Bible Translators, Educators, and Suffragists: The Smith Women, a Nineteenth-Century Case Study in America About Power, Agency, and Subordination

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ABSTRACT

The methodological approach used to tell the Smith sisters’ story is first and foremost a case study of women in the nineteenth century and the gendered categories that were constructed to define women. The story will be told through a biographical narrative, which will allow Hannah, Julia, and Abby Smith’s to tell their story in their own voice. Also, included within the biography is an examination of the nineteenth-century theories that defined women’s lives, and what effect, if any, these theories had on the Smiths. Each chapter is layered with three different narratives in an attempt to unravel the world that women lived in the nineteenth century. First, the chapter provides a description and
analysis of the specific theories such as Republican Motherhood and cult of domesticity to ground the Smith women in the discursive world in which they lived. Then the chapter closely examines the practice or the way the Smith women lived their lives and what they thought about their world. Lastly, each chapter explores the secondary sources that have been written about each subject, such as the new female seminaries that opened in the nineteenth century. By combining these approaches, I hope to avoid some of the shortcomings that dominate the study of women today. First, the theoretical models and the study of real lives of women actually leave women out of their own stories. Second, historians tend to evaluate women’s lives from the past based upon their own political agendas and their own beliefs of what freedom and rights mean completely discarding what it might have meant to women in their own time period.

INDEX WORDS: Gender, Coverture, Female seminary, Suffrage, Women’s rights, Republican Motherhood, Domesticity, Millerites
BIBLE TRANSLATORS, EDUCATORS, AND SUFFRAGISTS: THE SMITH WOMEN, A
NINETEENTH-CENTURY CASE STUDY IN AMERICA ABOUT POWER, AGENCY, AND
SUBORDINATION

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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May 2013
Dedicated in Loving Memory

to my Mother,

Toni Loudon,

and to my Beautiful Son, Tristan,

for his Patience and Understanding
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started down this journey over ten years ago, to try and reach my own level of excellence and to reach a new level of academic understanding of history. My journey began simply enough: I have always had a passion for and an absolute love of history. My interest began at the age of ten, when my sister and I traveled to Hong Kong. From that point on, I have wanted to know how people lived in other countries, and I wanted to know how and why they thought differently than we did here in America. Even though I have always believed that I traveled on my own journey of discovery and challenged myself to reach my own level of excellence, there have always been people behind the scenes that have made it possible for me to pursue my passion. So I must begin by thanking my father for taking my sister and I to many different countries, which introduced me to many different worlds and cultures. My father’s influence did not end there; he also helped me attend two great liberal arts Universities, which introduced me to the academic side of studying and learning about different cultures and peoples. Lastly, I inherited my love of and passion for history from my dad, so without him this dissertation would have never been written.

In the academic world I would like to thank my first mentor, Dr. John McClung, who took a chance on me when he personally signed off on my acceptance letter, which allowed me to pursue my Masters Degree in History at Pepperdine University. I thank him for his compassion as a professor and as an administrator. He taught me how I could bring my love and compassion for others to the classroom. Whenever I am teaching, whether in a large college lecture hall or a small high school classroom, I always try to treat my students with the same respect, love, and compassion that Dr. McClung so effortlessly showed to all of his students.
I am forever indebted to Dr. Robert Howard Baker II for stepping in as my dissertation director at the crucial moment when I needed not only encouragement, but also his indispensable suggestions and comments that have been incorporated into the final draft of my dissertation. Without the support, constructive criticism, and enthusiasm that Dr. Baker brought to this projected, this project may very well have never been completed. I also wish to thank Dr. Jake Selwood for his continued support of my project despite the many delays it took me to reach completion. His comments have assuredly made this a more polished work.

Of my three dissertation readers, I feel the need to send a special “thank you” to Dr. Wendy Venet whose support and encouragement contributed significantly to my ability to complete this story of the Smith sisters. It was in her 19th century gender class that I initially encountered the Smith sisters and wrote my first paper that eventually turned into this dissertation. More than any other course that I completed at the doctoral level, it was Dr. Venet’s class that taught me how to suitably write a research paper that could be turned into a larger project. Dr. Venet also taught me how to be an absolute professional at all times, whether I was doing committee work, leading a class discussion, or defending my dissertation. Most importantly, I am appreciative of Dr. Venet’s construction criticism and suggestions that she has given me since the beginning of this project when it was just a seminar paper, until the very end when I made the final edits of my completed dissertation.

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the time to meet me at the Glastonbury historical society to share her ideas and love for the Smith women, and for answering any questions that I had whenever I emailed her. I only hope I did justice to this amazing family of women, especially the matriarch, Hannah!

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INTRODUCTION

In 1872, at the ages of eighty and seventy-five years old, respectively, Julia and Abby Smith sounded a battle cry as the alleged victims of “taxation without representation.” The political battle began for the sisters when they learned the Glastonbury, Connecticut, town-fathers had greatly increased their property tax. The increase struck them as an underhanded move perpetrated against two legally unprotected spinsters.¹ In the age when most people wanted to retire and remain comfortably in their home, Julia and Abby set out on a quest that would take them all the way to the Connecticut State Legislature to fight for their rights to protect their private property.

The Smith sisters’ journey began on a quiet afternoon while they were relaxing in their parlor, and their local tax collector showed up at their front door with a tax bill that was $100.00 more than the previous year. Abby immediately responded to the tax collector that “the only other people in town whose assessment had increased besides themselves were two widows; not a single man was so affected.”² Julia and Abby knew that they lacked the power to fight against the town’s selectmen and the tax collector without the right to vote. They determined that their first line of defense against the tyranny of the tax collector would be to register to vote. When Julia and Abby were denied the right to register to vote they decided that they would not pay their property tax until they had the right to vote on local issues. This set off a chain of events, which brought the Smith sisters to the attention of local and national press when the tax collector, Mr. Andrews, confiscated seven of Julia’s eight Alderney cows. Julia pleaded with him

² Ibid., 141.
to leave behind at least two, since one would be distressed if left alone, but the tax collector refused and drove the reluctant, pet-like cows down the road, bellowing the entire way.

The Smith sister’s fight with the tax collector took them all the way to New York City in the summer of 1876, when Abby spoke at the New York State Woman Suffrage Association’s seventh annual convention passionately telling the story of their unfair treatment. The fight to protect their private property, which consisted of, first their seven cows and then when the sisters stilled refused to pay their taxes the town tax collector seized a portion of their land and sold it to a neighbor at an extremely low price, which paid the Smith’s local tax for one year. Their court cases over the confiscation of their land and their fight for their right to vote came to an inglorious end after seven long years of sacrifice, struggle, and disappointments, when they achieved their only victory against the town of Glastonbury as the court decided in their favor “that the tax collector had the right to seize their personal property but not their land.”

Julia and Abby Smith’s tax struggle was one of the many ordinary events that make up an altogether extraordinary history of the struggle for women’s rights in America. But it is important not just because it tied property rights to suffrage rights, or because it invoked cherished political beliefs to raise up the woman’s standard, but because the main characters were important for many other reasons. Before the Smith sisters joined the contemporary suffrage fight they worked for the poor their community, thus illustrating how national and local concerns intersected in women’s activism. In addition, their education and religious practices illuminated the complex and shifting expectations of women and what their defined roles should be in antebellum America.

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\(^3\) Housley, *The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life*, 168.
Luckily for historians, the Smith sister and their mother left behind extensive personal writings, allowing us to examine in detail their fight against the male leaders in the town of Glastonbury, their daily activities, their education, and their shifting thoughts on religion. The simple fact that Julia and Abby broke free of the proscribed behavior, by refusing to bow submissively to the male authority in their town, provides an interesting case study to examine closely how two women fought for their right to vote. The story of the Smith sisters also offers an opportunity to examine gender issues and categories that defined women in nineteenth-century America. The Smiths not only fought for the right to vote, but they also worked for the poor in their community throughout their lives, they were extremely well educated, their religious ideas challenged the dominant Protestant doctrine, and they worked on their father’s farm to provide for the family.

The extensive documents left behind by the Smith women provide the basis for this case study about the gender issues American women faced in the nineteenth century. By examining the interesting lives led by Hannah Smith and her daughters, and by writing a detailed analysis of such gendered theoretical categories as Republican Motherhood and the cult of domesticity, used by historians to define and portray women in nineteenth-century America, a clearer picture of women and how they lived their lives begins to emerge. More specifically, the experiences and challenges that Julia and Abby faced throughout their lives – including their break from the church for their radical religious views, their progressive education, and their benevolence work – presents an opportunity to examine the theoretical underpinnings of women’s work. Through their letters, speeches, and diaries that illuminate certain aspects of their lives, it becomes apparent that the Smith women were at times constrained by cultural mores; but at other times,
the women seemed surprisingly free and independent and left to create and live within their own personal space.

Current theoretical approaches used to study gender in the nineteenth century examine the patriarchal, educational, legal, and religious discourses, which created and enforced separate spheres for both men and women. Discursive practices served to restrict both men and women, to reduce their being to proscribed categories and impose upon them the expectation that they live up to certain morals and virtues. Women were believed to be creatures crafted by God to raise and nurture children, calm the passions of their husbands, and care for the sick. These social proscriptions also restricted women’s access to the worlds of power and politics. The limited and confining space shaped by these discourses reveals itself in phrases used to define the different areas in which women were expected to exist, such as, republican motherhood, true womanhood, and the cult of domesticity. Therefore, one of the central questions concerning women in the nineteenth century should be: how much or to what degree did these discursive categories work to repress women and keep them sequestered in their homes without a political voice or power? Were women able to construct their own spheres of influence and circumvent these restrictions? If so, to what degree? The Smith sisters and their mother’s own life experiences suggest that at certain moments and time they were able to create their own, unique spheres of power in which they found their own unique voices. Lastly, the Smith women’s personal and intimate stories offer a historical laboratory to examine the complicated relationship between the gendered defined categories and the practice of gender in nineteenth century America.

Women’s history has undergone many changes in the last forty years, beginning with an effort to simply retrieve female voices back from the past, and then it moved on providing a whole new theoretical basis to define, examine, and discuss the importance of women. The
public memory of the Smith sisters themselves followed the same sort of trajectory as women’s history. During their lifetime, the fight the sisters waged against the men in their hometown and the tax collector brought them to the attention of major newspapers throughout the country as well as the national women’s movement. While they seemed important enough to speak at suffrage conventions, their names, their fight, their letters, and their speeches are never mentioned in *History of Woman Suffrage*, edited in 1889 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage.

In the 1940s and 1950s interest in the Smith sisters’ lives revived in Glastonbury and in Connecticut when the town began to reconstruct their story and struggles with the town. Through articles, school plays, and a made-for-TV movie these two intelligent and strong women were transformed into absurd caricatures. They were portrayed as two “old biddy” busybodies interfering in business that should have not concerned them. The tendency to treat the sisters’ as oddities who added color to history of the town continued until local historian Kathleen L. Housley found a reference to Julia and Abby’s translation of the Bible. What caught her attention was a passage that stated, “Two unintelligent women translated the bible five times from the original Greek, Hebrew, and Latin texts.” According to Housley, it seemed odd that two unintelligent women in the nineteenth century would have the interest and knowledge to translate the Bible. She set out on a mission to discover who these two women were, a quest that led to the first full-length scholarly study of the Smith family.

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In 1993 Housley published *The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life: The Smiths—Abolitionist, Suffragists, Bible Translators*, which chronicles the Hannah and her daughters education and religious beliefs, and provides a detailed examination of Julia and Abby’s fight with the town leaders over their tax increase and their right to vote. The importance of Housley’s work cannot be overestimated, because it restored these interesting women to their proper place in women’s history and in nineteenth century American historiography. The works only flaw lay in the fact that it does not analyze the sisters’ accomplishments and struggles within the complex gendered discourses of the nineteenth century, an oversight that is remedied by this dissertation.

Susan Shaw wrote a second full—length book about Julia Smith entitled, *A Religious History of Julia Evelina Smith’s 1876 Translation of the Holy Bible*. As the title suggests, Shaw’s book offers a religious analysis to Julia’s religious beliefs and to her translations of the Bible. The purpose for the study according to Shaw was to investigate those “factors-religious, political, and otherwise, which led to the 1876 publication of Smith’s translation of the Holy Bible from the original languages.”

Another religious study has been completed by Emily Clyde Walte Sampson, which provides a detailed analysis of Julia’s translations. In her dissertation, *Her works shall praise her: the biblical translation of Julia Evelina Smith*, Sampson analyzes the process that Julia went through to translate the Bible from Greek, Hebrew, and then Latin. Her study also provides the explanation about the different types of translations and concludes that Julia strove for literal translations, meaning that Julia attempted to find the exact meaning of each and every word in English.

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7 Sampson, Emily Clyde Walte. *Her works shall praise her : the biblical translation of Julia Evelina Smith*. (Dissertation, Claremont University, California, 1998).
A third and much abbreviated account of the Smith sisters is found in one chapter of Linda K. Kerber’s book, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies, Women and the Obligations of Citizenship*. She provides a detailed analysis of the Smith sisters’ fight against townsmen of Glastonbury based on the law of coverture. Kerber uses Julia and Abby’s experience to illustrate the problems facing women in the nineteenth century who were not married or otherwise “covered by a father, brother, or uncle.”

One last account of the Smith story can be found in Carole Nichols’ *Votes and More for Women: Suffrage and After in Connecticut*. She only mentions of the Smith sisters, as a side story, but she does not begin to discuss or analyze the true impact and the struggle they went through when they fought the male leaders of Glastonbury. She simply stated, “A dramatic stand on the suffrage question was taken in the 1870s by Julia and Abby Smith, the ‘Maids of Glastonbury,’ who ‘resisted the collection of their taxes on the ground that they had no voice in the levy.’ When the women refused to back down, the town seized and sold their property and livestock to collect the taxes.” Instead of investigating the important role that the Smith’s played in the women’s movement, and the central role they played in creating the publicity for the fight in Connecticut, Nichols argued that Isabella Beecher Hooker actually was the dominant figure in the Connecticut women’s movement.

The two biographies and the religious study of the Smith family have provided the foundation and the framework needed to begin to examine the Smith family and their defined roles as women, beginning with the mother, Hannah in the eighteenth century and her daughters in the nineteenth century. In order to broaden the narrative, this dissertation will examine the

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Smiths’ lives against the gendered categories that were constructed in their day to define the proper roles for women, beginning in the late eighteenth century when Hannah came of age and ending with the deaths of Julia and Abby in the late 1870s.

This study builds upon several generations of scholarship in women’s history. The earliest works in the field consisted of straightforward and chronological accounts that attempted to restore women’s voices back to the national narrative. This approach changed with the rise of cultural and women’s studies in the 1970s, particularly with breakthrough theories advanced by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Both advanced the study of women by providing new methodological approaches to analyze and reveal the way powerful institutions, such as, educational, legal, medical, scientific, and government structures have worked to restrict women and the possible ways women may be able to subvert these dominant power structures.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault developed a theoretical model to examine power. He theorized that all power derived from discourse, which he formulated as “who does the speaking, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it, and who stores and distributes the things that are said.”¹⁰ According to Foucault, the modern discourse about sexuality began in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, taken up first by the school system, followed by the medical establishment, which defined perversion (abnormal sex) as a nervous disorder. The professionalization of knowledge continued as, “psychiatry set out to discover the etiology of mental illness, especially when it annexed the whole of sexual perversion as its own province,” and it tried to normalize sexuality. Lastly, the “criminal justice system included their opinions and began to criminalize sexual perversion.”¹¹ These institutions, according to Foucault, were powerful entities funded and supported by states intent on constructing ways to normalize and

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¹¹ Ibid., 30.
control the behaviors of their citizens. The discourses created were so powerful and pervasive that they permeated into the psyches of citizens in western society. Foucault finally concluded that men and women, essentially, had lost all personal power or agency because they had internalized the discourse of sexual normalcy. Foucault’s idea concerning the all-pervasive power of discourse has become one of the foundational, methodological approaches for much of women’s history. Therefore, a key question involving most of women’s historiography today is this: could women have agency if the control of knowledge and the power of discourse is as irresistible as Foucault’s model suggests?

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler applies Foucault’s theory to the study of women. She argues that women might be able to find small spheres of power and agency. However, for that to happen women would have to define their own gender and sexuality based upon a whole new discursive model. Butler asserts that gender is culturally molded and constructed by language or discourse rather than being inherited naturally and innately. This gender construction has been traditionally and particularly detrimental to women. The problem for women remains that men of science define and write about female gender for women. Therefore, men have the authority and power to control the creative discourse. She defines the male-constructed gender “as a phallocentric discourse,” which has proven difficult for women to overcome.  

Since men have been allowed to define women, their gender, and, therefore, their capabilities, women have been stripped of their agency. The ultimate challenge for women, according to Butler, is to develop a new language or model of gender that escapes the insidious, male-dominated power matrix.

Butler also describes as a fallacy the idea that gender exists only within the strict, biologically dictated, binary form of female and male. She believes that if gender is constructed, rather than natural and innate, and if it is the product of cultural reproducing itself within/into

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bodies, rather than bodies producing culture, then sexuality and gender must have a history that can be recognized, researched, and analyzed. Lastly, Butler concludes her analytical tour de force with the contention that the process of gender identity construction involves the repetitive performance of culturally rewarded gender behaviors—that is, “gender proves to be performative, and in a sense is always doing.” Thus, with enough “doing,” the actions become normalized and owned as natural, which, provides women with the ability to create their own gender identity and agency through performance.

Foucault’s discursive model and Butler’s ground breaking study about the cultural construction of gender influences most of the current literature defining women’s history today, when women’s studies are dominated by the question of whether women have their own agency or were they always subjugated by men based upon the law or the discursive constraint devised and maintained by men. Based upon the new methodology, the study of women can be divided into two broad historiographical categories. The first category describes women as generally lacking agency, power, or public personas based upon the theoretical models that kept women oppressed either by law, separate spheres of public and private lives, or the religious and medical constructed discourse that made women weak, irrational, and therefore less than or imperfect man. The second category argues that women in fact constructed their own spheres of power and that throughout the nineteenth century, women gained more agency and power over their own lives.

Following both Foucault’s and Butler’s models, Anthony Fletcher’s study *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England. 1500–1800* argues that patriarchy, like gender, also has a history that has defined women’s role. He states,

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13 Ibid., 25.
Patriarchy has been shaped and reshaped during the long history of Western Christendom as men have grappled with the effective exercise of social and political power. The structures of domination, which sustain patriarchy, have never been inert, they have always been adaptable.\(^\text{14}\)

Therefore, patriarchy as constructed by discourse will reflect the religious, political, and social ideology and values of any given time period. According to Fletcher, one of the key connections is not only the natural difference between women and men, as created by God, but also the language used to describe the two genders. In 1526 William Tyndale coined the phrase the “weaker vessel” in his English translation of the New Testament, and most of the medical literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thenceforth have used the same language to refer to women. Therefore, Fletcher concluded that “scripture and medical beliefs supported each other and they together supported the patriarchal order.”\(^\text{15}\)

Some biographies written today utilize a methodological approach that (1) discovers the theoretical bases that defined the discursive patriarchal world, which view women as the ‘weaker vessel’; and (2) uses Butler’s idea of performativity to define how women tried to break through the constructed barriers that served as various obstacles to construct their own agency. A perfect example of this type of study can be found in all the recent studies written about Queen Elizabeth I. One key example, Carol Levin’s, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, presents a cultural analysis focusing on such topics as the language, clothes, and images Elizabeth deployed to create for herself a legitimate gendered space to reign as sole monarch. Levin’s study belongs to the second category, which argues that women carved out their own space of power and agency. Levin specifically examines the many strategic representations Elizabeth “performed” using language and dress as cultural tools of power to construct her own unique gender identity, not so


\(^{15}\) Ibid., 63.
much as a queen, but rather as a female king. Levin’s work represents the most complete study of Elizabeth’s constructed nature of gender to date.16

The second study, Christopher Haigh’s biography Elizabeth I, argues that Elizabeth created her own unique gendered space that she needed to legitimize her rule; but she viewed herself as the exception, rather than the rule. He states “she determinedly contrasted herself with the rest of her sex, stressing their frailty but claiming to be an exception since God’s calling made her the Queen.”17 He also explains that the duality of Elizabeth as a monarch and a woman derived from the medieval idea that the monarch in fact had two bodies, one natural body and one political body, and therefore Elizabeth looked to history to define and perform her own gendered representation of a monarch, not a woman.

Another major change that has emerged in women’s history can be described in terms of theory versus practice. Amy Louise Erickson’s book Women and Property in Early Modern England: 1550-1720 and Linda K. Kerber’s Women of the Republic: Intellect and the Ideology in Revolutionary America both serve a perfect examples in the current literature that examines the complex relationship between women’s own personal agency and the constraints placed on the by the law and the dominant patriarchal discourse.

Using wills and court records, Erickson examines the relationship between the law of coverture, inheritance law, and the actual subordination of women. The records showed that many of the strict inheritance laws did not apply to middle rank women. Erickson’s analysis of court records revealed that inheritance law of the widow’s third and the discourses related to patriarchy and hierarchy did not necessarily impact the day-to-day reality for women, because many women inherited a lot more than their widow’s third when their husbands died. The court

records also showed that women were able to bring their own “wealth into a marriage, such as furniture, bedding, or money” that they inherited.\textsuperscript{18} She concedes in her conclusion that the aristocrats may have adhered more closely to the theory or the ideology of coverture, but for the majority of the middling and lower rank peoples, such adherence just was not economically feasible.

Erickson presents a second reason why women’s lives were different in practice in the sixteenth century from what the theoretical model might suggest. She explains that women had access to four courts, the most favorable were the church courts, which dealt with wills and inheritance laws. Her research reveals that women were provided with protection and had representation in the church court system. However, all of this changed by the eighteenth century when the common law courts replaced the church courts with the rise of democracy and the religious changes taking place in England. She discounts the liberal, progressive ideal that women gained more rights as time progressed and that they their lives improved with the rise of democracy. This argument leads logically to an interesting question regarding Hannah’s, Julia’s and Abby’s experiences and overall lives because, between them and their mother, women’s roles and place in society can be traced before the American Revolution through the end of the nineteenth century and thus gauge whether these individuals gained more freedom and agency with the rise of democracy in America or whether their lives became more repressive.

Linda K. Kerber’s book \textit{Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America}, examined how women defined their own space in the new American Republic by subverting the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideal of republican motherhood. She began her discussion by analyzing how women in the early nineteenth century America were first defined

by the Enlightenment ideology of republican motherhood, which was based upon the idea of civic virtue, as written by such men as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Charles de Socondat baron of Montesquieu. Both men wrote that a woman in a Republic should dedicate her life and energy to educating her sons and to providing the love and support a husband needed to properly perform his civil and public duties. According to Montesquieu, the stability of a nation rested on the persistence of virtue among its citizens, and the creation of virtuous citizens depended on the presence of wives and mothers who were well informed and “properly methodical and free of invidious passions, which dominated the male character.”¹⁹

Kerber also examines a second definition of republican motherhood, developed by the American doctor, Benjamin Rush. He, like his French counterparts excluded women from political power by omitting them from the public sphere and placing them firmly within the domestic sphere, which ultimately led to two separate areas of power for men and women. Men controlled the public and political sphere while women were relegated to the private/domestic sphere. Rush’s idea of republican motherhood differed from the French Philosophes in that he believed that women need a proper education in order to shape and mold the next generation of American citizens. He argued, “The equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government.”²⁰

Ultimately Kerber argues that women were able to subvert the cultural and legal definition of separate spheres as defined by Rush by constructing their own relationship to the state by turning their traditional domestic duties as mothers to nurture and educate their children.

²⁰ Ibid., 228, 229.
into a political act. She concludes that, in the end, republican motherhood had both a positive and negative impact on women’s personal and political lives. On the one hand, the ideology became a crucial event in the evolutionary process of developing women’s political consciousness and it provided an avenue for female education. On the other hand, the discursive construction of the domestic sphere restricted women’s actions to the role of nurturer and mother, which ultimately excluded them from the world of formal politics.

Many current scholars working in the field of women’s history have also analyzed the nineteenth century gender discourse of sexual difference, such as true womanhood and the cult of domesticity, both of which served to represent women as angelic, pious, soft, and nurturing creatures who lacked the mental ability to work outside of the home in any capacity beyond caring for others. According to recent historical research women in the nineteenth century did find ways to challenge this paradigm by subverting the biological qualities that defined them. For example Anne Boylan in *Origins of Women’s Activism: New York and Boston, 1797* examines how women worked to redefine their relationship with the state by controlling their own sphere of power. Boylan’s work specifically analysis “how the nineteenth-century gender system came into being,” by tracing the ideologies and practices of postrevolutionary womanhood and examining how “Republican Motherhood” turned into the ideologies and practices of antebellum northern womanhood.”

Boylan dates the beginnings of women’s public activism to 1797 with the founding of New York’s Society for the Relief of the Poor Widows and Small Children, and then she traces the changes that transformed women’s activism over the next forty years. These changes, according to Boylan, occurred when evangelicals reshaped the definition of womanhood as part

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of a larger agenda to capture and redefine republicanism for their own religious and political purposes. She argues that the evangelicals’ success “rested upon the strong appeal that their principles held for many postrevolutionary urban Americans, particularly the belief that social discipline stemmed from self-discipline, and conviction that true personal freedom required voluntary submission to God’s authority.”22 The key decades involved included the 1810s and 1820s. This was the period according to Boylan when evangelical impulses merged benevolence work, politics, and piety close together and that the obligations of citizenship became equated with the obligations of Christianity. Boylan concludes that nineteenth-century women were able to integrate their volunteer activities into their daily lives in ways that did not compete with family duties and that created a new gender ideology “based on feminine self-sacrifice and subordination.”23

Similarly, Lori D. Ginzberg, in her book *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, focuses on the evolution of female benevolent work in nineteenth-century America. Her study analyzes the strategies that female reformers employed to define their charity work, especially their Christian, moral duty to care for others, which became their special “calling.” The calling to perform their religious duties as good Christians provided the space needed to carve out their own sphere of influence as businesswomen, civil servants, and eventually, professional social workers. Ginzberg argues that the “antebellum equation of benevolence with female morality sheltered women’s considerable political influence and shielded their widespread involvement in business.” She also explains how women, through their benevolent work, were able to create and run major corporate bodies, which “contradicts everything we thought we knew about the legal

22 Ibid., 8
23 Ibid., 9.
status of married women in the antebellum period.”24 Because women were regarded as morally superior, Ginzberg concludes, they were able to redefine and use their special role in the benevolence work to enable personal and political power and agency.

Additionally, Judith Giesberg, in her study *Civil War Sisterhood*, examines the work that women accomplished and the power they exerted while working for the U.S. Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. She argues that the benevolent organization educated women in the political process and it set the foundation for the reform movements of the twentieth century. Her work repudiates the conventional argument that women played almost no political role in creating the organization. She maintains that the USSC came out of the women’s group WCAR (Women’s Central Association of Relief) and that the founding women successfully blended the voluntary agendas of thousands of local women societies with their own agendas for national political engagement.

The Women’s Central Relief of the Army and Navy of the US (WCAR) began in April 1861 as one of many grassroots organizations that supported Union soldiers in camp and in the field. Northern women formed thousands of local aid societies sending clothes, food, equipment, and medical supplies to their loved ones. How best to organize and distribute the goods led to the formation of advisory boards, and both men and women sat on the boards and made important contributions. After the war, according to Ginsberg, the many relationships gained during the war provided the foundation for many powerful reform movements led by many women who worked for the commission.25

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Lastly, Linda K. Kerber also presents an analysis of women based on the innate biological differences between woman and men, which worked to define American citizenship in binary differentiated terms for women and men. In *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship*, she examines the obligations a citizen must be able to fulfill to the state in order to enjoy the freedom and rights guaranteed by the state, a quid pro quo that served to exclude women from the basic rights promised to American citizens. She argues that whenever the state compels men to fulfill their civic duties, like military duty, then women should also be compelled to fulfill the same duty, and, if not, then their citizenship would be worth less. The fact that throughout the nineteenth century women were not allowed by the state to fulfill most of these obligations meant that they could not enjoy the full right of citizenship and therefore were excluded from the public sphere.²⁶

Kerber also discussed the binary biological differences between the sexes that politicians and women rights activists deployed to define women as intellectually, physically, and socially different. According to Kerber, feminist, women activists, and conservative groups all used this argument to either fight for the rights of women to participate in the civic and public sphere or to argue that women should be excluded. Supporters of women’s rights stated that if women were different then their unique ideas or opinions were needed in American politics or to sit on juries to create a more free and just nation. She further presented the opposing view that, because women were biologically different, they deserved and should expect to receive protection from the rough and cruel world of politics. As her title suggests, women have the “constitutional right to be treated like ladies.”²⁷ Lastly, Kerber shares Judith Butler’s view, that women and men’s intellectual and physical capabilities are similar and not determined by biology, but instead the

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²⁷ Kerber, xxiv.
differences only emerge in the construction of gender, therefore women are completely capable of performing the same duties as men and for that reason should be allowed to perform their civic obligations to the state.

A recent edition of the *Journal of America History* includes an article addressing the many different complicated issues facing women’s and gender history in the twenty-first century. Cornelia H. Dayton and Lisa Levenstein’s article, “The Big Tent of U.S. Women’s and Gender History,” examines the generational differences between young, tech-savvy women, who consider blogging the new sphere of cultural construction as well as the means to create and distribute political discourse, and historians who still publish their work in scholarly journals, for a very limited audience. Both writers believe that many twenty-first century trends directly influence the field of women’s history. They argue that twenty-first century feminist politics are reflected in women’s history scholarship, with a growing emphases on the cultural representations of ‘the body’ and have created a new broad agenda “in which feminists train their lenses on subjects not associated only—or even primarily—with women,”28 and while the younger generation sees public figures such as Lady Gaga as the embodiment of female power and agency, the older generation look to women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton as the feminist hero. With the many changes happening in twenty-first century politics, culture, and the feminist movement, the authors question if can there be an overarching umbrella for feminists, bloggers, and historians to work together to create a American narrative of women’s history.

The article concludes that to truly understand the work of any historian you must place them in the historical, cultural, and political environment of when and where they are producing their work. Dayton and Levenstein believe that this is especially true for gender and women’s

studies today. They examine the political, social, and cultural structures that influence the writing of women’s and gender history today, such as, “how women in the U.S. continue to be overrepresented among the poor, much more than in other developed nations,” how women’s incarceration rate is now nearly “double the rate for men,” and that women also outnumber men in four-year colleges and now make up half the paid labor force.29 Living in such a complicated world has pushed scholars to envision more flexible understandings of gender, ones that address “contingency, multiplicity, and fluidity as well as enduring exclusions and hierarchies.”30 By redefining the meaning of gender and sexuality the authors argue that many new and exciting areas of study will open up for gender and women historians. The future of the field will include combined studies of gender with “imperialism, sexuality, reproduction, transnational social movements, immigration, human trafficking, criminal justice, and care work,” and these new fields, the authors conclude, reflect the “expansive horizons of twenty-first-century feminist politics.”31

The new turn in American women’s historiography has discovered different roles and duties for women outside of the traditional binary of public/political versus private/domestic spheres, but they still lack the voices of real women and what they thought of the power that they managed to attain. The current studies still focus too heavily on the idea of agency and the theoretical models used by historians to prove or to disprove whether women had their own spheres of power.32 Also, many of the new studies at times fail to provide a clear analysis of the

29 Ibid., 815.
30 Ibid., 816
31 Ibid.
language and terms used by modern historians to describe what women in the nineteenth century believed to be their own spheres of influence and power. Therefore, an analysis of language, theories, and models are embedded within the biographical story of the Smith sisters, in an attempt to uncover the areas in which the Smiths had power or agency over their own lives.

Methodology and Sources

The methodological approach used to tell the Smith sisters’ story is first and foremost a biography, which allows the women to tell their story in their own voices. There are many difficulties in attempting to use individuals to help convey ideas in the past or to allow historical subjects to have their own voices. One of the main obstacles to writing biographies is that for the last two decades many historians have argued that biographies are an obsolete form of historical writing because of the “social history and linguistic turn cultural history, in their most extreme articulations, reject the significance (sometimes even the existence) of the individual as historical agent.”33 Also, many historians writing today believe that all historical writing is completely subjective, and that the real “truth” or story cannot be found or told. Even (perhaps especially) for those historians who believe in the possibility of objective truth, biography is problematic precisely because of its explicit embracement of a predetermined developmental pattern. For these reasons, the genre of biography has fallen into disfavor, and has largely been left to the popular historians, rather than academics.

