Giles Corey as Man, Myth, and Memory / Identity, Family, and Tradition in the Lives of George Robert Twelves Hewes, Robert Twelves, and Boston’s Old South Church

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Giles Corey as Man, Myth, and Memory / Identity, Family, and Tradition in the Lives of George Robert Twelves Hewes, Robert Twelves, and Boston’s Old South Church

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ABSTRACT

Giles Corey as Man, Myth, and Memory

Giles Corey is remembered today as the man who suffered the singular fate of being pressed to death during the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. Corey was neither the first, nor the only, man killed during the trials, yet has captured the public imagination where others have not. His refusal to stand before the court is depicted as a testament to his principled moral commitment, idealizing him as a hero ahead of his time. An examination of seventeenth-century records, however, reveal Corey engaging in illegal behavior, heckling his neighbors, alienating members of his own family, and generally inspiring dislike. How, then, did the glorified popular image of him originate, and why? Surveying the earliest works focused on Corey reveals him as a mythic construction of late nineteenth century. Authors recast his story out of shame for the 1692 executions and a general nostalgia for the agrarian past as a foil for the turmoil and corruption they saw in the present. Through these revisions, Corey entered American cultural memory as a symbolic caricature of preindustrial virtue and small-town values.

Family, and Tradition in the Lives of George Robert Twelves Hewes, Robert Twelves, and Boston’s Old South Church

George Robert Twelves Hewes, familiar to scholars of the American Revolution as the central figure of Alfred Young’s The Shoemaker and the Tea Party, had an unusually long name. Middle names were rare at the time of his birth, and multiple middle names rarer still. Why did Hewes’ parents bestow such an unwieldy name on him? Although Hewes shared his name with his father and uncle, another namesake, Robert Twelves (a distant relative, who built the original Old South Church), provided valuable social capital. However, the ties commemorated by the name did not remain transparent, and its meaning evolved over time. Just as Robert Twelves faded from memory in the Hewes family during the late nineteenth century, the caretakers of the Old South Meetinghouse revived his name to serve a new purpose. In saving the church from the threat of demolition, they reimagined its role in the nation’s founding and attached it to a version of the past that celebrated great men, including its purported builder. Exploring the intertwined histories of Hewes, his namesakes, and the church where his family worshipped illuminates both the varied purposes a name could serve and the role of memory in reconstructing the past.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Biography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles Corey as Man, Myth, and Memory</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity, Family, and Tradition in the Lives of George Robert Twelves Hewes, Robert Twelves, and Boston’s Old South Church</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Since both of these papers developed from earlier projects, the author would also like to thank Professor Jane Kamensky, whose Salem: 1692 course fuelled her interest in the Salem witch trials and Professor Stephen Berry, whose classes on American religious history helped her to contextualize Salem within the Puritan ethos of seventeenth-century Massachusetts. Their influence is readily apparent in the first paper. Additionally, Professors David Hackett Fischer and Timothy Orwig, who introduced the author to George Robert Twelves Hewes and Boston’s Old South Church (attributed to architect Robert Twelves), deserve thanks for their role in shaping the research trajectory that led to the second paper.
Intellectual Biography

The two papers that comprise my research portfolio reflect my interest in the study of historical memory and in reconstructing the lives of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century individuals as a means of understanding the wider cultural context they created, occupied, and responded to. These two papers investigate seemingly disparate cultural moments in New England’s history through individuals whose lives did not intersect. However, the common threads of memory, identity, and invented tradition run through both of them. Additionally, the structure of the two papers reflects my developing understanding of the mutually constituted nature of memory and history. In the first, I treated historical myth and invented tradition as fundamentally separate from historical reality; in the second, I came to understand them as inextricably intertwined.

In the fall, for Professor Kitamura’s Popular Culture research seminar, I wrote a paper that contrasted nineteenth-century portrayals of Giles Corey (of the Salem witch trials) with the persona that emerges from the seventeenth-century records. Beginning with documents created during Corey’s lifetime, both prior to and during the 1692 trials, I constructed a biography of Corey that situated him in the context of the tensions and conflicts that marked Salem’s early history. Then I examined the way nineteenth-century authors recast Corey’s character in both fictional and non-fictional accounts. In the final section of the paper, I explored the motives that guided the invention of Corey as an ideal, mythologized figure in response to anxieties wrought by the changes that swept through nineteenth-century New England society.
Before I can publish this paper, I need to restructure it to smooth the transition between the sections on the seventeenth and nineteenth century to emphasize how my analysis of both reflects an act of historical reconstruction from a twenty-first-century perspective. Additionally, reframing my argument around the nineteenth-century representations of Corey would forefront my historiographical intervention. Similarly, I need to more explicitly engage with the historiography of memory studies. Moreover, examining the nineteenth-century treatment of some of the other accused Salem witches would strengthen my claims by showing whether or not the treatment of Corey was anomalous, and would also extend the comparative approach I used when considering his life in the seventeenth century.

The second paper, written in the spring for Professor Piker's Colonial America research seminar, investigated the intersections of history, memory, and identity surrounding George Robert Twelves Hewes (the hero of Alfred Young's *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*), his namesake Robert Twelves, and Boston's Old South Church--which acts as both a setting and a character in its own right. Moving from Hewes to Twelves and back again, I examined how families, individuals, and communities remember and how they use those memories to create a usable past suited to their identities in the present moment. Drawing heavily on the literature of memory studies, I moved between Hewes' perception of his name and his parents’ intentions when they bestowed it. This enabled me to question what both reveal about conceptions and uses of familial networks in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Massachusetts and how those networks were shaped and perpetuated by naming children after relatives. In addition, I explored the malleable
relationship between Hewes’ namesake, Robert Twelves, and the Old South Church, which he built in 1669. The forgetting of Twelves, both by Hewes and by the congregation, and the later revival of his name demonstrate the strategic creation of memory to serve ideological and social interests.

In order to publish this paper, I need to address the relationship between the argument I made in the body of the paper and the one I made in the footnotes, shortening the latter and reconciling any contradictions between them. Additionally, the Old South Church should appear earlier in the paper, with greater emphasis on both its role as a site of memory and a participant in the perpetuation of that memory. Rethinking the sequence of my argument with an eye to chronology could clarify some points. Finally, I located a few more primary sources related to the Old South Church late in the research process that I was not able to access or incorporate. Before proceeding towards publication, I intend to examine them to see how they affect my argument and to incorporate any new insights they offer.

While both papers focused on areas in which I had a prior interest, they allowed me to experiment with new theoretical frameworks and to engage historiographies I had not previously considered. Working out these new applications within the confines of a familiar geographic and cultural context allowed me to better develop my grasp of their utility and significance before adapting them more broadly. In particular, my new understanding of names as mnemonic signifiers, influenced by the field of memory studies, will prove crucial to my future work. Also, recognizing the implications of a ‘good name’ as a source of heritable credit and capital, an insight I gained from studying the literature on the history of the family, has transformed my conception of the
meaning of kin naming. I intend to incorporate these insights into the methodological choices that will shape my future analysis of naming patterns, wherever or whenever I choose to look next.
Giles Corey is remembered today as the man who suffered the singular fate of being pressed to death during the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. Corey was neither the first, nor the only, man killed during the trials, yet he has captured the public imagination where others have not. In many ways, the image of him that persists today originated in the nineteenth century, when authors depicted his refusal to stand before the court as a testament to his principled moral commitment, idealizing him as a hero ahead of his time. Who was this man? How was he perceived in his own time, and why was he accused of practicing witchcraft? Seventeenth-century court records reveal a complex and often disagreeable character strikingly different from the nineteenth-century figure. How did this man, once described as “a very quarellsom & contentious bad neighbor,” transform into a principled defender of the common good and wronged innocent? Motivated by an immediate sense of shame for the executions during the hysteria of 1692 and a general nostalgia for the agrarian past as a foil for the turmoil and corruption they saw in the present, nineteenth-century authors transformed Corey to reflect the values of their own time. Wiped free of his history of socially questionable behavior, Corey appears as a paragon of righteous virtue, a characterization that speaks directly to the fears and values of the nineteenth century.

The figure of Giles Corey that emerges from the seventeenth-century records more closely resembles an outsider on the fringe of society than a

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model citizen in a Godly Puritan society. Many works written in the last forty years reveal the intricacies of the conflicts in seventeenth-century Salem, and the circumstances defy the generalizations often applied to early Puritan communities in Massachusetts. Salem in the second half of the seventeenth century exhibited many symptoms of the Puritan “crises of the second generation,” and was riven by sectional disputes. Even in this fallen world, far from the imagined “city upon a hill,” Corey struggled to find a balance among shifting allegiances.

A study of Corey’s origins reveals significant differences between him and the majority of seventeenth-century immigrants to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Although the details of his birth remain somewhat uncertain, it seems likely that Corey was born in the late 1610s or early 1620s. In June, 1672, Corey testified before the Essex Quarterly Court, stating his age as “about fifty-five years.” This approximates his birth year as 1617, making him seventy-five years old.

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at his death—a figure not far from the estimate of his age as “eighty years” given by the record-keeper of the First Church of Salem [Town] in 1691, which would place his birth in 1611. However, Giles Corey was likely born in Northampton, in the English midlands, in 1621, where a child by that name was baptized in the Anglican church of St. Sepulcher on August 21 of that year to Giles and Elizabeth. The elder Giles Corey, a “maulster” had been admitted as a freeman upon the completion of his apprenticeship on January 22, 1619. Additionally, an oblique reference to the Parish of St. Sepulcher corroborates the younger Corey’s membership in that congregation prior to his arrival in Massachusetts. As a child and young adult, then, Corey occupied the spiritual climate dominated by Robert Sibthorpe, a man described by one nineteenth-century Northampton historian as an “eccentric and violent anti-Puritan.”

