of Country that are now altogether dependent upon the Road Waggons.”

In an age when trade was structured by kinship, men’s letters typically mixed business with family news. Itinerant minister, Joshua Evens described his missionary work in New Bedford before informing Rotch that if he could provide the dimensions, his son was free to build him a wagon. He continued, “They are about to send a few seed poetatows & some water milon seeds of a good sort.”

898 McMurry, *From Sugar Camps to Star Barns*, 18.
899 Thomas Rotch letter to Benjamin Rotch, 2 Mo 5th 1817. Box A-3-13; McMahon, “The Indescribable Care Devolving upon a Housewife,” 186-187.
900 Joshua Evens letter to Thomas Rotch, 14th 4 month 1795. Box B-55-2.
A visit to New England was planned in 1819, a prosperous year for the Rotch and Rodman family whaling industry whose next generation began construction of stately stone mansions on “Rotch Hill” that overlooked the town and bay of New Bedford.\textsuperscript{901} Sarah Rotch Arnold wrote in November 1821 of the shortage of housing in New Bedford, and that her brother had constructed a row of “9 wooden building that were engaged before they were half finished, & some of his tenants are amongst the most respectable of our nearly married young people.”\textsuperscript{902} The location of the mansions was a powerful statement about the family’s success and what they thought Quakers should be. The Rotch and Rodman homes were built along Cottage and Sixth Street in the neighborhoods known as Acushnet Heights, which boasted magnificent views of the town, country and harbor below.\textsuperscript{903}

The Rotches put off their long anticipated return to New England because of the heat and discomfort of travel during the summer months of 1820.\textsuperscript{904} They left Ohio by carriage in the late autumn and reached New Bedford where several generations gathered under one roof to celebrate William Rotch’s eighty-sixth birthday.\textsuperscript{905} Visits, exchanged every few years renewed and preserved familial ties and in the case of more distant kin, reminded them that they were members of a home community and still a part of the

\textsuperscript{901} Daniel Ricketson, \textit{New Bedford of the Past} (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), 27.
\textsuperscript{902} Sarah Rotch Arnold letter, New Bedford to Charity Rotch, 11\textsuperscript{th} Mo 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1821.
\textsuperscript{903} Norling, \textit{Ahab’s Wife}, 123; Frederic Denison, \textit{Illustrated New Bedford, Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket}, (Providence, 1870): 24
\textsuperscript{904} Mary Robinson Morton letter to Charity Rotch, 8 mo 4, 1820. Box B-273-5.
\textsuperscript{905} Eliza Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, December 30, 1821. Box B-291-2; Bullard, 92; William Rotch, Sr., by far the wealthiest and most important man of his day in New Bedford died at the age of 94 in 1828. He left sizable holdings including his mansion on the northeast corner of Union and Second Street in New Bedford to his unmarried daughter, Mary (1777-1848) who cared for him in his final days.
family they had left behind.\(^{906}\) While the family recounted and relived its own history since their last visit together, the event was overshadowed by family concerns for his declining years and Charity’s continued failing health. Although she was unwell during the trip, the visit to New Bedford was a success. It “entwined the cord of affection stronger & brightened the chain of friendship.”\(^{907}\) Anna Hazard encouraged Charity “to return and spend the remainder of your time with us.”\(^{908}\)

Charity Rotch did not appear to be a woman of independent spirit. Although she and Rotch were partners and her work was necessary for family survival, she had paid a high price for his success. She never grew comfortable with the separation from her female circle, and prolonged absence from them was unwelcome to her. She also may have regretted not having the children she and Thomas had dearly wanted. When her closest confidante Hannah Fisher died in 1818, Charity fell into a deep depression and mourned the loss of a sister for whom she had reserved her deepest love. Historian Terri Apter points out that sisters supported each other throughout each other’s lives, throughout adulthood, including marriage, childbearing, old age, widowhood, aging and dying more than brothers. Women maintained close and affectionate relationships with each other, and when bonds are disrupted, sisters showed signs of depression.\(^ {909}\) A family member confirmed Charity’s despondency when she learned of her sister’s passing.

\(^{906}\) Motz, True Sisterhood, 51.
\(^{907}\) Elizabeth Rodman Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, June 7, 1821. Box B-295-2.
\(^{909}\) Terri Apter, The Sister Knot, Why We Fight, Why We’re Jealous, and Why We’ll Love Each Other No Matter What (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007),269.
Seemingly centered in her distant situation from all her near relatives and Friends, in resignation to the Solemn removal of her dear Sister, most tenderly attached to each other. She seems not to express anything about coming, only she says, the time their continuance in that Country has been prolonged far beyond what she had contemplated." 

She had expected to reach maturity with Hannah and her close female circle, and she hoped her kinship network that was based on custom, a sense of obligation and affection would not narrow. "We miss you much," wrote Thomas Rotch’s brother in March, “and can hardly reconcile your being so soon separated from us.”

The Rotches arrived in Kendal in May, 1821 after stocking up on items for themselves and for Rotch’s store. Rotch built a carriage house, a cider press and began construction on a new farmhouse. Having perhaps sensed a certain level of discontentment with Charity’s life during her most recent visit, twelve well-intentioned nieces initiated a writing circle to keep their aunt apprised of family news, and more importantly, to reassure her that family bonds would not be broken and distance would not destroy their supportive networks and familial ties.

As designated family correspondents, “the Champions of the pen, all ready & willing to espouse the cause, & forward to thee, the annals of our Village once in two

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910 Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. letter from Samuel Fisher, Philadelphia to E.R. Rodman, January 8, 1819. For an extensive account of the preservation of Hannah Fisher’s character and her death in family memory see Quaker Testimonies and memorials, Box F-15-23 and 23a. 12th day, 9th mo., 1819.
911 Sarah Rotch Arnold letter to Charity Rotch, 9th Mo 19th 1819. Box B-233-9. Sarah Rotch Arnold may have compounded Charity’s grief, writing, “Another regret will now be added to that which thou hast already suffered from disappointment in a visit to us this Spring. A Sister who dwelt fondly upon the idea of once more seeing thee is now no more;” Motz, True Sisterhood, 42.
912 William Rotch letter to Thomas Rotch, 3rd mo 13th 1821.
913 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, 59.
914 Ibid., 61.
915 Mary Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, February 3, no year. Box B-298-1
weeks” may only have deepened Charity’s sense of isolation in Ohio. Charity’s health did not improve and letters contain expressions of concern for her continued poor state of health. Niece Eliza Rodman wrote in December, 1821, “We regret to hear thy health has been so interrupted since thy return, it seems not altogether our climate that was so unfavorable to it.”