David Nasaw in the “Introduction” to an article on Biographical writing today in the The American Historical Review argues that new biographies written today should refocus attention on the “once living individuals who were both formed by and provided meaning to the social

and discursive orders in which they were inserted at birth and lived their lives,” and that historians who write biographies should begin with the premise that “individuals are situated but not imprisoned in social structures and discursive regimes.”

Alice Kessler-Harris agrees with Nasaw in her article, “Why Biography,” that we as historians must get beyond debating whether there is a “truth” to be found in the past, but “I resist the notion that we are therefore engaged in our own form of fiction writing.” Instead Kessler-Harris argues that if we closely examine the “perspectives from which our subjects speak and write,” and analyze the “individual actor—not for what he or she may have done, but for what his or her thoughts, language, and contests with the world reveal,” and use the collective memories of individuals as historical sources.”

The story of the Smith women is multi-generational narrative, beginning with Hannah, the mother, who came of age during the American Revolution and continuing specifically with Julia and Abby, both because they initiated the legal battle which garnered them national attention, in the 1860s, and because they, like their mother, left written records about their lives. The three main voices that will be “heard” throughout this narrative are Hannah, Julia, and Abby, but the other three sisters (Zephina, Cynthia, and Laurilla) will be discussed as they are relevant to Julia and Abby’s stories. Also, included within this biography is an examination of the nineteenth-century theories that defined women’s lives, and what effect, if any, these theories had on the Smiths.

Each chapter is layered with three different narratives in an attempt to unravel the world in which these women lived during the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth

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34Ibid.
century. First, each chapter provides a description and analysis of the specific event in their lives, like marriage, or theories, such as, Republican Motherhood and cult of domesticity, to place the Smith women in the discursive world in which they lived. A close examination then follows of this practice – how the Smith women lived their lives and what they thought about their world. Lastly, each chapter covers the secondary sources that have been written about each subject, such as the new female seminaries that opened in the nineteenth century. By combining these three different approaches, I hope to avoid some of the shortcomings that dominate the study of women today. First, the theoretical models and the study of real lives of women actually leave women out of their own stories. Second, historians tend to evaluate women’s lives from the past based upon their own political agendas and their own beliefs of what freedom and rights mean, completely discarding what it might have meant to women in their own time period.

Fortunately, the Smith sisters were extremely well educated women who left behind diaries, letters, and speeches that allow them at times to speak for themselves. One problem that emerges when using personal documents to illuminate specific theories or ideas is that sources written in diaries or letters never truly reveal what people think or feel. Oftentimes, the sources themselves become extremely repetitive and dry, frequently just commenting on the weather or one’s health. According to Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, the sheer repetitive nature of the narrative is where a person reveals what is truly important in their lives. Ulrich wrote that it “is the very dailiness, the exhaustive, repetitious dailiness, that the real power of Martha Ballard’s book lies.”36 After years of analyzing Ballard’s diary, Ulrich realized that Martha’s true voice came in the common and repetitive nature of her daily entries.

Following Ulrich’s example, I deconstructed the sheer repetitive nature of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century diaries. When reading the diary of David Hickok (Hannah Smith’s father), it became apparent that three things dominated this man’s life: the weather, his farm, and religion. Julia Smith kept a diary for ten years, and in this diary, she always commented on other people’s health, the weather, what she had read or studied that day, and what housework she had done for the day. Just as Ulrich reconstructed Ballard’s life by decoding each the diary entry, in the same way I was able to reveal moments of David’s and Julia’s voice from the past. By the sheer repetitive nature of their diaries, I was able to discover what they deemed to be important.

The story of the Smith family is told in five chapters, with each chapter focusing on a specific gender issue that white, Northern, middle-class women dealt with in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The story will be told through a comparative and thematic approach, where Hannah’s life and experiences are examined and then it is compared to her daughters to try and reveal if any significant changes took place for women between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The first chapter begins with Hannah when she was a young woman coming of age during the American Revolution. The story begins with Hannah’s parents, Abigail and David’s Hickok’s marriage and the manner in which they ran their household economy. The chapter then examines Hannah’s marriage along with her household economy compared to that of her parents, to analyze whether the tradition of marriage as well as a women’s role in the economy changes between the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The chapter ends with Hannah sets off for Glastonbury, Connecticut with her new husband, Zephaniah, to set up her own household.
Chapter Two begins with Hannah setting up her own domestic home in Glastonbury, Connecticut. The chapter focuses on Hannah’s and her daughters’ work on the farm and their spirited social lives. It focuses on how the women constructed and ran their own domestic sphere, and what occupied their time in their own household. The chapter also closely examines the cult of domesticity discourse by analyzing contemporary sources that defined and constructed the idea of properly constructed household. It examines the active social life of Hannah as a young woman and then compares it to the social lives of her daughters. Also, the way that that Hannah constructed her memory of the world around her, which is revealed through her diary is compared to the way her daughter, Julia constructed and made sense of her world through her diary. The way women constructed their identities and memories were very different between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Lastly, the sisters were known in Glastonbury for taking care of the sick and less fortunate, especially among the poverty-stricken mill families in town. As abolitionists, they were inspired by their keen sense of justice and their religious belief that all of God’s children must be protected, loved, and cared for. It then examines how Protestant beliefs affected and became the main driving force behind women and their work of benevolence, according to the studies done by Boylan and Ginzberg.

Chapter Three begins with a discussion about the contemporaneous tradition and beliefs that defined women’s education in the nineteenth century. Then it proceeds with a thorough examination of Hannah’s life and education. The fact that Hannah was born in 1767 in South Britain, Connecticut, will provide the information gleaned from her letters and diaries to serve as the foundational basis to gauge whether women’s’ lives change from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century with the rise of Democratic America. The chapter concludes with an analysis of theory of Republican Motherhood versus the practice of the way Hannah lived her
life, what she thought about the changes that took place during her lifetime, and how it influenced the way she raised her daughters. It discusses in detail the first-rate education that Julia and Abby received, such as attending the Litchfield Academy run by Sarah Pierce, and the innovative ways in which the Smith sisters furthered their education. Examples include both Julia and Abby spending one summer living with a “French family to improve their proficiency in the language,” and the older sisters in the household taking on the responsibility of teaching the younger sisters.

Chapter Four opens with a discussion concerning the Smith’s traditional religious background led by Zephaniah Smith, Julia and Abby’s father. This chapter focuses mainly on the Smith family’s break from mainstream Protestantism and the alternative religions they followed. For example, both Julia and Abby became extremely fascinated with the Millenarianism after hearing the sermons of a Vermont farmer, William Miller, and reading his works. Miller predicted the world would end in the early 1830s, and when the Second Coming did not occur, Julia and Abby turned to the Bible to determine the scriptural validity of Miller’s predictions and to figure out if Miller just made the wrong calculation. Julia’s exegetical search eventually led to her translations of the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin Bibles, all in search of the absolute correct interpretation of God’s message.

Chapter Five specifically addresses the very public fight that the Smith sisters instigated against the town of Glastonbury to fight for their right to vote against their own property taxes, which they believed were excessive. The chapter begins with an extensive definition of the English law of coverture and explains how the law directly affected Julia and Abby once all of their family members had passed away. Next, the chapter focuses on the very public fight the Smith sisters waged against the town in order to gain a voice in the political realm as legal

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property owners. Specifically, the chapter examines their access to the press and the courts as well as the language the sisters use to define the injustice they believed they received at the hands of the town leaders. The significance of Chapter Five derives from what the Smith sisters believed were their rights as Americans and how they defined freedom and injustice in order to place their lives within the proper historical context. Lastly, the chapter reveals the limits of the power that Julia and Abby, as never-married women, had over their own lives. Throughout most of their lives, the Smiths were able to construct their own spheres of agency and power; but when they entered the public sphere created by the men in their town and state, they were quickly reminded that they were women and therefore belonged not in the public sphere, but in the domestic sphere. Only then did the Smith women really believe that the laws and culture that were created by the men in society, which men used to keep women in their place, unjustly treated them.

For the most part, the Smith women, beginning with Hannah, lived ordinary lives that were of their own making. Upon examining their diaries, journals and speeches the lives of Julia, Abby, and the rest of the sisters, glimpses of their world begin to emerge. These women lived a quiet life in a small Connecticut town, where they had the power to choose not to marry, and had the luxury of time and money to spend eight years translating the Bible five different times. The women traveled easily and confidently between the small rural world in which they grew up and the hustle and bustle of Northeastern cities.

Like all women, whether they lived in the nineteenth century or in the twenty-first century, they eventually reached the limit of their freedom and agency when they dared to behave badly and questioned those who were in charge. The men in the town of Glastonbury were not about to give up their place of authority and power to two elderly women just because
the Smiths made a lot of noise when they brought their fight to the attention of national as well as regional newspapers. The final fight waged by Julia and Abby represented the complex gender world that we all live in, one that is constantly shifting and changing, and one that cannot be examined through a linear line of progress or by a binary set of terms. Cultural gender construction is much too complicated to be able to use a binary definition, such as public versus private, agency versus no power, oppressive or free.

As the Smith women’s lives revealed, they had moments of complete freedom and contentment and moments of sheer frustration and anger from the injustice they experienced due to their gender. As the preeminent historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, quoting one of her students, said, “people need to do the unexpected” to become part of history.38 According to Ulrich, women needed to “behave badly” in order to make history “precisely because she [they] dared to challenge both social norms and the law.”39 Both Julia and Abby behaved badly when they dared to challenge the local authority figures (i.e., men) for their right to vote and then had the audacity to refuse to pay their taxes until they received that right.

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39 Ibid.
CHAPTER 1

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIES AND MARRIAGE

Hannah Hickok Smith lived an ordinary life in extraordinary times. Born into what would be considered a middling family in South Britain, Connecticut, on August 7, 1767, her life reflected the rapid economic changes that transformed antebellum America. Before her death in 1850, Hannah not only witnessed the Revolutionary War, but also experienced the political, economic, social, and cultural revolutions that rocked America at the end of the eighteenth century and whose repercussions continued into the nineteenth century. As part of the Revolution generation, her life and experiences were crafted by the “newfound geographic and social mobility, the novel applications of steam power, and expanding uses of print communicated,” which the generation with a new sense of the modern.¹ Not only were Hannah and the first group of young adults that came of age during the Revolution confronted with “the vexed relation between the realm of reality – conditions, situations, and decisions,” but they were also active participants who helped shaped the new “political, social, cultural, and economic institutions that emerged in the nineteenth century.”²

Mediating the agrarian market-oriented economy of late-eighteenth century New England was the domestic pull of hearth and farm. The colonial farm economy was based on a division of labor between husbands and wives where the father worked the farm and the mother made clothes. At the end of the eighteenth century, a “great majority of people worked on the land, by

²Ibid., 5.
1860 this was not true in many places; in Northampton [Massachusetts], less than one-third of the workforce owned farms or labored in agriculture.”

When Hannah married and became a housewife in the early nineteenth century, a new division of labor emerged as men left the household and farms in order to make their fortune in the emerging market economy to earn cash money take care of their families. As the husbands became increasingly oriented toward the public world, the wife was becoming relegated to the household, keeping the house, raising the children, and soothing the passions of their husbands. The process of modernization that took place in the early part of the century transformed the countryside from a “millennium of inertia to a violent and sudden clustering of technological changes; from an economy of severely straitened possibilities and widespread poverty to one of ‘unheard-of material wealth’; from the perpetual specter of famine to the expectation of a perpetual sufficiency; from zero or negative population growth to a ‘sudden’ doubling of population; from zero productivity growth to a doubling of labor productivity in agriculture; from ‘the poor stockinger, to the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ handloom weaver, the utopian artisan, to an individual proletariat; from markets embedded within and constrained by values antithetical to them with the culture to the ‘disembedded’ market whose values penetrated and reinvented the culture.”

This early republican period could be best described as a moment when men were motivated and inspired by “vision of worldly gain,” and at the time, “the cultivation of the ‘go-ahead’ spirit, was enormously invigorating.”

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The powerful feeling that anything could be accomplished “raised a specter of chaos, of individual men devouring each other in the struggle for success.” For many, the “old values—especially the social values—had to be safely enshrined.” It was necessary to recreate some “traditional moorings, some emblem of softness and selflessness to counter the intense thrust of personal striving that characterized the age.” The home became the “place to come in out of the storm occasionally, a place that assured both repose and renewal. That place, lavishly affirmed from all side, was Home,” in which women became the focus in the discussion of creating or maintaining the place of sanity, the place where American republican virtues were kept safe.\(^6\)

Many historians debate the impact the revolution had concerning the gendered economic division in Colonial America. Mary Beth Norton in her book, *Liberty’s Daughters* believed that women had a very limited role in the pre-industrial economy. Her vision of the eighteenth century household was one where the father “controlled the finances, oversaw the upbringing of the children, and exercised a nominal supervision over household affairs,” but Norton also believed that women were active participates in the small scale local economy, selling their butter, cheese, and soap they made to their neighbors.\(^7\) Norton shares the same vision of women’s participation in the eighteenth century preindustrial economy as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, whose book *A Midwife’s Tale*, discusses active participation of women in the family farm economy. Women and girls spun wool, churned butter, and made soap and these items were in turn bartered with their neighbors. According to Ulrich, this placed women at the center of a communal economy, one defined by a “complete system of neighborly exchange,” one in which, the “training was communal and cumulative, work was cooperative, even though performed in

\(^6\) Demos, 14.
\(^7\) Norton, 18.
private households, and the products remained in the local economy.”

Nonetheless, Ulrich concedes that it is “clear that men did monopolize business, that households were formally patriarchal, and that women did uncritically assume that houses and even babies belonged to men,” but that this “world did not exclude women from (participating in) a complex web of social and economic exchange that engaged women beyond the household.”

Norton and Ulrich both argued that women participated in the local economy, but Ulrich believed that women had a greater role than Norton envisioned. Ulrich argued that in Martha’s world, men and women kept different account books and each controlled their own economic sphere, while Norton argued that the male adult dominated. Even though Norton and Ulrich disagreed about the level of participation that women had in the eighteenth century rural economy, they both agree that women’s roles in running the household economy changed drastically in the nineteenth century.

Anya Jabour, in her book *Marriage in the Early Rep*, sums up the changes that occurred in household economies between the end of the eighteenth-century and the beginning of the nineteenth-century. The new household economy was still a mixed economy, and still divided labor between the sexes. However, because men were bringing in cash now, the dynamic was different. Rather than a division of labor necessary to sustain a family, the new economy “depended on both paid and unpaid labor,” and with this distinction women became “invisible contributors to the family’s cash income.”

With the emergence of this new mixed economy Jabour concludes that women actually lost a powerful role in running the household, because of

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9 Ibid., 76.
the “the growing importance of cash gave men a new source of authority.”11 Growing up in rural Connecticut at the time of the revolution, Hannah’s own life and experiences traces the changing roles for women from the preindustrial age to the industrial age in the nineteenth century.

The farm and the rural New England household where Hannah grew up bears a resemblance to the historical portrait painted by Norton and Jabour. Hannah’s father, David Hickok could best be described as a scholar-farmer, who ran the business aspects of the farm, while, Hannah’s mother, Abigail Johnson Hickok, was a skilled and productive seamstress. Abigail Hickok does not make much of an appearance in either Hannah’s diary or David’s diaries. When David does refer to Abigail in his diary, he only comments on what she sewed for the day and how much money he received from her finished products.

The two diaries kept by David revealed many interesting insights into his economic and married life. Here one glimpses the slow rhythms of farm life in prerevolutionary New England. One also sees the marriage between David and Abigail as an active partnership, where they both contributed to the household income. As was standard in the day, the Hickok’s relied on David’s income from the farm and Abigail’s income from her domestic production. We also learn from David’s diary that his wife Abigail was a respected weaver, who sold linen and wool to further supplement the farming income, in keeping with the defined domestic role for women in the eighteenth century.

The Hickok’s diversified income represented the communal system found throughout the rural pre-industrial New England region. It was an economic system characterized by family production, where “spinning, like nursing, was a universal female occupation.”12 Even though

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11 Ibid.
Hannah’s mother sewed finished products that were sold or traded in the local economy, it was Hannah’s father who negotiated these sales. In one diary entry, David recorded that his “wife finished weaving a piece of worsted of 12 yards for which I charged him 7 shillings.” He further drew attention to his wife’s contributions to the family’s finances, saying, “my wife finished weaving a piece of flannel for John Stack containing 26 yards and half for which charging him 13 shilling.” While Abigail worked in the house, David managed the farm, which included the selling or trading of agricultural goods produced on the farm. On the farm, David raised sheep and pigs, grew wheat, oats, and rye, and an apple orchard. He noted that in February 1771, he sold “I4 of my best sheep for 40 shillings,” and that he “farmed up almost 3 bushel rye which was all I had.”

David not only ran his farm and kept the accounts, but he also represented his family in the outside world, which was standard practice according to Mary Beth Norton. In her book, *Liberty’s Daughter’s*, Norton outlined four areas in which men represented the family in the eighteenth century. The male head of the household cast the only vote for the family, he paid the tax, he worked for the community throughout the year, and he served in the local militia. As the head of the household, David recorded that he paid the household tax in March 1771 when he traveled to Mr. Johnson’s house to pay his country rate of “15 shilling Jersey money.”

With a rapidly expanding population in Colonial America, the colonies needed to raise revenue to build “defensive measures against Indians and other European intruders,” and they needed to “build and maintain roads, schools, prisons, public buildings, and ports and to support

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13 David Hickok diary, February 1771-1783. Connecticut State Library, Conn.
14 David Hickok diary, February 1771-1783. Connecticut State Library, Conn.
15 Ibid., March 1771.
poor relief.”¹⁶ By the middle of the seventeenth century, many colonial governments passed taxation bills to support their colony. For example, the General Court of Massachusetts passed a law in 1638 that “required all freemen and non-freemen to support both the commonwealth and the church.”¹⁷ In the colonies direct taxation took two forms: “(1) a wealth tax and (2) a poll, or head tax, which in some instances evolved into or included an income tax,” and the “wealth tax was based on what was known as the country ‘rate,’ which amounted to a property tax.”¹⁸ To assess the amount of tax each colony needed to support itself, the three different units of colonial government, “the province, the county, and the town or village,” met to draw up a “list proposed expenditures.”¹⁹ The country rate, in which David paid 15 shillings of Jersey money, was “initially levied as a lump sum in the form of quotas among towns, which assessed and collected taxes to meet their quotas.”²⁰

The year that David reported in his diary that he paid 15 shillings in taxes he had assessed the worth of his farm and all his goods at “51 pounds and six shillings.”²¹ David itemized in his diary of his assets on March 19, 1771. He wrote his “list as followeth;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Head</td>
<td>18:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Lot</td>
<td>3:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 acres and half of plow land</td>
<td>2:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 acres of meadow</td>
<td>2:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 acres of cleat pasture</td>
<td>3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 acres of bush pasture</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cows</td>
<td>6:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one yoke of oxen</td>
<td>3:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one house</td>
<td>3:0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one two year old calf</td>
<td>2:0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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¹⁷ Rabushka.
¹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Hickok Diary, March 19, 1771.
David also fulfilled his community obligation, noting in his diary that on March 25, 1771, he and his father “took out 4 sticks of timber 2 of them king 12 inches and very long square and 2 of them 9 by 12 18 foot long 3 of them we finished and the other we half finished and drawed 3 of them to the place” on the Stanscliff bridge. Lastly, David fulfilled his militia duty in October 1771, when he spent three consecutive days training and “trooping” at Bullet Hill.

David’s diaries make it clear that household duties were divided along gender lines. David not only was responsible for paying the tax on his land, performing community service and volunteering for the state militia, but he was also the economic head of the family. David personally negotiated all prices for his sheep and produce, for his winter teaching appointment, and for all of Abigail’s finished products from her sewing. On Thursday, March 14, 1771, David mentioned in his diary that he had finished teaching school for the winter. He noted that he had a total of forty-five students, but only “38 through the whole 4 months.” He finished his diary entry for the night stating that he “received 5 pound of money of Deacon Hicok—and 1 pound four shillings of neighbor Touley for which I let him corn at 2 per bushel.” After the Revolution, when Hannah came of age, she would leave home to go teach school in Vermont. But it was Hannah’s father, David’s household, not his wife, he is the one who taught school during the winter and he collected all the funds for his services, not his wife.

David’s patriarchal world described in his diary matches the same world that Ulrich writes about in Colonial Maine. She argued that even though the women in the eighteenth-century rural farm communities participated in the local economy when trading their goods with

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22 Ibid.
23Hickok’s Diary, March 1771
24Ibid., October 1771.
25Hickok Diary, March 14, 1771
neighbors, they still lived in a patriarchal world, where men were active participates in the public world. Ulrich argued that “women in eighteenth-century Hallowell [Maine] had no political life, but they did have a community life,” one that was still defined by a gender division of labor that relegated women to performing tasks that were connected to the house, such as sewing. Norton agrees with Ulrich that until the end of the century the father in colonial America ran the household economy and represented all of his dependents in the public world.

This was Hannah’s world. Her mother, Abigail, sewed to help supplement the family income, while her father, David, took care of all the farm accounts, ran and worked on his farm, and fulfilled his community service. But things would be different for Hannah. When Hannah married and moved to her own house with her new husband, she ran the farm, took care of the accounts, and ran the household, while her husband ran his own law office.

Even if eighteenth-century New England was patriarchal, women did have a significant say in their own lives, especially when it came to choose the man they married. When Hannah married Zephaniah Smith in the spring of 1786, she, like many of her contemporaries, chose her own husband. According to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, young women by the end of eighteenth-century chose their own partners with little interference from parents. By mid-century, Ulrich states that “young people began to exercise greater freedom in choosing marriage partners, when romantic and sexual attraction between couples became more important than economic negotiations between parents.” Ulrich’s intensive analysis Martha Ballard’s diary “supports the notion that children chose their own spouses,” because “there is no evidence of parental negotiation” or “parental supervision in any courtships.”

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26Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale, 76.
27Ulrich, 138.
It seems that Hannah met the man that she would marry, Zephaniah Smith, at a church meeting in the spring of 1786, but it is hard to know exactly how she met him because she does not say, only that he had come to visit her at her home one morning. Zephaniah Smith was a licensed Congregationalist Minister in the Spring of 1783, so Hannah could have heard him preach and met him at the meetings that she often attended in Britain. She first mentions Zephaniah on April 10, 1786, when she simply commented in her diary, “Monday rose late, Mr. Smith breakfasted here on his way home.”29 Then she mentions him two more times. On April 16, 1786, she wrote, “Sunday went to meeting Mr. Smith preached,” and then on April 17, 1786, “Mr. Smith came here and Mr. Gibb and his mother.”30 Of her own wedding day, Hannah unenthusiastically commented, “June 1, 1786 was day after wedding I can’t remember how it was spent.”31

In 1795, Hannah Smith moved with her husband, Zephaniah, to Glastonbury, Connecticut, where they would spend the rest of their lives together raising five daughters. The small but growing family purchased a farm and a large white house on Main Street. The lot that they purchased was located “on the east side of Conn. River 7 miles from Hartford in the middle of the place on a farm described in the most ancient record,” and was “3 miles long containing 130 acres.”32 As a symbol of the true partnership that defined Hannah and Zephaniah’s marriage, the funds they used to buy the family farm came from the money Hannah received from selling the farm she inherited from her father, according to a letter that Abby wrote to Miss Susan B. Anthony in December of 1874. Abby wrote that her “father and all his ancestors were also natives of this town and when he had graduated and was admitted to the bar and had married

29 Hannah Hickok Diary, April 10, 1786.
30 Ibid., April 16 and 17, 1786.
31 Ibid., June 1, 1786.
32 Abby Smith to Miss Anthony, December 25, 1874, Envelope L1133, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
our mother from another place (an only child and very learned) they sold her place, and bought this, where they always lived with their 5 daughters.”

Later in life, Hannah’s daughter Julia told the story to a friend of how her mother shrewdly negotiated the deal to sell her family farm, which definitely worked out to Hannah’s advantage. According to Julia, Hannah offered to sell the family farm for 600 pounds, but the man who came to purchase it countered with 595 pounds, which her mother refused. Hannah watched the man drive away. “My Father,” Julia said, “yelled at my Mother arguing, ‘Now you have lost a chance to sell the farm’ but my Mother calmly replied, ‘a man would not come fifty miles to buy a farm and give it up for 5 pounds.’” Of course, Julia’s mother was right, because the man returned and “bought the farm for 600 pounds.” Julia finished the story by pointing out that the amount that her mother received from the sale “paid for two thirds of the place and my father paid for the rest.”

The story illustrates the loving admiration that a daughter held for her mother, and it also illuminates Hannah and Zephaniah’s marriage, one that was a true partnership based upon mutual respect. The story also shows that Hannah had a say in the family business, and that her judgment might sometimes trump her husband’s. In the end, her business savvy won the day, and the family earned five extra pounds.

The young newlyweds also decided to establish their home in Glastonbury because the town was slowly becoming an industrial center, which meant there was still good farming land along the river. According to local historian Marjorie Grant McNulty, the local population rose by nearly 50 percent (from 2,346 to 3,363), “from the end of the Revolution to the beginning of the Civil War.”

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 38-39.
manufacturing of “textiles, forged iron, glass, hats, cast metal goods, clapboards, barrels, cigars, soap, and leather.”

Hannah and Zephaniah also chose to settle in Glastonbury because Zephaniah had grown up there, and many family members still lived there who could help the Smiths’ growing family build their new farm. Not only would Zephaniah have his own extended family to help him with the farm, but he also could in time rely on his five beautiful and very talented daughters to assist him with running the farm and household.

As a woman who came of age during the early republican period, Hannah had to raise her daughters in a world that was vastly different from the one in which she had grown up. The new nation that arose during Hannah’s young adult years exuded hope and promise, yet it unleashed powerful economic forces that rewarded intense competition and acquisitiveness. In New England, this had a dramatic effect on a farming economy that could not produce an adequate agricultural staple for market exchange. Things were changing in New England, and it dislocated the old way of life. The “processes of change experienced by much of rural New England in the eight decades between the Revolution and the Civil War,” produced a massive population boom, which left “young peoples’ searching for occupations other than farming, the emergence of a cash economy, the cultural complexities of revivalism, and the rise of an market economy profoundly affected New Englanders.”

Key to this would be the development of a New England economy focused more on industry than before.

These changes would have a dramatic effect on family life. In the eighteenth century the economy was centered on the home and farm and based on a rough partnership between husbands and wives, such as the marriage between Hannah’s parents, where the father worked the farm and the mother made clothes. At the end of the eighteenth century, the vast majority of

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36 Ibid., 46-47.
families in New England were farmers, who worked their own land, just as David Hickok supported his family off of his land. According to labor historian, Christopher Clarke, all of this changed by the middle of the nineteenth century when less than a third of the “workforce owned farms or labored in agriculture.” Also, by the early nineteenth century, a new division of labor emerged as men left the household and farms in order to make their fortune in the emerging market economy to take care of his family. As the husbands became increasingly oriented toward the public world, the wife was becoming relegated to the household, keeping the house, and raising the children.

When Hannah first became a wife, she entered into a true partnership with her husband, one that consisted of taking care of the farm while he first rode the circuit as a lawyer, and then when he set up his own law practice in their house on Main Street in Glastonbury. Hannah took care of the farm, and when her daughters were old enough, they took over managing the farm and the household economy. Meanwhile, Zephaniah contributed to the household economy by making the cash, which was used to purchase the consumer items that brought the necessities as well as luxuries into the Smith household. Hannah and her Zephaniah experienced the economic shifts that occurred throughout the nineteenth century. The Smith household did not support themselves from what their farm produced, it merely sublimated Zephaniah cash income.

As a rising middle-class family in the early nineteenth century, Hannah and Zephaniah both actively participated in the economy. Hannah took care of the farm and all of the household accounts, while Zephaniah worked as a lawyer who made cash. Nancy F. Cott wrote extensively about women in America in the nineteenth century and used Hannah “as an example of a wife

38 Ibid., 8.
who took care of the household accounts,” which illustrates the extent to which Hannah and Zephaniah were truly partners.40 Hannah faithfully kept an account book for the years 1821–1824, which highlights how she was intimately involved in commercial transactions and how her own participation with the outside economic world increasingly widened. In her account book for the household and farm, she provided a detailed list of all the consumer items she purchased.

All the food, house items, and luxuries she purchased consisted of:

- baking supplies (spices, plums, currents, raisins, sugar, molasses, salt, wine, coffee, tea),
- of teacups, platters, chest, jug, box, coffeepot, tinware, pins and construction materials (pine boards, nails, steel); of writing accoutrements (paper, pen-knife, spelling book),
- nursing supplies (camphor, plaister) and soap, and some luxuries (snuff, tobacco, shell combs, parasol). Furthermore, she purchased at least eleven different kinds of fabric (such as dimity, brown Holland, “factory cloth”), four kinds of yarn and thread, leather, and buttons; bought silk shawls, bonnets, dresses, stockings, and kid gloves, and also paid for people’s services in making clothing.41

Also, according to Hannah’s account book, the farm produced many products that they sold on the open market, such as “grain (oats, rye, corn) and timber, animals (calves, turkeys, fowl) and animal products (eggs, hens’ feathers, quills, wool, pork), and butter, cider, lard, and tallow.”42 Lastly, Hannah wrote a simple note citing the amount of cows on the farm, and the note is in her hand and not her husband’s. The note simply stated, “I have turned into the meadow four cows, five two year’s old and three yearling’s which make eight creatures and five sixths wanting one sixth of nine creature which I was (?).”43

The socio-economic class that the Smith’s lived in could be considered as a typical early-nineteenth-century commercial farming white Northern family. The Smith household had cash to be able to purchase luxury items, such as hand crafted mirrors and rugs for their homes, while

41 Cott
42 Ibid.
43 Hannah H. Smith, Envelope L1091, Box 8, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
at the same time the girls often sewed their own clothes. Also, Zephaniah worked as a Congregationalist minister for a brief period, but switched careers and became a lawyer at the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to noted historian Barbara Leslie Epstein, the Smith family would be defined as a rising nineteenth century middle class-family. Epstein defined the middle class as a group that included, “professionals, shopkeepers and other tradespeople, independent artisans, possibly skilled workers, urban people who were neither wealthy nor desperately poor and who hoped to find some avenue upward mobility in the expanding market of nineteenth—century America.”

Many of the changes that rapidly accord at the end of the eighteenth century brought both positive and negative changes for women and for the rising industrialist society that emerged in the nineteenth century. Many saw the rapid changes brought on by modernity as a threat to traditional ways of living, as if something precious was lost. This early republican period could be best described as a moment when men were motivated and inspired by “vision of worldly gain,” and at the time, “the cultivation of the ‘go-ahead’ spirit, was enormously invigorating.”

For Hannah it seemed the economic and social changes opened up a wider world for her and was invigorating, because the picture that emerges of Hannah as a nineteenth century wife is very different than the role her mother played in her own household in the eighteenth century. While Abigail was known as a respected weaver whose income helped to supplement the income from the farm, her role in the economic world was extremely limited because her husband took care of everything. By the nineteenth century, we see Hannah taking care of all the business dealing with the farm, keeping all the accounts, and going into town on her own or with her daughters to

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buy all the farm and household items. Hannah ran a well-organized economic household, but as her daughters grew older, she handed more and more of the running of the household over to their very capable hands.46

When Hannah’s daughters were old enough she gave them the task of running the farm and the household. The first task that Hannah handed over to her daughters was the work of spinning and sewing, a chore she had hated since she was a young girl.47 The wonderful experience about having daughters was that mothers like Hannah could avoid the arduous and boring task of spinning because she had five daughters at home to do it for her. Hannah wrote to her grandmother in 1800 that the “‘girls have been very busy spinning this spring, ‘and have spun enough for about seventy yards besides almost enough for another carpet.’” Spinning must have taken precedence in the daughters’ work,” because when “no spinning to do of any consequence’ then Mrs. Smith admitted that she ‘lived very easy, as the girls have done every thing.’”48

Along with the spinning, the girls were responsible for cleaning and maintaining the household, according to Julia’s diary. In almost every entry, she mentions that she had sewed or spun some wool that day and described in detail the daily tasks she and her sisters completed to keep the house clean, the meals they cooked and the accounts she kept of the household expenses.

When Julia was in her early twenties, Hannah gave her the account book to keep and from then on Julia kept the accounts for the family. On a cold winter’s day in January 1815,

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Julia “figured out expenses for the last year – they were almost four hundred and sixty gourds.”