Corey’s Anglican roots in Northampton set him apart from many of his Salem neighbors; the majority of the immigrants to Massachusetts Bay were East Anglian Puritans, the faith Corey had been raised to reject. Salem differed somewhat from this norm, settled first by large contingent of West
Countrymen under Roger Conant in 1626. However, the arrival of East Anglian immigrants *en masse* during the Great Migration of the 1630s created an early source of tension in Salem as the two groups clashed over farming techniques and settlement patterns, political organization, and religious practice. Where the West Country settlers favored dispersed, enclosed farms, a social order based on economic hierarchy, and inclusive worship more akin to Anglicanism, the East Anglians brought traditions of open-field husbandry that combined a compact village with outlying commons and fields, a social order that privileged the community of visible saints, and worship centered on the Puritan Covenant of Grace.

Corey first appears in the Salem records in 1644 as “Antram’s boy.” Since Corey was beyond the age of majority at this time, this phrase implies that he began his life in Salem as an indentured servant. His later appearance in conjunction with Thomas and Obadiah Anthrom or Antrum, even aiding in the inventory of Obadiah’s estate in 1666, lends support to this hypothesis. Corey’s unfree status and lack of a family served as another marker that differentiated him from his contemporaries; fewer than 25% of immigrants to Massachusetts arrived as servants, and the colony’s leaders actively discouraged “the meaner people” from emigrating to the Bay colony. Rather, more than 70% of those who arrived in Massachusetts came with family.

12 Gildrie, *Salem 1626-1683*, 1-3.
members, often as part of a complete nuclear family.\textsuperscript{16} Significantly, when Caleb More spoke on behalf of Corey’s second wife, Mary (Bright/Brite) in a 1678 court case, he testified to “being with his father in Virgenia when he bought [her] . . . out of a London ship,” a statement that reinforces the constrained agency of indentured servants.\textsuperscript{17} Perhaps Corey had intended to settle in Anglican Virginia, and arriving in Massachusetts instead as a result of the terms of his indenture. Another distinction lay in the timing of his arrival. After 1640, immigration to Massachusetts slowed considerably, and even reversed direction as many Puritans returned to England to fight in the English Civil War.\textsuperscript{18} By contrast, Corey may have been fleeing from the threat of impending war. The vicar who had baptized him, Robert Sibthorpe, a favorite of King Charles I and Archbishop Laud, was forced into hiding for his own safety around this time--England was no longer a safe place for opposition to Puritanism.\textsuperscript{19}

During his early years in Salem, Corey’s behavior suggests he made little effort to adapt to the mores of his new home. In 1647 the court fined him and several others for “sleeping in their watch and having their arms taken from them.” Again, in 1648, Corey was fined for neglecting the watch, leaving his post to gather “a canoe load of wood,” and then lying to the court when

\textsuperscript{16} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 25-28. By comparison, 75% of immigrants to Virginia arrived as servants in this time period, and male immigrants greatly outnumbered females.


\textsuperscript{18} Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 17. Young, \textit{From ‘Good Order’ to Glorious Revolution}, 70.

\textsuperscript{19} J. Charles Cox and R. M. Serjeantson, “The Vicars and Patrons,” \textit{A History of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Northampton} (Northampton, England: William Mark, 1897), 144-148,152-153. Sibthorpe left St. Sepulcher when Corey was still a baby, but remained in Northampton and gained fame by publishing his sermons. The 1640s also brought an increase in immigration to Virginia, as royalist supporters (most of them elites) sought refuge from Puritan governance. See Fischer, \textit{Albion’s Seed}, 212-213.
confronted. As an indentured servant with little personal property, he may have objected to keeping watch when he had no vested interests to protect.

The next year “Mr. Curwin” and Thomas Anthrom brought Corey before the court “for stealing wheat, powder, soap, flax, tobacco, bacon, pork, butter and knives” and “for selling cloth, which cost him 6s., for 8s.” Once again he paid a fine. The records suggest his concerns lay more with his own well-being than with the community’s imposed duty.

Limited records make reconstructing Corey’s Salem household challenging. Only one child born to Corey appears in the Salem vital records, his daughter Deliverance, borne by Margaret, his first wife, on August 5, 1658. The Salem marriage records reveal two more of Corey’s daughters, Mary, who married John Parker May 29, 1673; and Elizabeth, who married John Moulton at Marblehead September 16, 1684. Additionally, they record Deliverance’s marriage to Henry Crosby on June 5, 1683, and Corey’s marriage to his second wife, Mary Brite on April 11, 1664. Another of Corey’s daughters, Margaret, wed William Cleaves (incorrectly identified as William Clements) of Beverly at Marblehead on May 18, 1683. The Salem vital records also list the


22 Nearly all of the pre-1700 entries in the Salem vital records were transcribed from church records or court records. Since neither of Corey’s first two wives belonged to the church, and Corey himself did not belong until late in life, the court records provide the only surviving details about his family.

23 *Salem* (Mass.), *Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849, I, Births* (Salem, Massachusetts: The Essex Institute, 1916), 208. Like other sixteenth-century dates, it is rendered numerically: “5:6m:1658.” (The year began on March 25, making it the first month).

24 Ibid. *III, Marriages* (1924), 245-246.

death of Mary (Brite) Corey on August 27, 1684, and her burial in the Charter Street Cemetery. Conspicuously absent are marriage and death records for Corey’s first wife, Margaret, although her death undoubtedly preceded Corey’s marriage to Mary. Since Corey’s daughters all married less than twenty years after his marriage to Mary, Margaret likely bore them all; likewise, she and Corey likely married prior to 1653, twenty years before the earliest recorded marriage of a Corey daughter (Mary). Although the vital records do not list Corey’s third marriage, to the widow Martha Rich, it likely occurred on April 27, 1690, when minister Samuel Parris entered her admission to the Salem Village Church in his record book.

Corey’s familial situation also provides evidence of his nonconformity. Remarriage after the death of a spouse was a common practice, especially since as many as 20% of the deaths of adult women resulted from complications during childbirth. Yet, some suspicion may have surrounded the death of Margaret Corey, as Susannah Sheldon claimed during the witchcraft trials that the “Spectre of Giles Corey Murdered his first wife.” Furthermore, Corey married successively younger women. When Mary Corey made a deposition in the Essex Quarterly Court in 1672, she stated her age as

26 Salem (Mass.), Vital Records, V, Deaths (1925), 5, 177. The information was recorded from her gravestone.
27 Divorce was rare, though not unheard of. EQC contains some cases of a husband and wife separating, but Corey’s is not among them.
28 The average age at first marriage in Massachusetts was 26 for men and 23 for women, albeit a bit lower among the first generation of settlers to marry in the colony and in non-Puritan populations. See Fischer, Albion’s Seed, 75-76, including note 1.
“about forty-three years;” on the same day, Giles Corey declared that he was twelve years older. Despite Mary Corey’s relative youth, she and Giles apparently did not have any children together; perhaps she was barren. In a society that privileged the male inheritance of property, Corey’s lack of male heirs presented a threat to the social order. Many of the women accused of witchcraft lacked brothers or sons, allowing them to inherit property and gain power not typically allowed to women. Corey’s role in this unusual situation may have made him more vulnerable to later accusations of witchcraft.

Although the extant documents do not supply an age for Giles’s third wife, Martha (Rich) Corey, two pieces of evidence suggest her relative youth at the time of her marriage to Giles. First, about 1677, before her marriage to Rich, she had given birth to an illegitimate “malatto [son] named Benjamin or Benoni when she resided in the household of Constable John Clifford [presumably as a servant].” Second, she brought with her at least one child from her first marriage, a son named Thomas, who was baptized in the Salem Village Church as “Thomas, son of ‘Sister’ Korey,” on May 4, 1690, one week after his mother’s admission to that church. Since the Half-Way Covenant available to the children of church members only extended to those under the

33 Fischer, _Albion’s Seed_, 171-173.
35 Sidney Perley, ed. “Giles Corey’s Wife,” _The Essex Antiquarian_, 8 (January 1904) 18. Originally recorded in _Essex Registry of Deeds_, book 13, leaf 208. George and Bethiah Hacker, former neighbors of Martha, testified that she “lived a Considerable time with the Said Clifford towards bringing up the said Malatto her Sonn,” and that the young man was now (in 1699) “above Twenty Two yeares of age.” See also Sidney Perley, _The History of Salem, Massachusetts_, III, _1671-1716_ (Haverhill, Mass.: Record Publishing Company, 1928), 292, note 1.
age of majority, he was likely not much older than twelve. Even assuming that Martha was near the end of her child-bearing years when Thomas was born, she was likely not much older than fifty-five in 1690, considerably younger than her new husband. Although it seems likely that neither boy resided in the Corey household by the time of the witchcraft trials, their presence in the community added another aspect of unconventionality to the family. In what appears as a racially-charged metaphor, Susannah Sheldon claimed that one night she had seen “the blak man” give Martha Corey “a thing like a blake pig . . . [with] no haire on it,” and that she “gave it suck.” Accusing witches of nursing their familiars was a common trope, but the choice of animal for Martha seems particularly evocative in a community that undoubtedly remembered seeing her

36 Salem (Mass.), Vital Records, I, Births (1916), 500. “Records of the Salem-Village Church from November 1689 to October 1696, as Kept by the Reverend Samuel Parris,” in Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem-Village Witchcraft, 272. If Martha’s older son was only thirteen in 1690, then Thomas was likely younger than twelve, since Martha spent at least a few years raising Benoni/Benjamin prior to her marriage to Rich. Perhaps both boys were actually a few years older; the marriage of a Thomas Rich to “Mary Mackintir of Reading” on June 30, 1699 suggests that Thomas was born closer to the 1677 date suggested for Benoni/Benjamin, making him a teenager at the time of his mother’s second marriage. Salem (Mass.), Vital Records, IV, Marriages (1924), 252. Thomas’s petition for redress of his losses by the death of his mother, “Martha Corey, alias Martha Rich,” confirms the relationship. See D. P. Corey, “Martha Corey, of Salem Village,” NEHGR 26 (July 1872) 337. Thomas received £50, less than the “Sixty pounds of personall Estate, left by his Father,” but better than no compensation for his loss. See “Resolve Allowing £50 to Thomas Rich, July 1, 1724,” in Bernard Rosenthal et al., eds., Records of the Salem Witch Hunt (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 917. Martha’s role as administrator of the property left to Thomas by his father put her in the same position of other accused witches who controlled wealth independent of a male relative. See Karlsen, Devil in the Shape of a Woman, 82-83.