Narratives that informed on the everyday strengthened kin connections and recreated a gender-specific culture through correspondence. Women, textually connected, carved out a measure of power to determine familial relationships in a situation in which correspondence was the only way to ensure family memory and re-secure familial ties. If women were constructing same-sex kinship networks in response to unequal power sharing relationships between the sexes as Cashin suggests, it is possible to speculate that for many women, identity with female kin was more important than one’s own identity as an individual.

The female experience of the frontier was a working experience for virtually all women whose labor constituted an important part of the family economy. “Dis-assembled” families were part of the frontier legacy, and isolation on the rural frontier delayed and retarded the development of close knit communities of women. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes, “above all, rural life circumscribed their mobility and the size of

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916 Mary Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, February 3, no year. Box B-298-1 The writing circle and letters extant include: Anna Robison,(none); Mary R. Rotch, (12 letters, B-297-1 through 12); Anna S. Rotch,(None); Hannah H. Rodman, (1 letter, B-293-1); Sarah R. Arnold, (14 letters, B-233-1through 14); Eliza Rodman, ( 7 letters, B-291-2 through 8); Susan Ridgeway Rotch, (1 letter, B-299-1); Sarah Morgan, (1 letter, B-272-1); Susan M. Rodman, (none); Caroline L. Rotch, (none); Lydia Rodman, (none); Anna W. Rotch, (none).
917 Eliza Rodman letter to Charity Rotch, 12th mo 30th 1821. Box B-291-2.
918 Cashin, A Family Venture, 26.
the communities to which they belonged or within which they developed their sense of
themselves.”919

Born into a close knit family of kinswomen with opportunities to encourage and
cultivate one another’s spiritual wellbeing, Charity expected to live the life that she had
learned at the side of her female circle in New England. Hoping that life in a milder
climate would improve her health, she may have paused long enough to examine her life
in her own way, and to reflect on her accomplishments and the changes she had
witnessed during her lifetime in Ohio. As a working farm wife, her contributions to the
maintenance of her family’s comfort and her protection of religious tradition were as
important as her husband work. Her responsibilities that enabled her to gain power, a
measure of autonomy within marriage and respectability extended beyond the private
sphere. She had traded the damp, cold New England winters and the threat of recurrences
of various fevers for the prospects of better health in Ohio. But nothing in her past had
prepared her for the initial experience of isolation that she would encounter as she
negotiated the unfamiliar. Her correspondence, rarely robust and energetic, suggests that
she knew moments of doubt, dissatisfaction, despair, and possibly anger. Although
separated by physical distance, her deeply-rooted female network did not collapse. Her
closest confidante, Hannah Rodman Fisher, wondered if life in Ohio wasn’t more
detrimental to her well being than another could have anticipated. She wrote, “it is trying

919 Schlissel, Women’s Diaries, 93; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Within The Plantation
Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 1988), 44.
at thy time of life, and with thy infirmities to have the drudging part of family business upon thee."

As Rotch’s enterprise grew so did the work of the household. As an economic partner to her husband, Charity controlled the quality and quantity of labor within and household and was responsible for feeding farmhands, clothing herself and her spouse, and for the household production of soap, candles, butter, cheese, and medical remedies. While women rarely maintained records of their informal exchanges with their neighbors, Charity possibly gained control over the sale of certain surplus products and how the proceeds from those products were spent. The ideal farm wife was expected to willfully embrace her assigned roles and to be busy and cheerful. For women with limited opportunities for social contact on the frontier, work with other women was often a social occasion for exchange of friendship and practical support.

Although she depended on her husband and her identity was structured through him, she may have participated in female-dominated networks of exchange that were

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920 Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, July 5, 1814. Box B-247-34. Charity Rotch’s domestic life is documented in her inventoried household and personal belongings, Box F-26-59 through 87. Ann Bull letter to Charity Rotch, March 23, 1822 mentions that Charity had mentioned in a previous letter that she was “quite unwell” and in the Fall of 1821, Thomas Rotch “had an attack of a severe complaint in his head,” perhaps bilious fever.

921 The 1820 United States census lists the names of five persons who resided in Rotch’s farmhouse with an additional four persons employed in his woolen mill. Soap, candles, butter, cheese and a variety of medicines were commercially available to women in urban Philadelphia and New England after 1810.

922 See for example, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale, The Life and Martha Ballard, based on her diary 1785-1812. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) 84ff. which details female exchanges throughout Ballard’s diary; also see McCormick, Farm Wife, 93-98.

largely invisible to men and free of male interference.\textsuperscript{924} She occasionally ordered fabric from the East and followed the long established practice of making her own and some of Thomas’s work clothes. Women might spend the day sewing together, and without the benefit of daughters, Charity probably relied on other women for assistance with sewing and mending. Non-kin and extended family of aunts, cousins and nieces who assisted with sewing were generally paid in cash or in kind for their services, but between mothers and daughters, money never changed hands.\textsuperscript{925} Women regularly recycled clothes not only to be thrifty, but because of the time and effort that went into dressmaking. McCormick writes, “Everyday dresses became aprons and good dresses were remodeled or turned inside out for a fresh appearance.”\textsuperscript{926}

Letters suggest that Charity’s religious and gender identities were tightly bound together. As gender roles and notions of public and private spheres blurred, she established patterns of household management over which her spouse may have had limited influence. The Rotches were prosperous enough by 1814 to hire Mary Kimberly, and Charlotte Addams in 1818 to assist with indoor and outdoor work which may have allowed Charity to shift her focus to less labor intensive domestic tasks.\textsuperscript{927} Although their work was an essential part of the developing agricultural economy, the names of neither woman appear on tax lists because of their low wages and incomes. We do not know how class and religious differences affected these women’s relationships, whether Kimberley

\textsuperscript{924} Prescott, \textit{Gender and Generation}, 67; Brakebill, “Circumstances are Destiny,” 21.