In an interview, Smith biographer Kathleen Housley indicated that Julia may have referred to currency as gourds because the “Smiths learned their French from the Value Family – immigrants from Haiti after the revolution there. They settled in New Haven where they taught French. In the 18th century a gourd was a form of currency in Haiti. So when Julia uses the word she is most probably referring to a coin.”

Their economic lives symbolized the rapidly changing economic world of early nineteenth-century America. The Smith girls would make their own clothes, make their own candles, and they would ride into town in their carriage to purchase certain luxury items. At times they would hire day laborers to help out around the house and on the farm, and at other times they would do the work themselves. Norton in her book, *Liberty’s Daughters*, wrote that middling ranked white women wrote about their daily routines in letters and diaries beginning with a description of their mornings which were “devoted to household work,” then after a late dinner, which was usually around two o’clock the young women would spend the “afternoon of visiting friends, riding, or perhaps reading quietly at home.” Julia’s diary follows the exact same descriptions. She usually began her diary with the time she woke; what she did in the morning, which usually consisted of sewing or cleaning the house with her sisters; and then in the afternoon she would travel with her sisters to visit friends or to shop at the local stores.

On a daily basis, Julia and her sisters could be found sewing, picking straw, making clothes, cleaning house, and even traveling into town to visit the local store. On a typical day in the Smith household, as reported by Julia in her diary, she commented that she had been lazy that day because she had only mended her dress and knitted. She went on to say that her sisters

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49 Julia Smith Diary, January 4, 1815.
50 Kathleen L. Housley, e-mail interview by author, April 1, 2009.
Laurilla and Zephina were in the kitchen making a cake and a pie, while Hannah was lying down. Julia concludes the entry for the day by stating she wrote most of the day to pass the time but she now had to put away her diary “to knit or I’ll not finish my stockings this week.”

The sisters rotated the kitchen duties on a weekly basis, and when on duty, each sister was responsible for the cleaning and cooking for the week. For eight years, each time she was responsible for the kitchen chores, Julia remarked in her diary that she had the pleasure of kitchen duty. For Julia, a typical week of kitchen duty consisted of the following: On Monday the 26th, “Washed, sewed, etc. It is my turn to work in the kitchen this week”; on Wednesday, “Made some apple pies and pumpkin pies etc. There is much to do this week;” and on Saturday, “After dinner I went with Eunice Hale to Mr. Thomas Hale’s and we cut straw to make a hat.”

Even on Christmas Day, Julia felt the need to work, or at least make the comment that she worked, “Wednesday 25, Christmas. I sewed and knitted and it is very cold.”

The rest of the household chores seemed to have been shared equally by each sister on a daily basis, along with the sewing and the making of their own clothes. Their economic lives symbolized the rapidly changing economic world of early nineteenth-century America. The Smith girls would make their own clothes, but they would also ride into town in their carriage to purchase certain luxury items. At times they would hire day laborers to help out around the house and on the farm, and at other times they would do the work themselves. On Monday June 1, 1812, Julia wrote, “I do the work with Abby in the kitchen this week. Washed a lot and did some other things. It is very warm. We have two carpenters here today to build a wooden fence

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52 Julia Smith diary, 1810–1818, trans. Kathleen Housley, May 9, 1811, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
53 Ibid., December 26, 28, and 31, 1810.
54 Ibid., December 25, 1810.
around the garden.” The very garden fence that Hannah kept nagging Zephaniah to fix, for which she took the most unusual approach when nagging her husband: she wrote an amusing poem. Hannah writes to her husband:

Even though all the Smith women shared in completing the household work and were quite efficient at household management and economy, they still were consumers who indulged in buying luxury items. In December on a cold wintery day, Julia and her sister Laurilla traveled by a sleigh to Hartford, where they “bought a muff which twenty gourds and some silk velvet for some hats and many other things.” The next day, Julia and Laurilla went to Mr. Welles’s store and purchased “twelve and a half yards of cloth for some dresses which cost twenty gourds and five chelins.”

In the late eighteenth-century, Hannah grew up in a household where men dominated all aspects of the family economy. The Reverend Horace Bushnell, a prominent reformer who gave a speech in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1851, described this world and coined the phrase “the age of Homespun” to glorify and praise the Revolutionary Age. Bushnell’s speech extolled the “Family life, education, and religion [that] all took their shape from the economy of homespun.” In his idealized eighteenth-century world, Bushnell poetically described the homespun economy:

Thus if clothing is to be manufactured in the house, then the flax will be grown in the ploughed land, and sheep will be raised in the pasture, and the measure… and the number of the flock will correspond with the measure of the house market—the number of the sons and daughters to be clothed—so that the agriculture out of doors will map the family in-doors.

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55Ibid., June 1, 1812.
56Ibid., December 17, 1810.
57Ibid., December 18, 1810.
58Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. The Age of Homespun 16-17.
59Ibid., 17.
Even though Bushnell romanticized the late eighteen-century household economy, he did get one aspect of the story correct: women were at the center of the production. According to Laurel Ulrich Thatcher, women’s work and the objects produced by women contribute to a sentimentalized view, like Bushnell’s, of the pre-industrial, pre-revolutionary world. The height of spinning as the center of household production came at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the industrial age, “not because economic circumstances forced families to work harder, but because machines made that work easier.” From reading the material objects of an “unfinished stocking, still on its ancient needles” idealized by “Homespun” Bushnell, Ulrich concludes the role of spinning wool and sewing in the household economy remained the one continuity between the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Bushnell helped to construct that America during the pre-revolution period was a more pure and simple place, especially reflected by the rural preindustrial economy. Bushnell and many writers in the nineteenth century used the spinning wheel as the metaphor for the simplistic gender roles between men and women and the cooperative environment nature of the preindustrial economy. The world that Bushnell paints of prerevolutionary Connecticut is one where women sit around in sewing circles happily spinning and sewing products for home consumption, and in some ways it mirrors the world of Hannah’s childhood. The problem with the tranquil and homily scene created by Bushnell it hides that fact that men were in charge of the economic sphere, as in Hannah’s household where her father controlled every aspect of the family economy.

In the small rural New England world of her childhood, Hannah’s mom, Abigail, appears as a shadow, making only brief appearances in both Hannah and David’s diary. When Abigail

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60 Ibid., 37-38.
61 Ibid., 40.
does appear in David’s diary it is only as part of the overall production that his farm had produced for the day or week. In David’s descriptions of his farm, he did not reveal a woman who had her own independent spirit, or a woman who possessed her own power or agency over the farm or the household. Very similar to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s character, Martha Ballard, who always referred to her husband as Mr. Ballard, and always referred to the farm as “Mr. Ballard’s farm.”

When Abigail’s daughter, Hannah became a wife and mother in the nineteenth century, Hannah lived in a world that her mother, Abigail would not have recognized. Hannah became the active agent who ran the farm and managed the household economy. In fact, it seems as if Hannah was the central player who took care of almost all the aspects of the Smith’s economy. Hannah ran the farm, kept the accounts, watched over her daughters, and traveled to town to buy and sell good in the local economy. Her husband, Zephaniah absented himself from any discussion concerning the farm or the accounts. He spent his days in the law office, which he kept in a small room off their house on Main St. He earned the cash, which provided for the small luxuries for his girls and for their home, but it was Hannah and her daughters who were in charge of all purchases.

When Hannah’s daughters came of age, Hannah handed all management of the farm and the family economy over to her daughters, who ran the household just like their mother. Julia kept the accounts, while the other sisters participated in the outside public world both as producers and consumers. When Julia and Abby were in their seventies at the end of the nineteenth century, almost one hundred years had passed between the time when their grandmother sat in her own small farm house sewing to sell finished products simply to provide

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62 Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwifes Tale. For more detail on the way eighteenth century women referred to their husbands and the husband’s property see Mary Beth Norton’s Liberty’s Daughters.
extra income to the family economy, while Julia and Abby took care of the farm, took care of an investment account, and paid their taxes. Julia and Abby’s agency and control of their own economy was vastly different than their grandmother’s who essentially lived in a world where she worked for her husband because he had complete control over her and her finished products.

Another crucial area that changed for women between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century was the cultural idea that all women had to marry, or risk becoming an outcast or spinster. Hannah married Zephaniah at the age of nineteen at the end of the eighteenth century and moved to his family’s hometown to create a life together. According to Mary Beth Norton, it was the only option Hannah had. Norton writes, “No one challenged the dominant assumption that a woman’s destiny was sealed at birth, determined by her sex in a way that a man’s fate was not. Females would marry, have children, and direct the work of households; these propositions were so generally accepted they were usually left unstated.”

If Hannah made the only choice that was opened to women of her generation, her daughters had another option: not to marry and to take care of themselves. Not one of the Smith sisters married, instead they all stayed home and created their own space where they were able to pursue their own interests and talents. Throughout her diary, Julia seemed cheerful and quite fulfilled, with her reading, her letter writing, and her own personal studies. For Julia—and, we can assume, for the rest of her sisters—it was of the utmost importance to keep busy and to feel a sense of accomplishment on a daily basis, as illustrated by her diary.

Julia and Abby had complete control over their own household economy when they died in the 1870s. As the last of the surviving family members, Julia and Abby inherited the family farm and house on Main St., and they still kept cows and certain crops. In addition to the small

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income that came from the farm, they inherited the money their father had saved working as a respected lawyer.

In the domestic economic world created by the rise of the industrial economic system in the nineteenth century women became household managers. But as women took care of the household they began to be defined by the work and space they occupied within the house. So as women gained power as economic agents, they also witnessed new areas of opportunity open up for them, especially in spheres of charity work, education, and religion. As we will see with the Smith women, who moved comfortably between the rural and urban worlds of New England, and in the public as well as the private world, until they ran into trouble in the one world women could not penetrate, the political world. It was with the franchise we see the limit that women were able to gain in the nineteenth century. But there was one world women came to dominate in the nineteenth century, and that was the numerous reforms movements that emerged in the early part of the century.
CHAPTER 2
DOMESTICITY, SOCIAL WORLDS, AND MEMORY

In 1795, Hannah Smith moved with her husband, Zephaniah, to Glastonbury, Connecticut, where she set up her own household and where she and Zephaniah spent the rest of their lives together raising five daughters. When Hannah finally settled into her new home, on Main Street in Glastonbury, Connecticut, she set out to create her own domestic sphere, a space filled with love, warmth, and where all members of the family were encouraged to actively pursue their own interests. This chapter specifically examines the household that Hannah created for her family, which seemed to have been a place of tranquility and happiness, a suitable place to raise five daughters, and a place where she helped her husband navigate the rough-and-tumble world of the growing capitalist nation. In order to reconstruct the social world of the Smith women as they saw it, I must interrogate the personal recollections of the Smith’s journals, letters, and diaries to analyze the ways in which they constructed their memories.

The domestic sphere, according to noted women’s historian Nancy F. Cott, is defined as “the ideological presumptions, institutional practices, and strongly held habits of the mind insisting that the home must be guided by a calm, devoted, and self-abnegating wife and mother,” and that the wife and mother was responsible for the “social order,” and “furnishing a nursery of spiritual and civic values for the children.”¹ In the nineteenth century the domestic sphere comes to define the proper role and duties for white, middle class, New England women. The roles that women should aspire to came to be defined as True Womanhood, which meant, true/normal women care for their children and their husbands. Women were to soothe their husbands’ souls at the end of a rough day by creating a clean, calm, loving and quiet home.

¹ Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood, xvii.
Women learned to subvert this role (whether consciously or unconsciously) by taking their abilities as the caregivers out into the public by starting and participating in the many reform/charity movements that emerged in Antebellum America.

The definition for the public space comes from the social theorist Jurgen Habermas, which has been adapted by historians of women to explain the historical rise of domesticity in the nineteenth century. In her book *Beyond the Household*, Cynthia A. Kiener states that Habermas defined the public space as a world where men would meet in public spaces such as Public Houses to discuss and to formulate opinions about the current political climate, and it is in these spaces that public opinions and participation was formed. By definition the public sphere as theorized by Habermas became narrowly defined in the early Republican period in America, and according to Kiener the rhetorical construction of the public sphere led to the construction of the private sphere which only served to relegate women to the private sphere, which constrained their political and public civic life.²

In the rapidly changing world that defined America in the first part of the nineteenth century, many women sought control over their own world. As their husbands moved increasingly into a dislocated “public sphere,” they redefined their domestic roles in ways that fundamentally changed the value and function of domesticity and “true womanhood.” Three of the most important public figures that wrote extensively about the domestic sphere and the cult of true womanhood were Catharine Beecher, Angelina Grimke, and Sarah Grimke. These women spent their careers trying to define the proper role for women in the emerging capitalistic and democratic society of nineteenth-century America, but they often publically and privately disagreed about the precise nature of that role. While Beecher and the Grimke sisters agreed that

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women should play an important social role in shaping American cultural and political life, they often differed over how “female influence should be exerted and kind of society women would foster and influence.”

In her numerous works, Catharine Beecher insisted on the need for women to create their own domestic sphere. She believed that the social, political, and economic changes that were taking place throughout the growing country were generating tensions and conflicts that only women could lessen. Beecher believed that women inherited the task of finding ways to reduce conflict in the turbulent public world because only women possessed the ability to create a peaceful and tranquil private world. In her writings, Beecher argued “that by removing half of the population from the arena of competition and making it subservient to the other half,” the amount of conflict and chance of violence would be reduced. According to Beecher a wife had to be subordinate to the husband, “just as children are to their parents, employees to employers, and citizens to magistrates,” and the “subordination of women to men was necessary if society was to go forward harmoniously.”

While Beecher wrote about harmony and tranquility in the household, the Grimke sisters believed that women should accept the role that God established for them and they urged women to stop living the selfish life by hiding within their domestic sphere. Sarah Grimke believed that God created women to help “their fellow creatures in the world, those who have fallen into temptation by drinking or gambling.” With the rapid economic and political changes taking place in early nineteenth-century America, Sarah wrote, “A new and vast sphere of usefulness is

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4 Ibid., 156.
5 Ibid., 157–58.
open to her, and she is pressed by surrounding circumstances to come up to the help of the Lord against the giant sins which desolate our beloved country.”

In the nineteenth century many young women and men themselves sought to define exactly what was the proper public and private women. Numerous magazines, books, and journals, as well as self-help articles, were written about women and their proper roles and duties in society. Many articles criticized women for not making their homes a refuge for their husbands and a classroom for their children; and many short stories glorified the perfect wife, mother, and homemaker. All these publications endeavored to define the ideal woman. In 1843, the *American Ladies’ Magazine* published a typical short story written by a man in which he glorified his home and wife. The story emphasizes the cultural ideal of what men expect when they return to their home and what women should strive for while constructing their domestic space. The male narrator tells of the violent storm ranging outside, the thunder clapping across the sky, the dark clouds, and the fierce sleet and snow pounding his head every step of his way home. But, upon entering his little parlor, he found a bright fire that “blazed on the hearth, and a glow, still brighter and warmer, beamed from the countenance of my dear wife.”

He felt warm and safe, and then his cheerful and lovely wife “hastened to assist me in taking off my wet surtout,—warmed my slippers—drew my chair before the fire, and ceased not her tender cares, until I was completely comfortable. *Home!*” The love and affection from, his wife was “the sun of my moral system; were its warmth and light withdrawn … my virtues, would perish … But the vital warmth of the affections of husband and father has called into

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9Ibid.
activity every latent virtue and talent,—has kindled within my bosom aspirations after goodness and greatness." The sweet and loving wife provided him with the shelter and warmth the poor husband needed to give him the fortitude to continue to go out every day into the harsh and unforgiving world just so that he could provide for his family, his home, and his sanctuary. The anonymous author, “Southern Gentleman,” so elegantly described not only the perfect, warm, and comfortable home, but also the wonderful and charming wife that made his home a place of domestic bliss. And while they were creating the discourse, Hannah was busy creating her own sphere of influence.

Women historians’ today debate the restrictive nature that the domestic sphere and the true womanhood discourse had on women and their lives in the nineteenth century. Joyce Appleby in her book *Inheriting the Revolution*, argued that the domesticity actually worked to create many new public roles for women in the new republic. She believes that women themselves participated in the construction of their new roles, as writers who wrote an outpouring of literature that idealized “marriage and mothering with an ardor that turned customary arrangements into a cult of domesticity.” According to Appleby women as the creators of the gendered discourse of the nineteenth century provided the descriptions of their new roles, which opened up new spaces where they could contribute to society. The new public roles opening to women in the nineteenth century according to Appleby were “teaching in schools, organizing philanthropy, augmenting the services of the nation’s proliferating churches,” and in the process “women revealed for the first time their imaginative capacity to rework social prescriptions.”

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10Ibid.
11Appleby, 98-99.
In contrast, Mary Beth Norton in her book *Liberty’s Daughters* argued that the new domestic ideology served only to restrict women to the private household and cut off any role they may have had in the public sphere. According to Norton the celebration of wife and motherhood strictly defined women to participate in very specific roles and duties. The new ideology placed women squarely in the home and made women responsible for the welfare of the family. It was during the nineteenth century, Norton argues, that Americans determined “that a successful household needed a competent mistress, but they failed to endow that mistress with an independent social standing or to grant to her domestic work the value it deserved.”

John Demos in his article “The American Family in Past Times” shares Norton’s view that ultimately the domestic ideology restricted a women’s’ role in society. Demos examined the “posture of admiration—almost of reverence”, in which journal and magazine articles described women and their duties, but he argues it would be “quite erroneous to infer from such flattering rhetoric any genuine improvement in women’s status.”

In fact, Demos concludes when American woman in the nineteenth compare their defined roles with their grandmother in colonial times, and because their position in life was defined in terms of a purity, which was directly opposed to everything characteristic of the larger world their “domestic hearth was both their alter, and, from another perspective, their prison.”

Frances B. Cogan in her book *All American Girl*, disagreed with both Norton and Demos, she believed that the cultural discourse of the day actually offered and advocated a multilayered and complex identity for middle class women in the nineteenth century. She counters the limited and restrictive interpretation of domesticity by offering a counter argument which stressed that women found ‘a more positive and essential way to cope with the rapidly changing world around them. The new identity for women according to

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12 Norton, 38.
14 Demos, 15.
Cogan “advocated intelligence, physical fitness and health, self sufficiency, economic self-reliance and it was, in other words, a survival ethic.”

The world that Hannah and her daughters created seems to mirror the multilayered explanation of Cogan because Hannah and her daughters had many different identities that were played out in their domestic space. As a wife and mother, Hannah took care of the children, but she also responsible for keeping the accounts for the farm, educating her daughters, and most importantly she continued to study and learn until the day that she died. While her daughters, never married, they took care of themselves, spent their lives pursuing their own academic and artistic interests, fought for their right to vote, and became valued members of their community caring for the poor. The other definition of domesticity, given by Demos and Norton seem too limited, and they do not work to describe the world that the Smith women created.

When Hannah moved to Main Street in Glastonbury Connecticut she immediately began creating her world after marrying Zephaniah when she started having children, and in rapid succession she gave birth to five daughters. All of the Smith girls were given unique names, which in time matched their unique talents and personalities. Her eldest, Hancy Zephina, born in 1787, was given a name that seemed to be a combination of Hannah and Zephaniah. Their next daughter, Cyrinthia Sacretia, quickly followed and was given a name that represents her parents’ love for the Greek and Latin classics. A year after Cyrinthia, Laurilla Aleroyla was born, and then came Julietta Abelinda in 1792. Some time later, Hannah and Zephaniah changed Julietta’s name to Julia Evelina after a popular contemporary novel entitled *Evelina, or A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*, written by Fanny Burney. The last daughter, Abby Hadassah, born in

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1797, who also went by the name Abba, was named after her grandmother Abigail and her mother Hannah Hadassah.\textsuperscript{16}

Hannah as a mother raised five daughters with their own unique personalities, talents, and abilities. Abby had a special gift with plants and learning about the natural world; she knew which plants and herbs to use to cure different illnesses, cuts, and burns. Abby also became an eloquent and passionate speaker when she emerged as the reasoned voice behind the sisters’ fight against the town leaders for the franchise. Julia was the true intellectual and writer in the family. One example of her talent, which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four, was her translation of the Bible from its Greek, Latin, and Hebrew texts. The most artistically talented of the five daughters was Laurilla, who became an accomplished artist. She had been so devoted to painting that her father built a house for her across the street from the Smith farm just so she would have her own space to paint. Julia in her diary referred to Laurilla’s paintings and projects on numerous occasions. In a typical entry, Julia wrote, “In the morning I went with Laurilla to East Hartford to Mr. White’s—I left her there—she will stay to paint a picture that belongs to Mrs. Olmsted.”\textsuperscript{17}

Hannah’s daughters took after their mother by pursuing their own interests, and with their interaction with young men. When it came to early romances or interaction with men both Hannah and her daughters seemed uncomfortable with the attention and often found ways to dismiss the eager young suitors. At the age of seventeen Hannah had one man in particular, Gibbs, who on many occasions visited Hannah at home, but during his visits he must have suffered horribly by the outright contempt she showed him, and by the way she teased and insulted him. On one particular occasion Hannah wrote in her diary that on Thursday 19 at “5

\textsuperscript{16}Housley, \textit{The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life}, 39.
\textsuperscript{17}Julia Smith diary 1810-1818,, June 23, 1812, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
o’clock PM I am alone now but had much ado for it because of Gibbs, I wish I need not see him again.” The next day she angrily commented, “Gibbs has been here we have had some dispute, he is a vexation and I dislike him too much to write about him,” and then the following day, “Gibbs brought his nonsense company here and after prating about an hour without my saying a word, I asked him a question in arithmetic I said I have been studying upon it I was glad to see him show some resentment, he went away before night.”

Two years later when Hannah met Zephaniah Smith, she never mentions where or how she met him, or why she decided to marry this man. He only briefly appears in her diary and when she does mention him, she always refers to him as Mr. Smith. She first mentioned him in April of 1786, when she simply commented in her diary that, “Mr. Smith breakfasted here on his way home.” A week later she wrote that she went to a meeting where Mr. Smith preached. Then on June 1, she stated that she was married the day before to Mr. Smith, and she dryly commented that “June 1, 1786 was day after wedding I can’t remember how it was spent.” At least she did not write disparaging things of him as she had done of her previous suitor.

How shall we interpret this disinterest Hannah showed towards the man she married? Her diary would continue to mention her husband in pedestrian rather than tender ways, but with the women in her life during the same period she often displayed an overt interest and at times outright passion for her the women she spent time with. One woman in particular, Loandy, who suddenly appeared in Hannah’s diary with no explanation of where she came from, Hannah expressed a longing and frustration that she felt for Loandy when she was unable to spent time with her, or when she felt that Loandy did not share the same intense feelings. In May 1784, Hannah struggled with her feelings as she poured them all out into her diary. Beginning on

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18Hannah Hickok Diary. Feb. 1784.
19Ibid., April 10, 1786.
20Ibid., June 1, 1786
Monday, May 3, she wrote, “I wish I did not like Loandy—and to speak the truth I don’t Altho I must say that Loandy sometimes pleases me a little.”21 Then on Tuesday, May 11, Hannah revealed much more of her feelings, when she wrote,

   evening I have a good mind to write to ---I won’t tell who I think I would were I not so tired O my unhappy situation…I will not write quite so distracted as I have been Indeed I am quite ashamed of it Tho’ I do not dislike Loandy in the least—But I shall have such ado to write sober I find especially if Loandy is the subject---But it is almost nine—too late to think of Loandy; but I want to see Loandy indeed I wish I could see her for once she is a lovely picture.”22

After a sleepless night Hannah wrote that “I rose late and sewed…Loandy sometimes gets into my head and makes me intolerably inconsiderate.”23

The intense relationships and feelings that Hannah’s had for women were not considered abnormal in eighteenth century America according to historian Carroll Rosenberg-Smith. In her book, Disorderly Conduct, Rosenberg-Smith argued that there is in fact an “abundance of manuscript evidence suggests that eighteenth—and nineteenth-century women routinely formed emotional ties with other women,” and that these passionate feelings women had for one another “were casually accepted in American society.”24 Hannah always seemed to be surrounded by women who she obviously felt comfortable with and enjoyed spending with. Throughout her diary she refers to her cousin Bella, who she spent time sewing, shopping, and riding horse with, and she also was at Bella’s side whenever she was sick. In the informal way that Hannah referred to her many close women friends seems to indicate that she felt more comfortable around them rather than spending time with men.

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21Ibid., May 3, 1784
22Ibid., May 11, 1784
23Ibid., May 14, 1784
As Hannah’s daughters grew older into their maturity, they like their mother, preferred the company of women. Julia in her early twenties began to shy away from the activities that her mother had defined as frivolous activities. Julia and her sisters also slowly removed themselves from spending time with men and instead created a small group of close female friends. Just like her mother, Julia commented briefly on the men that would come to visit her, but she, like her mother always referred to young men in the formal manner of addressing them by their last names.

For a brief period that covered only a couple of weeks, Julia obsessively commented on which of her girlfriends spent the night and who slept with whom. These entries were an anomaly in Julia’s diary, because before these dates and after these dates, she neither discussed nor mentioned who slept with whom again. Even though it seemed an unusual period in Julia’s life according to her diary, it was not unusual for women in the early part of the century to create such close relationships with other women, according to Carroll Rosenberg-Smith in her book, Disorderly Conduct. The letters and diaries written by women in the eighteenth—and nineteenth century according to Rosenberg-Smith “revealed the existence of a female world of great emotional strength and complexity.”  

It was a closed female world, where women experienced “intimacy, love, and erotic passion,” with other women.  

In the last week of May 1815, when Julia was twenty-three, she carefully noted each night in her diary who came to visit and who stayed the night. On May 29, Julia wrote, “Harriet Stiles came over and slept with me.” Then the following night she commented, “the company left at ten. Chloe slept with me.” For the next three nights Mary Judson, who was a

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25Rosenberg-Smith, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America, p. 28.
26Ibid.
27Julia Smith’s diary, May 29, 1815.
28Ibid., May 30, 1815.
schoolmistress slept with Julia. After this date, Julia never mentions any of the girls again; they disappeared completely from her diary. Also, she never mentions that anyone spends the night at her house again, and any further references to these particular young ladies and her sleepovers come to an abrupt end.

Many afternoons and evenings Hannah spent a great deal of time with her friends playing cards or attending dances, but at the same time Hannah also criticized her friends for wasting time on what she believed were frivolous activities. On May 6, 1784, Hannah wrote that she “Methinks I never will play cards It is as silly as dancing and I believe much more in (marked out) and yet I am obliged to own that I should not say this if almost all the (boys, marked out) tho I carefully say that I never did…I don’t intend to play cards very soon again.”

In this entry she seemed to be aware of the cultural construction that dictated behavior for both the boys and the girls, and it appears that she fought against the cultural norms of the day. It was a difficult fight as George C. Rosenwald and Richard L. Ochberg, argued in their book, *Storied Lives*, that the explanations and details that individuals offer about their lives are “inevitably shaped by the prevailing norms of discourse within which their operate.”

So Hannah’s sharp criticism of her friends activities on the one hand reveal her own discomfort with the prevailing cultural norms of the day, but on the other hand she also adhered to the cultural norms when she participated in the activities she criticized. For example, on the very next day Hannah wrote “Abbia my young Hinman Billy and I are alone—we have played cards this afternoon.” Then a few weeks later Hannah wrote,

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29 Hannah Hickok Diary, May 6, 1784.
31 Ibid.
I was excessively indifferent—Bella came here this afternoon and is here now—she is excessively altered with regard to keeping company and dancing which she loves with more and more than ever she did and I must learn silence---Our minds are different and she hears me talk more reserve than she used to do and hears me read my journal without esteeming it as she used to and even reproves me for some of it—But no more of this for this if writing as if I had not always known that everybody was as silly myself not excepted which I always knew was the case of my disagreeing with them.'

More than anything it seems as if Hannah was struggling to define her own identity as a young woman who bright and intelligent who wanted to go out into the world and do something productive with her life other than to just be a wife and mother. At the age of sixteen, Hannah felt stifled by the cultural roles that defined her life, and continually sought to find meaning for her world and future life. In a previous entry in her diary Hannah achingly wrote, “Last evening I spent in my study till nine when I went to bed---I wish I knew how I mean what to do—but I intend to go somewhere.”

Hannah’s own daughters grew up together and created a very tight group among the five of them. The sisters were always extremely close and spent much of their time together, but they were not recluses, who shut themselves off from the rest of the world. In fact, it seems as if they took advantage of the key location of where they lived, traveling often to Hartford and visiting other towns throughout Connecticut. Much like their mother when she was a young women coming of age at the end of the eighteenth century, they enjoyed a very active and what seemed to be a stimulating a fun social life.

The Smith girls were sophisticated young women who could best be described as proper middle-class Northern white women. They had the same social lives as their friends and with many contemporary women who left behind accounts of what white middle-class girlhood was like in nineteenth-century America. At times reading Julia’s diary, it seemed that she and her

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32 Hannah Hickok Diary, May 26, 1784.
33 Ibid., May 3, 1784.
sisters could have been characters right out of Louisa May Alcott’s popular novel *Little Women*. Throughout Alcott’s book she described how the sisters played games, such as blindman’s bluff, or how the sisters would spend the day picking straw to make hats. Julia also often wrote about her sisters spent afternoons picking straw or her and her sisters “played blindman’s bluff,” on a cold wintery day.34

The Smith girls seemed to have had an entertaining social life, attending balls, teas, and numerous parties with many different friends. When their friends came to visit, the girls found much to keep them busy. Throughout her diary, Julia often refers to taking tea with her friends, sewing, and gathering straw in the fields to make hats. Two wonderful examples taken from Julia’s diary not only illustrate the activities that they participated in, but also provide a glimpse into Julia’s personality. In December, when some young women came to visit from Windsor, Julia wrote, “The girls from Windsor left after dinner. I like them fairly well, although Marie talks too much and she is very affected.”35 Then the following week, she and two of her close friends went, “after dinner with Eunice Hale to Mr. Thomas Hale’s and we cut straw to make a hat.”36

On a few occasions, the Smith sisters even attended formal balls, to which Julia referred in her diary as always fun and exciting. On two separate occasions less than a week apart, Julia described in her diary attending balls in the next town over from Glastonbury, “There was a ball in Farmington this evening. I went to it with Mr. and Mrs. Cowles, I danced four times.”37 Then on March 28, she wrote, “I did not feel well … Nevertheless I went to the ball in the evening. Cyrinthia went with Dr. Smith, Laurilla and I with Mr. Simons. There were 34 girls and 22

34Julia’s Diary, November 29, 1810.  
35Ibid., December 1, 1810.  
36Ibid., December 8, 1819.  
37Ibid., March 21, 1811.
gentlemen. I danced almost every time. We came home at 3 o’clock. We had a very fine dance. Mr. Simons spent the rest of the night here.”\(^{38}\) The Smith sisters seemed to have enjoyed the many social activities that were available for white middle-class ladies in the nineteenth century in the nineteenth century. It seems as if Julia and Abby enjoyed some of the same social activities as their mother, such as playing cards, but Hannah’s social world seemed much smaller than that of her daughters. In her diary Hannah only mentions taking one trip outside of Connecticut, while Julia and Abby traveled often. Julia and Abby also had the opportunity to attend many balls and they traveled in a carriage in mixed company. Hannah, on the other hand never attended balls, she tended to spend her time in small groups, and wherever she went she rode her own horse. The one continuity between Hannah’s eighteenth century social life as compared to her daughters is that they all seemed free to participate in mixed company without a chaperone.

In her diary, Julia often described in detail the places and the people she and her sisters visited on social calls. In October 1812, at the height of Julia’s social activities, she wrote,

In the morning Cyrinthia and I went to Wethersfield to make some wool thread for a rug. We called at Mr. Rose’s and at Mr. Stillman’s, later we went to Mrs. Combes’ who works on a rug frame, we left ours there. From there we went to Hartford—we went to the store of Mrs. Filley who had made my hat and I brought it home. I stopped at Mr. Value’s to ask him when there would be a French club meeting. Mrs. Value told me that it will be next week—I think I’ll go. We stopped at Mr. Williams in East Hartford, came home around four o’clock.\(^{39}\)

In another entry, Julia described a day trip that she took with her sister Abby to New London, where she met some handsome officers who seemed to have impressed her. The young officer, Lieutenant Greene gave the Abby and Julia a tour around a historical fort, from there the two sisters traveled to the Thames River to see two frigates anchored near Norwich. On board

\(^{38}\)bid., March 28, 1811.
\(^{39}\)Julia Smith diary, October 25, 1812.
another young officer showed them around the ship, which Julia particularly enjoyed, especially the cannons and the cabins. Julia described the frigate as “large, beautiful and very well made,” and that she “was delighted to see it.”