37 Martha’s illegitimate son, aged at least fifteen in 1692, would have been apprenticed if not indentured. Even Thomas, who was likely a teenager in 1692, could have been indentured. His absence from the trial proceedings suggests distance from the situation; the children of witches were susceptible to accusations themselves—see Andrew, Richard, Sarah, and Thomas Carrier (children of Martha Carrier) and Benjamin, Sarah, and William Procter (children of John and Elizabeth Procter) in Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., Salem Witchcraft Papers, I: 197-203; II: 655, 691-699.

38 Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., Salem Witchcraft Papers, I, 105-106. In the same deposition, Sheldon claimed that Bridget Bishop had a snake in her bosom, that Mary English had a yellow bird in her bosom, and that Giles Corey “had two tircels [turtles] hang to his Coat,” which he put “to his brest and gave them suck.”
suckle her own dark-skinned infant. Since Corey had no sons, the marriages of his daughters presented a valuable opportunity for him to participate in normal patterns of paternal behavior. The records illustrate continued relationships with all of his sons-in-law, albeit not always without tension. Corey seems especially close with John Parker, who twice appears alongside him in land assessments, suggesting they farmed as a team, not just on adjacent lots. According to the Essex County Deeds, Corey gifted land to Parker in 1681, and it seems plausible that he did the same for Henry Crosby after his marriage to Deliverance. As W. P. Upham’s map illustrates, Corey shared parts of his estate with Crosby and Parker. This could also explain why he divided his property between only Moulton and Cleaves in his will (dictated from an Ipswich jail cell in July, 1692), excluding Crosby and Parker. However, resentment might also have motivated Corey’s decision, as Crosby and Parker had contributed evidence against Martha when she was accused of witchcraft.

The bond between Corey and Parker extended into litigation as well, with Parker appearing as Corey’s “partner in crime.” When John Proctor accused Corey of arson in 1678, witnesses attested both to Corey’s presence in his

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39 Norton, In the Devil’s Snare, 58-59 identifies the spectral “black man” mentioned by many of the accusers as someone with “a dark or swarthy complexion,” resembling an Indian rather than an African, perhaps a more accurate visual description for a mulatto child than “black.” See also the testimony of Sarah Osborne and Mary Toothaker (who called him a “Tawny man,” Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., Salem Witchcraft Papers, II: 611; III: 768.
42 Joseph Moulton, “Giles Corey’s Will,” NEHGR 10 (January 1856), 32. Upham’s map is reproduced in Boyer and Nissenbaum, Salem-Village Witchcraft, 394-395, with an index on 396-397.
43 Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., Salem Witchcraft Papers, I, 250-251, 253. Crosby presented written evidence against her, and Parker failed to speak when Anthony Needham asserted he once said she was a witch.
own bed the night of the fire, and to that of Parker as well.\textsuperscript{44} Later that year Parker testified alongside the Coreys in a suit against the Proctors for selling liquor to the Indians, only to have his accusations turned back on him by other witnesses.\textsuperscript{45} The fallout from this suit brought a host of other accusations: John and Martha Bates successfully sued Giles and Mary Corey for defamation, and a group including several members of Proctor’s family and John Gloyd, charged John Parker and Mary Corey with drunkenness and misconduct. Although Caleb More tried to smooth over the situation by attesting to Mary Corey’s character as “an honest, civil woman,” and a host of others affirmed that they had never seen her swear or drink in many years of contact with her, she was ultimately fined for drunkenness, “cursing and swearing,” and “abusive speeches.” Parker was fined on two counts of drunkenness, “swearing and cursing,” and “pernicious lying,” further contributing to the image of Corey’s family as disorderly and ill-tempered.\textsuperscript{46}

Additionally, this case highlights the tensions between Corey and his son-in-law John Moulton. Moulton gave witness to charges of swearing against Parker and Mary Corey, and Moulton’s sister-in-law, Mary, deposed that she had also witnessed Parker’s swearing.\textsuperscript{47} Moulton also testified that Corey


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 147.
threatened to burn John Pudney’s orchard. His brother Robert stated that Corey made threats against his crops multiple times and stole from him. In part, the disagreement probably arose from Corey’s success; Moulton’s father had been a prominent, powerful citizen, but suffered a reversal of fortune after supporting Roger Williams in the Antinomian controversy. The Moultons’ losses mirrored Corey’s gains.

From his modest start, Corey attained a reasonable degree of wealth, first acquiring a lot in Salem Town prior to 1657, on which he built “a small house, which stood on what is now [1903] the western corner of Federal and Boston Streets.” In July 1663, Giles Corey, “husbandman,” obtained from Ezra Clap and Nathaniell Clapp of Dorchester the deed to “one dwelling house with the appurtenances thereunto belonging & two acres upland, also fifty acres of upland with the meadow thereto belonging . . . also ten acres of upland lying in the north neck,” which they had sold to him in 1659. Corey promptly sold the two dwellings and lots in town and removed to the more remote upland.

Robert Goodell of Salem sold “fifty acres of land” to Corey in March, 1660, abutting his existing farm. In 1661, the Salem selectmen granted Corey two acres of land and a “spot or hole” of meadow to compensate for what he lost.

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49 Ibid. 91. Corey responded by filing a defamation suit against Robert Moulton, but later withdrew it.
50 Young, ‘Good Order,’ 27-28, 35, 106. Robert Moulton Sr. was excommunicated and lost his position as a selectman, bitter pills to swallow. For a brief genealogy of the Moulton family, see Perley, History of Salem, I, 1626-1637 (1924), 117.
when they laid a highway across his property.\textsuperscript{54} When Corey was assessed for the minister’s salary in 1681, however, he fell among the bottom ten percent of villagers, perhaps because of his farm’s location near the border of Salem Village, but within Salem Town. Three years later, his tax rate had risen to the middle of the spectrum.\textsuperscript{55} By 1692, Corey owned a “farm of about 150 acres” that contained the houses of his sons-in-law Parker and Crosby as well as his own.\textsuperscript{56}

Rather than changing to match the expectations of Salem’s Puritan elites, Corey’s unlawful behavior continued after he became a husband and father. In 1656, Roger Haskell sued Corey for debt, and in June, 1671, Philip Cromwell made a writ against Corey for debt, though it was never served.\textsuperscript{57} In the first case, Corey may have claimed poverty, but by 1671 the threat of another court case and its attendant costs induced him to pay. Similarly, in June 1670, Corwin had again charged Corey with stealing things, “some of which he confessed and some proved.”\textsuperscript{58} Auxiliary testimony in a 1678 case implicated Corey and one of his sons-in-law in selling a pair of borrowed fetters.\textsuperscript{59} It

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seems Corey attempted to increase the profits of his labor by taking things from his neighbors and trying to avoid paying his debts, advancing his financial position by any means possible. Such a blatant commercial outlook almost certainly unsettled the stricter Puritans in Salem, but Corey ignored their censure. Significantly, Corey’s history of thievery would remain in the collective consciousness. During the witch trials sixteen-year-old John DeRich stated that Corey (or his spectre--the statement is unclear) had walked into his mistress’s house and borrowed platters for “a feast” without permission. It did not matter that he brought them back “half a oure” later--DeRich was implying that Corey had used them for a satanic ritual, so Corey’s habit of taking things without asking served to increase the incident’s plausibility.60

Corey also engaged in protracted conflicts with other members of the Salem community, frequently shifting his alliances to suit his own needs. In June 1676, the court called Corey on suspicion of beating Jacob Goodell, to death. Although the gruesome report of those who had examined the body left little doubt as to the cause of Goodell’s death, witnesses provided conflicting evidence as to who was responsible. Elisha Kebee declared that he saw Corey “unreasonably beat said Jacob with a stick of about an inch through and that with the great end of the stick he struck him nearly a hundred blows,” and John Procter stated that Corey had admitted to beating Goodell. Lot Killum testified that “upon his death bed” Goodell had told him “that John Parker,

60 Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, I, 245. Corey’s last conviction for stealing had occurred when DeRich was two years old.
Corie’s son-in-law, struck him with the side of a bed.” 61 Yet, Mary Corey testified that Goodell’s sister-in-law Elizabeth recounted to her how her husband, Zachariah, had also beaten his brother, with a stick, for taking apples from his cellar about ten days before his death. 62 After recounting an incident the previous year when Corey had brought Jacob to his house with a broken arm and other injuries that suggested Corey had hurt his brother before, Zachariah Goodell declared, “I Cannot say that ever I saw him [Corey] beat or wrong my brother [this time], but he hath beene very much beaten & wronged to by report.” Unable to agree on a culprit, the court merely fined Corey and required him to pay the court costs. 63 This too would haunt Salemites’ perceptions of Corey.

On the night before Corey’s execution, Thomas Putnam recounted to judge Samuel Sewall a dream of his daughter Ann: she had seen “a man in a Winding Sheet; who had told her that Giles Corey had Murdered him . . . and

61 Dow, EQC, VI, 1674-1678 (1917), 190-191. Jacob Goodell had “upon his left arme and upon his right thigh a great bruise wch is very much swold,” and the examiners “upon the reynes [?] of his backe in colour differinge from the other parts of his his body we caused an incision to be made much bruised and Run wth a gelly and the skin broke upon the outside of each buttocke.”