\textsuperscript{925} McCormick, \textit{Farm Wife}, 103.

\textsuperscript{926} Ibid., 100.

\textsuperscript{927} McCormick, \textit{Farm Wife}, Work common to all frontier women included oversight of the house and housecleaning, care of furnishings, yards and kitchen gardens, food preparation, canning, preserving, butchering, cooking, baking, sewing, knitting, dress making and home nursing (63-117).
and Addams were accepted as equals or whether class differences were overlooked because of the dependence that these women had on the other. Charity remembered Charlotte Addams in her will, (Mary Kimberley had died in childbirth in 1823), which suggests that their relationship was one of mutual dependency and more of a friendship than a business arrangement.

By November 1822 despite mid life, Charity was still not free of the competing demands on her time and physical health. Perhaps out of weariness or because she secretly blamed her husband for her hardship, she reiterated her need for continued communications with female kin in New England. She wrote,

I wish to encourage the hope of frequently hearing of & from you, as it certainly ranks amongst the dearest enjoyments of my life. Our apples & cider being a rarity in this part of the country draws many visitors and thou mayest conclude that upon the whose I find it a toilsome life.

The Rotches by all accounts were fully engaged in farming and despite the distance and time, networks with kith and kin cultivated over a lifetime remained intact and unbroken. In late 1822, Anna Hazard sent her sister two cases of lobster via Michael and Patience Graham in Wheeling and William Dickenson in Steubenville who delivered the tins to Kendal. Rotch mentions the arrival of the lobsters which must have lifted the spirits of those gathered round for the occasion, “On the 21st of 12 Mo 1822, they were opened at Kendal and were found as fresh as if just taken out of the shell.”

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928 Jensen, Loosening the Bonds, 45.
930 Thomas Rotch Daybook, found February 11, 2008, Rotch Wales Papers, Massillon Public Library.
In January of 1822, family in New England received news of the construction of Rotch’s new farmhouse on Spring Hill. Sarah Rotch Arnold wrote, “Father says he thinks when he hears you have got into your new house & the canal is nearly finished, he shall put his contemplated journey into operation, visit his salt establishment at Salina, the Falls of Niagara, & his dear brother and sister at Kendal.”

But before the Spring Hill farmhouse was completed, Thomas Rotch was dead.

His sudden demise in September, 1823 brought Charity’s life to a sudden stop and touched the family circle deeply. Aside from the shock of his passing at a relatively young age, he was denied the common ambition among Friends of retiring in good time in order to prepare spiritually for death. While Quakerism urged contentment and resignation to God’s will, perfect resignation was not always achievable. Writing to family in New England, Charity rebelled against her fate. She never challenged traditional notions of marriage. She believed in romantic love and in making her spouse the center of her world. Despite everything that had drained her and worn her down, suddenly she could not imagine herself as a self-sufficient women without him. Ruth Block points out the ideal of marital love in the eighteenth century amounted to “a romantic fusion of identities” and the realization that one’s definition of self “depends on communion with the other.”

931 Sarah Rotch Arnold letter to Charity Rotch, Kendal, Ohio, 16th of 1st Month, 1823. Box B-233-12.
932 Holton, Quaker Women, 161.
933 Mary Beth Norton, Liberty’s Daughters, 126-127.
Catie Gill argues that the death of a pious individual created a gap and signified a loss to the community of Friends, especially if one had not led a full life. She writes, for Quakers, “A good death, conventionally, is the reward for the commitment to a godly Quaker life. The lived experiences of the recently deceased are therefore a model for the surviving members of the community.” Since death was a family experience, it was extremely important that family be present at death to ensure that kin did not die alone. Charity’s letter to New England kin who wished to know if she was with Thomas “till the solemn and awful close took place” was rich with meaning and appears to have been written under duress. As a deathbed testimony, her words capture her husband’s godliness, his perceived moral capital, his resignation to God’s will and his spiritual commitment to his maker in his final hours. As was the case with pious Friends, his death created a gap and was a loss to the movement. Gill writes, “Deathbed testimonies exonerate the dying person, aiming to convey the individual’s godliness by indicating his/her commitment, even in the final hours of life, to the godly maker.”

Charity had prioritized her role as wife and gained spiritual power in her family, assuring distant kin that in tending to numerous acts of caring and nursing she had

935 William Logan Fisher to Charity Rotch, October 8, 1823. Box B-251-1
936 Gill, Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community, 148.
937 Gillis, A World of Their Own Making, 206-210.
938 Samuel R. Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, October 2, 1823. Box B-249-2. The letter contains multiple corrections and appears to be tear-stained, most likely by the writer herself.
939 Quakers assembled deathbed testimonies including the last words of the deceased to ensure that Friends understood that the deceased had died a good and pious death. See Box B-247-43, Hannah Rodman Fisher letter to Charity Rotch, April 1, [no year] Box F-15-16 Quaker Testimonies and Memorials; “Some Account of the last illness of Hannah Fisher who departed this life the 12th day of the 9th month, 1819 in the 56 year of her age.” Box F-15-23.
discharged her domestic duties and responsibilities in a spirit of feminine goodness and piety. Regardless of the distance between them, death was a communal affair and Friends, deeply interested in the death watch and the deathbed scene took comfort in knowing that the deceased had made a good death in the company of caring family and friends. For Friends, Fischer writes, “death became the fulfillment of life. It was an escape from the corruptions of the world, and the final transcendence of the mortal self.”

While death itself was domesticated, Friends did not uniformly romanticize death or the dead. Patience Graham writes that while attending the deceased until she was buried, “I had in the silent watch of the night to make her grave clothes, the very person whom she had so illy treated. I though it remarkable that among all her relations and gay acquaintances it should devolve upon one at last whom she had so persecuted.”