Julia’s mother, Hannah, who came of age during the Revolutionary War kept a very intimate and revealing diary, in which, she wrote of her feelings, her loneliness, her dreams of her future, and her secret love and longing for those who did not reciprocate her feelings, which according to Joyce Appleby, was not typical of the Revolutionary Generation. Appleby observed that people rarely confided their innermost feelings to their diaries, instead most men and women of the Revolutionary generation filled their diaries “with laconic notations on the prosaic details of family life and work routines.” Also, Appleby observed that for many young men and women their “daily journal entries provided a surrogate companion on the rugged trail of their spiritual journeys”, which, Hannah, used her diary after her father died to search for spiritual meaning and purpose for her life.

Hannah’s father constructed his immediate meaning and memory in his diaries from the farm and the economic/public world, in which he existed. David Hickok kept two diaries, in which he wrote about the life on his farm, what he sold or bought with his neighborhood economy, and he often commented on the scripture read at the Congregationalists meetings he attended. While Hannah on the other hand constructed her own identity and made sense of her immediate domestic space, with the two diaries that she kept, by categorizing both her private rooms where she studied and worked and her private inner thoughts and feelings. Hannah, like so many of her contemporaries used the house as a “material metonym for the mind,” to record her thought which, represented “the eighteenth century’s gendered distinction of space that

40 Ibid., July 14, 1813.
limited women to the home on the one hand while authorizing their superior memory through images of domestic interiors on the other.\textsuperscript{42}

The cultural tradition many young women used to compose their diaries in the late eighteen-century came from “their manuscript commonplace books,” for which they “adapted the eighteenth century’s new modes of learning based on accumulation, order, and classification into a feminine art of collecting.”\textsuperscript{43} Hannah’s own diary reflected the tradition by carefully categorizing books that she read or were interested in, the layout of her study and her own room, but she broke from tradition when she reflected upon her own frustrations with her life, the passion that she felt for certain people and the lack of interest she had for others. Throughout the diary that Hannah kept in her late teens provides an interesting glimpse into how she viewed herself and frustrations she felt about the world that she felt at times suppressed her inner most feelings and longings.

Hannah’s daughter, Julia, continued with this cultural tradition while writing her own memories and collection of ideas in her diaries, but, unlike her mother, Julia stayed much closer to the commonplace tradition where “women’s memory practices adapted the eighteenth century’s new modes of learning based on accumulation, order, and classification into a feminine art of collecting.”\textsuperscript{44}

Like her mother, Julia’s diary mirrored the domestic space in which she lived. Hannah, as a young woman at the end of the eighteenth century often commented on how she organized her room or her study, what she cleaned and washed for the day, and commented on the friends that had come to visit her for the day. Hannah’s daughter, Julia, also carefully noted and

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 12.
organized her daily activities, such as, what she cleaned or read that day or the people she visited, or lastly, the accounts that she maintained for the household economy. Lacking from Julia’s journal entries were thoughts or feelings about how she felt at the time regarding her place in the world, her aspirations, or her passion she felt for others. Unlike her mother’s journal, who wrote about her longing she felt for a woman who seemed to lack the same passion for her, or Hannah aspirations to be something or to do something in the world. Julia’s diary entries were completely devoid of feelings or introspection of herself, or her aspirations for the future.

Hannah often wrote poetry to express her feeling, whether she was happy, depressed, or frustrated, her writing always gave her an outlet to express herself. In one example, Hannah wrote a poem reflecting her frustration with her husband over a fence she had asked him on numerous occasions to build around her garden, a fence she eventually had to hire a man to finally come and build for her. Hannah wrote a witty and humorous poem to Zephaniah expressing her feelings,

Our Garden;
But first of all, the garden wall
Tis requisite to mention
As we conjecture, its architecture
Is quite a new invention.
Part is so high, ’twould brave the sky,
Had not old Boreas shatter’d,
And rueful battle with the cattle,
Unfortunately batter’d
One place is pales, another rails,
But boards compose the front all,
Some in particular, rise in perpendicular,
And some is horizontal.
Next in the inside, which forms the pride
Of curious cultivators,
Where roses grow and tulips blow,
Mid onions and potatoes …

Hannah’s poem also reflects the nineteenth-century cultural world that occupied and gave meaning to women. For Hannah, her frustration came from the fact that as the domestic world defines her space on the farm and made sense of her world for her, she asked that Zephaniah help her by participating in her world with her. The fence for Hannah was part of the larger world for her, she took care of the farm, the accounts, so the fence occupied her space, but for once she asked her husband to step out of his law office, which was right next to the garden and build her a fence for which he failed to do so. Hannah turned to the one form of communication, was the place that she created knowledge and her memories, which she felt safe to write out her frustration, her diary.  

Hannah made sense of her world and constructed her memories through the culturally defined domestic space she occupied as a young eighteenth-century woman. Hannah’s intellectual, as well as her intimate life was illustrated in her diary by using the gendered domestic space that she occupied. In her diary, she often commented on the placement of her desk, where she studied and well as what she studied. In February Hannah wrote about her lack of feelings and frustrations with one very persistent young man, Gibbs, and at the same time she discussed the moving of her furniture, and what she wanted to study. The first entry Hannah explains that she, “rose at ten went to cleaning room till noon when I went to spinning, Gibbs has been here we have had some dispute, he is a vexation and I dislike him too much to write about him, I have moved my study today.” Then on Saturday, Hannah wrote, “today I rose at eight after adjusting things in my parlor went to spining two or three hours then wound yarn which I have finished, I want a geographic.” With these two entries Hannah describes her world, her feelings, and what is and is not important to her. Her space, her room and parlor are

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47 Hannah Hickok Diary, February 20 and 21, 1784.
important to her, it is her that she creates her world, it is here that she studies, reads, and writes in her diary. This space may offer a place for her to escape from the world that is defined for her, the world of Gibbs. The eighteenth-century gender role that defines young women as future wives clearly frustrated Hannah, and her impatience towards Gibbs, clearly reveals her impatience with the gender role that she is suppose to ascribe to. Lastly, she simply states, “I want a geography,” which means for her, I would like to be able to study and learn and to be left alone to pursue my own interests. She also discussed her relationship with her male and female friends in her diary, and even her relationship with her husband was defined by her domestic world.\(^{48}\)

Also as part of the domestic ideology and true womanhood, women were expected to care for the sick or to play the role of nursemaid. There were numerous writers and authors who contributed to the gendered discourse that helped to create one of only other suitable role for women in the early nineteenth century—the nursemaid. The cult of true womanhood was the last piece of the domestic discourse that defined women in the nineteenth century. Women, because of their compassion, goodness, calmness, and sensitivity to others, made not only the most nourishing and loving mothers, but also the perfect nursemaids.

In the early nineteenth century world in which Hannah raised her daughters, the role of women was defined by an ideal known as the cult of true womanhood. The ideology of the cult of true womanhood defined the ideal qualities that all respectable middling class white women were expected to develop and it also defined the ideal occupation that women were qualified to perform outside of her home. According to some articles, the sick bed only became an extension of the wife/mother domestic circle. For those females who lacked true virtue of the selfless loving mother and wife, the world became devoid of all charm and joy. Many writers of the time

\(^{48}\)Stabile, 23-24.
argued that women who were not capable of caring for the sick or those women who lacked an interest in sacrificing themselves to care for their family were at best abnormal women, and at worst a monstrosity. One article written in *American Ladies’ Magazine: Containing Original Tales, Essays, Literary and History* in 1834 argued that women “who despise[ed] domestic life and its duties, and shrink from engagements which involve care and responsibility,” were likely to fall into a “state of indifference to the world, bordering upon disgust, if not upon misanthropy.”49 These women instead, were “unnatural” whose lives became “tame, monotonous, or gloomy, like a fading autumn, or frozen winter.”50 But according to the author, the poor and sad women who lived outside of the proper domestic sphere—that is, who “lived in the ‘unnatural’ state”—had only one role left open to them that offered them redemption: caring for the sick.51

The author advised women who were not mothers or wives to spend their time “sitting by a sick bed day and night, administering the medicine and compassion” to the sick and needy, which would give them hope that they were actually “useful and productive citizens.”52 Therefore, according to the author, it was

an imperative duty of society to train every female to the important art of attending THE SICK … There are individuals who need some employment, for the sake even of the emolument; but more especially to save them from ennui and disgust, and misery,—sometimes from speedy or more protracted suicide.53

The article concludes by stating that all females were universally qualified for caring for others, because they “are better calculated, by nature and providence, for attending the sick than males,”

49“Female Attendance on the Sick,” *American Ladies’ Magazine: Containing Original Tales, Essays, Literary and Historical Sketches, Poetry, Criticism, Music, and a Great Variety of Matter Connected with Many Subjects of Importance and Interest (1834–1836).* Vol. 7, issue 7 (Boston: July 1834), 301 (6 pp.).


50Ibid.

51Ibid.

52Ibid.

53Ibid.
and because they have more “fortitude in scenes of trial and distress,” their manners and methods are more gentle; their devotion to whatever they undertake greater; their thoughts less engrossed by other objects, and especially the cares and presence of business.\textsuperscript{54}

The Smith sisters themselves participated in the culturally defined role of nursemaid when they cared of the sick and the needy in their town. The Smith women not only read about the goodness of charity in the Bible and the numerous magazines and newspapers, they also spent a good deal of time involved in charity and reform work. All five sisters were known in Glastonbury for taking care of the sick and less fortunate, especially among the poverty-stricken mill families in town.

As an extension of the domestic sphere, the Smith’s as well as other middle class white women were able to participate out in the public world as long as their charity work remained within the realm of domesticity. Gender historian, Lori B. Ginzberg explained in her book, \textit{Women and the Work of Benevolence}, that women were not only allowed, but encouraged to exert their own influence and power in the public sphere as long as that “benevolent work merely extended the job of motherhood, that it would elevate woman ‘without removing her from her appropriate sphere.’ Justified as an extension of their maternal duties, women’s influence could be exerted over an entire nation.”\textsuperscript{55}

Like many middle-class white women in the early part of the nineteenth century in America, Sarah Grimke, understood that true Christian virtue demanded that both men and women care for the less fortunate in society; but many critics, especially Church leaders, used religion to keep women out of the public sphere. In 1837, the General Assembly of the Congregational Church released a newsletter that argued “‘when woman assumes the place and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{54}Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
tone of man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seems unnecessary; we put ourselves in a self-defence against her, and her character becomes unnatural.’”

Sarah Grimke responded to her critics saying that Jesus commanded both men and women to “‘Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression.’” Therefore, Ms. Grimke believed that “The motto of woman, when she is engaged in the great work of public reformation should be,—The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Women, according to Ms. Grimke, “must feel that she is fulfilling one of the important duties laid upon her as an accountable being, and that her character, instead of being ‘unnatural’ is in exact accordance with the will of Him to whom, and to no other, she is responsible for the talents and the gifts confided to her.” Lastly, in fulfilling their Christian duty as proscribed by Jesus Christ, women in America would fulfill their duties to define them as virtuous citizens.

Sarah Grimke, like her contemporaries, defined Christian duty as helping those less fortunate in society that could not help themselves. Reform work seemed to be the one public sphere in which women were able to carve out a defined cultural space just for themselves. Even though Sarah may have seemed a radical in pushing for women’s rights, she still used the culturally accepted language of the day to describe the proper role for women. Numerous articles written in the early and middle part of the century defined Christian duty in gender terms, using a religious discourse. The American Ladies’ Magazine published many articles in the 1830s defining reform work as the proper sphere for women because of their virtuous character. In May 1834, an anonymous writer for the American Ladies’ Magazine wrote, “religion

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57 Ibid., 20.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 21.
The writer concluded her argument by using a clarion call to women to allow their religious devotion and learning to “elevate and perfect the character” and “let her feel, and acknowledge” with patience and compassion “the duties which naturally grow out of her station in society.” Moreover, women must use their Christian virtue to “aid in molding other characters” and then let women’s lives be devoted to the “great and general good.”

Throughout her diary Julia often commented on visiting or caring for the sick or for those poor individuals who were less fortunate in Glastonbury. Julia discussed the days when she and her sister visited the sick and gave them much-needed food, especially fresh fruit. On a beautiful spring morning, Julia set out with her sister Cyrinthia in the carriage to “take some necessities to Alice Lindsay a poor sick (woman) who has broken her arm.” Then, on another busy and hectic day in the summer of 1815 when Julia finished with all of her usual chores, she states that her day began when she “ironed my braid,” then

Spun twenty knots of wool. Went out this afternoon in the carriage with Zephina. We took a few peaches to Anne Miller who is sick. We brought home our cloth from Mrs. Loveland’s. Later I went with Cyrinthia in the carriage to Mr. Brown’s to take a letter to Abby for Mr. Sweetland who is going to New Haven Monday and will take it to Abby. It rained a little this afternoon.

The sisters were also ardent abolitionists, inspired by their keen sense of justice and their religious belief that all of God’s children must be protected, loved, and cared for. It seems that the Smith sisters were inspired by their mother’s keen sense of justice and believed in fighting

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., April 12, 1815.
65 Ibid., April 26, 1815.
the social ills of society. The daughters followed their father’s religious beliefs, but it was their mother who created in them a sense of social justice. On July 4, Hannah wrote a scathing poem criticizing America’s independence because the new republic still kept in bondage a large portion of its people. The poem is a satirical attack on the men who were celebrated each year for their fine virtues and ideals that define the American republic and the women who worshiped them and who safeguarded these virtues for the world to see and admire. Hannah beautifully wrote:

Let not Columbia’s sons, elate
To hear their deeds extolled,
Unites the day to celebrate
When they were disenthralled.

Nor hail the morn of its return
With shouts of Freedom gained
While millions of our people mourn,
In galling fretters chained.

Denied the book of life they grope,
In darkness till they die,
Without a ray of heavenly hope
And none to comfort nigh.

O tell it not ye who shall stray
Where missionaries roam,
Among the heathen lest they say
Go teach your slaves at home.

Let all unite upon this day
To plead the sufferers cause,
To rulers ever bound to pray
For just and equal laws.

Vaunt not your valour, for the brave
Possess a generous heart
And will release the suppliant slave
And act a friendly part.

Henceforth let not a voice declare
Our victories when enslaved,
Our nation no memorial bear,
No tablet be engraved.

No pillars rise on hill or plain
Along our lengthened coast,
Or monument be placed again
Our Freedom still to boast.

And never more a banner wave
Inscribed with Liberty
Till we unchain the prostrate slave
And set the captive free.  

The abolitionist movement was one of many reform movements to emerge in the nineteenth-century, but unlike other social reform activities “antislavery was, in fact, a radical cause.” In her book, *The Great Silent Army*, Julia Roy Jeffrey, explains that most of the women in the nineteenth century who were interested in benevolent and charitable causes focused mainly “on those worthy individuals whom progress had left behind,” such as working orphanages, soup kitchens, etc. Even though these women “promoted certain behaviors among their clients—industriousness, Christian piety, and sobriety, for example,” they generally accepted and rarely tried to change society. Comparatively, women like the Smith sisters who became abolitionists not only challenged the sins of slavery, they sought to remove the sin from society.

Hannah and her daughters seemed most angry about the plight of “Negroes” (the term that Julia used in her diary) in America, and the way the slaves’ lack of freedom diminished the great ideals that the republic had been founded upon. Hannah’s poem drips with sarcasm about the great American freedom celebration, and Julia in her diary often referred to the work that she did for the Negros to help them in a world that kept them in bondage. On July 4, 1819, Julia

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65 Hannah Smith poem, Envelope L1091, Box 8, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
67 Ibid.
wrote, “I stayed at church and Sunday school. I taught the Negros.”\(^68\) Julia then commented in her diary that she, Zephine, and Cyrlintha went to Eastbury to visit the poor and to “carry provisions for the sick.” She also mentioned that she and Abby went to “Mr. Plummer’s society there were fourteen women and girls” and they made dresses for the “poor negresses, so they may go to school next Sunday.”\(^69\)

The Smith women not only distributed provisions to the people of color in their community, but they also worked tirelessly to put together a petition drive to end slavery. Beginning in 1839, Hannah along with her daughters wrote two petitions to end slavery. They also all took turns going from house to house in Glastonbury to convince the community to sign their petition. Julia commented on their work for the abolitionist cause in her diary on April 27, 1839. She wrote, “This afternoon I have been in the gig with Laurilla as far as the house of Mr. Jones (after having been to the house of Mrs. Norton and M. Jones) to present him with our petition to the legislature on slavery.”\(^70\) Then on September 22, 1839, she wrote, “My mother went in the carriage with the minister to collect some signatures for the petitions for abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia … Zephina came back at night with sixty names.”\(^71\) Julia wrote in her diary that by November 1839, she had finally mailed off their petition with over 400 names. On the momentous day, Julia wrote, “I have written an note to Mr. Trumbell and I have wrapped it up with the petition and this afternoon I walked to the post office and put it in the mail.”\(^72\)

The Smith’s charitable acts were supported and lauded by the people in Glastonbury, when the Smith women remained within the proper domestic sphere, a area defined by one

\(^{68}\)Housley, *The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life*, 100.
\(^{69}\)Ibid., 101.
\(^{70}\)Ibid., 111.
\(^{71}\)Ibid.
\(^{72}\)Ibid., 112.
anonymous writer in The American Ladies’ Magazine, which, defined reform work as the proper sphere for women because of their virtuous character. In May 1834, the anonymous writer wrote, “religion [emphasis original], a woman’s peculiar province” and that “the truths of which should be her dearest study, the practice of its duties her constant aim.”73 The writer concluded her argument by using a clarion call to women to allow their religious devotion and learning to “elevate and perfect the character” and “let her feel, and acknowledge” with patience and compassion “the duties which naturally grow out of her station in society.”74 Moreover, women must use their Christian virtue to “aid in molding other characters” and then let women’s lives be devoted to the “great and general good.”75 At Abby’s funeral, one man who was interviewed applauded and praised the charity work performed by the Smith women precisely because it conformed to the nineteenth-century definition of the proper gender role for women. He stated:

he and other members of the town always called upon them (the Smith’s) first with cases of charity, and never met a refusal. There was only one peculiarity. The sisters, sometimes three or four, would always step into a corner of the room to consult, so that each might contribute and equal share, and once, in mid-winter, I told them of a woman starving, on my way to get help, and they harnessed up and drove with a wagon load—and the house on a hill so icy that they actually had to crawl up on their hands and knees, but they did it. ‘Yes,’ said a lady, ‘and they watched all over the town, night after night taking turns. There’s no end to the kindnesses.’76

As long as the Smith women remained within the boundaries of the domestic sphere, they were praised and celebrated by the town.

The Smith women not only created their own comfortable domestic world where they pursued their own interests, but they also took their beliefs out into the public sphere to fight

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 “The Smith Sisters” The Funeral—Interesting Reminiscences Abby Smith’s Faith in the Bible Correspondence of The Evening Post. Glastonbury, CT, July 26, 1878.
injustice and to help the less fortunate. The Smith women were caught up in the reform efforts that many middle-class white women embraced in the nineteenth century. They lived out their Christian beliefs and used the cultural norms of the day to create their place in the world. Even their own neighbors and town folks found the Smith sisters a bit eccentric at times, especially because of the fact that they never married. In the end, the sisters were always respected for their charity work and were viewed as kind and caring Christian women. Their neighbor and longtime friend Henry Titus Welles attests to their generous and caring nature in *Autobiography and Reminiscences*:

[They] did not seem to have a love of the marvelous, nor a desire to be eccentric. But they did have a pride of independence, and arrogated to themselves superior judgment, and were inordinately tenacious of their own opinions. They were self-sufficient. But nevertheless their lives were fragrant with good deeds. They were ever at the bedside of the sick, and were ministering angels to the poor. They were Christians withal, and their record is written in letters of gold in the Lamb’s Book of Life, forever and ever.77

Mr. Wells, seemed to remember almost a caricature of the Smith sisters, one that had been filtered through the culturally loaded gendered language of the day. The first part of his memories almost ridiculed and criticized Julia and Abby because they were independent women who decided not to marry and because they had their own opinions on various subjects. He does remember the Smith for their “good deeds,” or for the appropriate roles and behavior for middle-class white women. He praises that they cared for the poor and took care of the sick as angelic, Christian women.

When Julia was twenty-three years old at the beginning of the nineteenth century her diary reflected the mature woman that Julia had become. From twenty-three on, Julia never wrote about her social life again. She no longer talked about going to balls or friends coming over for tea, picking straw, or calling at her neighbors’ house. Instead her diary focused on either

her reading or her religious study. It seems at the age of twenty-three, Julia became much like her mother, very serious and focused on her own personal studies, leaving the outside world behind. Julia existed in this world until the age of seventy, when the outside world forced itself back into her life and into her quiet home on Main Street, which arrived with the Glastonbury tax collector trying to collect more money from her and Abby than any other property owner in town. The injustice of the act thrust both Julia and Abby into the public sphere to fight for what they believed were their rights as property owners—the right to vote for their own local taxes and government. When the Smith women began to retreat from the outside world, they still had many other activities to keep them occupied and extremely busy. As they became older, it seems as if they became more attached to living and existing primarily with their own domestic circle. The sphere that began to dominate their lives included the running of the home and the farm, keeping track of expenses, education, reading and writing, and taking care of the sick, but with very little socializing.

This suggests something important about the way in which we read the lives of ordinary people. Hannah only challenged the dominant gender order once in her life, when as a young girl of sixteen in 1783 she left home to teach in Vermont. The death of her father that autumn brought her back to the farm, and she assumed the duties necessary to maintain a living. This included marrying and bearing children. But, as a young mother of the early republic, Hannah managed to create her own sphere of power and influence on the family farm. Even though Hannah may have lived through the shifting attitudes regarding the proper role of women, especially married women, she was able to create and maintain her own her intellectual curiosity and passion for learning, which she would later inspire her own daughters to pursue their own intellectual interested.
The ideal of Real Womanhood seemed to be a better cultural definition for women like Hannah Smith and her daughters, because they did not have just one identity, but instead they had multilayered identities. All the sisters pursued their own interests; they traveled, socialized, worked on the farm, knitted their own clothes, and managed their domestic economy. The new type of woman emerging in the nineteenth century—the Real Woman, according to Cogan—had to be prepared to work and be trained in a skill that could support them in the event of an economic crisis caused by the ever-changing and unpredictable capitalist society.

Throughout the early part of the century, Julia and her sisters enjoyed their youth, but as they grew older, they also began to value their solitude more. It seems that by the time the Smith women reached their mid-20s, they closed themselves off from the outside world and existed in a tiny isolated world of their own making. After November 1815, Julia began to write less and less about their social life and more about her studying, reading, and teaching. When Julia reached age twenty-two, she left behind her childhood and moved on to her adulthood, and at the same time decided not to marry.

When the Smith women began to retreat from the outside world, they still had many other activities to keep them occupied and extremely busy. As they became older, it seems as if they became more attached to living and existing primarily with their own domestic circle. The sphere that began to dominate their lives included the running of the home and the farm, keeping track of expenses, education, reading and writing, and taking care of the sick, but with very little socializing.

From the cultural discourse that outlined the roles for women, it seems that socially and economically, the Smith women adhered to the gendered cultural norms of the day. They were regulars on the social scene in Glastonbury and Hartford, who participated in all of the same
activities other young people enjoyed in the early nineteenth century. They attended balls, had sewing circles at the home, picked straw for hats, played blind man’s bluff, shopped, and went for walks and sleigh rides with young gentlemen. Socially, there was only one norm in which none of the Smith girls decided to participate: marriage. All of the Smith daughters remained single (except for Julia, who married very late in life), and there is really no definitive answer as to why; but what is clear is that they had the option and the choice not to marry. The Smith women led social and entertaining lives, ones created by themselves and not dominated by a husband. As they became older and left behind their childhood interests and pursuits, the Smith women focused more on their intellectual and religious interests, which kept them content and happy in their own domestic circle.
CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION AND CAREERS

As part of the Revolutionary generation, Hannah Hickok experienced the war and was a witness to the deprivation it caused. Her happy and carefree memories of her youth impacted the way in which she interpreted the American Revolution. Her reflections about that tumultuous period in American history were not about the battles or politics. Instead, Hannah remembered the fashions of the period:

I have seen children’s frocks pinned with thorns, I have seen wooden tea cups & saucers in some families, but we could spin & weave our own garments. Happy were the daughters whose mothers had laid by a gown or two of silk and calico or chintz. My mother had a comfortable number altered for me when I was in my fifteenth year. The war did not end till I was near 16, when we began to buy, tho’ cloth of all kinds were dear.

According to Hannah, a calico dress was “a grand affair kept choice to wear only to meeting and taken off as soon as we returned till I was 15. At 16 peace was proclaimed and my mother bought, I think two gowns.”1 That year, Hannah also commented that she cut her hair “short” because it was “fashionable.”2 Like many others of the time, her memories of the war were not of the high political ideals of liberty, and freedom, nor how the Revolution might forever change her world. This is not to say she was not aware of the politics, or blind to them. But like so many others, her daily focus was on the mundane and the pedestrian. But a close review of her reminiscences pulls back the curtain and allows us to see the emerging Revolutionary generation as they lived. And her life as well as her daughters would look very different than the world of her childhood.

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1Ibid, 12–13.
2Ibid.
Hannah’s memories of the war may have focused on the pedestrian, as did many others, but she certainly lived in changing times. Some women took this as a call to action, such as the prominent eighteenth century writer, Judith Sargent Murray, who wrote under the pen name of the powerful Roman matron Constantia, which represented for Murray the ideal of the civic and matronly virtue. As Constantia, Murray participated in refashioning the ideals of virtue, and republicanism, in which she included women in her creation of a new type of republican citizen. Murray was hardly alone in this project. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, many influential members of the new nation undertook a cultural project to create and maintain a virtuous republican citizenry, one, that would protect and nourish the young nation. What seemed apparent to all who took part in the project was the need to produce virtuous citizens who could resist vice because many believed that vice had destroyed all earlier republics, such as Greece and Rome. The key to the cultural undertaking and debate on how best to protect the fragile nation was education, for both men and women. The constructed education plan for the new generation of citizens was devised in eighteenth-century gendered terms, or what best suited one’s natural abilities. Two of the most prominent writers of the time, Benjamin Rush and Judith Sargent Murray, believed that without a well-educated public, the democratic experience was doomed to fail.

According to Rush, if the fragile and young republic failed, every individual would ultimately lose his or her liberty. He therefore wrote that “freedom can exist only in the society of knowledge. Without learning, men are incapable of knowing their rights, and where learning

is confined to a few people, liberty can be neither equal nor universal.” Rush created his education program in the gendered terms of his day, meaning that boys and girls had to be taught the knowledge and skills necessary to allow them to participate in the new republic in the separate spheres imposed by the natural order.

Murray and Rush defined the role for women as Republican Motherhood, and many writers after him advocated this new sphere for women. However, such a notion circumscribed women’s freedom by limiting their area of influence to the home or the private sphere. Hannah’s own experiences as a young woman reflects the numerous changes happening in late eighteenth-century America. Not only does the new movement to create a new female republican citizen shape Hannah’s life and that of her daughters.

Like many of her contemporaries, Hannah’s father educated her at home using his own library and the time that her father devoted to Hannah and her education left an indelible impression on Hannah for the rest of her life. As a young man, David Hickok was the only member of his family to attend Yale, but illness forced him to quit before he could fulfill his dream of becoming a Congregationalist minister. According to his granddaughter, Julia, David was “a very learned man and a great mathematician.”

Her daughter, Julia, said of her mother and of her education that “in those days (1770s) she was almost a ‘none such,’ she could speak French when a child.” Also, she acquired when nearly 60 years of age a knowledge of the Italian language and could read and understand all Italian poets and translated many pieces of them, and in letter writing I have seldom seen her equal, and so accustomed was she to use her pen that in the last painful sickness she called for her journal and wrote though unable to sit up.

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5Julia Smith to Mr. Cothren, April 3, 1854, Envelope L1101 Box 8, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
6Smith to Cothren, April 3, 1854.
Later in life, Hannah described in her journal the early training she received from her father and a local clergyman that provided her with the foundation she needed to pursue her love of learning throughout her life. She wrote, “65 years ago I studied Latin a part of the time. Mr. Minor the clergyman came and heard me recite but I did not get it perfectly. My father was then dead, I had studied french under his tuition but I did not understand it as I do now for I have been reading it by turns ever since.”

In addition to the classical studies taught to her by her father, Hannah also learned how to build and repair clocks and watches. She loved the intricate and complicated parts of a timepiece and the tiny gears and springs, which fascinated both her and her father. After her father’s death Hannah continued her fascination with making and repairing watches as illustrated by her diary entry in March of 1785 when she wrote, “have been at work on the time piece and have fixed it up so it keeps time.” Appropriately, David also shared his love of astronomy with Hannah, taking her outside on starry nights to teach her the names of the constellations, “pointing out to her the planets which wandered among them, and teaching her the courses throughout the years, as well as the arrival times of the comets.”

Throughout her diary Hannah constantly makes references to her love of learning, stating that she loved to be alone in her study reading a newspaper or the books she was able to buy. On a warm day in March in 1784 Hannah noted that her father “brought home the 7 vol of Grandison, which I read.” Then in the first week of April, Hannah commented that she had “done little besides reading in Grandison the only advantage I have in reading Richardson’s style

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8Hannah Hickok Diary. March 10, 1785.
9Ibid., 14.
10Hannah Hickok Diary. March 30, 1784
is it gives me patience to write which otherwise I should not have.”

Even while she noted what she was reading in her diary, Hannah still felt self-conscious about her own intellect and her own abilities, as was reflected in her diary when she wrote, “I wonder I do not write a better journal it is not so good as it used to be and only tells the time I rise and go to bed.”

More importantly, Hannah also understood the prejudice against women who were too educated in the eighteenth-century. On May 25, 1784, she wrote in her diary,

Miss Knowles is young, which excuses her awkward behavior but Miss Mitchell is really a very sensible, learned, instructive and conversable young Lady---She is a year younger than I am with admirable education… People in general don’t like her, they say she is proud and fond of shewing her learning by continually talking of the learned men, poets, heroes, Goddesses and Gods, for which I like and indeed she and I are to be very intimate.

Julia described the powerful influence that David had on Hannah and the bond they established through the time and effort he invested in her education. In the introduction to Hannah’s published poems, Julia described her independent, intelligent, and free-spirited mother in the following way:

My mother in many respects was a remarkable woman, an only child, and her parents persons of strong minds. Her father, a man of superior education, took pains to teach her at an early age, and she had much time for study, having much more taste for books than for dress and company and fashionable resorts. Her father taught her Latin and French when quite a child. He acquired the French language at Yale College and spoke it fluently; he was also an astronomer and mathematician, and could calculate eclipses. Mother was like him in her taste for astronomy, and was often out late at night gazing at the starry firmament, and made herself a perpetual almanac. When it was clear she could always tell the time of night by the stars. Late in life she studied Italian poets. For her own amusement, she would occasionally write pieces of poetry.

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11Ibid., April 2, 1784.
12Ibid., April 16, 1784.
13Hannah Hickok Diary. May 25, 1784.
14Julia Smith. Selections from the Poems of Mrs. Hannah H. Smith, by Her Daughter, Julia E. Smith, the Only Survivor of the Family, Box 8, Envelope L1101 (Hartford, CT: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1881).
Yet not only did her father play a role in educating Hannah, but her mother Abigail taught Hannah the important but tedious skill of spinning wool. Hannah’s childhood did not seem to be governed by a strict gender division until she came of age and her mother taught the one skill all young ladies needed to master, spinning wool. According to Mary Beth Norton, in the eighteenth century “no household task was more time consuming or more symbolic of the female role than spinning.” Hannah and her mother Abigail spent many hours together, especially in the winter months “bending over a flax wheel or loom, or walking beside a great wheel, spinning wool.” Under her mother’s tutelage, it seemed Hannah learned and performed the important skill of spinning wool, but it came with a certain amount of dread. She often remarked how she loved to be outside riding furiously through the fields or sitting quietly in her room reading and studying alone. On a rainy Saturday in February 1784, Hannah wrote that she “rose at eight after adjusting things in my parlor went to spinning two or three hours then wound yarn which I have finished,” and at the end of her comments for the day she simply stated that, “I want a geographic.”