62 Complicating the case further was the fact that in 1672, Giles and Mary Corey had supported Elizabeth’s brother-in-law John Smith when she accused him of assaulting her with “abusive and uncivil carriages” on multiple occasions. See Ibid. V, 1672-1674 (1916) 52-55. http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/Essex/vol5/images/essex052.html (Accessed 5 December 2016)
http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/Essex/vol5/images/essex055.html (Accessed 5 December 2016) Although the Coreys affirmed that Elizabeth Goodell had complained of Smith’s behavior before, they claimed that the interaction they had observed between Elizabeth and Smith was not abusive and implying that she was exaggerating and had welcomed Smith’s advances. Zachariah had supported his wife. The court found Smith guilty, but Giles Corey and Anthony Needham paid his fine to keep him out of jail, and interceded to have his sentence of whipping remitted.

that her Father knew the man and the thing was done before she was born.\textsuperscript{64}

While the "afflicted" (accusers) frequently claimed that the witches physically tortured them, testimony against Giles Corey stressed violence--biting, cutting with a knife, choking, beating--perhaps reflecting fears of his past actions.\textsuperscript{65}

Likewise, the records depict Corey often at odds with John Procter. After Procter's house burned in 1678, he claimed "that Giles Coree was the only person who might have burned his house or set it on fire."\textsuperscript{66} On another occasion, Procter accused Corey of stealing wood, to which he responded he had taken "two or three sticks" to use for leverage when his oxen were struggling.\textsuperscript{67} Despite Moore's allegations of "an abundance of love" between Corey and Proctor during the subsequent defamation hearing, Proctor's reference to Corey's "old Trade" and frequent accusations point at hard feelings.\textsuperscript{68} The trouble between the two men, supposedly rooted in Proctor's part in wage arbitration between Corey and John Gloyd, apparently had more ill effect on Corey's relationship with Proctor than his relationship with Gloyd, who later testified on Corey's behalf.\textsuperscript{69} Tellingly, Mary Warren, the Procters' servant in 1692, invoked the tension between Corey and John Procter by claiming his

\textsuperscript{64} "Letter of Thomas Putnam to Samuel Sewall, Sept. 19, 1692," in Cotton Mather, \textit{Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an Account of the Tryals of Several Witches Lately Excuted [sic] in New-England;} \textit{And of several remarkable Curiosities therein Occuring . . .} (London: John Dunton, 1693), 47; reprinted in Rosenthal et al., eds., \textit{Records of the Salem Witch Hunt}, 671. Ann had claimed that Corey had "\textit{Press[ed]} him to Death with his Feet," and that "the Jury had found the Murder." Thomas Putnam recalled "about Seventeen Years ago [1675], Giles Corey kept a man in his House, that was almost a Natural Fool; which Man Dy'd suddenly." He was "bruised to Death, and having clodders of Blood about his Heart." "The Jury," Thomas remembered, "brought in the man Murdered; but as if some Enchantment had hindered the Prosecution . . . Proceeded not against Giles."


\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.


spectre accused her of “Caus[ing] her Master to ask more for a peice of Meadow than he was willing to give.”\textsuperscript{70}

Nevertheless, Corey did not always stand opposed to those around him. He mediated the charges between the Cogswell heirs over the debts of their father’s estate, attached his name to a 1667 petition of Salem Village residents for release from the Town watch, and joined others in begging the General Court for relief from import taxes in 1668.\textsuperscript{71} Corey incurred the anger of his neighbors by defying the laws, but he was far from unique in that respect. An examination of the indices for the Essex County Quarterly Courts discloses numerous cases of violence, theft, sexual impropriety, neglect, and other crimes.\textsuperscript{72} On at least one occasion, Corey was the victim rather than the perpetrator of a physical altercation. In December 1650, as Corey and Edward Norris were walking near the brick kiln, John Kitching ambushed them from behind, “niping and pinshing.” What initially seemed like a joke turned serious as he put Corey in a strangle-hold, saying “this is nothing, I doe owe you more than this.” Kitching then doused them in dirty water, and pushed Corey, following him over the rails of a fence, and “beat[ing] him until he was all

\textsuperscript{70} Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., \textit{Salem Witchcraft Papers}, III: 795-796.
bloody.” The residents of Salem, while preaching the creation of an ideal city, practiced the same unchristian behavior they decried. Salem was the scene of bitter religious and social factionalism in the decades leading up to the witchcraft outbreak, and Corey was only a single actor in the larger conflict.

Later in life Corey apparently made an effort to conform to the laws. After settling the mass of litigation begun in 1678, his name disappears from the court records. On April 26, 1691, he took the momentous step of joining the Salem Town Church. Although he had “been a scandalous person in his former time,” God had “awakened him unto Repentance.” But it proved to be too little, too late.

Before Corey’s former conduct could make him a target during the witchcraft outbreak, he participated in the proceedings with the same argumentative spirit exhibited in the court records of previous decades. When his wife Martha stated he had told her that the accusers used the clothes of the accused to identify them, he denied it, making it seem that she was lying. He also testified against her directly, claiming that she had interfered with his ability to pray and that she she prayed in an unorthodox manner after he had

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The accusation of “niping and pinshing” is strikingly evocative of the witchcraft trials, suggesting that the “afflicted” might have drawn on vernacular stock phrases for describing assault. While Corey attested this before the court, it remains unclear whether or not Kitching received punishment, and why Norris did not provide witness for Corey. The court records are silent on the nature of Kitching’s complaint against Corey. Upham claims this Edward Norris was the son of the minister of the same name, but the court records do not indicate whether it was the elder or the younger man. See Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*, I: 205.


gone to bed, casting doubt on her declaration that she was a “Gospel Woman.”

Later, at Giles’s examination, Thomas Gold declared “that he heard him say, that he knew enough against his wife that he would do her business.” “The Marshall” and “Bibber’s daughter” backed this claim.

When he was accused, the details of Corey’s past lawbreaking bled into his spectral crimes. Like some of the other accused witches, he was said to participate in the Devil’s sacrament, an interesting proposition since he had only recently begun to receive the Sacrament. Attempting to reconcile Corey’s lack of Puritan religiosity for so many years with his sudden change of heart, they imagined that he must serve the Devil instead. At his examination, numerous members of the community testified that they had heard him swearing, casting doubt on the truth of his spiritual reformation. Additionally, John Bibber, Bibber’s wife, and others alleged that he had “temptations to do away with himself,” and that he intended to “charge his death upon his son.”

“Self murther” was a particularly serious crime, indicating a denial of God’s ultimate agency and repudiating the experience of grace that had allowed him to join the church. Such spiritual weakness would “make way to temptation to witchcraft.” Like Martha, Giles Corey insisted that he was not guilty of the charges filed against him. However, he refused to allow the court to try him,

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76 Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, I: 248-249, 259-262. Giles also complained that Martha had taken his saddle to prevent him from attending the trials, and cited unusual injuries suffered by his ox and his cat, as though they had been bewitched. 77 Rosenthal, et al., eds. *Records of the Salem Witch Hunt*, 187. 78 Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., *Salem Witchcraft Papers*, I: 245. While all members of the community were expected to attend weekly services in the meetinghouse, only confessing members of the church could receive the Sacrament. 79 Rosenthal, et al., eds. *Records of the Salem Witch Hunt*, 188. This statement, if true, provides rare insight into Corey’s mental state. Unfortunately, the testimony gives no indication of how long Corey had been experiencing such “temptations,” or how frequently. Furthermore, the accusation that Corey planned to frame one of his sons-in-law for his death implied that he had no regard for communal order or human life. 80 For a brief description of the Puritan covenant of grace see Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 23-24. 81 Rosenthal, et al., eds. *Records of the Salem Witch Hunt*, 188.
choosing instead to face the punishment of *peine forte et dure*. Some have claimed that he chose this method because it allowed him to avoid forfeiting his property, but existing laws permitted forfeiture only in cases of high treason. On September 19, 1692, after his friend Captain John Gardner of Nantucket failed to convince him to relent and save himself, he was pressed to death; the church had excommunicated him the previous day.

By the nineteenth century, temporal distance from the Salem witchcraft trials and from the seventeenth century changed people’s perceptions of the trials and the characters who participated in them. Unlike earlier writers on the trials, Nineteenth-century authors had not participated or even lived through them. They displayed scorn for the barbarism of the witchcraft trials and guilt for their ancestors’ roles in perpetuating what seemed like the deluded murder of innocent people. Yet, even as they condemned the backwardness of the witch trials, these authors exhibited nostalgia for the “simpler times” of the

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82 David C. Brown, "The Case of Giles Corey," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 121, no. 4 (1985): 286-288, 298. This practice had already been outlawed in England. It involved piling heavy weights on the prisoner’s chest while he lay on his back with limbs outstretched. On the first day, he would receive “three morsels of the worst bread;” and the second day “three draughts of standing water, that should be nearest to the prison-door,” continuing this day until he agreed to a trial or died.

83 Ibid. 293-297, 299.

84 Upham *Salem Witchcraft*, II: 290-291. Brown, "Case of Giles Corey," 291-293. Pierce, ed., *Records of the First Church in Salem*, 173. Martha Corey was hanged three days later. It is said that as Corey was dying, the weight forced his tongue out of his mouth, and the sheriff used his cane to push it back in. This is first recorded in Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (London, 1700) reprinted in George Lincoln Burr, ed. *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases 1648-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914; Barnes and Noble Books, 1975) 367. Captain John Gardner had grown up in Salem and had a farm near Corey’s prior to his removal to Nantucket in the 1670s. Like Corey, he had a sharp tongue and frequently appeared in court. He may have been a Quaker.

seventeenth century. Motivated by an immediate sense of shame for the executions during the hysteria of 1692 and a general nostalgia for the agrarian past as a foil for the turmoil and corruption they saw in the present, nineteenth-century authors transformed Corey to reflect the values of their own time. From their revisions to the historical record, Corey emerged as a hero.