Charity Rotch, however, needed to assure her husband’s family that Thomas was resigned to a ‘good death,’ ‘without the least repentance,’ and that his passing was peaceful, ‘without sigh or struggle.’ She also took the opportunity to inscribe her own piety in the text alongside her deference to her deceased spouse, perhaps to project an autonomous female voice, to exercise her spiritual authority, or to facilitate the spirituality of others. She understood that Christians were assigned blessings as well as sorrows in life, but Rotch’s death caused an anguished separation that parted him from her and from family and Friends for life. She had grumbled very little at least on paper, but her widowhood was a death sentence that induced emotional and physical collapse. In

941 Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 520.
942 Patience Graham letter to Charity Rotch, 9mo 10th ,[nd] Box B-259-4.
943 Gillis, *A World of Their Own Making*, 208.
keeping with family tradition, Charity presided over the ritual of death, and described Thomas’s deathbed scene in great detail

She invited distant kin “to partake with me in the bitter Cup recently dispensed.”

She continued with detail of the final bedside scene to assure family that Rotch had had a good death. She wrote, underlining certain words that had special meaning for her,

little did I think when we left home to attend the yearly meeting the result would have been so solemn & had the disease have been less flattening, it would have afforded more opportunity to have conversed on many subjects; when only within one hour of the final close, he was considered doing well for one so weak & low. & when the Dr ordered wine & I thot it one of the low times, from which he had been raised several times in the course of the illness by stimulation applications; very soon they ordered Brandy given him; & I gave it to him with the unremitting opportunity & when I perceived they thot him going, I desired the Dr. to give him strengthening and stimulating injections telling them I could not be satisfied, until every possible exertion was made to save a life so precious. They gratified in that respect; & he had all the applications; apparently well & took the brandy within two minutes of the final close; without the least repentance, he passed quietly away without sigh or struggle, or the least alteration of countenance~ I have hitherto been helped beyond any expectations, to endure the painful allotment.

Thomas Rotch’s death resonated within the Quaker community and his passing was a focus of extensive consideration. Although Friends grieved over the loss of the dead, according to custom they avoided wakes, processions and funerals, preferring instead simple internments in unmarked graves. Death was followed immediately by an outpouring of solace, hope, and resignation to God’s will. Jeremy Winslow, Rotch’s former apprentice, described Rotch “as a master and friend, who had treated me with all the tenderness of a father.” Charity remained emotionally committed to her family in

945 Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 520.
946 Jeremy Winslow letter to Charity Rotch, December 17, 1823. Box B-320-1.
the East that immediately closed around her, full of sympathy and advice. Rachel Todd wrote that New Bedford Friends “mingled tears together in bonds of mutual support and obligation, we could not comprehend the loss of one whose life was so valuable, & whose character was so much esteemed so much beloved & admired, should be cut off in the midst of his days.”

Rotch’s friend Dr. Eli Todd “Manifested much tender feeling,” saying, “he did not feel as if he could attend to any business through the day, and that he had no Idea before, of the strength of his attachment to Mr. Rotch.” Assigning herself an active role in the construction and preservation of his memory, Charity enclosed a lock of “his previous hair, all that is now left of the earthly Tabernacle” in a letter to her sister, Anna Hazard who confided, “thy letter enclosing a lock of thy beloved Husband’s hair we have received it as a precious pledge the only visible relict of a dear departed brother whose memory will long be cherished by thy sister.”

For Quakers, death was a communal rather than a private moment and account of the deathbed suffering and passing of pious individuals was often a shared community event that brought mourners together. If an individual had led a pious life, and was peaceful and calm at the “Solemn close,” mourners could be assured that the change for

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948 Ann Bull letter to Charity Rotch, October 9, 1823. Box B-238-6; Charity Rotch remembered Eli Todd in her will. She forgave his debt to Thomas Rotch and gave him a small sum of money for the establishment of a Hospital for the Insane in Hartford. Ann Bull letter to Charity Rotch, July 5, 1824, Box B-238-7.
949 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, December 22, 1823. Box B-260-19; Charity Rotch letter to William Rotch, New Bedford, 10th mo 27th, 1823. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, PA.
950 Mary Pemberton letter to Mary Rodman in May, 1770 confirms that Quakers viewed the death of pious individuals as a loss to the community, as well as the Quaker movement. Box A-9-1
the dead would be a happy one, and “we have no reason to regret his or her removal, from works to rewards.”951 Rachel Todd wrote, “when I retired, to lay my head upon my pillow, my heart was with thee, & I could not but feel, that of all the lonely places in the world, a widowed bed must be the most solitary.”952

In October 1823, family in New England urged Charity “to return to our circle at Bedford.”953 Her spiritual house in order, she chose to remain at Kendal, subordinate to her husband who had always been central to her happiness, even in death. She wrote to her parents, “I am capable of feeling the void that is made by the removal of one on whom I have placed with utmost propriety my every outward dependence.”954

In life, Rotch was Charity’s “affectionate companion, the friend of thy bosom.”955 In death, his surviving papers, his daybooks and ruminations, and even his lock of hair ensured the construction of his place in his family’s memory as a devoted spouse with whom Charity shared an egalitarian domestic culture, a capable and honest businessman, and an active member of his religious community with considerable spiritual power.

In the year following Thomas’s death, his widow, lawyer and Arvine Wales began the task of settling Rotch’s financial affairs and collecting on debts owed to his estate.956

954 Charity Rotch letter to her Parents, Kendal 10th mo 27, 1823. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.
955 Elizabeth Rodman Rotch letter to Charity Rotch, September 29, 1823. Box B-295-5
956 Thomas Rotch, Estimate of such part of my property as I propose to give to my Wife. Box F-11-58. Thomas Rotch made out his will in 1818, leaving the bulk of his estate totally $43,572 to Charity with allowance for $5000 to the Yearly Meeting School at Mount Pleasant and several individual bequests to family. Box H-5-16; Charity Rotch Estate Accounts. Approximately ninety individuals owed Thomas Rotch’s estate a total
In January 1824, Charity considered relocation to New England but by mid-July, news that Charity “appeared feeble and had lost flesh” reached the family in New Bedford.957 Arvine Wales, meanwhile, would look after the farm and oversee Charity’s business affairs. An extended female network who she would remember in her will including Sarah Macy, Mary Coffin, Sarah Williams, P. Macy, and Charlotte Addams came in to care for her in her final days.958

Themes of endurance and quiet resignation to God’s will, the primary message of colonial religion for women, were constant features in their letters. In 1824, Anna Hazard reminded Charity of their mother Mary Rodman’s widowhood and suffering. She wrote,