One continuity that carried from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century was the tradition and importance of women spinning wool in order to contribute to the household income. Just as Abigail taught Hannah how to spin wool, Hannah also passed down the tradition to her own daughters, who spent their days making their own clothes and bedding.

From the diary and letters left behind by Hannah and Julia, we learn that Hannah and her husband, Zephaniah, both used all the nineteenth-century resources at their disposal to give their daughters the best education possible. One letter in particular outlines the importance that Hannah placed on educating her daughters properly. In September 1802, Hannah wrote to her

16Hannah Hickok Diary February 21, 1785.
daughters at Litchfield Female Academy outlining their education program for the coming year. She begins, “Cyrinthia must go all winter (to Litchfield Female Academy). She may work at her picture now, and learn composition when she comes.”

It seems that the Smith women spent a considerable amount of time each day studying or pursuing their own intellectual interests, a tradition began by their mother Hannah. Hannah’s daughters seemed to have inherited their mother’s curiosity. Even though Hannah grew up in the early republican period, her education curriculum did not vary that much from that of her daughters, who received their education at the height of the female seminary reform movement. Julia and the rest of the Smith girls took their education very seriously and felt that they should be profoundly grateful for the gift given to them by their parents. In a letter written to two close friends, Miss Miller and Miss Kellogg, Julia revealed her own sentiments concerning the importance she placed on education and how women should appreciate the opportunities given to them and not squander the precious gift of knowledge. Even by the end of the nineteenth century, a challenging education for women should not have been taken for granted. Julia advised the two young women not to write depressing letters home to their family about being homesick and not enjoying the many activities and experiences one has when they are away from home. Julia admonishes to two girls for their selfish behavior, if fact Julia says, their behavior is “worse than nonsense, it is real selfishness, and how can your mothers help you. After being at such trouble and expense to send you away from home to improve yourselves, all you are doing is to hurt their feelings I want you should both wipe your eyes.” She concludes her letter advising the Kellogg girls to use this time and experience at school to “improve yourselves to the utmost, so that you will become such real ladies,” and that as young women they need to become mature.

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17Hannah Smith to the Girls, September 20, 1802, Envelope L1091, Box 8. Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
young women who will appreciate the time and effort their parents had put into making sure they received an excellent education.\footnote{Julia Smith to Misses Miller and Kellogg, October 11, 1868, Envelope L1097, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.}

The Smith girls were afforded a variety of opportunities to obtain a quality education. They attended boarding school and day school. Their parents hired tutors and sent the girls to live with a French family (the Values) to learn French. The older girls often taught the younger girls at home. Hannah and Zephaniah took advantage of the many educational opportunities that were just opening for women in the early part of the nineteenth century. The education of women in the early part of the century became a hotly debated topic, especially as women were perceived as fulfilling a fundamental role in the education and instruction of young children of the Republic. Many agreed that women would require more formal education to fulfill this important role of “republican motherhood,” but disagreed about what should young ladies be taught and for what purpose. Benjamin Rush, the architect of the republican discourse believed that all young women needed to be educated. The Smith sisters’ education and their lifelong passion for learning was similar to that of their contemporaries, both in their approach to learning and their purpose for attaining higher learning.

With the emergence of the Republican Motherhood ideology, education for women in the early part of the century became a hotly debated topic, one dominated by what should young ladies be taught and for what purpose. Benjamin Rush, the architect of the republican discourse believed that all young women needed to be educated. The Smith sisters’ education and their lifelong passion for learning was similar to that of their contemporaries, both in their approach to learning and their purpose for attaining higher learning.
Rush, one of the most outspoken advocates for women to be included in the new education program in America, believed women needed an education just as much as young men did, in order to prepare them for their necessary task of raising and educating the next generation of citizens to protect the new republic. In fact, he defined the role of female citizens as “Republican Motherhood.” In his own writings, he did not place a value on male or female citizenship; instead, he implicitly argued that women’s roles in the new nation were equally as important as those of the young men, or even more so;

The state of prosperity, in America, renders it necessary for the greatest part of our citizens to employ themselves, in different occupations, for the advancement of their fortunes. This cannot be done without the assistance of the female members of the community, because they must be the stewards, and guardians of their husbands’ property.\(^{19}\)

Ultimately, since it is the women who will be responsible for the education and morals of the nation’s youth, because of the nature of the work men perform outside of the home keeps men away for extended periods of time, therefore it naturally the women who has to be responsible for the early education of her children. Rush believed that a mothers’ most sacred and important duty as a citizen of the new republic is to “concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government.”\(^{20}\) Rush defined the role for women as Republican Motherhood, and many writers after him advocated this new sphere for women. However, such a notion limited women’s freedom by circumscribing their area of influence to the home or the private sphere.

To create the perfect Republican Mother, Rush advocated that young ladies obtained a thorough knowledge of the English language, including reading, writing, grammar, and speaking.

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\(^{20}\)Ibid., 6-7.
As discussed above, Judith Sargent Murray also participated in the creation of the cultural discourse that defined Republican Motherhood, complementing the efforts of Rush. The central thesis concerning her discussion of women was that a woman should attain a proper education herself, which in turn would provide her with the necessary skills needed to teach her children about virtue, republicanism, and liberty. Murray believed that women had to be wise in the art of domestic economy and a great conversationalist in order to be a helpmate to her husband. The purpose was to create not an individual woman of the world, but a woman who would be responsible for safeguarding the virtue of their sons and husbands, and ultimately the republic itself.

In one of her short stories, Murray described the education and deportment of the ideal young lady, whom she names Margaretta. In the story, Murray argued that

“the propriety of circumscribing the education of a female, within such narrow bounds are as frequently assigned, is at least problematical … It is an incontrovertible fact that to the matron is entrusted not only the care of her daughter, but also the forming the first and oftentimes the most important movements of that mind, which is to inform the future man … Now, was she properly qualified, how enviable and how dignified would be her employment.”

Accordingly, she envisioned women in the future to be the true holders of liberty through their role as the Republican Mother; much in the same way Rush envisioned female citizenship. Murray states,

The trust reposed in parents and preceptors, is indeed important; the character of the rising generation is in their gift, and the peace or anarchy of society must result from them … Much of this momentous department, depends on female administration; and the mother, or the woman to whom she may delegate her office, will imprint on the opening mind, characters, ideas and conclusions, which time, in all its variety of vicissitudes will never be able to erase [emphasis original].

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21 Murray, The Gleaner, 58.
22 Ibid., 287.
As with Rush and the rest of the early cultural contributors to the newly formed republic, Murray’s writings clearly stated that citizenship itself must be constructed in gendered terms. Therefore, women naturally were in charge of the household, which included the domestic economy, raising and educating the children, preparing the next generation to be responsible and moral citizens, and caring for and soothing the passions of their husbands. Men were trained to be legislators, farmers, mechanics, merchants, and soldiers—all the roles necessary to protect the young nation and to help it flourish for future generations. If the finely crafted roles of citizenship and participation were subverted in any way, those men and women who contributed to the construction truly believed that the natural balance and order necessary to protect the young nation against vice would collapse; and therefore, the young nation and those ideals that men and women sacrificed their lives for would be destroyed just like the republics of Greece and Rome.

Central to the Republican Motherhood debate, is whether it truly improved the lives of women in the nineteenth century, or did it simply relegate women to the household as mothers. According to Mary Beth Norton, Republican Motherhood did in fact improve women lives in the nineteenth century. But Hannah’s own experience as a young woman in Colonial America contradicts Norton’s portrayal of eighteenth century women. The freedom that Hannah described as a young girl in late colonial America also challenges the conventional view of girls sitting around sewing and spinning circles, speaking softly to one another in small, poorly lit rooms, and confined in uncomfortable dresses. In fact, Norton describes the late eighteenth century as a time of confinement for middling-ranked white women, one where they knew their place defined by their gender: “Eighteenth-century Americans proved to have clear ideas of which tasks were properly ‘feminine’ and which were not; of what behavior was appropriate for females,
especially white females; and of what functions ‘the sex’ was expected to perform.” Norton argued that women truly believed themselves to be inferior to men, and that instead of having a “high status and an excellent opinion of themselves and their abilities, most white women who lived in pre-revolutionary America turned out to display low self-esteem.” She concludes that women gained more rights after the Revolution, and that their lot in life progressively improved throughout the nineteenth century. She asserts that women in the eighteenth century had “very limited conceptions of themselves and their roles, and to habitually denigrate their sex in general”;23 but that began to change in the nineteenth century when numerous female seminaries opened up throughout the country, which provided women with a proper education.

The historical literature today debates the significance of the female seminary movement that began at the turn of the century and the influence of education on middle-class white women. The debate among historians centers on the topic of domesticity, which dominated the cultural discourse of the day. Some historians argue that the new movement to reform women’s education actually reinforced the domesticity and served to keep women submissive and in the home. Keith Melder countered the argument that the new schools were the liberal progressive institutions that many made them out to be. Instead, he believes that they were conservative institutions with a primary goal to groom future wives and mothers. Ultimately, Melder argued that the new seminaries “aimed essentially to program their students academically and emotionally into becoming ideal women according to contemporary standards.”24 The problem with the new female academies according to Melder was that the new seminaries restricted their

classes to “‘those which are solid and useful,’ eliminating many ‘showy accomplishments’ and teachers would be able to specialize in certain subjects to improve the quality of instruction.”

The central issue, according to Melder, began with the creation of the curriculum for the female seminaries, because the gender divide and the discourse concerning the different abilities of men and women became institutionalized. Melder argues that the discourse created by the cult of true womanhood worked to polarize and divide the roles that men and women were to assume in the nineteenth century. The ideology defined men as “aggressive, exploitive, materialistic, unchaste, impious, and mobile,” whereas women were supposed to be “passive, delicate, pure, pious, maternal, domestic, and self-sacrificing.” The female reformers helped to sustain the true womanhood discourse because they taught and reinforced the “doctrine of women’s subordination and self-sacrifice.” Therefore, Melder concluded that the “seminary movement cannot be considered an instrument of independence, for autonomy cannot be asserted in the face of inclusive restrictions placed on their graduates by the seminaries, because, autonomy demands alternatives, but these nineteenth-century institutions did not offer realistic alternatives.” Rather than provide an alternative, Melder argued, the female seminary reform movement actually hindered women from participating in the public sphere by carefully defining the domestic sphere. The seminaries also contributed to the cultural discourse, legitimizing women’s subordination.

Anne Firor Scott disagreed with Melder’s assessment, arguing that women participated in constructing their own roles in society through the seminary movement. She states that by the mid-1830s, two cultural changes took place that allowed women to move beyond the domestic

\[\text{\textsuperscript{25}}\text{Ibid., 27.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\text{Ibid., 29–30.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{27}}\text{Ibid., 44.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{28}}\text{Ibid.}\]
sphere by providing women with the skills needed to venture out into the public sphere. One area in which women were able to achieve a certain amount of freedom and power was through the establishment of benevolent organizations and institutions that they created and controlled. Most importantly, women who “engaged in these organizational and institutional inventions were also establishing bonds with others similarly engaged, creating networks for communications and mutual support.”

Originally established by a handful of mavericks, like Emma Hart Willard, these developments “in time contributed to the great nineteenth-century movement for the ‘elevation of woman’ and changed important aspects of American society.”

Whereas Melder contended that women who held to the cultural norms thus reinforced the idea of the domestic spheres as the only proper place for women, Scott countered this idea by arguing that the “most effective purveyors of new values were often those who had some attachment to the old, and therefore were not so frightening.” In fact, she believed that the leading women in the reform movement used the cultural domestic language to their advantage in order to protect them from criticism. She used the founder of the Troy Seminary and a leader of the reform movement, Emma Willard, as a “powerful example of a ‘new women’ whose achievements were made possible because of her ability to integrate new values with the prevailing ones.” According to Scott, Willard in fact worked to construct a true feminist view of womanhood by mixing the past with the future language, which made her progressive approach to female curriculum extremely persuasive and successful in redefining women’s education.


30 Ibid.


32 Ibid., 72.
Hannah Hickock Smith did marry and become a mother, and did fulfill the domestic duties expected of her. But she created her own sphere of power and exercised great influence on the family farm. Hannah certainly took the education of her children seriously, making sure that all five of her daughters were properly educated and were provided with opportunities that were not available to her. The Smith women found themselves at the center of the cultural movement to improve female education, first when they attended Litchfield Female Academy, and secondly, when Julia and Laurilla taught at Emma Willard’s Female Academy. Even if the Smith women themselves did not participate in either the construction of the curriculum or the debate that raged concerning the purpose for female education, they were situated right in the center of it; their experience directly reflects the cultural changes experienced by the first generation of Americans born after the Revolution. Judging from the evidence left behind in Julia’s diary, it appears that the education program for all the Smith girls was a family affair. Their early education began at home, Julia and Abby were sent to board with the Value family in Hartford for one summer to study French, and then they were all sent to a local school.

In the early part of the nineteenth century when the Female seminaries were becoming cultural centers of learning for young women the Smith women grew up in the midst of the rapidly changing world of curriculum for women. The Smith women found themselves at the center of the cultural movement to improve female education, first when they attended the Litchfield Female Academy, and secondly, when Julia and Laurilla taught at Emma Willard Female Academy. Therefore, even if the Smith women themselves did not participate in either the construction of the curriculum or the debate that raged about the idea of female education, they definitely were situated right in the center of all of it; so it must be argued that the Smith women were aware of the new movements and were themselves products of the cultural changes
taking place in early nineteenth-century America. Judging from the evidence left behind in Julia’s diary, it appears that the education program for all the Smith girls was a family affair. Their early education began at home, Julia and Abby were sent to board with the Value family in Hartford for one summer to study French, and then they were all sent to a local school.

The Values were refugees from Haiti who had opened a boarding school in Hartford 1800 to support themselves. Julia spent the summer of 1810 studying French and other subjects with the Values. Mr. Value advertised his services as “a dancing master, instructor of the French language, and teacher of fencing, drawing, music and polite manners.” Students attended her school throughout the year.

The small town of Litchfield, Connecticut, became the home for academy in 1792, and by 1810, the academy became one of the most celebrated seminars in the United States. Not only did Julia and Abby attend the school, but the celebrated writer Catharine Beecher, who wrote numerous textbooks and started her own female academy in the West, attended Litchfield Academy and was personally trained and inspired by Miss Pierce.

The curriculum offered at Litchfield Academy was constructed to teach young ladies how to become proper young women, and this curriculum was taught to the Smith women while they attended the school. The female academy offered courses in “geography, composition, grammar, arithmetic, history, moral and natural philosophy, Biblical history, logic, English literature, botany, mineralogy, chemistry, piano, music, and drawing. For $5.00 extra, students could also

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33 Housley, The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life, 56.
take French lessons."

The program that Miss Pierce created at Litchfield did not end with just academics; she also instituted a program that fostered religious and moral development of her students. According to the former pupil, the purpose behind Miss Pierce’s curriculum was designed to make her young students

usefulness to themselves and others—to teach them the work of education was not finished in the school room—that they were laying a foundation on which to improve during their lives. And that this foundation should be solid [emphasis original] was her chief care—the result we see in some of the most highly informed, elegant women of our country, filling the duties, and adorning their stations as wives, mothers, and Christians.37

The curriculum offered at Litchfield Academy corresponds to the educational plan that Rush advocated at the end of the eighteenth century. He wrote an eight—point curriculum that he believed would help young mothers become republican mothers. His plan included

1) A knowledge of the English language. She should not only read, but speak and spell it correctly. And to enable her to do this, she should be taught the English grammar, and be frequently examined in applying its rules in common conversation.

2) Pleasure and interest conspire to make the writing of a fair and legible hand, a necessary branch of female education. For this purpose she should be taught not only to shape every letter properly, but to pay the strictest regard to points and capitals.”

3) Some knowledge of figures and bookkeeping is absolutely necessary to qualify a young lady for the duties which await her in this country. There are certain occupations in which she may assist her husband with this knowledge; and should she survive him, and agreeably to the custom of our country be the executrix of his will, she cannot fail of deriving immense advantage from it…

4) An acquaintance with geography and some instruction in chronology will enable a young lady to read history, biography, and travels, with advantage; thereby qualify her not only for general intercourse with the world, but, to be an agreeable companion for a sensible man. To these branches of knowledge may be added, in some instances a general acquaintance with the first principles of astronomy, and natural philosophy, particularly with such parts of them as are calculated to prevent superstition, by explaining the causes, or obviating the effects of natural evil (?)

5) Vocal music should never be neglected in the education of a young lady, in this country. Besides preparing her to join in the part of public worship which consists in

psalmody, it will enable her to soothe the cares of domestic life. The distress and vexation of a husband—the noise of the nursery, and even, the sorrows that will sometimes intrude into her own bosom, may be relieved by a song, where found and sentiment unite and act upon the mind…

6) Dancing is by no means an improper branch of education for an American lady. It promotes health, and renders the figure and motions of the body easy and agreeable. I anticipate the time when the resources of conversation shall be so far multiplied, that the amusement of dancing shall be wholly confined to children. But in our present state of society and knowledge, I conceive it to be an agreeable substitute for the ignoble pleasures of drinking, and gaming in our assemblies of grown people…

7) The attention of our young ladies should be directed, as soon as they are prepared for it, to the reading of history-travels-poetry- and moral essays.

8) It will be necessary to connect all these branches of education with regular instruction in the Christian religion. For this purpose the principles of different sects of Christians should be taught and explained, and our pupils should early be furnished with some of the most simple arguments in favor of the truth of Christianity. A portion of the bible (of late improperly banished from our school) should be read every day, and such questions should be asked, after reading it, as are calculated to imprint upon their minds the interesting stories contained in it.  

Not only were the Smith sisters taught and influenced by Miss Pierce, but they also were directly connected to Emma Willard, who had perhaps the greatest influence reforming female education in the nineteenth century. Emma Willard, who started, Troy Female Seminary in New York in 1814, believed that women should receive the same education as men and, therefore, offered such classes as mathematics, science, modern languages, Latin, history, philosophy, geography, and literature.  

The female seminary established a curriculum very similar to Rush’s eight-point plan of what should be taught to proper young ladies.

Just as their mother Hannah taught school in Vermont for the summer when she was sixteen, her daughters, Julia and Laurilla both taught courses at the Troy Female Seminary in


New York from the summer of 1823 to March 1824. Julia commented in her diary upon Laurilla’s arrival at the new school in New York,

Wednesday 12, March 1823, Cyrinthia and Abby went out in the carriage to see Betsey Waterman. They found a letter from Laurilla at the mail. She arrived safely in Troy the last day of February. Her letter is dated the third of March. She wrote only a little about Mrs. Willard’s school. She had not been there long enough when she wrote.\textsuperscript{40}

The fact that Julia and her sister taught at Willard’s Female Seminary attests to the education and intelligence of both women, considering that Willard’s school was the most progressive and influential college for women in the nineteenth century. The school opened in 1814, and it was the “first permanent institution offering American women a curriculum similar to that of the contemporary men’s colleges.”\textsuperscript{41} While at the college, Julia taught French, Latin, and arithmetic. She also studied Euclidean geometry under Willard, with the intention of teaching the course in the future, which was a policy of Willard’s. Many female teachers would not have been taught such a subject in school, and Willard knew that, in order to introduce a new, radical, and progressive subject to her school’s curriculum, she first had to educate her teachers on the subject herself.

The school she created possessed an innovative spirit, and so too did Willard. At times she was extremely “forthright about her feminism. ‘Justice will yet be done. Women will have her rights. I see it in the course of events,’” she wrote fifteen years before the convention at Seneca Falls. Yet at the same time, Willard also appeared quite conservative, giving voice to traditional values. She wrote to Catharine Beecher: “In reflecting on political subjects my

\textsuperscript{40}Julia Smith Diary, 1823. Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.

thoughts are apt to take this direction: the only natural government on earth is that of the family—the only natural sovereign the husband and father.”

Willard’s fight to reform the female seminaries began as early as 1819 when she addressed the New York legislature, appealing for public support for women’s education. In her speech, she outlined not only what she thought the proper curriculum should be for nineteenth-century ladies, but also the purpose for their education. She began her address by stating the purpose for her appearance: simply to convince the lawmakers that the female education system had to be reformed, and the only way to improve education for women required the “public monies provided by the state legislature” and “to persuade that body, to endow a seminary for females, as the commencement of such reformation.” Moreover, Willard directly addressed the culturally perceived differences between the genders in early nineteenth-century America when she conceded, “feminine delicacy requires that girls should be educated chiefly by their own sex. This is apparent from considerations that regard their health and conveniences, the propriety of their dress and manners, and their domestic accomplishments.” Therefore, Willard argued that young women must have their own school and curriculum designed specifically to prepare them for their future roles in society. She believed that the purpose for a state “education should seek to bring its subjects to the perfection of their moral, intellectual and physical nature, in order, that they may be of the greatest possible use to themselves and others.”

42Ibid., pp. 8–9.
43Emma Willard, “Female Colleges,” American Ladies’ Magazine: Containing Original Tales, Essays, Literary and Historical Sketches, Poetry, Criticism, Music, and a Great Variety of Matter Connected with Many Subjects of Importance and Interest (1834–1836), vol. 7, issue 4 (Boston: April 1834), 162; and Willard, “Mrs. Willard on Female Education: An Address to the Public; Particularly to the Members of the Legislature of New York, Proposing a Plan for Female Education,” American Ladies’ Magazine: Containing Original Tales, Essays, Literary and Historical Sketches, Poetry, Criticism, Music, and a Great Variety of Matter Connected with Many Subjects of Importance and Interest (1834–1836), vol. 7, issue 4 (Boston: April 1834), 163.
44Ibid
45Ibid.
Willard concluded her speech by answering the critics of female education and at the same time contributing to the domestic ideology discourse. She discussed the culturally defined spheres for men and women, which dominated the debate for reforming female education for the next twenty years. She used the eighteenth-century code defining the natural differences between men and women, and she added the nineteenth-century domesticity discourse, which argued not only that women should construct a peaceful, rational, and economical domestic sphere, but also that the home would become the world of influence and power for women. She began her remarks about the Republican Motherhood ideology by stating, “that nature designed for our sex the care of children, she had made manifest, by mental as well as physical indications.”

According to Willard, women possessed “a greater degree than man, the gentle arts of insinuation, to vary modes of teaching to different dispositions; and more patience to make repeated efforts”; therefore, women naturally are much more suited to instructing their young children. Also, young mothers “would have no higher pecuniary object to engage their attention, and their reputation as instructors they would consider important,” rather than men whose attention would often be engaged in this business, and they would consider teaching “merely as a temporary employment.” Therefore, women should have a proper state-sponsored education because they were more likely to teach children better than men. “They also could afford to do it cheaper,” because women do not have to support families. All the benefits would lead one to conclude that women must be educated to prepare them for the future duties they will be expected to fulfill in society. Women will teach the next generation, will take responsibility for the morals and virtue of future citizens, run economical and prosperous households, and help

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
their husbands succeed out in the public sphere, but only if they are taught the proper skills necessary to fulfill their roles in the domestic sphere.

Julia taught at the Troy Female Academy from 1823 to the summer of 1824, and throughout her diary she often commented that she was sick or how she detested studying Euclid. In the summer of 1824 Julia’s diary was filled with entries of how often she was not feeling well and it seems to have been connected to the heat of the summer and the stress caused by studying Euclid. On July 6, July wrote that Mrs. Willard her the assignment to study but she could not because she was “too tired from my trip,” because she at “two o’clock I went with sister and the others to the lessons on chemistry by Mr. Eaton who gives them in the courthouse…I wasn’t entertained by the lessons” On July 9, Julia wrote that she woke at five in the morning to study Euclid and then she “recited to Mrs. Willard” and then she stated “I don’t like this Euclid. On July 10th she “Got up about sunrise. Studied Euclid but cannot see anything in it…This evening I went to Mrs. Willard’s room to recite Euclid. I did it perfectly but I hate it thoroughly. Studied Euclid and I hate it more and more.” In the next couple of days until the end of the month Julia seems to have made herself ill from the stress and the heat. On July 12, Julia wrote that it was “so hot I haven’t done a thing” and then on July 17, she stated that she “Arose with the sun to study Euclid which I hate. I recited before breakfast to Miss Whiting this beastly subject.” Lastly, on July 22, she commented that she liked “Euclid a little better but studying makes me ill. I didn’t feel very well today.”

Julia never taught the geometry class because she returned home and took charge of Abby’s education. Like all the sisters, Julia taught her younger sister and continued on with her own studies, and they created a curriculum similar to Rush’s and Willard’s ideas for what scholarly topics should be taught to prepare white middle class women for their defined roles as mothers and wives.

50Julia Smith Diary, July 1824. Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
According to Julia’s diary, Julia taught Abby at home, and she listed all the topics that she taught Abby. Julia herself kept detailed accounts of all of the books she read. From the time period that Julia kept her diary, the years 1810 to 1820, she had read over 100 books. Her list of books consisted of numerous historical books, classical literature, religious texts, and books on female education, chemistry, and law. These books seem to correspond with her intellectual interests. Julia used many of her books to teach herself as well as Abby. She mentioned specifically throughout her diary the Latin and Greek texts that both she and Abby read. Examples of Julia’s most impressive texts include *The Writings of Virgil*, *The Aeneid*, *Letters of Mme. Montague*, Blackstone, *Essays by Mr. Knox*, Erasmus, and histories of Portugal, France, Spain, and England. These texts reveal the depth and breadth of her intellectual interests. They also show her interest in history, Latin, law, and philosophy. Many books that Julia read out of pure curiosity came to help her later in life. Her Latin and Greek texts proved useful when Julia wrote a literal translation of the Bible. She also used her knowledge gleaned from reading Blackstone in her fight over taxation with the leading townsmen in Glastonbury.

Beyond the impressive classical library she built for herself, the number of books that she read concerning the importance of a proper education for women, and what the proper curriculum should be for women reveals her interest not only in improving herself, but in the overall general improvement for women. She read Hannah More’s book on education, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, which argued, that “women had been short-changed, fobbed off with a trivial education that left them unfitted to be companionable wives, rational mothers, or moral examples to the wider society.” Her numerous books and articles on education also show that she did follow the debate concerning the proper role for women in her

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51Julia Smith Diary
society very closely, which would have put her again right at the center of the cultural reform movements taking place in nineteenth-century America.

In keeping with the purpose and type of education that seemed appropriate for white middle-class women, the Smith women followed quite closely the conventions of the day. Throughout her diary, Julia wrote endless notations about not only what she read and the importance of each subject that she relentlessly studied, but she also continually commented on her need to be productive. In one such entry she chides herself for wasting a morning; “I have done nothing yet,” but she soon remedies her laziness by putting away her “writing at present and returning to her diary, and finally turning to her serious study by reading a book on the “history of England.” On another day, she simply states, “Did nothing except read Mr. Locke On the Intellect.” Julia carefully and painstakingly wrote down each book that she read, and on many occasions, it was all that she wrote about for that day. Not only did she have amazingly varied interests in her reading habits and an almost unquenchable thirst for knowledge that she could never satisfy, but the amount that she read per day was quite impressive. In one day, she states that she “read in the Bible, etc. forty-chapters,” and “read in Mrs. Hamilton on Education.” Julia read and studied not only for her own enjoyment, but for the search for truth and knowledge, and just like her mother Hannah, it became a lifelong endeavor.

According to Mary Kelley in her article, “Female Academies and Seminaries and Print Culture,” Julia and her sisters were part of a new reading culture that had emerged in the Republic by the 1830s. The many young women who were flocking to the new female academies, whether it was Emma Willard’s Troy Female Academy or Sarah Pierce’s Litchfield

53Smith Diary, July 10, 1812.
54Ibid., June 15, 1812.
55Ibid., June 14, 1812
56See appendix 1 for a complete list if Julia’s reading materials.
Academy, were taught by young women themselves who “placed an almost equal amount of value on the reading students did informally as on the instruction they offered in the classrooms.”

Julia and her sisters, like many of their contemporaries were introduced to learning by their parents, for the Smith women, it was their mother Hannah who passed down her passion for reading and the love of books. When the girls entered school their love of books and reading was reinforced by the female teachers, who used books not only to teaching tools, but also to strengthen their relationship with their students. One young woman who attended Litchfield Academy under the tutelage of Sarah Pierce declared, books “were the means by which ‘we learn how to live.’”

By the 1830s it was considered that for reading had been defined as a woman’s “enterprise based on the way reading had come to give women access to the outside world, and a way for them to feed their passion for learning even after their left school. Books became sites for “meditation on and experiments with individual subjectivities” that women were fashioning for themselves. Also, women were able to explore new ideas and personae, sampling perspectives and measuring relevance for their lives.”

Julia, like many young women also use books as a way to define the world and the current events that were taking place in America throughout the nineteenth century. In 1812, when war broke out between the United States and Great Britain, Julia took a great interest in the history of Europe, which she commented on in her diary in July 1812. She wrote on that Thursday evening that a fast was called “because of the war,” and she simply wrote, “we do not like the war,” which was one of the few entries in which she expressed her emotions or opinions. She concluded her entry for the day in her usual manner of writing down what she had for that

58 Ibid., 340.
59 Ibid., 341.
day, commenting she read, “thirty chapters in the Bible, etc. and read in the history of Modern Europe.”

Beginning in 1810, Julia wrote down the curriculum that she taught her younger sister Abby and frequently commented on her sister’s progress. For the next three years, Julia recorded Abby’s progress in her diary, often embedded within her comments about the weather, her domestic work, and her own readings of the day. The detailed account that Julia kept for those three years provides a glimpse into what subjects interested them, how seriously they took their studies, and how well their curriculum modeled the new movement for the improvement for female seminaries begun by Emma Willard and continued on by such women as Catharine Beecher and Sarah Pierce.

Abby’s curriculum consisted of the subjects that were considered necessary for all young women to study in order to become proper young ladies according to the nineteenth-century domestic ideology discourse. According to Julia’s diary, Abby took dance lessons, studied French and Latin, and read Erasmus. Julia’s diary constantly made references to what Abby was learning and the progress she made with her studies. At times, Julia does reveal her pride in the achievements that Abby made throughout her academic endeavors. In November 1811, Julia commented that Abby had “commenced to study Latin with me.”

Beginning in July 1812 and continuing into 1813, Julia began tracking Abby’s progress nearly on a daily basis. On Friday July 10, Julia commented “Abby recited eighteen lines of the Aeneid.” Then six months later, Julia ended her diary entry for the day by stating “Abby recited sixty-six lines before dinner and Flora recited her lesson in grammar. I sewed a little and read French. Abby recited seventy-four

60Ibid., July 23, 1812.
61Ibid., November 22, 1811.
62Ibid., July 10, 1812.
Within the short time span of only six months, Abby, under Julia’s tutelage, went from learning, memorizing, and reciting eighteen lines of the Aeneid in Latin to reciting over 130 lines in a day. Her progress for the standards of any time period seems quite astonishing.

The Smith sisters participated and benefited from the new opportunities opening to women due to the education debate that was taking place. In 1854, Julia commented that their education experiences and opportunities were the standard for the nineteenth century. In a letter addressed to a Mr. Cothren, Julia compared her own educational opportunities to that of her mother’s when she wrote, “I know that at the present time, it is nothing uncommon to meet with learned ladies, therefore you have given us much more credit than we deserve, our late mother excepted,” and in the 1760s, “in those days she was almost a ‘none such.’”

When Hannah remarked in her diary upon the books that she read or tried to discuss the current subjects she had been studying with her friends she did almost apologetically because she knew as a woman her love of learning would not be accepted by both her male and female friends. Hannah comments in her diary of her new friend, Miss Mitchell, who her friends disliked, but Hannah herself was very impressed. She describes that Miss Mitchell is really a very sensible, learned, instructive and conversable young Lady---She is a year younger than I am with admirable education for her years and indeed advantages, If I may call the having of a teacher advantage. Altho she has the time allowed her. People in general don’t like her, they say she is proud and fond of shewing her learning by continually talking of the learned men, poets, heroes, Goddesses and Gods, for which I like and indeed she and I are to be very intimate.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the world for educated women had changed a great deal than when Hannah came of age during the early Republican period. With the rise of many new

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63 Ibid., January 6, 1813.
64 Julia Smith to Mr. Cothren, April 3, 1854, Envelope L1101, Box 8, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
65 Hannah Hickok Diary, May 25, 1784.
female academies, women, including the Smith girls took advantage of all the new opportunities to learn and to receive a proper education. Julia throughout her diary celebrates and discusses in detail everything that she and her sister Abby are learning, and she does not does the process in negative or in an apologetic tone like her mother.