The first history of the Salem witchcraft outbreak, published in 1867 by Charles Upham, served as the core of information for future authors writing about the trials. In an era when the original records were unpublished and not easily accessible, his narrative of events became the accepted reality. Upham emphasized the singularity of Corey’s experience, elevating him to a “prominent place . . . in the scene before us.” He alleged that the root of Corey’s troubles lay in his headstrong nature and the fact that he “care[d] little about the opinions or the talk of others.” Although he acknowledged that Corey was “disregardful...of the conventional proprieties of his day,” and had lived a “scandalous life,” he made light of the criminal accusations against him. Labeling the plaintiffs who brought suits against him “scandal-mongers” and declaring that their charges were “exaggerated or wholly unfounded, Upham asserted that “it is not safe to receive implicitly the statements made by his contemporaries.”

He claimed that Corey was “much misunderstood” rather than scornful of the laws, explaining his transgressions as “the natural consequences, when

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86 The original documents were first assembled and transcribed by the WPA, but remained unpublished until Boyer and Nissenbaum’s Salem Witchcraft Papers in 1977. Winfield S. Nevins published Witchcraft in Salem Village in 1892, but it was essentially “a rewrite of Upham’s work . . . a series of essays on various aspects of the episode” rather than a narrative or a collection of documents. See Marion L. Starkey, The Devil in Massachusetts: A Modern Inquiry into the Salem Witch Trials (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), v.
87 Upham, Salem Witchcraft, I: 181.
88 Ibid. I: 181-182.
a bold and strong man was put upon the defensive or drawn to the offensive.”

He dismissed Corey’s part in Jacob Goodell’s death since the court only assessed him a fine, even suggesting that Goodell might have died from “ordinary disease.” In his estimation, the 1650 incident between Corey and Kitching at the kiln, an example of “gratuitous” violence, showed Corey as a “victim of ill-usage, either given or taken.” Highlighting the positive outcome of the wage arbitration between Corey and John Gloyd, Upham claimed it illustrated Corey’s “generous, forgiving, and genial nature.” He cited the occasion of Corey and Procter drinking wine together after the hearing as evidence of an “overflow of affection” between them, and incident where Proctor accused Corey of stealing wood became friendly teasing. He attributed Procter’s charge of arson against him as “rashness,” and Corey’s subsequent defamation suit as a means of ending “the malignant and malicious slanders which had been current in the neighborhood.”

Emphasizing Corey’s material success, Upham characterized him as “an industrious, hard-working man, . . . a person of some means, a holder of considerable property.” He credited Corey with “traits of kind-heartedness and generosity, under a rather rough exterior.” Overall, Upham painted Corey as a scapegoat, a victim of “unrestrained” gossip and “prejudice” who was no more sinful than his neighbors and did not deserve his “bad repute.”

89 Ibid. I: 182, 184.
90 Ibid. I: 185-186. Upham offered as additional evidence of Corey’s innocence the lack of “ill feeling” observed when Corey’s wife (Mary) stopped at the Procter’s house as she escorted Goodell to his family.
91 Ibid. I: 205-207. He also suggested that Kitching was drunk at the time, a point not included in the court records.
92 Ibid. I: 185, 187.
93 Ibid. I: 187, 190.
94 Ibid. I: 190.
95 Ibid. I: 182, 185-186. Upham further stated that “it became fashionable to charge all sorts of offences against Corey,” emphasizing his victimhood.
Upham expressed his penitence for the “sad catastrophe” and “folly” of the trials as “delusion” that offered “enduring proof of human infirmity.” Even Corey’s accusation of his wife was excusable as he was “entirely carried away by the delusion,” and reverted to “his life-long rough phrases” and “characteristic imprudence of speech.” Upham stressed the phrasing of Giles’s testimony as observations instead of direct accusations, and suggested that “the fact that he would not lend himself to their purposes . . . may explain the subsequent proceedings against him.” Indeed, between her trial and his own, Upham claimed, “reflection had [probably] brought him to his senses,” and caused him “to express himself very freely.” Flipping the implications of the accusation that Corey had contemplated suicide, Upham portrayed him as racked by guilt over his role in the trials; his sons-in-law Parker and Crosby, who had offered evidence against Martha Corey, were at least partly to blame. By refusing to stand trial, Corey could “expiate his own folly . . . proclaim his abhorrence of the prosecutions,” and preserve his property for “his faithful sons-in-law.”

96 Ibid. II: 439-441. After comparing the response of white New Yorkers to the suspicion of a “Negro Plot” in 1741 and the subsequent imprisonment and execution of those believed to have been involved, drew an analogy to actions taken under “the impulse of passion” and without the “restraints of reason.” Perhaps thinking of the recent Civil War, he warned against condemning “our fanatical ancestors” too strongly, “at least until we have ceased to imitate and repeat them.”
97 Ibid. II: 52-54.
98 Ibid. II: 54-55. By which he implied that Corey could not bring himself to make an overt accusation against his wife. He explained Corey’s difficulty with prayer as the result of unfamiliarity, since he had joined the church one year prior.
99 Ibid. II: 122.
100 Ibid. II: 124. Upham carries the argument further, claiming that Corey’s decision to refuse to stand trial was part of an elaborate plan to end his life without incurring the spiritual repercussions of suicide.
101 Ibid. II: 335-337. Legally, Corey’s property was not in danger; see Brown, “Case of Giles Corey,” 293-297. But, in his request for restitution, John Moulton reported that “after our fathers death the sh’rife threaten’d to Size our fathers Estate and for feare thar of wee Complied with him and paid him Eleven pound six shillings in monie by all which we have bee[n] greatly damnified & impovershd.” See Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds. Salem Witchcraft Papers, III:985.
“resolute defiance” in the face of the “wicked falsehoods heaped upon him,” and his “unconquerable firmness” before a “strange and horrible” death attested to his “true manliness” and “heroic spirit.”¹⁰² Moreover, he attributed the end of the witchcraft proceedings to Corey’s case. “The course of Giles Corey profoundly affected the public mind,” inspiring “the breath of reason” that single-handedly caused the magistrates to see the error of their ways.¹⁰³

Nineteenth-century fiction authors also placed Corey at the center of their portrayals of the Salem witchcraft trials. Following Upham, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published “Giles Corey of the Salem Farms” in 1868 to bring the drama of the trials to the stage. Despite its limited cast of characters, the play reproduced a cogent narrative and included the most salient occurrences from 1692, albeit with some embellishments.¹⁰⁴

Longfellow expanded the wage dispute with Gloyd into a vengeful plot to destroy Corey, casting Gloyd as “crafty, not to be trusted, sullen and untruthful.”¹⁰⁵ Later in the play, Gloyd raises suspicions of witchcraft against Corey, stating that “the Devil and all his imps are in that man.” When Corey rushes to the jail after hearing that Martha has been arrested, Gloyd reveals his

¹⁰³ Ibid. II 340, 344. Objections to the proceedings of the court of Oyer and Terminer had been raised as early as August, as the social standing and moral reputation of the accused (and convicted) rose. In late September, two publications circulated among Boston’s ministers that called the admissibility of spectral evidence into question. See Norton, In the Devil’s Snare, 278-281. Corey’s fate may have caused public outcry, but other factors played a larger role in convincing the elites to alter their standard procedure.
sinister plot through the double-entendre of the “Cornish hug.” At Martha’s trial, Gloyd alleges that she “prays to the Devil,” delighting in her fate. When Corey himself is subsequently accused, Gloyd, claimed to be a “friend” of his, only to testify to Corey’s “supernatural power,” laying the foundation of the case against him.

Similarly, Longfellow intensified Corey’s conflict with Procter, having Corey declare him a liar after accusing him of arson. Procter claims Corey “did it out of spite” for his role in the wage dispute with Gloyd. Additionally, Procter claimed that Corey had murdered Goodell, “trampling upon his body till he breathed no more.”

Corey’s response captures his quick temper, as Longfellow has him swear to “make Procter eat his words or strangle him,” for slandering him. Referring to Goodell’s death, Corey asserts his innocence, saying “in his bed he died . . . because his hour had come.” In his anger, Corey suggests that Procter is possessed by the devil.

Early in the play, Corey and Martha disagree over the trials; she does not believe in witchcraft, while he affixes a horseshoe to the door frame to keep out

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106 Ibid. Act III, Scene IV, 148-151. Earlier in the scene, Gloyd had challenged Corey to a wrestling match, which Corey won using a move known as the Cornish hug for its origin in Cornwall. Gloyd asserts that Corey will receive his own Cornish hug soon enough. However, during the English Civil War, the phrase “Cornish hug” had acquired the figurative meaning of inflicting the ultimate defeat, tantamount to murder, on the Cornish cavaliers. See M. J. Stoyle, “Pagans or Paragons?: Images of the Cornish during the English Civil War,” The English Historical Review, 111, no. 441 (April 1996): 313-314. This clever reference also served to identify Corey with the anti-Puritan West Countrymen.

107 Longfellow, “Giles Corey of the Salem Farms,” Act IV, Scene I, 154-155

108 Ibid. Act IV, Scene I, 155; Act IV, Scene II, 168. Longfellow seems to have conflated minister George Burroughs with Corey. Burroughs had been accused of strength beyond the natural power of any man. See also Boyer and Nissenbaum, eds., Salem Witchcraft Papers, I: 160-162.