I have often recurred to the precious example of our mother, through many tribulated scenes of her widowhood which then it was impossible of us to realize, and I have long been convinced that nothing but experience can enforce the truth of what we have heretofore noticed in regard to the conduct of others, and I believe none are exempt from trials, and those of a secret nature many, very many have to content with.959

If widowhood increased Charity’s reliance on her New England kinship networks, if she assumed a matrix of familial exchange, if she had relied on ideals of family love and reciprocal duties, the prospect of her dependence on male kin suddenly seemed unwelcome and even impractical. A nephew planned to visit Kendal some time in the spring of 1824, but by July of that year, William Rotch, Thomas’s brother wrote that he

957 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, July 17, 1824. Box B-260-21.
958 Conrad, Invaluable Friends, 67; Charity Rotch estate papers, Box F-25-1 and F-25-12.
959 Anna Hazard letter to Charity Rotch, January 25, 1824. Box B-260-20
“regretted that none of thy connections were in a situation to visit thee & contribute all in our power to alleviate thy sufferings.”

On July 11, 1824, Charity drew up her own detailed will with several additional bequests to family members. While she was socially positioned as a giver of material items of value, above all, her final bequests reveal her personal intentions and the special value she placed on her female circle and on emotional relations. As an important ritualized moment, gift-giving acknowledged special kinds of female relationships. Women were named as individuals, and the selection of gifts and objects appropriate to them functioned as a final reminder of their devotion to one another.

Like her mother, Charity left a sizable legacy of material culture. She rewarded the women of her circle who were particularly loyal and affectionate, singling out for special consideration those women with whom she had been in closest and longest

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961 Charity Rotch will, Box F-25-1, July 11, 1824 and Box F-25-12 Box F-25-3 (Executors Sale Advertisement for the property of Charity Rotch, late of Kendal, November 5 & 6, 1824.) In addition to the personal bequests of her will, the inventory of Charity’s property included one span of horses, two carriages, five wagons, a great variety of farming tools, a great quantity of hay, corn and wheat, about 20 head of cattle & two hundred head of Merino sheep, an assortment of broad cloth, cashmere and satin, a variety of surgical instruments, maps and charts, 200 books, carpenter tools, one silver watch, some wooden clocks, a great variety of valuable articles “of almost every description too tedious to enumerate.” See Box F-26-57, 58, 59, 67, 68, 70; H-5-27. Inventoried items from her estate sale, Box F-26-59 through 87. Items included books, china, clothing, furniture, kitchenware, tools, cloth, glassware, personal items such as combs and mirrors, bedding, and other items in various rooms, trunks, cupboards and boxes. Pointon points out, “Inventories written after the death of the owner have always been regarded as more reliable indicators of personal wealth precisely because they are impersonal; they list rather than describe and because they are produced without the intervention of the possessor they are regarded as more historically reliable (30).” Combined monies from Charity’s estate sale totaled approximately $20,000.

962 Pointon, Strategies for Showing, 40.
contact. She bequeathed cash to the circle of women who cared for her until her death: $300 to Charlotte Adams, $50 to Sarah Williams, and monies to women who apparently lived in Kendal and were part of the town’s founding members from Nantucket or New Bedford, Sarah Macy and P. Macy who received $50 each and Mary Coffin who received $100. She gave family mementos belonging to her parents and grandparents to surviving siblings and property in Kendal to Charles and Mary Coffin, and directed that her nieces and wives of her nephews were to divide between them, “the Linen in the Black Trunk, covered with Leather about three feet long with a round top.”

Quite possibly, Charity took into account that her nieces, most of whom were well established by 1824 had substantial means of their own. It was entirely appropriate to bequeath personal items such as linen to them rather than cash. She remembered Daniel Richmond who had worked for Rotch between 1800 and 1806 in Hartford, and his wife, Elizabeth (Betsy Swain) who Charity employed until she married Daniel Richmond in 1810. Charity forgave Daniel’s outstanding debt to Thomas Rotch’s estate. The Richmond children, girls and boys, received silver spoons marked ‘CR.’ Elizabeth Richmond received $100 from the sale of household goods and furniture, and 300$ cash “for her use, benefit and disposal forever.” The “sole use” formula preserved individual wealth for female kin by specifying that Daniel Richmond legally had no claims on his wife’s money.

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963 Charity Rotch Will, Box F-25-1.
964 Ibid.
965 Charity Rotch Will, 1824, Box F-25-1 Estate Legal Documents. Thomas Rotch Letterbook, H-21, October 26, 1825. Arvine Wales wrote Elizabeth Richmond died of Bilious fever in 1825.
Charity gave her husband’s and mother’s possessions, many of them marked with the initials of the original owners to her sisters and their children. Her nieces received silver spoons that were indicative of social class and personalized with her initials. There were also objects of the everyday invested with memory that linked individuals together. Charity forgave debts, and left cash and the use of property to several people. She specified her belongings in great detail, directing the wives of her nephews to the divide the linen in “a black trunk covered with leather about three feet long with a round top” equally between themselves. To Eli Todd, her physician and founder of Connecticut’s first Hospital for the Insane, Charity gave “the Note of hand which I hold against him bearing date of June Eighth 1807 for the sum of one thousand dollars with interest to be applied to the benefit of the Insane Institution of the City of Hartford.” She directed that Charlotte Adams who cared for her in her declining years, was “to take a cow and one side saddle for part of her portion.” Charity’s brother received a strong box “that was my beloved mothers, & a gold stock buckle.” She directed that her husband’s books were to be used “to establish a Library in the Town of Kendal for the use of the Inhabitants of said Town and its vicinity.” Sarah Perry of Newport received 6 teaspoons bearing the initials “CR” that perhaps had special significance since Charity names the silversmith, ‘C.L. Warren’ who originally made them for Abigail Macy of Nantucket.

In the tradition of Quaker women’s philanthropy, Charity looked outward to social reforms and those in her community in need. She designated that monies from the sale of woolen cloth and remaining property were to be used to establish a school for destitute orphans and indigent children, “that they may be trained up in habits of industry and economy whereby they may support themselves and become useful members of
society.” She used specific terms to protect legacies, such as “to be used for her benefit forever” or “for the use of Mary during her lifetime.” These specifications were added to preserve family memory and individual wealth for certain kin, and to ensure women’s independent use of their gifts and bequests.