Throughout their lives, whether studying at home, attending day schools, or teaching in New York, the Smith women had a choice of what they wanted to do, or what they did not want to do. Simply put, they had control over their own lives. Perhaps the most significant decision each sister made on her own was always to return home. Not one sister married and left to go set up her own home or her own domestic sphere. Instead, all five sisters seemed completely content and happy in the domestic space that they created together. Led by their mother, all five daughters contributed to the construction of a peaceful household in which they had control over what they did during the day, and they each carved out their own space and time to pursue their own interests. For Julia and Abby, their intellectual search and natural curiosity took them on a long journey searching for truth, which began when the Smith family broke with the traditional Congregational Church, continued with their deep commitment to William Miller’s Millennium movement, and ended with a new literal translation of the Bible.
As a young woman, Hannah struggled to define her own faith and her own relationship with God. Often in her diary she discussed her lack of interest in religion. In May 1784, Hannah questioned her own lack of spiritual feelings when she commented, “I wish I loved to read in the Bible – Why don’t I.”\(^1\) It was not until after her father died that Hannah began to read the Bible and to attend meetings on a regular basis. After her father’s death, Hannah began commenting on the sermons and Biblical passages that spoke to her, just like her father had done in his diary. In most of her father’s diary entries, David discussed in detail the sermons that he heard throughout the week. He contemplated not only the sermons themselves, but also how they could have a direct impact on his daily life. As Congregationalists, David and his daughter “emphasized prayer, Bible reading, psalm singing, and a sermon, which they believed constituted the only essential elements of early Christian worship.”\(^2\) Also, throughout their diary entries, both David and Hannah expressed the Puritan notion that stressed complete “dependence upon God for salvation,” and that they “worshipped God because they were depended upon God and obliged to worship him, not because they could win salvation for doing so.”\(^3\)

The meaning of the word “Congregationalist” describes the closed community created by Winthrop in 1631 in Massachusetts, which required that all men had to be members of the local Puritan congregation if they wanted to be voting members in the community. As the “Massachusetts assembly put it, the ‘body politic’ would be synonymous with church members, and the civil government would be moral and virtuous, because it would be elected by good and

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\(^1\)Hannah diary, May 6, 1784.  
\(^3\)Ibid.
right-minded citizens, all of whom belonged to Puritan churches.” Therefore, congregations, which “accepted the authority of no higher ecclesiastical body – hence their later labeling as ‘Congregationalist’ – exercised the local management of congregational affairs.”⁴ Members of a Congregationalist church also referred to their church services as “meeting” to emphasize and reinforce the idea that all men in the service were equal members of the religious and civic community.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes sweeping through the colonies in the early eighteen century was The Great Awakening, which had profound impact altering the way American’s came to view religion. The religious revival movement, began in New England, and before the revivals ended the new social and religious movement reached the colonies in the north and the south, and inspired both men and women from all different social backgrounds. During this period of rapid religious changed caused by the many revivals sweeping across the colonies, the idea of the Calvinist conversion experience began to change.

The Calvinist conversion experience began with the idea all humans were condemned at birth to be a sinner, because of the original sin that Adam and Eve committed against God. Therefore if all humans are sinful and have a rebellious heart, then a person has change their heart in order to attain any hope of salvation. According to this view God because of his divine love and mercy was ready to receive sinners and to offer them forgiveness, but sinners must first open themselves to divine love. Conversion according to Calvinist theology could only happen when each person repents not only “concrete misdeeds, actual sins, but also innate or original sin

⁴ Butler., 57.
and to consider the damnation such sin deserved.”

With the excitement created by the revivals religion “became infectious, and conversion took on the character of a collective experience.”

According to the book, *Religion in American Life*, during the first Great Awakening both men and women seemed to be much more passive at the revivals, as if to emphasize God’s power over them. The Calvinists during the first revival knew that they were hopeless sinners, who could not achieve their own salvation, that they could not actively earn a place in heaven, instead they knew that it was God’s grace, his action upon them, that saved them from falling into the fiery pits of hell. Hannah’s diary entries began to reflect the uncertainty and fear created by the Puritan theological belief that all humans were sinful creatures and that one’s salvation only came through God’s grace. On July 8, Hannah wrote in her diary that “Today I was somewhat troubled in my mind I saw I was a vile sinner and was afraid if I did not see Christ the Remedy.— I rose before the Sun an hour or two and in the morning after which I read in the Sermon book that was preached.” It was not until Hannah left home in June of 1784 and traveled to Vermont where she spent the summer with her very conservative relatives that she began to questions her own depravity and the need to find salvation or forgiveness. When her father died at the end of the summer of 1784, Hannah turned to her Bible for solace, and became more and more fearful for her own sinful soul.

In a typical diary entry David discussed the meeting (a Congregationalists religious service) that he had attended that day. On Sunday, October 29, 1769, David recorded that he went to a meeting where

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8 Hannah Hickok Diary, July 8, 1784.
Mr. Minor preached from 6 chapter 7 verse persons deceived God is not mocked (?) whatsoever a man that shall he pray he showed that we are liable to be deceived by having wrong ideas of God and by the grand adversary and by having a high conceit of ourselves and comparing our good deeds by other peoples by our own hearts.9

Following the example set by her father, Hannah began commenting in her diary on passages she read in the Bible or from the sermons she heard at meetings. Beginning in July, while in Vermont in 1784, Hannah became more interest in religion and the Bible, which only intensified after her father’s death. While in Vermont she began to attend more meetings (religious services), at least twice a week, and spent more time reading the Bible, which seems to have marked for Hannah the beginning of her conversion experience.

According to the entries in her diary, Hannah had stopped participating in what she criticized as frivolous pastimes, dancing and playing cards, and instead began attending meetings on a more regular basis, usually at least once a week, sometimes even twice a week. It is hard to trace why the changed happened because starting in October 1784, large gaps begin to appear in her diary. For some reason she simply stopped her daily ritual of writing in her diary. In March 1785, she began keeping her journal again but made entries only periodically until the end of 1786, when her diary abruptly ends. In this period of time she wrote mainly about the meetings she attended and the work she completed in her house and garden. An example of her last entries focused on religion, in which she commented,

Sunday I rose at about six — went to meeting at Britain Mr. Ganfield preached from these words ‘But his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying we will not have this man to reign over us. The language of all our hearts is We’ll not have Christ over us—In the afternoon from these words but these mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring Luther and slay them before’ (?) Luke 19.27.10

Likewise, the Smith girls, especially Julia and Abby, approached religion in the same unemotional way as their mother, and in fact turned to their father, Zephaniah Smith, for their

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10Ibid., July 3, 1786.
religious education. Hannah Smith seemed to embrace a very practical view of religion, as she did with most things in her life. Even as a young woman, she did not get caught up in the guilt-driven beliefs of the Northern Calvinists, nor did she immerse herself in religion to escape from the world. Her beliefs were simple and straightforward, and they are revealed in the poem she wrote in 1777 to immortalize the passing of her cousin Rueben Hickok that January:

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His grave is level with the plain
Its stone is mosey to the top
The dust return’d to dust again
Once, bore a noble spirit up
A spirit of celestial mould
Formed for a higher sphere
As angels are, earth cannot hold
Them long to linger here …
Long life, What is it, but a Day,
And youths a moment cannot trust
Sure wit the psalmist we must say
Lord what is man, but dust.  
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Drawing from his own experience with religion and the church, Zephaniah shaped his daughters’ beliefs in such a way that led them to be suspicious of the church. Zephaniah became serious about studying religion and devoted himself to search for the truth at the age of twenty, when he entered Yale College in New Haven, to study for the ministry. He began his religious career in September 1782 when he graduated from Yale, and the following year, he joined the Eastbury Society, a Congregational Church. Then in the following month, he received his license to preach from the Hartford Association of Ministers. As a man of integrity, Zephaniah soon learned that he could not in good conscience remain in the ministry because he regretted the fact that ministers were paid for their services, so he knew he was going to have to change his profession.  

Julia wrote of the experience that:

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11 Hannah Smith to Mr. Francis Hickok of Greenville in Memory of the Reuben Hickok who died at Castleton (January 7, 1777), Envelope L1091, Box 8, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.  
My father visited Rev. Mr. Wildman, a noted Congregational clergyman of South Britain, to talk over the subject. Mr. Wildman believed just as he did in regard to preaching for money, and he advised my father to quit preaching at once, as he was a young man; and he added, “I would do so if I were younger, but I am too old to dig, and to beg I am ashamed.” My father went home and made preparations to abandon the ministry.\(^\text{13}\)

The nineteenth century was a time of great social and religious change, when many individuals began to question the orthodox beliefs with which they were raised. Many of the changes and upheavals that occurred within the American religious traditions and the Protestant theologies “were shaped by matters of race, ethnicity, and gender, as well as industrialization, the immigration of large numbers of Catholics and Jews, and westward expansion.”\(^\text{14}\) According to religious historian Mary R. Sawyer, America or “the ‘Righteous Empire’ suffered multiple internal fractures,” which according to Sawyer created a spirit of dissent that swept through nineteenth century America. The new fire of dissent and religious fervor inspired lit by the Second Great Awakening motivated many dissatisfied Christians to seek alternative Christian expressions, which led to the formation of many new utopian communities, such as, Shakers and the Oneida Community. The new outpouring of religious excitement that emerged during the second Great Awakening also led to the creation of many “sectarian movements such as the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints; Church of Christ, Scientists; Seven-Day Adventists; and Jehovah’s Witnesses.\(^\text{15}\)

America also has a history of seeing the formation of the colonies and the new Republic as playing a central role in God’s plan to create the shiny new righteous city on the hill where the Bible’s prophecies begin. According to religious historian, Nathan O. Hatch, New England ministers envisioned “America as the perfect setting for the return of Christ, which sets the stage

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 33–34.
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
for many of the Millennium movements that emerge in America,” and that for many men of faith, America “became the primary agent of redemptive history.” Many New England ministers believed and preached in their sermons the nature of the apocalyptic struggle needed two revolutions to “initiate the millennium, the first a worldwide expansion of those principles of liberty realized in America, the second a proclamation throughout the world of the pure Christianity embodied in American churches.” The ultimate vision held by many of the elite minister was that they saw that the American Republic “assumed ‘the soul of the church’ not by accident but as the direct result of those principles of republican eschatology which emerged in the years between America’s two Great Awakenings.”

Not only were religions expanding in the nineteenth century, new sects were rising throughout Antebellum America, and with them, a new enthusiasm excitement about religion emerged. According to Joyce Appleby, “New Christian denominations proliferated under the nourishing influences of lay enthusiasm, most of them carrying the rallying cry of ‘No creed but the Bible.’ A host of artisans, farmers, even slaves and women, discovered that their religious ardor had the power to stir others.” The result was a movement away from older, venerable denominations to new and exciting ones. The Smith family was swept up in this historical trend as Zephaniah as well as the rest of the Smith family searched for an alternative church.

Zephaniah Smith became deeply disappointed and uneasy about the Congregational Church, and this uneasiness motivated him to look elsewhere for religious meaning. As a young student at Yale, and then again as a minister at a Congregational church in Newtown,

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 For more information of the changes see, Barbara Leslie Epstein, Jon Butler, Nathan O. Hatch, Mary R. Sawyer, Michael J. St. Clair, Rosemary.
Connecticut, Zephaniah became interested in the teachings of Robert Sandeman, a Scottish theologian who belonged to a religious sect called the Glasites. Zephaniah already felt uncomfortable with many aspects of the Congregational Church, and he found many of Sandeman’s radical ideas inspiring. This religious discovery greatly influenced his daughters as they became older. Zephaniah’s support for and preaching of Sandeman’s beliefs, along with his guilt over being paid for his ministerial services, led to his final break with the conventional church. The *Sketch of the Fairfield East Association* reported in 1790 that Zephaniah “subsequently embraced much of the sentiments of the sect of the Glasites, or Sandemanians, and painful divisions arose in the church. He was dismissed by the society in 1790. A small Sandeman church was formed, to which he preached for a few months.”  

The Sandeman movement and beliefs that Zephaniah found inspiring came from John Glas, who was a minister of the Church of Scotland. John Glas created the Glasite sect when the Scottish general assembly removed him from the ministry for advocating the separation of church and state. Glas’s son-in-law, Robert Sandeman, became his chief spokesman, especially in America, when Sandeman published his treatise *Some Thoughts on Christianity*. The central foundational belief as inspired by Glas and expounded by Sandeman was that if a person spiritually knows Christ from Scripture and has faith in the loving Christ of the New Testament, then that person has found salvation. Writing to a critic, Sandeman stated that, “Now I am still of the mind that the Scripture supports me in maintaining, that everyone who obtains a just notion of the person and work of Christ, or whose notions corresponds to what is testified of him, is justified and finds peace with God simply by that very notion.”

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22Samuel Pike, *An Epistolary Correspondence between S. P. and R. S. with Several Additional Letters, Never before Printed. To Which Are Annexed, a Copious Alphabetical Index, and a Correct Scriptural Index, to the Two Volumes*
comes to know Jesus Christ, understands his work, and begins to live his or her life based upon
the teachings of Jesus, he or she will come to know God.

For Sandeman and his followers, the true teaching and mission of Jesus Christ could be
found in one text, the New Testament. Sandeman believed that too many people had turned their
eyes and hearts away from the practical teachings found in the New Testament and instead relied
on famous and outspoken leaders of the church to receive their message and truth about their
salvation. The central problem, according to Sandeman, is that many of these men of God were
false in their beliefs and had lost the true meaning of Christian duty. He wrote,

I have likewise seen, by a very palpable proof, that the bulk of religious people are
swayed much more by reverence for eminent men, than by the fear of God and his word.
I find most of them much more interested about the honour and credit of their Rabbies,
than the controversy about acceptance with God.23

Not only had Zephaniah become very interested in the Glasite movement, which
separated him from the church of his childhood, but his daughters also adopted his beliefs.
According to her diary, Julia began studying Sandeman’s religious ideas as early as 1816. In
August 1816, she wrote two entries in which she mentioned reading Sandeman. On Thursday
August 1, 1816, Julia wrote, “Read the letters of Mr. Sandeman,” then on Friday, she
commented; “Read Mr. Sandeman on Theron and Apasio.”24 One key aspect to the Sandeman
teachings was that all truth could be found through reading the Bible. According to her diary,
Julia took the reading of the Bible very seriously, because not only did she often read the Bible

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23 Ibid., 17.
24 Julia Smith diary, August 1–2, 1816.
during the week, but also on many occasions, she spent her Sundays reading the Scripture rather than attending church.

Throughout her diary, Julia constantly referred to the days when she chose not to attend church. Instead, she used Sundays for a day to call upon friends and to study religion on her own. In a four-week period during November and December 1810, when Julia was eighteen, she attended church only once, and the rest of her entries described whom she went to visit for the day. She wrote on “Sunday 25, I didn’t go to church. In the evening I went with my sisters to N. Hale’s to see his new wife. We came home at nine o’clock.”\(^{25}\) Then the following Sunday, she wrote, “I didn’t go to church,” and finally on “Sunday 16 did not go to church.”\(^{26}\) For many of her diary entries on Sunday, she followed the same format. She mentioned that she did not attend church, but went to visit friends. Instead of attending church, Julia began reading about the Glasite movement, inspired by her father’s interest in the new movement. She recorded in her diary that she began reading about the Glasites’ teachings in the works of Robert Sandeman as early as 1816. She wrote, “Spun thirty knots of wool. Read the letters of Mr. Sandeman.”\(^{27}\) Then in August 1816, she read “Mr. Sandeman on Theron and Apasio.”\(^{28}\) In 1822, Julia began attending Sandemanian meetings in Newtown at the house of Dr. Shepherd, where she stated that the group read the “sacred scriptures, discussed the passages together, and that they were all content with the meeting.”\(^{29}\)

Inspired both by her father and by Sandeman’s teachings, Julia began to read the New Testament to search for the path to salvation and for God’s words to man as they were revealed through his Son. Both she and her father believed that the truth could be found only by reading

\(^{25}\)Ibid., December 25, 1810.  
\(^{26}\)Ibid., December 9 and 16, 1810.  
\(^{27}\)Ibid., August 1, 1816.  
\(^{28}\)Ibid., August 2, 1816.  
\(^{29}\)Quoted in Housley, The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life, 73–74.
the New Testament, and not through the mouths of men. Through the numerous entries Julia wrote in her diary about reading the New Testament, it becomes clear how serious Julia was about searching for her truth and finding her path to salvation. She writes on Sunday, November 3, 1811, that she “read forty-four chapters in the Bible and the testament,”30 and then on Sunday, November 24, she “Read sixty-seven chapters in the Bible and testament.”31 Then the following month, she spent her Sunday afternoons finishing the New Testament. On Sunday, December 22, 1811, she read, “thirty-three chapters in the Bible and Testament, finished the Testament and began to read it again.”32 Julia usually spent her Sundays reading the Bible, but she also read it throughout the week. In fact, reading and studying the Bible seemed to be the one constant she held to throughout her life, whether she followed the teachings of Sandeman or that of William Miller, a Vermont farmer who came out of obscurity in the late 1830s preaching that the Second Coming was at hand.

Julia and Abby’s fascination with other Protestant traditions did not end with their study of Sandemanism, for they also became involved with Millenarianism. A diary entry written at the end of 1842 reveals Julia’s interest in Miller and his ideas:

Monday 31 [December 1842] I have stayed in the house all day except I have been walking in the afternoon in order to see Henry Welles. I read the Bible almost all day. I’ve eaten nothing since yesterday noon. It is the last day of the year, perhaps all of us should be prepared to enter the new year 1843 which according to Mr. Miller could be the last year of this world. That the Great Lord might give us the faith to be always ready for the Second Coming.33

Miller, a man well versed in the Bible, began predicting around 1837 that Christ would return in the early 1840s. He conducted a series of lectures, published in the Boston Daily Times starting

30 Julia Smith diary, November 3, 1811.
31 Ibid., November 24, 1811.
32 Ibid., December 22, 1811.
33 Housley, The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life, 78.
in February 1838, in which he established that “the coming of Christ as likely to occur *about* the year 1843.”\textsuperscript{34} In a letter to a close friend, Miller clarified his beliefs and outlined how he had determined the time of Christ’s return to earth. In the letter he wrote to Brother Himes, a true follower and supporter, that his main principles were:

That Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, cleanse, purify, and take possession of the same, with all the saints, sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. I have never for the space of more than 23 years, had any other time, preached or published by me. I have never fixed on any one month, day, or hour between that time; I have never found any mistake in reckoning, summing up, or miscalculation; I have made no provision for any other time; I am perfectly satisfied that the Bible is true, and the word of God, and I am confident, I rely wholly on the blessed book for my faith in this matter. I am not a prophet, I am not sent to prophesy, but to read, believe, and publish what God has inspired the ancient prophets to administer unto us, in the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments. These have been, and now are my principles, and I hope I shall never be ashamed of them.\textsuperscript{35}

At a conference organized and attended by followers of Miller, a more comprehensive set of beliefs was set down and agreed upon. The conference was called to respond to the criticism made by many influential church leaders that Miller was simply trying to create disunity among the established church, and that ultimately his goal was to establish his own church. The concluding mission statement published after the conference stated Miller’s doctrine that the “advent night” should have a “sanctifying influence on all who accept it,” and that the message should make “the believer love and practice holiness.”\textsuperscript{36} The statement also “urged all believers to live a life of prayer, they should discuss the coming of Christ with all who will listen, and most importantly each follower form bible classes for mutual study of the great subject.”\textsuperscript{37}

As Julia stated in her diary on December 31, 1842, she waited like so many others for Miller’s prediction to come true, and as the year passed she, her sisters, and many of his

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 96–97.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 47.
followers kept waiting and believing that the day was at hand. As the year progressed, more excitement grew from people all over the country. It seemed that the public had been swept up by the close press coverage of Miller and his lectures. By January 1843, the New York Express proclaimed that Miller caused “greater excitement than any other prophet of the age.”38 The Smith sisters seemed to have been caught up in the excitement as well, and like so many others, they turned to their Bible, prayed, and waited. It was believed that Miller “led a movement that numbered upwards of 50,000 Americans who expected the coming of the last days.”39 When the Second Coming did not happen, Julia decided to turn to the Bible to search for a mistake Miller may had made in determining the correct date that Christ would return.

Miller never claimed to be a prophet, who received a message directly from God, but instead claimed that everyone had the ability to learn and to know God from reading the divinely inspired words in the New Testament. Ultimately, Miller developed a system that consisted of fourteen rules that he used to interpret God’s revelations to man. They were four rules in particular that would later guide Julia with her own translations of the Bible; the first rule, “every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible”, second, “all scripture is necessary, and may be understood by a diligent application and study,” third, nothing revealed in scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith,” and the forth, “scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself.”40 Ultimately, Miller inspired both Julia and Abby to search for their own spiritual truth as revealed in the New Testament, and Julia’s exegetical search eventually led to her translations of the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin Bibles.

38Ibid., 117.
Julia set out to teach herself Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, an effort that launched eight years of concentrated effort to create a literal, highly accurate English translation. During this prolonged period – from 1847 to 1855 – Julia studied weekly with her sisters and a close friend, named Emily Moseley, to find the true meaning of God’s revelations to man. By the time she finished, she had translated the Bible in its entirety five times over, each time striving to come nearer to the original meaning. As Julia stated in the preface to her translation, she and her sisters saw by the margins of the King James Bible that the text had not been given literally, and it was the literal meaning that they were seeking. She explained the process and motivation behind her translation of the Bible. She wrote that she and her four sisters along with her friend Emily met once a week to search the scriptures “to learn the exact meaning of every Greek and Hebrew word, from the King James’s forty-seven translators had taken their version of the Bible,” and by reading the margins in the King James Bible, learned “that the text had not been given literally and it was literal meaning we were seeking.” Throughout the King James Bible explanations are given as to what the Greek or Hebrew meaning of a word or certain passages. When Julia states that from reading the margins in the King James translation was not literal translated she was referring to the explanations given throughout the Kings James Bible. Julia believed that the three original languages that the Bible was written in were truly inspired and that the “Bible was the only communication from God to man, for all time.”

According to Religious scholar Emily Clyde Walter Sampson there are many different types of translations, which can vary from one end of the spectrum, which would be a literal translation and at the other end, a free translation. According to Sampson a literal translation is a “formal correspondence,” which, attempts to “reflect the original language as closely as possible

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in the ‘receptor’ language. This, of course, plays havoc with figures of speech, especially idioms.” At the other end of the spectrum, “Free translations focuses on the act of communication rather than individual words; it seeks to find the ‘closest natural equivalent in the receptor language.’” Julia used the literal technique for her translations and as a result they are awkward and difficult to read.42

In late 1875 Julia explained in an interview that ran in the New York Sun the process and purpose behind her numerous translations of the Bible. In the interview she stated,

I have used only the lexicon, and of course, have looked up the King James translation, but I have consulted no commentators. It was not man’s opinion that I wanted as to construction or rendering, but the literal meaning of every Hebrew word and that I wrote down, supplying nothing and paraphrasing nothing, so everybody may judge the meaning for himself by the translation, precisely as those familiar with the Hebrew may construe the original… I have translated every such work in the same way whenever I found. I wanted every reader to see the exact original and nothing else through rendering as through glass.43

It’s possible that Julia also began her translations of the Bible to find the mistakes made in the King James Version in order to explain why Miller’s dates were incorrect, but one thing is certain about Julia’s translations, she was looking for the exact meaning of each word in order to try and to understand God and his grace. Julia in her translation gave complete literal translations of the times and dates in the Book of Daniel that Miller had used to predict the End of Times. When William Miller made his prediction that the Second Coming of Christ would take place in and around 1843 he looked to the passages in the Book of Daniel to make his calculations of Christ’s imminent return. He began his calculation with Dan 9:25, which stated that “2,300 years began with the proclamation of the decree to build the walls of Jerusalem,” and the date that Miller concluded was 1843. He also believed that the 1,335 days referred to in Dan

42Emily Clyde Walter Sampson, Her Works Shall Praise Her, 130-131.
43Ibid., 131-132.
12:12 corresponded to the beginning of the papacy in 538 A.D. According to his calculation then the last days, “comprised the 45 years from 1798 to 1843.” Or Miller would subtract the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24 – representing 490 years – from 2,300 days, add the life of Christ (33 years), and come to the same conclusion…Biblical numbers all led Miller to the same conclusion, that Christ would come for the second time on or before 1843.”

One example of Julia’s literal translation of the Book of Daniel comes from key passages Miller used to calculate the date of the Second Coming. From the period of 1847 to 1855, Julia, her sister, and her closest friend Emily held weekly meeting to discuss the newest literal translation that Julia had completed for that week. According to Religious scholar, Emily Clyde Walter Sampson, Julia actually began her translation as early as 1845, which corresponded very closely with the “‘Great Disappointment,’ the last date predicted by Miller,” which, “occurred in October 1844.” Julia had completed her translation of the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint by the end of 1846 and began her first Hebrew translation in 1847. It took much longer because “she first had to teach herself the language, which, took one year and seven month” and after she completed the translation she began her translation of the Latin/Vulgate Bible. The latest dated manuscripts were written in 1860. Therefore, the total time Julia and her Bible study group actually spent on their literal translations of the Bible “appears to have been at least fifteen years.” At the end of her long academic endeavor Julia had “written over 10,000 pages meticulously-dated, small hand bound folios of varying size.”

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44 Ibid., 130-131.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
In the two columns listed below, one the left side are excerpts taken from key passages found in the Book of Daniel from the King James Bible and on the right side are Julia’s translations of the same passages. The King James translation of the passage from the Book of Daniel provides an example of what religious scholar, Emily Clyde Walter Sampson defined as a free translations, which focuses on the “act of communication rather than individual words,” while Smith’s translations provides an example of a literal translation is a “formal correspondence,” which, attempts to “reflect the original language as closely as possible in the ‘receptor’ language.” And as seen by the two different types of translations, the King James version follows basic rules of grammar and is written in beautiful poetic form, while Julia’s version disregards all forms of grammar and is very difficult to read and understand.

Daniel 9:24 the KJV;
Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most Holy.49

Daniel 9:24 JSV;
Seventy seventy were divided upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to close the transgression, and to seal up sins, and to expiate iniquity, and to bring in eternal justice, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of holies.50

Daniel 9:25 KJV;
Know therefore and understand, [that] from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.51

Daniel 9:25 JSV;
And thou shalt know understand from the going forth of then word to turn back and to build Jerusalem even to Messiah the leader, seventy weeks, and sixty and two weeks: and the street shall turn back and be built and the ditch, in the trouble Of the times.52

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48 Emily Clyde Walter Sampson, Her Works Shall Praise Her, 130-131.
50 The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testament., 791.
51 King James Bible
52 Smith Bible, 791
Julia stated in the introduction to her published Bible, in 1876, that she translated the Bible to find the Holy Spirit and published it twenty years later to prove to the American public that women had the same intellectual capacity as men.\(^5\) Julia’s translations and reasons behind it seemed quite conservative, compared to many other progressive women who were using the Bible to define a new role for women in the Church.

While Julia was working on her translations, a prominent contemporary, Sarah Grimke, looked to uncover the fallacies in the Bible that Christian society used to discriminate against women. One thing that both Julia and Sarah did agree on was that the authoritative King James Bible made serious mistakes within its translation. Sarah, who was much more radical than Julia believed that the church accepted the erroneous translation and used it to institutionalize the oppression of women. Therefore, Sarah wrote in a letter in 1837 that in order to eradicate the deeply embedded Western religious cultural tradition that excluded women from having any real power or authority within the church, the church itself would have to create a whole new interpretation of Genesis. Sarah passionately wrote to her sister that,

we must first view woman at the period of her creation … In all this sublime description of the creation of man, (which is a generic term including man and woman) there is not one particle of difference intimated as existing between them. They were both made in the image of God; dominion was given to both over every other creature, but not over each other.\(^5\)

Writing to her sister, Sarah expressed her earnest hope that women finally would be released from the bonds of oppression created by the Christian Church to carve out their own proper sphere in society. She believed that God truly created man and woman equally, and that that as the true creator, man cannot subvert God’s original creation. Sarah passionately wrote to her sister that “God created us equal: —he created us free agents” and as “our Lawgiver, our

\(^5\) Julia Smith Bible, Ibid, Introduction
King and our Judge” therefore it is only “to him alone is woman bound to be in subjection, and
to him alone is she accountable.” Sarah concludes her letter to her sister addressing the
question of what duty a woman must perform in a Christian society in order to live a Christian
life as outlined by God in the Bible. According to Sarah’s interpretation of the Old and New
Testament, a woman must live “in the sphere which her Creator has assigned her”; and she
believed when the Christian Church displaced her from her designated role in society, it only
served to “introduce confusion into the world.” Therefore, Sarah argued that it was “of vast
importance to herself and to all the rational creation, that she should ascertain what are her duties
and her privileges as a responsible and immortal being.”

Julia’s translation of Genesis reveals not only the conservative nature of her translations,
but only reveals her conservative nature compared to many of the more progressive women in
the middle of the nineteenth-century, such as Sarah Grimke. A few key passages from Genesis,
which discusses Eve and the role of women reveals the conservative nature of Julia’s
translations. The first three examples come from the passages that describe the creation of
woman;

Genesis 2:21-2:23 KJV
And the Lord God caused a
Deep sleep to fall upon Adam,
And he slept: and he took
one of his ribs, and closed
up the flesh instead thereof;
And the rib, which the Lord
God had taken from man,
Made he a woman, and
Brought her unto man
And Adam said, This [is]
now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh: she
Shall be called Woman,

Genesis 2:21-2:23 JSV
And Jehovah God will cause
to fall a deep sleep upon man,
and he will sleep; and he will
take one of his ribs and will close
up the flesh underneath it
And Jehovah God will build
the rib which he took from
the man, into a woman, and
will bring her to the man.
And the man will say, This is
now bone of my bone and
flesh of my flesh; and this
shall be called woman,

55 Ibid., 8.
56 Ibid., 15.
because she was taken out of man.\textsuperscript{57} because she was taken from man.\textsuperscript{58}

As compared to the King James Version, Julia only provides a literal translation of the story, not a revision of the creation story to serve the feminist fight over religion in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{59} Another passage taken from Genesis that many feminists, like Sarah Gremke, used to redefine the role for women in the Bible comes from the original sin committed by Eve, which ultimately leads to man’s fall from grace. Chapter three of Genesis explains Eve’s temptation and her ultimate sin of eating the forbidden fruit.

Julia in the conclusion of her introduction to her Hebrew translation explains why she chose to use the literal translations of verb tenses even though is made her translation awkward and difficult to read. She explains that the “original Hebrew had no regard to time,” and therefore the “Bible speaks for all ages.” Also, she argues that if she altered the tenses just to make read translation easier to read then she would become the judge and not God. Finally, and most importantly it is the “promiscuous use of the tenses shows that there must be something hidden, that we must search out, and not hold to the outward, for the ‘letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.’"\textsuperscript{60}

What began as an informal study group with Julia, her sisters, and a friend simply coming together to discuss the word of God ultimately became a search for the truth. After following the teachings of Miller, Julia and her sisters were inspired to find the literal meaning contained within the Gospels, believing that true peace and comfort could only come from a life filled with prayer and study. In a letter that Abby wrote in September 1862, she passionately described her

\textsuperscript{57}King James Bible.
\textsuperscript{58}Julia Smith Bible, Genesis 2:21-23.
\textsuperscript{59}For more examples of the Biblical translations see appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{60}Julia Smith, \textit{The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testament}. 
and her sister’s belief in religion and how they viewed the supremacy of the Word over the voices of men as the true religious authority:

The “Word” as containing the only power in which we may trust that all things came into being thro the action of that Word…It is the Word which Is to do the worlds work after all, because it is the vehicle of the power that controls the universe, the revelation of the divine idea or purpose … The Jews received their law in the Old Testament as God speaking directly to them and he has in these last days spoken to us by his Son by whom he has made all the world, the New Tes.61

According to Abby the path to salvation comes from the true understanding of the word, but she cautions that it is not an easy journey. Abby believes that God created all man with the ability to search for the truth within the hidden messages contained in the New Testament. After the years spent in their weekly Bible study group to search for the God’s revelation to man, Abby learned that:

The greatest part is spoken in parables, allegories, and dark sayings, but there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed nor hid that shall not be made known. It requires a strong desire to learn which will bring application, searching, watching … to get at the truth of it in the same way that you get at the truth of a mathematical problem by the figuring themselves so clear that you know you cannot be mistaken and you can prove a verse in the bible by the other verses so you know it must be so for it makes it all agree from Genesis to Revelation…You get at the spiritual life of the word by being (baptized) immersed into the letter of it.62

According to Abby, God breathed spirit and life into the New Testament, it is not made up of dead letters, but they are alive with the spirit of God. Abby had almost a Gnostic understanding of the New Testament, if one searches for the meaning, the meaning will be revealed. Just as Abby believed that the truth of God’s grace and salvation were hidden within the parables, and the allegories in the New Testament, the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas also stated that the hidden truth with be revealed; “Jesus said, "Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from

61Abby Smith letter to C. C. Burleigh, September 9, 1862, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
62Ibid.
you will be disclosed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.”