110 Ibid. Act II, Scene II, 128.

111 Ibid. Act II, Scene III, 132.

witches and complains that his cattle are bewitched.\textsuperscript{113} In jest, he accuses her (rightly) of hiding his saddle to keep him from attending the trials, and demands that she bring it to him, threatening to tell people that she, “A witch[,] has stolen it” if she refuses.\textsuperscript{114} Despite this disagreement, Corey rushes to Martha’s defense after she is accused, wiping her tears and begging the judges to allow him to hold her hand.\textsuperscript{115} The judges twist his previous declarations that his cattle were bewitched and that the devil hindered him in his prayers to implicate Martha, but he vehemently denies it, crying “it is false! . . . She never harmed me, never hindered me In anything but what I should not do.”\textsuperscript{116}

Throughout the play, Longfellow paints Corey as a sympathetic character. Upon learning that his escaped cattle have drowned, he proclaims “I could drown myself for sheer vexation!” a statement he later justifies by saying he “loved them” and “they were [his] friends.”\textsuperscript{117} Although he hears a voice whispering that “Self-murder is no crime,” he resists the temptation.\textsuperscript{118} He attributes the trouble with his prayers to the return of “Hate and revenge,” thoughts of “my old self,---my old, bad life,” signaling his repentance.\textsuperscript{119} After Gloyd suggests that Corey is a witch and that he will complain of him to the magistrates, a man working alongside him jumps to Corey’s defense, calling him “a good master.”\textsuperscript{120} When Corey denies telling his wife that the children

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid. Act II, Scene I, 119-122. Martha claims that the cattle did not break down the fence because they were bewitched, but that she saw Gloyd let them out. He denies it, and Corey believes him.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid. Act II, Scene I, 124-126. The tone of this exchange is light, but it also carries a serious message. Giles must work to assert his authority over his wife, a difficulty he attributes to their age difference.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. Act IV, Scene II, 161--162.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. Act IV, Scene II, 165-166.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. Act II, Scene II, 129; Act II, Scene III, 133.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid. Act II, Scene III, 135.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. Act II, Scene III, 136.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. Act III, Scene IV, 151.
would ask about her clothes, it is only because he “must speak the truth.” He recognizes too late how the judges have tricked him, “drawing round [him] . . . A net [he] cannot break.”

In Longfellow’s version of events, Corey refuses to lodge a plea because he knows the magistrates will convict him regardless of what he says. He will not “confess a lie, to buy a life,” will not “swerve a hair’s-breadth from the Truth.” Despite the intercession of his friend Richard Gardner, who begs him to “Confess and live” for the sake of his daughters, Corey declares that he is “resolved to die” to prove his principles. They may torture his body, but he insists that they cannot crush his soul. Acknowledging Corey’s commitment to the moral high ground, Gardner proclaims Corey’s “noble character” and laments “how mean” he appears by comparison. With his torturous death, Corey draws attention to the court’s injustice, becoming a martyr for the greater good.

Fascination with the Corey’s case persisted into the late nineteenth century. Mary Wilkins Freeman penned “Giles Corey Yeoman” for serial publication in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine between December 1892 and May 1893 to coincide with the bicentennial of the Salem witch trials. Going beyond Longfellow’s poetic license, she made sweeping changes to Corey’s story, creating a heavily fictionalized account. Most strikingly, she invented new characters; some represented amalgams of people involved in the trials, but

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121 Ibid. Act IV, Scene II, 158-159.  
122 Ibid. Act IV, Scene II, 166.  
123 Ibid. Act V, Scene II, 176.  
125 Ibid. Act V, Scene II, 176-177.  
126 Ibid. Act V, Scene IV, 179.  
others she created wholly anew. In addition to Corey and his wife, their household now included maiden daughter Olive, orphaned niece Phoebe, and elderly servant Nancy.  

Freeman focused entirely on the events of 1692, only having Corey reference his earlier “brawl[ing] and blasphe[m]” as a counterpoint to his later principled defense of his beliefs. As in earlier works, Corey starts out as a superstitious believer in “afflicting” witches and “devilish black beasts.” When he worries that his cat sickened and his ox fell down for inexplicable reasons, his daughter assures him of their recovery and his wife laughs before offering logical explanations for their ailments. Neither Olive nor Martha believe in witches, and their jesting about witches annoys Corey. Frustrated by Martha’s refusal to accept the “truth” (that witches exist and cause real harm), he suggests that “perhaps [she] galloped a broomstick,” warning that “One of these days folk will say [she] be a witch.” Before going to bed, he mentions having difficulty with his prayers the previous night. The entire exchange occurs in the presence of Olive’s “friend” Ann Hutchins. 

Motivated by jealousy of Olive’s relationship with Paul Bayley, who “once looked with a favorable eye upon [her]” instead, Ann joined the ranks of the afflicted girls. Enlisting her widowed mother’s aid, she accused Martha Corey of using “devilish arts” to allow Olive to win Bayley’s affections, and then using

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129 Ibid. Act V, 95.  
130 Ibid. Act I, Scene I, 10-12, 15.  
131 Ibid. Act I, Scene I, 11-12, 14-16. Freeman plays heavily with irony, as it is Giles Corey who needs to be persuaded of the truth.  
132 Ibid. Act I, Scene I, 16  
133 Ibid. Act I, Scene I, 8-9; Act II, 32.
the same “devilish arts” alongside Olive to “grievously” torment Ann.\footnote{Ibid. Act I, Scene I, 6; Act II, 33-35. Olive’s eyes are “bigger and bluer than they used to be.”}

Giles Corey unwittingly seals his wife’s fate when he recounts the previous evening’s conversation to the authorities at Ann Hutchins’s bedside, in hopes that Ann’s affliction will make believers of Martha and Olive. Urging the magistrate to imprison the “trollop” hurting Ann and to “load her down well with irons,” Corey remains oblivious of the effect his words will have.\footnote{Ibid. Act II, 39-41.} Despite preserving his penchant for cursing, Freeman displayed him as a wronged innocent, tricked by people who took advantage of his sympathy and trust in their sincerity.

In Freeman’s account, Corey does not testify against either his wife or his daughter, vehemently denying the imputed accusations. Their arrest reverses his opinion of witches; now Ann is the “lying trollop.”\footnote{Ibid. Act III, 47-48.} When Nancy takes the opportunity to vent her complaints against Martha, ultimately accusing her of afflicting her, Giles exclaims that she is a “lying old jade!”\footnote{Ibid. Act III, 51-52. Significantly, the judge tosses out Nancy’s ordinary grievances (that Martha treated her like a child), so she resorts to more damning afflictions to make her case (describing Martha’s familiars and claiming she tried to get her to sign the Devil’s book).} Corey is even more outspoken in his defense of Olive, wishing that her “blue eyes could shoot pins into the lying hussies.”\footnote{Ibid. Act III, 59.} However, his physical presence cannot protect her. Only Martha’s impassioned appeal to the afflicted girls causes them to reconsider, and secures her own condemnation instead.\footnote{Ibid. Act III, 62, 65-69. Ann is only dissuaded by the threat of another afflicted girl that she will confess.}

After Martha’s conviction, Corey rails against the court, threatening violence to those who call her a witch and yelling that he will “cut [his] way through a whole king’s army . . . [and] raise the devil [him]self” before allowing
them to put her in jail. His outburst causes the afflicted to accuse him as well. This time, Corey’s only crime is trying to protect his family. Exaggerating the role of Corey’s sons-in-law, Freeman imagines a scenario in which they all testify against him and Martha. Only Bayley tries to help them.

Unlike Longfellow, Freeman attributes Corey’s refusal to stand trial partially to material motives. After securing a promise from Bayley that he will marry Olive immediately so that she will “not be left alone in the world,” he presents him with a deed for all of his property. Repeating Upham’s claim that the convicted witches would forfeit their estates, she shows Corey doing everything he can to protect his only loyal child. Moreover, Corey asserts that his resolution resulted from his hope “to make amends” for his role in Martha’s conviction, lamenting that he “said words that they twisted to her undoing.”

Although Bayley tries to change Corey’s mind, “for Olive’s sake,” he refuses to yield. Stating that he is undertaking “a mightier work,” Corey claims that by submitting to pressing, he will break “the backbone of this great evil in the land.” His stoic “obstinacy” will change “the temper of the people,” and even the magistrates agree, though they remain convinced until the end that he will yield to the pressure. With his death, Freeman implies, society awoke to the evil of the trials, attesting to the nobility of his sacrifice.

Even as they condemned the backwardness of the witch trials, these authors exhibited nostalgia for an idealized past in the seventeenth century.

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140 Ibid. Act III, 70-72.
141 Ibid. Act IV, 82-83. Bayley attempts unsuccessfully to secure a pardon from the governor.
142 Ibid. Act V, 88-91.
143 Ibid. Act V, 91-93.
144 Ibid. Act V, 93, 97-98. Olive also begs him not to do it, threatening that she will refuse to marry Bayley.
145 Ibid. Act V, 94-95.
Alarmed by the consequences of rapid industrialization and urbanization, with the attendant transformation of the country’s economic and sociopolitical landscape, New England’s Protestant middle class constructed a venerable past that embodied the characteristics they valued and sought to revive. The pace of life in a nineteenth-century city created new fears and dangers, making the fear of witchcraft seem quaint by comparison. In an increasingly urban, commercialized world, the image of a simple rural life found widespread support.

As small towns grew into cities, conflict followed the broadening definition of public responsibility and the costs that came with it. Increased size made administration via town meeting unwieldy and impractical; representative government, though effective, removed the general population from direct control and contributed to the impersonal atmosphere of the city. Moreover, the centralization of public services severed many of the communal bonds that united neighbors. Now people depended on the city government rather than each other, a situation that heightened feelings of isolation. Moreover, the visible economic disparity revealed by industrialization combined with increased immigration to exacerbate class, ethnic, and racial tensions. Despite the improvements in efficiency and the wealth they represented, cities also showcased poverty, corruption, and greed, highlighting the tension between ideals of progress and the problems caused by industrial capitalism.