Charity Rotch was cared for during her last illness by a supportive group of women, most of whom were not mentioned in her correspondence but who were bound to her through religious and community ties. She died on August 6 1824, but not before ensuring a place for herself in family memory as a “good woman.” Arvine Wales who who worked alongside Charity in Connecticut and Ohio and knew her well, summed up his understanding of her feelings about the experience of settlement in Ohio. He wrote, “Her suffering was great and borne with persisting patience, welcoming her solemn final close having for some time given up all hopes of enjoying life.”

Quaker women’s friendships developed in a distinct geographical context of New England and the cultural context of Quakerism. Letter writing for women created an interactive and collaborative women’s sub-culture that strengthened same-sex connections and ties of kinship between women joined by blood, marriage, class, and shared religious values. Women formed with closest bonds with other women, and their interdependent relationships provided women with emotional support, autonomy, and

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968 Berg, Women’s Property and the Industrial Revolution, 249. Testators also used the phrase “sole and separate use” to protect wealth and women’s independent use of it.
969 Arvine Wales letter to William Rotch, Jr. August 16, 1824. Box C-16-1.
970 Ibid.
social resources within the larger community of Friends, perhaps as a practical alternative to unequal power sharing relationships with men.\textsuperscript{971}

As members of wealthy, powerful and accomplished New England families, the Rotch-Rodman circle of women faced their elder years fully integrated into their culture rather than segregated from it. The strong ties to family that women themselves had initiated, encouraged and controlled over generations withstood physical separation and assured them of continued responsibility, respect, and influence as parents and senior members within the nuclear family. In prioritizing their family histories, preservation of letters correspondence linked Quaker women together and shaped individual and collective identity and family memory.

\textsuperscript{971} Cashin, \textit{A Family Venture}, 26.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS:

QUAKER WOMEN, KINSHIP, AND CORRESPONDENCE

This final chapter assesses the place of religion, domesticity and kinships in women’s lives and the strategies they used to encourage their interconnections and interdependence. Religion defined and influencing lives and choices of Quaker women, shaped their world view and was essential for how Charity Rotch viewed her life and how others viewed her.

The Rotch and Rodman circle of women recognized the significance of gender in their lives as they defined themselves as women in the nineteenth-century. Their correspondence reveals how their work, their families and communities intersected as they created interactive female communities in which matters of faith, family and business overlapped. My research reveals that women renegotiated relationships, adapted to new realities as economic and political actors, and struggled for control of the terms of their labor by necessity rather than by choice. Charged with domesticating strange places, women shared resources, depended on each other, took on roles traditionally performed by men, and lived together in shared patterns of residency.

The papers of Mary Rodman paint a portrait of a small storekeeper contributing to and adapting to emerging notions of personal freedom, property, and market relations. This study suggests that Newport women were enmeshed in highly gendered shore side
exchange economies that brought them into a broad range of social relationships with each other. Strategies for survival focused on cooperation and the creation of relationships and effective networks in which women with similar business interests exchanged goods and services, and visits and interactions were frequent and spontaneous. Even as they continued to subscribe to the cultural imperative of female dependence on men, their interactive activities were critical to their survival. Local familial ties for Friends were part of the kinship networks that linked Quakers into expansive fellowship over vast distances. Visiting patterns controlled channels of communication within the family and tied generations of women together. Lettering writing enabled Mrs. Rodman to mobilize family assets and connections to expand her options and ensure the care and education of her children. Her productive and reproductive labors and her interactive networks were central to the formation of her identity, and enmeshed her in broader social spaces that extended outward from her household and family to her church and community.

Analysis of Mary Rodman’s will is an indication of the significance that her female network held for her. By individualizing gifts with commemorative value and distributing property and money to female kin, she created bonds of obligation and support and established her place in family memory. Perhaps most importantly, the marriages of four of her children to the sons and daughters of elite Friends were an investment for the future that joined families, their wealth, resources, and a widening female circle of kin together.

Charity Rotch’s life course at Kendal offers historians a lens through which to view the experiences of the majority of women who only reluctantly left their families to
emigrate westward. By establishing the diversity and details of her experiences, it is possible to retrieve her history and integrate her more fully into the settlement of the rural heartland.

Like many first generation female settlers, emigration did not mean emancipation. Charity thought of relocation as intensified labor rather than freedom. And there were other paradoxes. In her mind, the break in ties with kinswomen on whom she had come to rely was unfortunate and unnatural. She took steps to repair this self-fragmentation and reassemble those connections disrupted by geographical distance. Kinship ties carried life-long obligations and most women expected that acts of kindness, and financial and emotional support would be reciprocated, especially as they grew older. Charity also believed that New England moral and cultural values defined the nation. By applying these values to a new environment, she could possibly civilize the frontier and “change the wilderness into a garden.” However, the Midwest as a culturally and geographically diverse crossroads region unexpectedly presented new challenges that redefined her gender roles in complex ways. As she crossed gender barriers and adapted to new realities, Charity altered her notions of self. Her labor, dominated by the needs of her family and the rhythm of the seasons, reflected her values and added a new dimension to her identity. And like her mother, Charity constructed a broad range of social relationships with other women. It appears that she operated in a supportive female community that made her survival in a new environment possible.

While we do not know how the Rotches negotiated and resolved the tensions that grew out of their changing work roles at Kendal, Charity’s productive labor affected her identity and enlarged her sphere of personal independence and autonomy. While Thomas
Rotch focused his energies on the “real work” of specialized commercial farming, the work of providing most of the family’s subsistence fell to his wife, whose work was not given a monetary value and was less valued than his. Charity however had an important role to play in the growth of the Kendal community. While Yearly Meetings imposed top-down structure on every aspect of Quaker life, local leaders including women interpreted and shaped the direction that their faith communities would take.

Entrusted with the preservation of their inner community life, Quaker women considered it their right and responsibility to build the faith community by maintaining the tenets of the faith. Charity’s witness to the signing of the Treaty of St. Mary’s (1818), her account of the signing to the Quaker Committee for Indian Concerns, and her centrality to Women’s Meetings supports the view that the Society of Friends encouraged and expected women to take on leadership roles in community life. Her will, the inventory of her estate and her bequests for the construction of the Charity School for poor children demonstrates the extent of her influence within her household and in her community. If her partnership with Rotch was not an egalitarian venture, she shaped and lent cohesion to the local Kendal community that men and women were building together.