Abby also believed that one had to actively search for the meaning, which was similar to the weekly meeting the Smiths’ spent translating the Bible. Abby’s and Julia’s understanding of God and the truth was much closer to the messages and meaning found in the Gnostic Gospels, then in the Gospels found in the King James Bible. Both sisters removed themselves from organize religion and completely stopped attending church, because they believed God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were found in the living word sent by God. God could not be found in four walls, he could not reveal his truth through the spoken words of men, but were to be found in our hearts and souls. Much like the famous Gospel of Thomas line, when Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."  

The Smith women not only created their own Christian community among themselves, and seemed to embody the world that many middle-class white women embraced in the nineteenth century. Even their own neighbors and town folks found the Smith sisters a bit eccentric at times, especially because of the fact that they never married and for their radical religious views. In the end, the sisters were always respected for their charity work and were viewed as kind and caring Christian women. Their neighbor and longtime friend Henry Titus Welles attests to their generous and caring nature in Autobiography and Reminiscences: “[They] did not seem to have a love of the marvelous, nor a desire to be eccentric. But they did have a pride of independence, and arrogated to themselves superior judgment, and were inordinately tenacious of their own opinions. They were self-sufficient. But nevertheless their lives were fragrant with good deeds. They were ever at the bedside of the sick, and were ministering angels

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64 Gospel of Thomas, line 77.
to the poor. They were Christians withal, and their record is written in letters of gold in the Lamb’s Book of Life, forever and ever.”

Julia and Abby never wavered from their distrust of the Congregationalist Church and held firm to their own beliefs that the “Word,” as found in the New Testament, was the true religious authority, not man. In 1864, when their beloved sister Cyrinthia died, Abby and Julia did not turn to the church for comfort or to preside over the funeral. Instead, Julia and Abby organized a simple funeral where passages were read from the New Testament at Cyrinthia’s gravesite. Abby wrote to a close friend, Mrs. Demarise, on August 25, 1864 detailing the beautiful and simple service:

The gentleman who spoke at the grave of our sister returned thanks to the people for their attendance and assistance. There was nothing like sympathy which had the power to soothe the heart of the sorrowing. It is this sympathy which has endeared you to us for which I desire to return you and our most sincere thanks. We reached Hartford the day we left at 12 and a quarter. We both felt that we could not follow the remains of our sister in a hearse and we had the good fortune to find a man in the depot who engaged to take them over to Glas with us also in an express wagon for ten dollars. We stopped at one place in East Hartford and at 4 or 5 in Glas-street to inform our particular friends from the last house I walked to our own to prepare my sister before the wagon drove up. I thought she would be a little prepared by her visit in New York but nothing could express her grief. The house was filled in a few moments with sympathy kissing and sorrowing friends and neighbors who rendered every assistance that could be … The funeral was attended the next morning (Sunday) at 8 o clock and she looked perfectly natural tho altered a little at the grave. The 90 chapters of Isaiah beginning at the 6 verse was selected and read by a friend which was the only service performed … And now all is over she rests peacefully in her grave besides our father.

The letter beautifully revealed the simple and dignified world that the Smith women constructed for themselves, which not only sustained them through the vicissitudes of life, but also provided them with the courage and fortitude to fight injustice. Their mother Hannah began the journey when she taught her daughters by example the importance of a life filled with

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66 Abby Smith to Mrs. Demarise, August 25, 1864, Envelope L11077, Box 8, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
learning, which for all of the Smith women became a central part of their lives. She also imparted the conviction to live their Christian beliefs and to fight injustice in whatever form it manifested itself. For Julia and Abby, at the age when most people retire to their beds for rest and contemplation, they engaged in the fight of their lives when the local town leaders raised their property taxes without their consent. In 1872, when Julia was eighty and Abby seventy-five years old, they began their fight for their right to vote as legal property owners, a battle that would complete their journey as passionate women who used their education and Christian beliefs to fight for what they believed were their rights as American citizens.
CHAPTER 5
JULIA AND ABBY’S FORAY INTO THE PUBLIC SPHERE:
HANNAH’S SPIRIT LIVES ON

In 1872, at the ages of eighty and seventy-five years old, respectively, Julia and Abby Smith sounded a battle cry as the alleged victims of “taxation without representation.” The political battle began for the sisters when they learned from the Glastonbury town fathers of increases in their property tax. On January 6, 1874, the Springfield Republican, in an article titled “Abby Smith’s Cows[,] Taxation without Representation, What Males of Glastonbury did on New Year’s Day,” reported:

In refusing to continue paying heavier taxes, year by year, than any other property owners in Glastonbury, while refused a voice in assessing and spending them, Abby Smith and her sister as truly stand for the American principle as did the citizens who ripped open the tea-chests in Boston harbor, or the farmers who leveled their muskets at Concord. And they seem to have very much that same quality of quiet, old fashioned Yankee grit, too. They are not demonstrative or declamatory. They don’t shriek, or wring their hands, or make a fuss of any sort. They are good-nature itself. But they are also logic itself, and resolution itself, and pluck itself. They simply stand upon their rights.¹

The tax increase made the Smiths suspicious, as they figured that this was a move perpetrated against two legally unprotected spinsters. At the same time, Julia and Abby also had to fight the same prejudice and social biases as all women of the nineteenth century.

Throughout the nineteenth century many changes happened which helped women gain more agency over their own lives and gave them more opportunity for them to participate in the public sphere. One of the changes that took place in Antebellum America which many women benefitted from was when education became more available for them with all of the female seminaries opening up throughout the country. Also, the curriculum at the female seminaries

¹Julia Smith, Abby Smith and Her Cows (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 14; Springfield Republican, January 6, 1874.
became very similar to that offered at schools for boys. Young girls were able to study math, sciences, history, and literature, which led to greater career opportunities for them. The watershed for career opportunities for women really began to open up for them during the Civil War, where many women worked as nurses in hospitals and out on the battle fields.

According to the gender historian Jane E. Shultz over 20,000 women from both the Confederate and Union states worked as nurses during the Civil War. In her book, *Women at the Front*, Shultz illuminates the vast experience women gained working as nurses, cook, drivers, and administrators during the war and how the lessons learned led women to achieve more independence and greater autonomy in the work force after the war. She argues that “despite the rhetoric that urges women to return to private life (and women’s own collusion in it), relief work gave a number of elite women postwar visibility as agents of change in the public arena.”

Even though elite women began entering the work force as secretaries in government offices, as teachers, and as health professionals, and even as working-class women took advantage of the expansion of industry after the war and found numerous jobs in factories, this “postwar work did not, however, threaten the ethos of domesticity.” The careers that were available to women were jobs that were still defined by their gender, that of the caring nurse maid and assistant to male-dominated professions.

It is odd that for Julia and Abby that they did not become involved in any of the relief work during the Civil War, especially after the abolitionist work they did with their mother. But during the Civil War, and after, the two sisters do not mention working for the war effort, nor did they mention what they thought about President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, or the Union

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3 Ibid., 6.
4 Ibid.
victory. At the end of their lives the only issue that concerned both Julia and Abby was their fight against the leading men in Glastonbury over a tax bill that they believed was too high, which led them to fight for their right to vote on taxes that they were forced to pay. For them the fight that consumed their last years was personal and only about them. It may have been that the abolitionist work that they had done with their mother was inspired by and carried out by Hannah, and her daughters only followed her lead.

Despite all the changes for women in the post-Civil War decades, the English law of coverture continued to dictate women’s public roles, just as Julia and Abby learned when the tax man showed up at their house demanding payment for their property tax. The English law of coverture and the placing of women exclusively within a domestic sphere remained the two most difficult obstacles for women to overcome in the fight for their rights. The law of coverture, dating back to the Colonial period, served to “protect” women as well as to deny them their full rights as citizens, for the law treated women “as covered by their husbands, placing sharp constraints on the extent, to which married women controlled their bodies and their property.”

As the law of coverture defined the domestic and power relationship between husband and wife, it also bolstered the notion that women belonged in a domestic sphere, which placed women in the privacy of the home and men in the public sphere of business, politics, and power. The domestic relations in America stemmed from the British practice of “Baron” and “Feme,” as Linda K. Kerber notes: “The very wording implies a political relationship: lord and woman, not husband and wife. One party had status as well as gender; the other had only gender.” The key to the Smith sisters’ fight with the town leaders was that the law of coverture did not cover them.

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nor could they be confined within the proscribed domestic relationship, as they never married; and, therefore, they were left unprotected.

When Julia and Abby began their fight against the towns’ selectmen, their father had been dead for nearly thirty years, and their mother for nearly twenty-five years. Both Abby and Julia had inherited the family farm and home from their mother after she passed away, and as the only two remaining family members, they lacked the “protection” of a male relative provided by the law of coverture. At the same time, they were obliged to pay taxes. After studying the law with her father and reading Blackstone, Julia would have been keenly aware of the law of coverture and the problems it posed for women, especially for women who never married. Julia made numerous references throughout her diary of her reading Blackstone and how the law of coverture directly impacted her and her sister. Beginning in November 1815, Julia commented nearly every night that she read the English law book until completed. In one such entry, she simply stated, “Cloudy, Mended my dress and some other things. Read in the Bible and in Mr. Blackstone, a law book.”

After her father’s death in 1836, Julia wrote in her diary of her fear of being left without protection. She laments, “O this is a family without a husband, without a father, without a brother, without an uncle, without a man who has the care of us.” And after their mother’s and sisters’ deaths, Julia and Abby were left alone to fight the injustice of having to pay taxes when they lacked the basic constitutional right to vote.

The fight that Julia and Abby waged against the town was framed by the ideology of coverture, as revealed by the constant references made in their letters and speeches to protection or, more specifically, lack of protection. They understood that when their father was alive that they were covered or protected by him legally and civically. Both Julia and Abby had never

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7Julia Smith diary, November 1, 1815.
married, so therefore they had been shielded from the idea that as an independent citizen in America, they lacked the rights and freedom that male property owners enjoyed. Throughout their lives, their father paid their taxes and then their mother took care of them after Zephaniah passed away. Up until they became the lawful owners of the Smith house, Julia and Abby never wrote about the injustice to which they or other women were subjected because of the ideology that men covered women in civic and political matters. In fact, not until the town tax collector came calling to the Smith homestead 1872 and presented a tax bill to the sisters for $100.00 more than the previous year, did Julia and Abby respond, arguing that “the only other people in town whose assessment had increased besides themselves were two widows; not a single man was so affected.”

Even as they realized that they did not have control over their civic and political lives, both Abby and Julia usually framed their argument against the town tax collector as independent and legal property owners, who in a republic should have the right to vote, not as women suffrages.

Inspired by their anger and their righteous sense of justice that Julia and Abby inherited from their mother, they decided to travel the seven miles to Hartford to attend the Connecticut Women Suffrage Association convention in 1867, which was their first encounter with the Women Suffrage Movement. It seems that both Julia and Abby did not feel the need before now to get involved with the women rights movement. The only explanation for not getting involved earlier could only be that they did not realize the sense of injustice until it affected them directly. Julia had never commented on women rights in her diary, or women’s lack of freedom. It was only when they experienced firsthand the injustice and ridicule they were treated to by their local townsmen did both Julia and Abby become involved in the official women rights movement.

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9Ibid., 141.
The women rights movement officially began in July 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, thirty years before Julia and Abby began their fight for the right to vote in the local election. The first suffrage convention was marked by the speech from Elizabeth C. Stanton, known as the “Declaration of Sentiments.” This speech set the ideology and the language with which the suffrage battle would be fought for the next seventy years. The discourse created at the convention by Stanton centered on the Western liberal theory of natural rights and the tyranny of men who had usurped power from much of the U.S. population. Stanton opened her speech by stating, “We are assembled to protest against a form of government, existing without the consent of the governed—to declare our right to be free as man is free, to be represented in the government which we are taxed to support. The right is ours. The question now is, how shall we get possession of what rightfully belongs to us.”

Although the convention only lasted two days if forever changed the way the male population would view women, because this is the first time that two very strong and intelligent women, Lucretia Coffin Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton came together to organize a formal convention to fight their legal, political, and civic subordinate status.

The two leaders at the Seneca Falls convention were Mott and Stanton, who were the principle organizers and wrote the platform, which outlined the rights that woman must have in the Republic, and set the agenda for the future women’s rights movement that emerged after the convention. The leader of the first convention was Lucretia Coffin Mott, who first contacted Elizabeth Cady Stanton and convinced her the time was right to begin a suffrage movement in America, because she herself just witnessed the growing movement in England. Mott was

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10 The Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Reader, Correspondence, Writings, Speeches, ed. Ellen Carol Dubois (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992): 91.

inspired by the women she had met in England while visiting London and attending lectures given by women in the British movement. She was also inspired by what she learned growing up as a Quaker, that all men and women should be treated equally.\(^\text{12}\)

Lucretia was the force that inspired and organized the first convention, while Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the intellectual force behind the convention who wrote the keynote address at Seneca Falls, which laid out the main platform for the convention and outlined the mission for the women rights movement. After the convention Stanton became one the founders, chief organizer, and the intellectual mind that guided women’s rights movement that emerged after the convention. Similar to Lucretia, Stanton grew up believing that men and women should be given the same opportunities in life to excel, especially when it came to education.

Two other key players in the women rights movement were Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony, even though they were not at the first convention, they both became leaders in the movement. Lucy’s first fight was against the church when they refused her the right to vote on issues regarding matters of faith and church business. She challenged many of the Old Testament passages that supported the insubordination and women and that women must remain silent in matters of religion. Much like Mott, Susan B. Anthony was raised in a Quaker family that believed in the right for both men and women to be treated equally. Susan’s father supported the abolition movement and the temperance movement and taught both his sons and daughters to get involved in the early nineteenth century reform movements.\(^\text{13}\)

The message the Smith sisters heard at the convention of the Connecticut Women Suffrage Association in 1867 reiterated many of the points that Stanton uttered at the first convention in 1848, and it also encouraged and emboldened them to fight the battle themselves. The Smiths

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{13}\) McMillen, 6.
would specifically go on to argue against the tyranny of their town’s men for taxing them without representation. Julia and Abby never officially joined the Women Rights Movement, instead their fight began as a local fight against the local townsmen, many of men who they fought against the Smiths knew personally. They would attend suffrage conventions and correspond with many of the leading member of the suffrage Movement, such as Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone. They would use the movement and the women in the movement to their advantage to further their own cause. The Smiths fight began and remained a local fight for them, a fight for their rights as property owners.

Susan B. Anthony, a leading advocate for women rights and an original member of the women suffrage movement, especially motivated Julia and Abby when she spoke of several instances when women were cheated out of their fair wages because they lacked the power given to those who had the right to vote. Anthony presented a moving example of women’s need for protection that only the vote could provide for them. She discussed at great length a petition for higher wages presented to the Rochester school board by eight male teachers and 125 female teachers. The great controversy and injustice, according to Anthony, occurred when the men, who already received $800.00 per year, received a $100.00 raise; while the women, who received only the maximum wage of $400.00, the most they could earn in one year, actually had their wages cut by $25.00. She concluded her speech by asking, “If those one hundred and twenty-five women had each possessed the ballot, would the board have dared to take that course?” She answered “no,” of course, and argued that women “need the power (of the vote) that will give rulers a motive for giving us what we have a right to demand.”14

Inspired by the convention and especially by Anthony’s story of injustice, the Smiths returned to Glastonbury with a new resolve to work for women suffrage. “We could stay only one session, and came home believing that the women had truth and right on their side.” Although Julia and Abby returned home from the convention ready for battle against the town to fight for enfranchisement, four years passed before they would get the chance to publicly voice their position on taxation. The main reason for the delay was the death of their eldest sister, Hancy Zephina Smith, which caused both Julia and Abby consuming grief. Hancy had died on June 30, 1871, at the age of eighty-four. The surviving sisters both considered her “the life of the house, and an individual with a ‘keen sense of injustice.’”

Ironically, no one knew that the past convention would be the last in which Susan B Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucy Stone would all speak on the same stage again.

While the Smith sisters grieved over the loss of their beloved sister, the women’s movement entered into its own crisis, when it split over a difference of opinion regarding the Fourteenth Amendment. Passed in June 1866 with the word “male” added, the constitutional amendment explicitly defined enfranchisement as a universal male right. After spending the last twenty years allied with black emancipation leaders fighting for universal male and female suffrage, Stanton and Anthony felt betrayed. Both men and women who had thus campaigned through the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) had to make a decision. Would they support black suffrage and wait for an amendment to grant women the right to vote, or fight the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment until it expunged the word “male”? The women’s movement divided into two separate organizations over the controversy; while Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell accepted the priority of black suffrage, Stanton and Anthony refused to support black suffrage alone and broke from Stone and Blackwell to work exclusively for women.

\textsuperscript{15}Housley, \textit{The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life}, 142.
suffrage. In May 1869, Stanton and Anthony created the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) with the intent to campaign for women suffrage at the national level—a fight for women waged exclusively by women. They chose as their main tactic the test through the court systems of the constitutionality of women’s disenfranchisement, believing the men in Congress had failed women with the Fourteenth Amendment. At the same time Lucy Stone and Henry Ward Beecher created the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) with the intention of fighting for women’s rights on a state-by-state basis. When the Smith sisters returned to the issue of taxation and suffrage, they followed the strategic example of the NWSA and Susan B. Anthony, when Anthony tested the legality of the right to vote by registering in the November 1872 presidential election.

Julia and Abby knew that they lacked the power to fight against the town’s selectmen and the tax collector without the vote, and after hearing about Anthony’s fight for the right to vote, they determined that their first line of defense against the tyranny of the tax collector would be to register to vote. The sisters, along with a close Glastonbury friend, Rosella Buckingham, tried to register to vote in Glastonbury, but were promptly denied the right by the town registrar. However, Buckingham had determined that by law, they could appeal to the town selectmen, which the three women did when the council met in March 1873. Their efforts were rewarded by a selectman who dismissively lectured them on the fact that they did not have the right to appeal the registrar’s decision. This selectman argued that their rejection had been made on the basis that the word “male” had not been expunged from the Constitution, and the town did not wish to act contrary to law. Rosella countered that argument by pointing out that the word “white” had not been expunged, either; yet the laws now pertained to blacks. The town clerk then read the

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16 The Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Reader, 91.
18 Ibid., 627.
Fourteenth Amendment and agreed with the women that if “Negro” could come in under state law, so also could “women,” but the lawyer strongly disagreed and denied their right to appeal. Abby’s reply to the whole insulting experience before the town’s selectmen stemmed from the following:

[T]he veriest vagabond that walked the streets to whose support we were liable, who never paid the town a dollar, whose poll tax even they had to remit—this man had been given by the town power which they were not willing to give to us and he could take our property from us. What we were asking the town was to be put on a level with this man. We did not ask for more power than was given to him, we wanted the same law to judge both.\(^1^9\)

When the taxes again came due again, Abby decided to act on her resolve to challenge the “taxation without representation” from which she suffered. In November 1873, Julia and Abby rode down main street to the red brick town hall to speak to the men gathered inside for a town meeting. As Julia and Abby entered the room, Abby immediately asked for and received permission to speak. A local reporter who covered the story for the *Hartford Courant* filed this report:

It is not without due deliberation that we have been willing to attend this meeting, but we had no other way of coming before the men of the town. Others, our neighbors, can complain more effectually than we can, without speaking a word, when they think those who rule over them rule with injustice; but we are not put under the laws of the land as they are—we are wholly in the power of those we have come to address … The motto of our government is “Proclaim liberty to all inhabitants of the land,” and here where liberty is so highly extolled and gloried by every man in it, one-half the inhabitants are not put under her laws, but are ruled over by the other half, who can by their own laws, not hers, take from the other half all they possess. How is liberty pleased with such a worship? Would she not be apt to think of her own sex?\(^2^0\)

This was not a speech designed to win male friends, and indeed, it did not; for no man present spoke in their defense, and by the time the sisters’ left, nothing had been resolved.

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\(^1^9\) Housley, *The Letter Kills but the Spirit Gives Life*, 142.

\(^2^0\) Smith, *Abby Smith and Her Cows*, 9; *Hartford Courant*, November 5, 1873.
No matter how effective or ineffective Abby’s speech was at the town hall meeting, it did not deter the new tax collector, a man named George Andrews, from calling on the Smiths and demanding payment. Once again, the sisters refused, telling him, as they had told the men at the town meeting, that he could not take their farm away. He left without payment, and apparently the sisters expected to be allowed to get by for another year by paying 12 percent interest on the tax, terms that the selectmen had accepted for years with other town taxpayers, but not for them. From here on, the sisters would fight the battle with Glastonbury effectively in the press, much to the town fathers’ chagrin. The host of reporters that traveled to the town over the next several years would depict these rural gentlemen as a bunch of inept country bumpkins oppressing two vulnerable elderly women in a backwater town.

The next visit from the tax collector came on New Year’s Day, 1874, when Mr. Andrews walked onto the Smiths’ property and confiscated seven of their eight Alderney cows. Julia pleaded with him to leave behind at least two, since one would be distressed if left alone. Although the sisters asked for a delay until they could once again petition the selectmen to be allowed to vote, the tax collector refused and drove the reluctant, pet-like cows down the road, bellowing the entire way.

On the day set for the cow auction, January 8, 1874, Julia and Abby seemed surprised by the interest their press story generated; or, perhaps they really were not so very surprised, as the story of an evil tax collector auctioning off seven pet cows, owned by two elderly and respectable spinsters, turned out to be great publicity for their cause. The newspaper headlines were certainly not confined only to Springfield and Hartford newspapers, but the story also appeared in Boston and Providence. The Boston Post published a story entitled “The
Glastonbury War,” on January 21, 1874, which provided the best account of the Smith sisters fight against the town:

Within a time, comparatively brief, this little town has risen from obscurity to be the center of a public interest that has burst all local barriers and spread itself over all parts of the country where political and civil rights and the destiny of women are discussed, and it suddenly finds itself famous through the spirited and determined position assumed by the Misses Smith … his sale, not only of their property but of their pets, was looked upon as an arbitrary proceeding, all the more for the reason that on two previous occasions the Collector had assured them that their tax could lie by returning twelve per cent interest which they consented to pay, and at the time when their cows were being sold there were more than $2000 of uncollected taxes, and no one seemed able to explain why this amount should be allowed to run and two defenseless women brought so rigorously up to the letter of the law.²¹

In April 1874, the Smiths’ taxes came due once again, which brought another visit from the tax collector and when he entered their home, he inquired if they would hand anything over to him to satisfy this year’s property tax. The Smith sisters replied that they could not help him, because “nothing could be more wrong than taking our property in this way … We were under no state law, no other law but theirs, and they did not meet but twice a year, when we must speak to them if we ever could, but they had made a gag-law even in a house we had paid more money to build than any other voter in it.” When the tax collector left their home, he promised to return, and the next time he would confiscate their land, and he informed them that by law, he had to place an advertisement in a local paper nine weeks prior to the auction, and that the sisters could bid on their property if they chose. Less than a week later, the tax man made good on his promise and placed the following advertisement in the Hartford Weekly Times on April 13, 1874:

“NOTICE—Levied upon virtue of warrant delivered to me for the collection of taxes for the town of Glastonbury, and so much will be sold at public auction, on Saturday, the 20th day of June, A.D. 1874, at 2 o’clock p.m.”²²

²¹Smith, Abby Smith and Her Cows, 18; Boston Post, January 21, 1874.
²²Smith, Abby Smith and Her Cows, 38; Hartford Weekly Times, April 13, 1874.
It was at this time that Julia and Abby Smith wrote a letter to Ms. Anthony describing the details of the public auction, which sold eleven acres of their land out of the fourteen that they owned. In their letter, Abby described how she and Julia met the tax collectors before they arrived at the Smiths’ land:

[Julia and Abby] told them they could not sell it, for they should have taken moveable property for which there was sufficient. The collector said it was already bargained for 78, 35 cents. He asked who bids said he twice, and none answering he said we could bid more if we chose. We enquired how he could be so unjust and he said he had engaged to, and he actually sold 11 acres worth 2,000 to our unjust neighbor, the only one to buy, for a tax of less than 50, they making up beforehand their bill of cost what each should take of nearly 30.23

The sisters also complained that the land had already been sold before the designated time to their neighbor Mr. Hardin, who had been trying to get his hands on their land for years. Again, the Smith sisters protested that they had been lied to and cheated out of their money and land. Since they were not allowed to bid on their land as promised and the town sold their land so cheaply, they felt in a sense that they had been robbed. In her letter to Ms. Anthony, Abby described their fight against the town tax collectors in the same language used by the Founding Fathers to declare independence from Great Britain. Abby and Julia truly believed they were carrying on the fight that the revolutionary generation began but left unfinished for women of property who were left unprotected by the state. Abby wrote to Ms. Anthony, from whom she hoped she would gain sympathy, support, and advice on how to pursue their fight for justice:

We doubt whether any women in the United States have ever been treated so barbarously and unfeelingly as we have for laying claim to the same principles the men have fought for and ever proposed to hold to, contained in our Declaration of Independence, principles so plain, self evident, they cannot be denied, for if it be wrong to take a man’s property without his consent, it must be equally wrong to take a woman’s property without her consent.24

23Abby Smith to Ms. Anthony, December 25, 1874, Envelope 1133, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
24Ibid.
After consulting their lawyer in Hartford, Julia and Abby Smith brought a lawsuit against the tax collector and against the town of Glastonbury for the illegal sale of their land. In a letter to the *New Haven Evening Union*, Abby explained that the local judge decided in their favor, as their lawyer “clearly proved that there was abundance of personal estate, and that they could not lawfully touch the real estate; but as it was an action of trespass, only nominal damages could be given, and ten dollars and the costs were awarded.”\(^{25}\) The story of course does not end there, as the tax collector’s lawyer appealed the case to the higher court in Hartford. Abby felt that the case would be postponed for at least a year to allow, “for our bad neighbor to record his deed of two thousand dollars worth of land, which cost him seventy-eight dollars and thirty-five cents.”\(^{26}\) By this point in the battle, Abby understood her adversaries well. The town lawyers did postpone the case for a year to provide Mr. Hardin with the time he needed to register his deed to their land and eventually to receive the legal title.

While waiting for their second court date, Julia and Abby kept busy and continued their fight for their own suffrage. In July 1874, they traveled to the Connecticut state legislature to speak on their own behalf defending their right to petition. Once again, Abby presented a passionate, hard-hitting, and logical speech to the committee. She immediately addressed the central issue at hand, inequality and the lack of rights for women:

> We see by the papers that the legislature has given us leave to withdraw our petition, that is to withdraw the only privilege, the only right our state has ever given us (we needed no permission for this) and this they have done, without considering the subject of our prayer, as we can learn, without ever discussing it, or bring it before the house, in any way. They say, in effect, they will hear none of our complaints, we must submit to those they have put over us; there is no appeal from their authority, whether they govern us according to law or not, we must pay them what they tell us, we shall pay without questioning! They say this, when by their own acknowledgment they take themselves as much money from us to say the least, to support them in their power as from any of the citizens who enjoy all their rights and privileges. Probably not one half the members

\(^{25}\)Smith, *Abby Smith and Her Cows*, 46; *New Haven Evening Union*, April 1874.  
\(^{26}\)Ibid.
knew anything about our petition, for we were unable to learn ourselves, in any way for
weeks after the committee was appointed, when we could be heard. We saw a short
paragraph in one paper only. It was not announced by the Speaker but one hour
beforehand as he adjourned for dinner. No friend in the city accompanied us for none
heard of it, they were greatly disappointed and many in the neighboring townships. The
Committee seemed much hurried and not willing to wait for those coming in. No sign or
word of approval or disapproval was ever spoken by them, that we know. We always
thought before, our state would at least give us a hearing. Why put our fellow townsmen
over us to take our money when they please, we are not idiots but have the same
intelligence that they have, and nothing can be brought against us, but the blameless one
of birth. All governments, surely, if they meant to rule in justice would be willing to give
a reason to the lowest of the people, when asked. It is those who intend to rule by force,
who refuse to do this. It is force that is the author of all manner of evil, or robbery, piracy
and murder, the victims of which are subdued by force. This is the power that takes our
property from us without our consent. How much better if liberty and equality indeed
ruled throughout our land, as is the boast of men?27

Following these painful losses political losses, when the sisters realized that their
elloquent speeches and their publicity stunts were not going to shame the local townsmen into
giving them the vote, Julia switched to a new tactic: persuasion. She decided to publish her Bible
translation to prove to the town and country patriarchy that women were as intelligent and
capable as they, and that some women were even more intelligent. In November 1875, Julia
wrote a letter to Lucy Stone announcing her intention to publish the translation, which Stone
reprinted in The Woman’s Journal.

Dear Mrs. Stone:— … My sister Abby has a strong desire to have it done. To be sure, we
both know, there is no reason under heaven why women cannot control their own
property, only that they do not know as much as men. Printing a translation from the
original tongues would show that one woman had done, without aid, what one man has
never done … We have another inducement to publish. We think we have enough money
in Hartford banks to pay the expense of the work, which will relieve the town of half our
taxes, as the bank stock is assessed as much as the farm.28

Once again, the tax collector called on the sisters in April 1876, and this time their sad
story appeared in the New York Tribune. The story, entitled “The Misses Smith’s Cows,” ran in

27Abby Smith, Speech to the Connecticut Legislature, July 19, 1874, Envelope L1076, Smith Papers, Glastonbury
Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
28Smith, Abby Smith and Her Cow, 62; The Woman’s Journal, November 6, 1875.
the April 24, 1876, issue, detailing how the cows of the “Misses Smith of Glastonbury, Conn., have been sold again … Last week the ruthless tax-collector came and levied in the three ‘milky mother.’ Two of them the Misses Smith bid in; a third seems to have been carried off by an outsider.” Furthermore, that year the tax collector sold off an additional $100 worth of bank stocks! The reporter finished his piece by extolling Julia and Abby’s persistence and expressing his support for their noble cause. He concluded, “The Misses Smith are determined they will pay no taxes until they are permitted to vote. Cows and bank stock are as nothing in comparison with the inestimable privilege to vote.”

In the summer of 1876, Julia and Abby attended the New York State Woman Suffrage Association’s seventh annual convention to present their story of the unfair treatment they received from their local townsmen. Abby spoke of their refusal to pay their property tax until they were granted the right to vote. She related the story of the corrupt town official who sold their meadow land for “$96.75, when its actual market value was $2,000.” After Abby’s inspiring and rousing speech, a series of resolutions were adopted, declaring that so long as women were deprived of their franchise and their voice in the Government, the Constitution was only a ‘high sounding mockery,’ and insisting that ‘the influence of women was needed in all the departments of the Government—in local matters, to secure better roads, clean streets, and a more thorough sanitary rule, and in legislative affairs to insure a purer administration and more equal laws.’

Abby and Julia both agreed that women should have the franchise—in fact, that was the only issue that led to the fight with their local tax collectors—but they did not necessarily support the rest of the New York convention’s agenda. At the New York convention, the many speakers also

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29Smith, *Abby Smith and Her Cows*, 72; *New York Tribune*, April 24, 1876.
discussed such issues as “the unjust and cruel statute, which made children the absolute property of the husband, which the latter could will away if he so desired.”

The Smith sisters’ appeals to justice for women were based upon the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence. Julia and Abby appealed to the sentiment that all legal property owners should have the franchise. In the majority of the speeches that Abby delivered, she repeatedly referred to the Founding Fathers’ Revolutionary cry, “No taxation without representation.” On July 4, 1876, the same year that Abby gave many speeches and wrote to many different newspapers outlining their fight against the town of Glastonbury and the unjust treatment they received at the hands of the men in their town.

As Julia and Abby present their case in the language of the Revolutionary generation, the ideas about liberty and all men/women are created equally and our endowed with inalienable rights, the actual language and ideas about freedom and equality had changed with the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves. The change came with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. The law “asserted the principle of equality before the law and the authority of the national government to guarantee the irrevocable rights of citizens, which it enumerated as those of contract, property, and personal liberty.”