Situating Corey in a pastoral setting, on a successful small farm, Longfellow evoked the “pleasant landscape” of agrarian society in contrast to

both the barbaric treachery of the witch trials and the social fragmentation of his own time.149 By the mid-nineteenth century, many New England towns had either modernized or sunk into decay. The lucrative promise of more fertile land to the west lured many from New England’s rocky soils, while cities drew others to factory labor. As the sons and daughters of New England migrated to take advantage of opportunities, the countryside emptied and many of the smaller towns lay abandoned.150 Seeking solace from this perceived decline, people looked to a past, when “the goodman ploughed [his] ample acres under sun or cloud.”151

Reacting to the undesirable conditions found in cities wealthy families withdrew into isolated homes, preferably in the country.152 Conceptually, the middle and lower class housing imitated the rural ideal achieved by the elites.153 Cheaper residential areas in suburbs could offer few of the amenities of a country estate, but the inclusion of small yards, tree-lined streets, and nearby parks by developers and city planners illustrates the importance of the rural ideal to working class aspirations.154 The “peaceful streets" shaded by “great elms,” “tall poplar-trees before the door,” and “peonies and hollyhocks in the front yard” that characterized the Salem of Longfellow and Freeman

149 Longfellow, “Giles Corey of the Salem Farms,” Act V, Scene I, 170 (note also “the four tall poplar-trees before the door” and “the well, [w]ith its moss-covered bucket.” Act II, Scene I, 119, presents abundant imagery: Corey’s “orchard groans with russet and pearmains,” his “ripening corn shines golden in the sun,” and “the birds sing blithely.” In Act II, Scene III, 133, he waxes poetic about Corey’s oxen, with their “patient eyes,” “strain[ing] their necks against the yoke,” and on the next page highlights the beauty of a walk through the woods where “yellow leaves lit up the trees . . . [l]ike an enchanted palace.” Even the scene of Corey and his men swinging their scythes in the meadow and taking a break to wrestle before settling down to “see what’s in our basket” for lunch must have seemed a welcome change from the pace of the industrial city. See Act III, Scene IV, 148-150.


152 Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class, 147-148.


154 Ibid. 90.
appealed universally across class boundaries.\textsuperscript{155}

Similarly, Freeman celebrated the perceived domesticity of the seventeenth century. In an increasingly urban, commercialized world, the image of a simple rural life found widespread support. Altering Corey's household, she created a sense of centrality around the hearth and the family.\textsuperscript{156} Through the character of Olive Corey (non-existent daughter of Giles and Martha) and the tension between Corey and his sons-in-law, Freeman reformed Corey's unorthodox household to fit the exalted role of the family in nineteenth-century life.\textsuperscript{157} Freeman also emphasized spinning, knitting, cleaning, and dedication to household arts.\textsuperscript{158} As the spheres of work and home drew apart, the household became a sanctuary from the city's bustle. Although the majority of housewives only spun their own yarn and wove their own cloth in the decades immediately surrounding the American Revolution, nineteenth-century authors indiscriminately portrayed them in these occupations throughout history.\textsuperscript{159} Envisioning domestic production as static prior to the Industrial Revolution provided historical continuity for the ideal of the domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{160} It also connected people with a lifestyle that seemed less complicated and more real than their own.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{156} Freeman, \textit{Giles Corey, Yeoman}, 3, 73. Freeman sets most of her scenes within the Corey home.
\textsuperscript{157} Ryan, \textit{Cradle of the Middle Class}, 154.
\textsuperscript{158} Freeman, \textit{Giles Corey, Yeoman}, Act I, Scene I, 13, 19-22; Act III, 67; Act IV, 98. When she visits her father for the last time, Olive mends his coat using the needle and thread that she carries with her at all times in her "huswife."
The myth of social advancement through hard work and determination loomed large in the consciousness of the New England bourgeoisie, though it became increasingly difficult to realize as the nineteenth century progressed.\footnote{Rodgers, \textit{Work Ethic}, 28, 35.} City leaders touted the possibility for advancement for immigrants, but few achieved it. Most unskilled laborers were transient, underscoring the city as an unstable social entity.\footnote{Stephan Thernstrom, \textit{Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 85.} Of those who stayed, most experienced little occupational improvement during their lives. The odds were better for the native-born than for immigrants, but only a minority attained real success.\footnote{Ibid. 96-103.} Most managed only small steps up the ladder of success.\footnote{Ibid. 107-113. Rodgers, \textit{Work Ethic}, 36-37.} Nonetheless, the myth of success persisted, and Corey exemplified this ideal. By his own labor he had obtained one “Hundred Acres” that supplied him abundantly.\footnote{Longfellow, “Giles Corey of the Salem Farms,” Act II, Scene I, 119.} Furthermore, he took great pains to ensure the preservation of his economic gains for his children, refusing to plead in order to protect his estate from attainder, and thus preserving his family from financial ruin as a model father should.\footnote{Freeman, \textit{Giles Corey, Yeoman}, Act V, 90-91.}

The authors who wrote about Giles Corey all glorified him for many of the same reasons his contemporaries found him so disagreeable. In their portrayals, he was a self-made man of strong opinions in a society that valued meekness and deference to the established elite. For an audience of social and economic climbers, his self-interested striving was no longer a liability; it was a virtue. In tales designed to inspire moral improvement, they presented Corey as reformed-sinner-turned-martyr who compelled the end of barbarous
superstition. By transforming Corey’s stubbornness before the court into a
defense of the common good and an attack on social evils and injustice,
Freeman, Longfellow, and Upham contributed to the tradition of deifying historic
figures to a produce a collective memory in support of the national ethos.168

The seventeenth-century Giles Corey differs markedly from the
nineteenth-century creation. In reality, Corey engaged in illegal behavior,
heckled his neighbors, alienated members of his own family, and generally
inspired dislike. Though the records sometimes leave his guilt in question, he
certainly did not dedicate himself to the Puritan quest for a model community.
Nineteenth-century authors reconstructed Corey as an innocent victim plagued
by his neighbors’ wrongful accusations. They utilized his death, a murder by
their reckoning, to forge a hero. Corey symbolized the supposed virtues they
infused into agrarian past in support of their own values. As the cities shifted to
a new industrial economy and the agricultural towns fell into decline, the
population struggled to adapt their ideology to the conditions. The loss of
individual influence and broad community ties fueled the celebration of the
small town and domestic life of the distant American past. In the nineteenth
century, people turned away from the turmoil and corruption they saw in the
present, embedding their morals in the rural history they framed.

168 Peter Burke, “History as Social Memory,” in Thomas Butler, ed., Memory: History, Culture,
and the Mind (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1989), 104. Burke argues that the process of
“hero-making” can be conscious or unconscious, and is dependent on the “fit” of the historical
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“An important 10 percent” of good historical research, according to Alfred Young, “is serendipity.”

In fact, serendipity guided this project, which weaves together several seemingly unrelated threads into a tapestry that displays the interconnections of memory, identity, place, and kinship through the branches of a single family and the church where their lives intersected. George Robert Twelves Hewes, who Young immortalized in The Shoemaker and the Tea Party, was “a nobody who briefly became a somebody in the Revolution and, for a moment near the end of his life, a hero.”

A rare member of the “‘humble classes’” for whom “an unusually rich cumulative record” survives in the form of two late-life biographies, Hewes’ life provides a window into the social history of eighteenth-century Boston, of the varied purposes a name could serve, and of the role of memory in reconstructing the past. Although Hewes’ life may typify the poor laborer’s experience, his name itself defies the cultural tradition of early eighteenth-century Massachusetts. As with the story of his life, memory and the forces that guide its formation and re-creation are essential to understanding the significance of his name and his namesake, for Hewes’ parents, for the church he was born into, for his descendants, and for Hewes himself.

As Maurice Halbwachs asserts, “memory depends on the social


\[170\] Ibid. 5.

\[171\] Ibid. 6.
environment.” Hewes' memories of his name, as well as those of his life, were shaped by the context in which he remembered them and mutually constituted with the memories of the people who surrounded him. Public rituals and monuments ordered the story Hewes' biographers told of his role in the Revolution and guided the larger narrative constructed for public consumption, but they also ordered the way Hewes' remembered his participation and portrayed his motives and actions. Memory and forgetting are not simply matters of poor recall— they are governed by social and cultural factors that define a “politics” of memory. While the authorial bias of Hewes' biographers may have imposed certain frameworks on his story, even autobiography involves the selective interpretation and organization of life events to create a culturally intelligible narrative. They make meaning by imposing form and genre. Hewes' identity as a son and a grandson, and as a patriot, reflect both his own historical consciousness from the present looking back and his sense of how his lived experience mirrored collective memory, his perception of himself as a “historical entit[y].” As Susan Crane explains, “Lived experience and collective memory ‘interpenetrate’ each other.” They are mutually constitutive.

173 Ibid. 40. For the role of collective memory and place on the history of the Revolution, see Young, *Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, 92-98, 108-120, 136-142, 155-158. For the “appropriation” of Hewes, see ibid. 166-179.
176 Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *American Historical Review*, 102, no. 5 (December 1997): 1373, 1375. Thus, Hewes cannot separate his experiences as a father, grandfather, or veteran from his memories of his earlier life.
177 Ibid. 1377.
Additionally, many of the same processes apply to the formation of personal memories. The family, as Halbwachs observes, has a collective memory of its own that allows it to “not only reproduce its history but also define its nature,” to “teach” the next generation the familial “attitude” and to preserve the “memories which it alone commemorates.”