Letters attest to the significance that kinship ties had for women whose responsibilities to each other remained unchanged and were unaltered by distance or death. Evidence confirms that dispersal reshaped the contours of familial connections, but did not eliminate the major function of kinship networks between women related by blood and marriage. By the late nineteenth century, personal letters would continue to be
a vehicle for expressions of intimacy for families increasingly uprooted from their homes and given to geographical dispersal.

My research reveals that most nineteenth-century women, including possibly those who left no written record, expected to live a female-centered life and did not think of themselves as autonomous. Letters represented the absent person’s nearness and tended to cluster around key events such as separation, births, marriage, sickness, work and death. Letters thus contributed to fashioning a self, and frequently were a place forbidden to men.

Elongated distances between families underscores the particular value and strengthening force letter writing had for women’s friendships and kinship ties in this period. Letters formed spaces that protected privacy and transparency, and enabled correspondents to think about who they were in relation to each other. Women’s activities, sometimes on a daily basis, held neighborhoods together and gave substance to the idea of community. Accounts of their shared interactions fill the pages of their letters. Rarely did women writers describe the activities of men, although men usually decided how and where women lived. Work with other women was part of a large organization of community, and an occasion for the exchange of ideas, practical support, news and gossip, and what women were thinking and feeling. As they became aware of themselves as writers, women established a sense of intimacy in spaces that encouraged their interconnections and interdependence and gave voice to their interior lives.

As an extension of face to face visits, social calls, and same-sex activities that drew on the art of conversation, letter-writing like earlier forms of Quaker print culture
open to women, empowered female writers, encouraging them to define relationships within their families and faith communities.

Although many Quaker women might have limited autonomy or power within their marriages, they utilized their letters to indirectly challenge the Society’s dominant male hierarchy. Entrusted with the task of preservation of their family through exclusion, Quaker women manipulated kin relationships to protect kinswomen from transgressions that were considered improper within marriage. Relationships, constructed or broken on the pages of letters created networks of kin that extended beyond the household and domestic life, and determined who came into the family circle where all intimacies were permissible, and who was excluded. Writers’ use of language to impose subtle limits, to influence, to control, to invoke a sense of guilt, or to persuade was a unique form of interaction that signaled a change in women’s self-identity.

Regardless of distance or geographical separation, most women continued to rely on kin for financial support, and emotional advice and stability. Despite their age or occupation or even region, whether they were teaching, homesteading, or self-employed, most women were interested in connectedness and assumed a like-minded reader. Pioneering, thus, created new opportunities and roles for women who remained interconnected and interdependent while they shaped kin relationships and defined the meaning of “family” and “community” on the frontier.
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______, “To Friends in Pennsylvania and New Jersey in America,” Handsworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, 6 mo 12th, 1746. Box F-14-9

______, “Extracts of a letter from Sarah Tuke, transcribed by Hannah Coffin for Charity Rotch, 7th of 5th mo, 1810”. Box F-14-25.

Quaker Poetry and other writings. Box F-17-21, “On Sugar” copied by Charity Rotch. Box F-17-47 Charity Rodman, Newport booklet of poems, “On viewing a ship in the Harbour of Boston bound to Africa to make slaves of Men,” 1785, and “The Negro’s Hymn” [nd, but before 1780]

Quaker Testimonies and Memorials Box F-15-1 through 35. [testimonials to deceased Friends.]

Quaker Writings and Printed copies, 1759-1823. Box F-18-2. The Epistle from the Yearly Meeting, London, 23rd day of the fifth month 1768 to the 28th of the same.


Robeson, Anna Rodman, New Bedford to Charity Rotch, Kendal. 12 Mo 23, 1821.


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Rodman, Elizabeth (Rotch), Wakefield, to Charity Rotch, Hartford, October 6, 1808. Box B-292-5.


______, letter to Charity Rotch, 5th mo 12th 1822. Box-B-291-3


Rodman, Hannah, to Sarah Rodman, 1775, Box F-14-7. Address to Hannah Rodman to Sarah Rodman, [np][nd]

Rodman, Hannah Prior, New Bedford, to Charity Rotch, Kendal, Ohio, February 20, 1822. Box B-293-1.

Rodman, Mary, Newport, Rhode Island, Extracts from her letters, 1758-1793. Box A-1-1.


______, Personal Correspondence, Maria Imlay letter to Mary Rodman, Newport 18th of the 7th mo 1777. Box A-14-1.

______, Newport, Rhode Island, to William and Elizabeth Rotch, Nantucket, April 4, 1790. Extracts from her letters, Box A-1-1.

______. Business and Personal Papers, 1775-1800. Box E-2-1 through 22. Box E-2-21 Mary Rodman, note of move to New Bedford, August 27, 1793; E-2-22, record of Mary Rodman’s death in New Bedford, on February 26, 1798.


______, Box E-2-3 Mary Rodman Business and Personal papers, Mary Rodman’s Book inventory lists, Newport 12 month 1785 through 12 month 1787.

______, Box E-2-4 [with map] October, 29, 1787. Town proposal for a road through Mary Rodman’s property.

______, Box E-2-12 Mary Rodman Business and Personal Papers, Will of Mary Rodman, New Bedford, February 10, 1798.


______, letter to Mary Rodman, 10th mo 14 1793. Box A-10-2.


Rotch, Charity, Kendal, Ohio to family, Connecticut, nd, Box B-226-4.


______, Kendal, Ohio, to Elizabeth Rodman, New Bedford, November 17, 1822. Swarthmore College Quaker Library, letter.

______, Kendal, Ohio to Parents and other dear relatives, New Bedford, October 27, 1823. Swarthmore College Quaker Library, letter.