According to Amy Dru Stanley, the passing of the Civil Rights Act change the meaning of freedom now meant that a free person “has the right to contract,” and has the “right to support himself.” As Julia and Abby were fighting the Law of Coverture in the language of the past, they soon realized that even if the language changed, the right or lack of rights for women had not. In almost one hundred years and the victory of the Civil War for freedom and civil rights, women were still subjected to the law of coverture, as Julia and Abby both found out, when they

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31 Ibid.
never succeeded in gaining the right to vote in their local election. According to Stanley the question soon arose after the passage of the thirteenth and fourteenth Amendment, what rights to free women of color and by extension all women will have under the new laws? Law makers decided that free women of color would transfer their rights to their labor and property from slave holders to their husbands, that “the birthright of all free men: title not only himself but to his wife—to her person, labor, and sexuality.” So women, whether of color or white, were placed under the law of coverture, but in the new world of 1870s, senators and other politicians argued that women in fact had the right to enter into a contract, a marriage contract, and once they entered into the contract they had to fulfill their part of the agreement, which was to live under the subordinate status placed upon them by the law of coverture. And the husband had to uphold his side of the contract, to take care of, guide her, and to provide a home.

Also, in the year of 1876, many leaders from the National Woman Suffrage Association met in Philadelphia to voice their own Declaration of Independence, during a celebration ceremony marking the one hundred years since the signing the Declaration of Independence at Independence Square. Many of the leading suffragists had a seat on the platform to participate in the official celebratory activities. According to the *New York Times*, when the official reading of Declaration of Independence finished four ladies quietly rose from their seats, “Miss Susan B. Anthony, Mrs. Matilda Joslyn Gage, Mrs. Lillie Devereux Blake, and Miss Sarah A. Spencer advanced” to the stage where Anthony presented the presiding officer with an appeal for their independence. Anthony spoke loudly enough for all in Independence Square to hear her message:

> Mr. President, I present to you a declaration of rights from the women citizens of the United States,’ at the same moment handing to the Vice President Ferry the long roll which contained the copy of the declaration engrossed and signed. It is headed,
‘Declaration of Rights of the Women of the United States by the National Woman Suffrage Association, July 4, 1876.’ After a preamble, it sets forth that ‘the history of our country the past hundred years has been a series of assumptions and usurpations of power over women, in direct opposition to the principles of just government acknowledged by the United States at its foundation, which are: First, the natural rights of each individual; second, the exact equality of these rights; third, that these rights, when not delegated by the individual, are retained by the individual; fourth, that no person can exercise the rights of others without delegated authority; fifth, that the non-use of these rights does not destroy them, and for the violation of these fundamental principles of our government we arraign our rulers on this Fourth day of July, 1876.’

After stating the basic principles listed in their Declaration of Rights, Anthony read out loud the specific wrongs listed by the National Woman’s Association of which they believed the national, state, and local governments had perpetuated against women. The document according to Anthony charged various governments with inserting the “word ‘nolle’ in State Constitutions [Nolle Prosequi: Latin for, "we shall no longer prosecute," which is a declaration made to the judge by a prosecutor in a criminal case (or by a plaintiff in a civil lawsuit) either before or during trial, meaning the case against the defendant is being dropped“]

the inoperativeness of the habeas corpus in case of a married woman against her husband; exclusion from the jury box; taxation without representation; inequality of ways, &c.” The official protest concluded with Anthony reading out loud, “‘We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation. We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States, to be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.’” While women’s rights protests took place in all the major cities throughout the summer of 1876, Julia and Abby Smith were back home in Glastonbury,
Connecticut, fighting the men in their town to save their property from the auction block, for their right to vote for their taxes, and in a long, drawn-out legal battle.

Unfortunately for both the women’s rights movement and the Smith sisters, 1876 was not their year to celebrate their independence. In fact, Julia and Abby’s battle with the town finally came to an abrupt, inglorious, and sad end with their final court appearance to settle their lawsuit. They had lost the previous trial held in Hartford, as the judge decided that the Smith sisters did not, in fact, have the moveable personal property to satisfy their delinquent tax bill. The sisters appealed the case to the Court of Equity, which finally heard their case in November 1876. The court decided in their favor, and this time the town decided not to appeal the ruling. After seven long years of sacrifice, struggle, and disappointments, this ruling became the only victory the Smith sisters achieved, and in the end, it did not prove to be much of a victory, considering their losses. The court victory merely proved to Julia and Abby “that the tax collector had the right to seize their personal property but not their land.” Their cruel and greedy neighbor Mr. Hardin still owned the eleven acres, they never did get a reprieve from paying their taxes, and, of course, they never won enfranchisement.³⁷ The final blow to the Smiths sisters’ crusade came on July 23, 1878, when Abby died at the age of eighty-one. Her death left Julia all alone in the world for the first time in her life, as the obituary in the Hartford Post put it: “her sister has lost her chief support.”³⁸

Three days after Abby’s death, the local paper, the Evening Post, wrote a moving obituary that not only seemed to pay tribute to the courageous fight that Abby and Julia waged against the town, but also highlighted the charity that all the Smith women provided for the members of the Glastonbury community. The article was also a tearful reminder that one sister,

³⁸Ibid.
Julia, was left behind to endure a life alone. The article began with a brief description of Abby and the house before the funeral:

Miss Abby died in the room where she was born, and her face was as sweet and childlike now as then; absolutely beautiful and fair, with a smile just parting the lips no longer thin and old. All remarked this—and Miss Julia, though scarce knowing how to act without Abby, received each new comer with kind words, and moved among the company, the embodiment of the traditional hospitality of the old Smith family.  

At the wake before the funeral, many members of the community believed “the town of Glastonbury could well afford to remit all the taxes on this family,” said an old resident, “for the distress they have relieved and the poverty removed for the years past.” Lastly, many friends spoke at the wake describing not only Abby giving heart, but how all the Smith women always gave back to the town. One friend spoke for the group when he said,

I have always called upon them first with cases of charity, and never met a refusal. There was only one peculiarity. The sisters, sometimes three or four, would always step into a corner of the room to consult, so that each might contribute and equal share, and once, in mid-winter, I told them of a woman starving, on my way to get help, and they harnessed up and drove with a wagon load—and the house on a hill so icy that they actually had to crawl up on their hands and knees, but they did it. ‘Yes,’ said a lady, ‘and they watched all over the town, night after night taking turns. There’s no end to the kindnesses.’

Just as the neighbors were discussing the many virtues of the Smith family, Julia walked up to the group and remarked, “[H]ow can I live without Abby? There never were two sisters so united before, I do believe. It’s years since I’ve done anything without saying, ‘Would you?’ to Abby; and how I am all alone.”

With the loss of Abby, Julia surrendered her fight against the town’s injustice, and, sadly, she also lost her independent spirit and strong will. At the age of eighty-seven, she accepted a marriage proposal from a man named Amos Parker, age eighty-six, an admirer she had

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
befriended after Abby’s death. The marriage only lasted two years, until Julia died on March 6, 1886. One wonders whether she should have heeded the warnings her father gave to all the sisters at a young age, not to marry, and whether she regretted her decision. According to an interview that Julia gave in January 21, 1874, she explained that her “father had imbibed a prejudice against marriage laws, and a distrust of man’s chivalry, while discharging his duties as a lawyer.” For Julia experienced the full meaning of these words after Amos, as the new lawful overseer of her property, sold her Glastonbury family farm along with most of her personal possessions. He paid the overdue tax bill to the town and, finally, Julia reimbursed him the money in the form of a “gift.” The only real act of kindness Amos had shown Julia happened after her death—when he returned her body to the town cemetery and buried her next to her family, thus fulfilling her final request.43

After Julia’s death, Lucy Stone made a pilgrimage to the Smith sisters’ homestead to pay her respects to two extraordinary women who fought the good fight against the prejudice and biases of men in America. Stone elegized in a Woman’s Journal editorial:

As I went through the rooms where these brave women lived, it seemed to me that the spot whereon I trod was holy ground. Here began a peaceful resistance to the same kind of tyranny as that which caused the Revolution, and here, some day, as to Bunker Hill now, will come men and women who are reverent of the great principle of the consent of the governed, who respect courage and fidelity to principle, and who will hold at its true value, that part which these sisters have taken in solving the meaning of a representative government.44

The touching testimony Stone left behind serves as an example of how influential the Smith sisters had become to the leaders in the national movement, and how highly they were esteemed by their contemporaries. It seems so unfortunate that they and their story have been lost to nineteenth-century historians, and how their local fight against the leading men of Glastonbury,

43See Epilogue to learn more about Julia and her loss of independence when she married Amos.
44Housley, 179.
and the fight for enfranchisement never made it into the official history of the women’s movement.

The Smith sisters’ local battle against their neighbors and friends should also serve as an example of the importance of the local scene to the women’s movement and should point to a new area of study that must be examined by historians of the nineteenth century. Many American historians look to the nineteenth century as America’s heyday of participatory democracy, and two women during this era spoke at town meetings and at the Connecticut state legislature, yet they have never been mentioned in one political history covering their era. As Stone believed, these two women should be honored for their political activism, which Julia and Abby undertook with great risk and personal sacrifice to themselves and their property.

The fight against the town also represents the conclusion of the story that began with Hannah Hickok, the young woman riding fearlessly through the glen with rain pelting her hair as she rode. Hannah came of age during the Revolution, a time of hope and a new beginnings for America, and which signaled what hoped to be a new beginning for woman, as Abigail Adams so eloquently wrote to her husband, asking him not to forget the ladies when constructing the laws of the new nation. What began as a hopeful time for women, with the idea of Republican Motherhood that created a new ideology and space for women’s education, ended in disappointment for Hannah’s daughters, Julia and Abby, when they realized that their education and years of learning and studying still would not give them a voice in the republic, simply because they were women.

The fight that Abby and Julia waged against the leading men of Glastonbury illuminates the shifting identities and roles that women created and played out in nineteen-century America. The story of the Smith women also highlights the trajectory of the women’s fight for their rights.
in the nineteenth century, both the Smith’s and women won a few a the battles, but in the end they were legally still subordinate to men.

Julia and Abby’s fight against the town leaders regarding the increase in their taxes, which resulted in a fight for the right to vote, would have made Hannah proud, as a mother, to see her two daughters write and speak out against the injustice so eloquently. One would have to believe that Hannah’s spirit lived on in her daughters, who fought for what they believed was an egregious and despicable injustice perpetuated against women in the most democratic country in the world.
EPILOGUE

After Abby’s death, when Julia married Amos, it appeared that Julia had exchanged her fierce independence for companionship. The loneliness and sadness she must have felt at the loss of her beloved sister must have been devastating. After Abby’s death, Julia seemed to have lost a part of her and when she married Amos she seemed to have lost herself completely, or at least that is what her lifelong friend Emily Moseley believed. In two interesting and revealing letters—one to Julia from her lifelong best friend Emily Moseley, and Julia’s letter of response—exposes the difficulties Julia experienced and the end of her life.

The two letters expose a family fight that broke out between Julia and a cousin over the ownership of the Smith farm. It appears that Julia promised her cousin the farm, but when Julia married Amos, he sold the farm. Both letters are quoted below in their entirety because of the rare emotions that are revealed in both letters. Julia, a product of the Victorian Age, rarely if ever expressed her emotions in the diary she kept for close to twenty years. But here in the letter to Emily, she becomes a real living person who was angry and hurt by what she perceived as her best friend’s betrayal. Also, the letters shed some light on what both women felt about the institution of marriage; throughout her letter, Emily blames Julia’s marriage as the cause for all the problems in Julia’s life. Lastly, the letters address the issue of whether women were more or less free in the nineteenth century, and it seems that by 1870, much had not changed for women from the previous century. Julia still lacked the power to control her own property once she married; in fact, it was sold without her permission. According to Emily’s letter, Julia died as a
sad shell of herself, a woman who lost the one thing she held most dear for most of her life: her respect and dignity.

Emily Moseley to Julia Smith

My once dear friend,

Yes it was so far as Julia E. Smith, you was a dear and highly valued friend but now that you are Mrs. Parker I cannot find it in my heart to say in truth. Why is it? Does intimate connections with a man necessarily produce such a change of character as seems to be evident in your case? If so, I may be more thankful than ever that I have happily escaped the influence. Perhaps however it is not that your character has suffered but that some hidden motive has induced a change of action only—It is to be hoped that the cause of your recent unreasonable conduct has no deeper foundation than impulse stimulated by some outside influence. From some cause of whatever nature it may have been—your talk, facts have been of such as to lead your best friends to regard you as in some sense blind to the rights of truth and justice you unhesitatingly charge your truest best friends with lying and perjury, when they only asserted what they had heard you say. You accuse them of insulting you, though when and where, they have no idea. You unhesitatingly denounce them as your enemies when in no instance have they treated you unkindly—or said aught about you but what was dictated by kind feeling stirred to extreme pity for you in your present evidently blindly misguided judgment which leads to acts of great injustice. Those once your friends, do not believe that Julia Smith as she was—would ever have treated her Cousins as Mrs. Parker has
done. These same cousins though so unkindly and unjustly treated have ever alluded to you kindly and respectfully—They are entitled to the sympathy and good will of the public and they have it while you are regarded as of unsound mind or impelled onward by an influence which has led you strangely astray. It seems desirable that you should see your error so far as to lead you to right the wrong before it shall be too late.

I had written the proceeding pages and thought I would sent it to Mr. Kinne and his family, asking whether it met their approval and I was in a great measure forced to the writing of it by having read the strange and unkind letter which you had sent to them. Much to my surprise, it was soon returned by Mr. Kinne in person, who expressed unqualified approval and also gave me a letter to read which Miss Mary Taylor had written for the same purpose as mine—though neither knew ought of the intentions of the other. I could not rest for the trouble it gave me and was really forced to obtain peace of mind by doing what seemed a plain duty. What was it but a strong conviction that you was in the wrong and our earnest wish as your true friends to lead you if possible to see the wrong—You state that all your Hartford friends approve of your course—It is possible because they have only attended to one side of the case—yet this supposition seems hardly reasonable when they must have had as good an opportunity for understanding both sides as many others of character and good judgment who unhesitatingly concur … It is understood that the decision was given on the ground that the promise on your part was not clearly proven—whereas is as believed that the
testimony on the side that such a promise was given, could not be gainsayed and therefore should be effectual …

Your friends still do and never will regard you kindly but it seems sad indeed to them that a time honored family as yours has been—should be dishonored by the last living member—we hope it will not be—there is yet time to avert it—may you be led to think and act as true justice dictates. I once called your attention to Prov. 17:14—I now name Prov. 27:5

I hope to be able to love and respect you as of old—that remains with you—Whatever may happen I shall always wish you well. Emily

Julia Smith to Emily Moseley

People do sometimes change in mind and character without changing the name. It must be so in your case. You told me within the past year that you had met at our house to read the Scriptures weekly for five years in succession, but in your letter you have neither followed the spirit or the text. You live within less than a mile of your offending brother, and could have conferred in an amicable manner. But instead of going alone and having the matter explained, Matthew 18th and 15th, you write a most spiteful letter to gratify a sworn enemy, show it to him to know if it was suitable to send to me. I think I may say sworn enemy, who because he had witnessed a will, goes to court and tried to make out that it was a document or contract in Horace Smith’s favor to take all my real estate from me without his

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45 Emily Moseley to Julia Parker, n.d., Envelope LL1102, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
ever paying or ever promised to him till after my death. It appears to me that the will was much before we ever thought of giving anything to him or his wife. At any rate we wrote wills sometime after that, and Mrs. Marcia Hale and her family witnessed them, she insinuated to them that we had written in their favor. The truth is the name Horace Smith was never in any will of ours until after Abby’s death and we have made quite a number. I wish they were all in existence and could be seen. Although I have added Parker to my name, I am not always under his influence. He knew not of my writing to Mr. and Mrs. Kinne, nor did he see Mary Taylor’s letter, for he had a good opinion of her, and as her aim was to make me out a liar, I knew he would be indignant but he knew nothing about it, till your letter came. Colman gave it to him or he would not have seen it. He asked me if he should read it as my eyes are weak and I let him. When he got thru, I said I would answer it for I knew what to say. By no means, said he, not such as spiteful letter which makes you out a liar and perjurer, and as she feels, she will believe nothing you say. Mr. Parker and I believe each other perfectly truthful, I know he is by daily observation as he never varies from the truth in the least item and we have as good a right to assert our belief as you have yours. What proof have you that we were not truthful, only from open enemies, and you choose to believe those you have known so short a time, instead of one you have known for nearly a lifetime. It makes me feel differently for your good character for everybody speaks well of you. Mrs. Pamela Hale says you are the queen of the neighborhood. Mrs. Bliss of Worcester thanked me the morning we came away for taking you there, and her daughter when I was last there inquired
affectionately after you. You speak very differently of me and say my friends are all against me and ought to be and even accuse the Judge of a wrong decision when he heard both sides and heard Horace Smith testify to a direct lie which my account book proved the next day. And Flora Smith has treated me so kindly when she even wrote and I can show you the letter that it was disagreeable to wait for Cousin Julia to die, before she could get my property, and that Cousin Julia was not capable of making a will but it would be difficult to prove it. She said she had a letter written to her about me by one of my friends which was as bad as hers. I did not then believe it, but since yours came, it might be so. How do you know except by her own story, which you credit, when she made out in her testimony in court both Mrs. Brainard and Mrs. Kellogg liars. Oh could Abby ever have thought that you would say that one she loved so well had dishonored her family, you who went as second chief mourner at her grave. Were I ever as bad as you are determined to make me I should not think you would wish to harrow up my feelings when in such a trial that I have been obliged to sell a loved home to get rid of one who has robbed me of it for 8 months past and whose sight is a horror to me. His own brother wrote me that he believed I should do right, and when he knew the decision, seemed to rejoice that it was so. Though I had written nothing against his brother except after the first trial that he and his family had perjured themselves or I had, but my friends did not believe I could do so at the end of life and on the confines of eternity, but I mistook, for one I thought formerly my best friend has asserted it. Mr. Parker said after he read your letter he would show it to Dr. Scudder. No said I for someone might yet remember your
leaving that church for which we have the credit and be gratified to find you such an enemy to the last living member of the Smith family. You will probably never see my face again unless you attend my funeral as I have the promise of lying with my family that you say I have so dishonored. When you view that cold pale face, you might think what was the use of cruelly adding to its deep sorrow, when it never had a thought of you but of the greatest kindness. I know you can injure me in the opinion of those I esteem in Hartford, but you may be sure I shall make no return for I shall not speak your name to anyone, and when hearing it spoken, it must give me a thrill of anguish. I shall have the comfort among strangers that when in trouble, I shall not have professed friends desert me and join the enemy without the least shadow of proof but from the enemies themselves. As this is the last communication I expect to make to you, I will only say that I wish you may be endowed with the Spirit of that Book of books that you have spent so much time in searching in former days. J E S Parker

P.S. While writing the above I received three letters, one as far off as Minnesota. The writers not seeming to have the idea that I have dishonored my family. They may never know it, as you know but few of my correspondents. You say you hope to be able to love and respect me as of old but you do not say what I must to regain what I have lost. But if it is to restore to the robber what he has taken from me, as much as I have prized your love and esteem, I shall be obliged to live without them.

I wrote the foregoing shortly after the receipt of your first letter as I then expected to leave town very soon, but I [?]to Mr. Parker and did not send it as he thought
you might get cooled down some and feel in a better mood though he has not seen or heard what I wrote. The last is the cap chief of all, for you have declared outright an unmitigated lie without the least proof, that I have wronged my cousins most shamefully. This was not possible for I was perfectly powerless to do it. I will state a case in point. You own a house and land, suppose you let someone have it, upon the condition that they should leave when you said, and when they would not, answered you stating they owned it making you great trouble and expense, swearing you gave it to them and you knew positively to the contrary and you told one you considered your best friend about it, and she consulted with those who had testified against you in court and told you to let them have it, would you give the robber your whole estate. This is the truth of the matter …

I do not write at such length to convert you into a friend but I think my truth may be said, as well as your assertions. I do not desire the friendship of anyone who will desert me in the time of trouble and try to blackmail me by threatening to destroy my character. Should she exert herself to get the whole town on her side I do not mean to do wrong to suit anybody. As I have never wronged you in your secular affairs, suppose you let me alone, and grant me the favor I asked in the beginning, for which you now will have my hearty thanks. Julia.46

46 Julia Parker to Emily Moseley, n.d., Envelope LL1102, Smith Papers, Glastonbury Historical Society, Glastonbury, CT.
CONCLUSION

Gender roles and ideology are much more complicated than a simple binary equation between oppression and freedom. Oppression caused by constructed gender categories and theories cannot be explained based upon a simple linear graph, which usually argues that women have gained more freedom with the rise of democracy and education. But in reality, one’s freedom and rights, or the lack thereof, can be attributed to many different factors including race, socioeconomic background, and gender. At different times throughout history or throughout one’s own life, both men and women have felt oppressed. The same can be argued concerning the Smith women, who lived in a happy domestic circle that they created for themselves. All five daughters chose to remain at home in their carefully constructed domestic sphere, rather than create their own separate space as a mother and wife.

Much of the peace and contentment that the Smith women created in their domestic sphere seems to have come from their middle-class social position, which afforded them the time, education, and luxury to pursue their own interests, such as translating the Bible five times in eight years. They had enough free time to pursue their own interests and to indulge in their own academic pursuits throughout their lives much more than women in the twenty-first century. The Smith women really did not run into any obstacles to what they wanted until they had to pay taxes, and only then did they realize that they did not have the same political rights as men. Until that time in their lives, they did not care about the women’s rights movement because it did not directly affect them and because they were busy pursuing their own interests.
The Smith women’s socioeconomic background afforded them the time and resources needed to pursue their own interests. This began with Hannah (Hickok) Smith, who grew up in a middling-rank household with a father who attended Yale and worked as a farmer, and a mother who sewed clothes for extra money. The Smith family would have been defined as a middle-class family by nineteenth-century standards. In addition to farming, Zephaniah worked as a lawyer from a room in their two-story home; and in addition to sewing, Hannah contributed to the household income by selling products from the farm. The combined household income provided the Smith women with the leisure time and resources necessary to pursue their varied interests. The household income also gave all five sisters the economic independence needed to remain single throughout their lives. They all had the choice not to marry, and they exercised that choice. Lastly, even though Laurilla and Julia both moved to New York to teach at Troy Female Seminary, they both had the option of moving home after only one year, which they did.

Economically and socially, the Smith women were given the opportunity to create the world they wanted to live in and to pursue their own artistic and academic interests.

Even though Hannah’s childhood household was not wealthy, her parents had the resources, time, and inclination to provide her with a thorough classical education. As she came of age during the Revolution, one would characterize Hannah as a Republican Mother, and as one, she did truly adhere to the cultural discourse of the time, which dedicated that all young women needed a proper education to teach the next generation in accordance with the ideas of republican and civic virtue. When Hannah married and set up her own domestic sphere, she and her husband achieved sufficient economic independence to provide all five daughters with a first-rate education in the nineteenth century. The education that all five of the Smith sisters received does not adhere to the Republican Motherhood discourse because of the simple fact that
not one of the five girls married or had children. Therefore, it seems that Hannah educated her daughters not to become Republican Mothers, but to provide them with an education needed to pursue their own academic or artistic endeavors. The girls were so well educated that Emma Willard of the famous Troy Female Seminary hired two of the sisters, Laurilla and Julia, to teach classes.

The education that the Smith women obtained also allowed them to question the dominant Protestant theology during the nineteenth century, and gave them the confidence to leave the church to search for their own salvation. Beginning with the girls’ father, Zephaniah, the daughters broke from the Congregational Church and created their own Bible study group. For eight years, the sisters met twice a week to write a literal translation of the Bible. Led by Julia, the Smiths translated the Bible five times from the Greek, Hebrew, and Latin versions. The time one needed to devote to such an endeavor provides an example of the luxury of time the Smith women had to work on their own projects.

The freedom and peace that each one of the Smith women experienced throughout their lives came to an abrupt end in the 1870s when they reached the cultural and legal limit of the rights that women had in the nineteenth century. The fight that Julia and Abby waged against the town’s tax collectors exposed the oppression caused by the law of coverture. Julia and Abby experienced firsthand the limit of their freedoms when they arrived at the town hall to speak to the town council about their right to vote and found the doors of the taxpayer’s state house closed to them. The ideology and the law itself starkly revealed the limit of freedom women gained in America. At the end of the nineteenth century, Julia and Abby had the same political and legal rights, or the lack of rights, that their mother Hannah had at the end of the eighteenth century.
There were two specific areas in which Hannah’s daughters seemed to have more of a choice over their own lives than Hannah herself. The most important area that they had control over was their decision not to marry. All five daughters had the luxury to decide not to marry. All five sisters stayed home on the Smith farm and set up their own independent domestic sphere, one that they constructed and controlled themselves. Within their own domestic space, the women pursued their own academic and artistic interests. Lastly, the daughters were able to leave home and return at will. They all had the opportunity and resources to travel around the East Coast on their own visiting different friends and family.

The cultural development of the gendered discourse that emerged during the end of the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth century seemed to have a limited impact on the Smith women. The ideology of Republican Motherhood did not fundamentally change what Abby and her sisters had learned as compared to their mother. In both generations, the women learned history, languages, mathematics, literature, and some science. The work that the women completed on a daily basis did not fundamentally change—both Hannah and her daughters taught school, cleaned house, spun wool, and worked on the farm. Lastly, Hannah had to pay taxes without representation just like Julia and Abby were obligated to pay twenty-five years after her death. Examining the lives of Hannah and her daughters exposes both the progress and the limits of progress that women experienced in the nineteenth century.
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Appendix 1: Biblical Excerpts

This appendix reviews the biblical book of Genesis, chapter 3, verses 1-24, comparing the King James Version (KJV) with Julia Smith’s Translation (JST).

KJV 3:1
Now the Serpent was more subtil
Than any beast of the field which
the LORD God had made. And
he said unto the woman, Yea,
hath God said, Ye shall not eat
of every tree of the garden?

JST 3:1
And the serpent was crafty above every
beast of the field which Jehovah God
made; and he will say to the woman, Is
it because God said ye shall not eat
of every tree of the garden?

KJV 3:2
And the women said unto the
Serpent, We may eat of the
fruit of the trees of the garden

JST 3:2
And the woman will say to the
serpent, From the fruit of the
tree of the garden we shall eat.

KJV 3:3
But of the fruit of the tree
which [is] in the midst of
the garden, Gad hath said,
Ye shall not eat of it, neither
Shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

JST 3:3
And from the fruit of the tree
which is in the midst of the garden,
God said, Ye shall not eat from
it, and ye shall not touch upon
it, lest ye shall die.

KJV 3:4
And the serpent said unto the
woman, Ye shall not surely die:

JST 3:4
And the serpent will say to the
woman, Dying ye shall not die.

KJV 3:5
For God doth know that in the
day ye eat thereof, then your
eyes shall be opened, and ye
shall be as gods, knowing
good and evil.

JST 3:5
For God is knowing in the day
of your eating from it, and
your eyes shall be opened, and
ye shall be as God, knowing
good and evil.

KJV 3:6
And when the woman saw
that the tree [was] good
for food, and that it [was]
plesant to the eyes, and a
tree to be desired to make

JST 3:6
And the woman will see that
the tree is good for food, and
that it is a desire to the eyes,
and a tree desired to make wise;
and she will take from its fruit
[one] wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

KJV 3:7
And the eyes of them were opened, and they knew that they [were] naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

JST 3:7
And the eyes of the two shall be opened, and they shall know that they are naked; and they shall sew together the leaves of the Fig tree, and shall make themselves girdles.

KJV 3:8
And they heard the voice of the LORD God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

JST 3:8
And they shall hear the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden at the breeze of the day: and Adam and his wife will hide from the face of Jehovah God in the midst of the wood of the garden.

KJV 3:9
And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where [art] thou?

JST 3:9
And Jehovah God will call to the man, and will say To him, Where art thou?

KJV 3:10
And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I [was] naked; and I hid myself

JST 3:10
And he will say, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I shall be afraid, because I am naked, and I will hide myself.

KJV 3:11
And he said, Who told thee that thou [was] naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?

JST 3:11
And he will say, Who showed to thee that thou art naked? Of the tree which I charged thee not to eat, didst thou eat from it?

KJV 3:12
And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest [to be] with

JST 3:12
And the man shall say, The woman which thou gavest with
me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

KJV 3:13
And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this thing thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

JST 3:13
And Jehovah God will say to the woman, What is this thou didst? And the woman will say, The serpent deceived me and I shall eat.

KJV 3:14
And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

JST 3:14
And Jehovah God will say to the serpent, Because thou didst this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust thou shalt eat all the days of thy life.

KJV 3:15
And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

JST 3:15
And I will put enmity between thee and between the woman, and between thy seed and between her seed; it shall lie in wait for thee as to the head, and thou shalt lie in wait for him as to the head.

KJV 3:16
Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

JST 3:16
To the woman he said, Multiplying, I will multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and to thy husband thy desire, and he shall rule over thee.
KJV 3:17
And unto Adam he said,
Because thou hast hearkened
unto the voice of thy
wife, and hast eaten of the
tree, of which I commanded
thee, saying, Thou shalt not
eat of it: cursed is the ground
for thy sake; in sorrow shalt
thou eat [of] it all the days
of thy life;

JST 3:17
And to Adam he said,
Because thou didst listen
to the voice of thy wife, and
thou wilt eat from the tree
which I commanded thee
saying, Thou shalt not eat
from it; cursed the earth
for thy sake; in labor shalt
thou eat of it all the days
of thy life.

KJV 3:18
Thorns also and thistles
shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat
the herb of the field;

JST 3:18
And thorns and weeds shall it cause to sprout forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the green herb of the field.

KJV 3:19
In the sweat of thy face
shalt thou eat bread, till
thou return unto the ground
for out of it wast thou taken:
for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.

JST 3:19
In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat food until thy turning back to the earth: for out of it thou wert taken; for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou turn back.

KJV 3:20
And Adam called his wife’s
name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

JST 3:20
And Adam will call his wife’s name Life, for she was the mother of all living.

KJV 3:21
Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

JST 3:21
And Jehovah God will make to Adam and to his wife, coats of skin, and will clothe them.

KJV 3:22
And the LORD God said,
Behold, the man is become
As one of us, to know good

JST 3:22
And Jehovah God will say,
Lo, Adam became as one from us, to know good and
and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

KJV 3:23
Therefore the LORD God sent Him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

JST 3:23
And Jehovah God will send him forth from the garden of Eden to work the earth which He was taken from there.

KJV 3:24
So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

JST 3:24
And he will drive out Adam; and he will set up from the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning about to keep the way of the tree of lives.
Appendix 2: Books on Which Julia Commented in Her Diary, 1810-1820

Religious Readings

*Essays by John Knox*: A Scottish Clergyman clergyman who wrote against the monstrous rule of women.

*The Letters of Mr. Sandeman*: Robert Sandeman, John Glas’s son-in-law and the leading advocate of Mr. Glas’s ideas in America.

*Letters of Pope Clement XIV*

*The Missionary Herald*

*Mr. Scott’s Sermon* (October 24, 1817)

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The History of the Jews

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Aeneid, as well as other writings by Virgil

Blackstone

Chemistry book

Dufiefs’ Grammar

Erasmus

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Feminine Biography
Hannah More on Education
*The Intellect* by John Locke
*Mr. Hamilton on Education*
*The Writings of Nancy M. Hyde*

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*Citizen of the World*

*Don Garmon of Alfarache: A French Novel*

*Herman de Unna, a Novel*

*Historic Letters and Love Letters between Two Ladies*
The Idle One

Lady of the Lake by Scott

Letters of Madame Chupore

Letters of Mme. Montague

Letters of Mr. Newton to his Wife

The Life of Milton Chatham

The Memoirs of Mr. Whitfield

The Memoirs of Mrs. Newell

Miscellanies of Mr. Buck

Mourning Bride

The Narrative of Captain Riley

Ossian: Collection Gaelic Poems

Poem, “The Violin”

The Platonic Marriage

Remarkable Shipwrecks

The Ring

Scottish Chief, a Novel

Shakespeare

Stranger in France

The Stranger in Ireland

Story of St. Cloud

The Travels of Mr. Brissott of Warville in North America

Theodoleus of Warsaw, a Tale
Thinks I to Myself, a Novel

Voyages of Captain Cook

Voyages of Mr. Bligh

Voyages of Mr. Moore

Voyages of Mr. Pack

Zion’s Pilgrim