______, Miscellaneous memoranda, Note by Charity Rotch, March 21, 1809. Box F-24-2.

______, Remedies and Recipes, Box F-10-2 through 36.

______, Kendal, Ohio, to family [np], [nd]. Box B-226-4.

______, Estate Legal Documents and Will, (July 11, 1824) Box F-25-2 through 13.

______, Estate Legal Documents and Accounts, Box F-26-50, Box F-26-62 through 70.

______, Charity School of Kendal, records, letters of application, indentures of students, minutes, accounts, 1831- 1865, Box G-2 through 12.


______, Newport Notebook, Box F-17-47.


Rotch, Elizabeth, letter to Charity Rotch, 2nd mo 25th, 1822 Box B-295-3.


Rotch, Mary. New Bedford, Connecticut, to Charity Rotch, 2nd Mo 3 (ny) Box B-298-1.

Rotch, Mary. New Bedford, Connecticut, to Charity Rotch, Wheeling on the Ohio. February 27, 1812.Box B-297-4


Rotch, Mary R., New Bedford, Connecticut, to Charity Rotch, Kendal, Ohio, February 3, [nd]. Box B-298-1.


Rotch, Thomas, letter to Eastus Newhall, Hartford, 3 mo 29th 1809. Box A-30-3.


______, letter to his parents, 10th mo 27th 1812. Box A-30-8.
______, letter to Seth Adams, 4th mo 13th 1816, Box A-30-12.
______, to the Committee on Indian Affairs, 10th mo 10th 1818, Box A-30-18.
______, letter to Aaron Chapman 7th mo 18, 1815. Box A-29-19.
______, Daybook H-21, pgs. 90-102. “Invoice of clothes forwarded to Pittsburgh to Allen & Grant for sale on Acct of Thomas Rotch, 11 mo 14, 1815.”
______, Quaker Testimonies and Memorials, Box F-15-16, Testimonial, [np][nd]
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______, Friends Preparative Meeting, Kendal Records, 1812-1836. Box F-7-1,2.


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______, letter, Kendal, to Isaac Russel, 6 mo 17th 1816. Daybook, Box-H-21, pp 43-44.

______, Notes of Friends Meetings, 1789-1821. Women’s Monthly Meeting for Mountmeluk, 10th of 4th mo 1789. Box F-8-1

______, Accounts and Notes of Friends Meetings, 1789-1821. Box F-8-1; F-8-3; F-8-8; F-8-21.

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______, Friends Preparative Meeting  Box F-7-1.

______, Daybook, to the Committee on Indian Concerns for the Yearly Meeting of Ohio. Box H-21, pp 76-78.

______, Diaries and memorandum books, Box F-9-9.

______, Accounts payable, Hartford, 1807-1812. Box E-8-1 through 139.

______, Daybook, H-20, letter to Michael Grable, Kendal 2 mo 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1818.

______, Daybook, H-20, letter to Daniel Christ, Kendal 1 mo 4\textsuperscript{th} 1819.


Rotch, William, Jr. to Thomas Rotch, 1 mo 18 1820. Box B-164-24.

______, letter to Mary Rodman, 7\textsuperscript{th} day morning [nd]. A-11-1.

Rotch, William Sr. and Elizabeth, New Bedford, to Charity Rotch, Kendal, Ohio, October 28, 1823. Box B-300-5.

______, letter to Thomas Rotch, 2 mo 5, 1809. Box B-164-21.

______, letter to Mary Rodman, 4\textsuperscript{th} mo 21, 1790. Box A-22-2.

______, letter to Thomas Rotch, 3 mo 22, 1802. Box B-164-8.

______, letter to Thomas Rotch, 3 mo 22, 1802. Box B-164-9.

______, letter to Thomas Rotch, 3\textsuperscript{rd} mo 27\textsuperscript{th} 1809. Box B-292-7.

______, letter to Thomas Rotch, 8\textsuperscript{th} mo 11\textsuperscript{th} 1810. Box B-164-49.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE RODMAN FAMILY OF NEWPORT

Thomas Rodman m. Mary Borden
(1724-1766) | (1729-1798)

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Samuel                      Elizabeth                 Sarah                      Charity
(1753-1835)                (1759-1856)                (1764-1793)                (1766-1824)
m. Elizabeth Rotch          m. William Rotch            m. Thomas Rotch
(1759-1856)                (1759-1850)                (1767-1823)

Elizabeth                  Mary                        Anna                    Hannah
(1752-1753)                (1757-1835)                (1761-1845)                (1764-1819)
m. Thomas Hazard            m. Samuel Fisher
APPENDIX B

GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE ROTCH FAMILY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>William Rotch m. Hannah Potter (1650-1705)</th>
<th>(1665-?)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William (1692-1756)</td>
<td>Hannah (1694-?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>m.</td>
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<td>David Webb (1697-?)</td>
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<td>m.</td>
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<td>Mary Kingman (1699-?)</td>
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<td>Nath. Jackson (1702-1758)</td>
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<td>m.</td>
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<td>Saml Symonds (1704-1784)</td>
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<td>m.</td>
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<td>Joseph (1707-1784)</td>
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<td>m.</td>
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<td>Martha Paine (1713-1767)</td>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
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<td>Love Macy (1702-1784)</td>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>m.</td>
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APPENDIX C

GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE ROTCH FAMILY OF NANTUCKET

Joseph Rotch m. Love Macy  
(1704-1784) | (1713-1767)

| William m. Elizabeth Barney  | Joseph  | Francis m. 1) Deborah Fleming  |
| (1734-1828) | (1743-1773) | (1750-1822) | (NFD) |
|  |  | 2) Alice Church  |
|  |  | (NFD – 1806) |
|  |  | 3) Nancy Rotch  |
|  |  | (1776-NFD) |

| William  | William  | Benjamin  | Lydia  |
| (1775-1757) | (1759-1850) | (1764-1839) | (1770-1822) |
| Elizabeth  | Susanna  | Thomas  | Mary  |
| (1757-1856) | (1762-1762) | (1767-1823) | (1777-1848) |
| m. Samuel Rodman  |  |  | m. William Dean  |
| (1753-1835) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | m. 1) Elizabeth Rodman  |
|  |  | 2) Lydia Scott  |
|  |  |  | (1759-1828) | (1782-1863) |
|  |  |  | m. Elizabeth Barker  |
|  |  |  | (1764-1857) | (1775-1846) |
|  |  |  | Charity Rotch  |
|  |  |  | (1766-1824) |