Hewes’ personal interactions and spatial connections (or lack thereof) structured his memories of his relatives and his understanding of the fit between family and identity. In forming his identity, Hewes, like all individuals, defined himself relative to others in ways that were shaped by class, gender, and politics, using memories to create a self that made sense in the context of group memory.

Similarly, his conceptualization of the family reflected his understanding of generational (dis)continuity and his place within it. By recalling and reflecting on aspects of his childhood, Hewes made meaning out of his past, adapting it to his needs in the present.

In addition to the influence of people, place also helps to structure memory, as a physical space of remembrance, what Pierre Nora calls the “site of memory.”

When Hewes returned to Boston in 1821, after more than forty years away from the city, he found it “almost as a new town,” a “land of strangers.” Finding the “whole scenery ... like the work of enchantment,” he observed that even the spot where his childhood home had stood “could not be

ascertained by any visible object.”

Unlike some families, whose “house and ... land were so ‘incorporated in the family that it could neither lose them nor part with them,’” Hewes’ urban upbringing and adult mobility erased the connection between place and personal past. Only a “few scattered relics” remained, leaving him surrounded by “the rush of new and populous generations, who [recognized] not so much as [his] name.” Dislocation and separation from one’s native context, like familial discontinuity, could interrupt the transmission of generational memory.

Comprehending the significance of Hewes’ name both at the moment of his birth and in later memories first requires an understanding of the basic principles that guided New England naming practices in the first half of the eighteenth century. Parents focused on perpetuating the lineage, almost always naming children for themselves. Additionally, they often named children for the mother’s parents or siblings, and the father’s mother and sisters, as a way of perpetuating family ties among those who, because women’s names changed upon marriage, usually did not share a surname.

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182 Ibid. 78.
183 Halbwachs, Collective Memory, 64.
In most cases, brothers respected the exclusive privilege of naming a son for oneself, except in cases where the brothers lived at a distance from each other. If a man died without marrying, or failed to produce sons, no rules seem to have decreed which of his brothers could name a son for him, and this sometimes created identically-named first cousins. Additionally, parents frequently reused the names of children who died, ensuring that these names, like those of other relatives, would outlive their bearers.

Multiple scholars have established the sui generis character of the naming pattern that developed within the first few decades of New England’s settlement. In addition to the new emphasis on bestowing their own names, most parents began relying exclusively on the Bible, especially the Old Testament, when choosing names, discarding English traditional names for ones untainted by association with Catholic saints. They did so even when

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187 Smith, “Child-Naming Practices,” 551. Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 98-99. There was no formal rule against naming sons for fathers’ brothers, but the practice was relatively rare, especially when the brothers resided in the same town. See also Susan E. Klepp, Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in Early America, 1760-1820 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2009), 63-64. Klepp connects the preservation of a man’s memory with his production of sons and also argues that he was “obligated to his ancestors to preserve the surname,” citing Joseph Price, who lamented the “name Lost” when men failed to marry or fathered only daughters. See Joseph Price Diary, June 30, Aug. 10, 1804 http://www.lowermerionhistory.org/texts/price/price1804.html (Accessed 26 April 2017). In New England, families feared the “extinct[ion]” of the forename as much as that of the surname.


this conflicted with their desire to name their children after themselves.\textsuperscript{191}
However, if an English traditional name survived the initial purge, as some did, in many cases successive generations of parents continued to perpetuate it just as their Biblically-named neighbors did.\textsuperscript{192} Middle names remained rare until late in the eighteenth century, when they gained rapidly in popularity.\textsuperscript{193}
Multiple middle names remained rarer still, and such long names were evocative of nobility or even royalty.\textsuperscript{194} The future king George III was given the
\textsuperscript{191} Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 543-545. Among Hingham families prior to 1720, one third of the parents who chose not to bestow their names on a their children had non-Biblical names; in the remainder of the eighteenth century, only 6\% of non-transmitted names were non-Biblical. Stewart, “Men’s Names,” 117-118. The far higher percentage of Biblical names among Massachusetts-born boys than among the English-born Massachusetts freeholders of the 1630s shows the effect of this decision.
\textsuperscript{192} See for example, Stewart’s discussion of the periodicity of William in “Men’s Names,” 122. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 544. One sixth of parents with non-Biblical names named children for themselves in the seventeenth century. Compare the argument in Smith, “Continuity and Discontinuity in Puritan Naming, 68-69 that Biblical names were themselves perpetuated out of familial as well as religious concerns. Main, “Naming Children,” 16, observes about 15\% of children bearing non-familial English traditional names up to the eve of the Revolution, although she counts only parents, grandparents, and previously deceased children as relatives at risk for name-sharing and thus may count the names of parents’ siblings here.
\textsuperscript{193} Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 229-230. Among Fischer’s Concord families, no child had a middle name prior to the 1721-1730 marriage cohort, and fewer than 5\% had them until the 1771-1780 cohort. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 556 notes middle names only as a complicating factor in the transmission of familial names, locating their rise at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 98, 128. Among the approximately 1100 children I catalogued who were born between 1700 and 1759, only one had a middle name: Asa Partridge Richardson, born Jan. 26, 1746/7 in Medway (VR 112). This figure includes all of the full and partial families I compiled from genealogies and Massachusetts municipal records, not just the limited set of completed families I used for statistical analysis. The latter data set consists of 1400 children in 225 families who resided in eastern and central Massachusetts between 1660 and 1850, for whom I found names and birth dates of all siblings, parents’ names, grandparents’ names, and names of parents’ siblings.
\textsuperscript{194} The children of Dr. Hosea and Elizabeth Dutton, Sebastian Maria Ximenes Petruchio, and Thomas Albert Bonaparte Jefferson, recorded in Oxford, Connecticut in 1801 and 1802, respectively, are notable exceptions. The boys were born a year apart, on Jan. 26 and Jan. 27, respectively. See Lucius Barnes Barbour, “Oxford Vital Records,” 16, in Connecticut Vital Records to 1870 (1928; online database Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2011). https://www.americanancestors.org/databases/connecticut-vital-records-to-1870-the-barbour-collection/image/?pageNumber=16&viewStateID=14197 (Accessed 9 April 2017) Cited in Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 230, who copied this anecdote from Donald Lines Jacobus, “Early New England Nomenclature,” New England Historical and Genealogical Register 77 (January 1923): 13, who erroneously recorded the boys’ father as Dr. Osee Dutton of Boston. Among the children in my data set, only one had more than two given names, Moses Bullen Harding Bishop, born in Medfield on Oct. 27, 1817 (VR 21, 58-59, 145) and named for his maternal grandfather, a prominent man whose only surviving child was Bishop’s mother. The grandfather himself was named for Moses Bullen.
name George William Frederick upon his birth in 1738.\textsuperscript{195}

Massachusetts naming habits would change beginning in the 1760s, so that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the onomastic landscape looked very different: fewer Biblical names (and the return of English traditional names), a decline in parental naming and familial naming in general, the virtual extinction of necronyms, and near ubiquitous middle names.\textsuperscript{196} However, no one could have predicted these changes at the time of Hewes' birth in 1742. A survey of names drawn from 1771 tax lists (predominantly consisting of people born between 1720 and 1750) reveals "no hint" of the names that "would first erode and then devastate the biblical norm."\textsuperscript{197} That Hewes’ name appears in some respects decades ahead of its time does not signify his parents’ prescience; they could not have anticipated changes that they would not live long enough to witness.

George Robert Twelves, the fourth son and sixth child of George and Abigail (Seaver) Hewes, was born in Boston on August 25, 1742.\textsuperscript{198} A month later, he was baptized at Boston’s Old South Church, where the minister

\textsuperscript{195} Bernard Burke and Ashworth P. Burke, A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Peerage and Baronetage, the Privy Council, Knightage and Companionage, 76th ed. (London: Harrison and Sons; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1914), 37.

\textsuperscript{196} Fischer, “Forenames and the Family,” 224-231. Fischer describes this period as a “revolution.” Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 544-545, 547, 549. Smith places the decline in Biblical names earlier, in the marriage cohort formed between 1741 and 1760. The other trends he observes later; with middle names not appearing until just before 1800 and necronyms and parental naming persisting at high levels well into the nineteenth century. Schwartz, “Invention and Convention,” 47, 52, 62, 69, 75, 122, 29, 136. My conclusions more closely follow Fischer’s than Smith’s on this point, but the change appears less abrupt.

\textsuperscript{197} Smith, Continuity and Discontinuity,” 74.

\textsuperscript{198} [William Sumner Appleton], A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, containing Boston Births from A.D. 1700 to A.D. 1800 (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1894), 246. Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 16.
carefully inscribed his name as “George-Robert-Twells” in the record book.\textsuperscript{199} Perhaps the hyphens indicated that the name was to be read as a single unit—he was not to be called George or Robert or Twelves, but all three together. One nineteenth-century scholar of English names argued for this interpretation, citing several examples from parish registers roughly contemporary with Hewes. In the previous century, the conjunction of forenames, when it occurred, was often seamless, with the two run together into a single construction and “treated as one name.”\textsuperscript{200}

A story Hewes recounted to one of his biographers concerning his baptism illustrates the rarity of such a name and the difficulty it could cause. According to “accounts of the occasion reported to” him, the pastor officiating the ceremony could not remember his many appellations—“George—what did you say?—George Rob.” Asked to repeat himself, Hewes’ father, “embarrassed a little” mumbled his response, provoking a raised voice from the minister. The result, Hewes claimed, was that his father “somewhat immoderately” shouted his name, so that it “was probably never forgotten by those who heard it.”\textsuperscript{201} In rendering this humorous scene, Hewes demonstrates the absurdity of his three-part given name and also captures the audacity of his parents to select it.

What right had he, the son of a “tallow chandler and erstwhile tanner” to the sort


\textsuperscript{200} Charles W[areing] Bardsley, \textit{Curiosities of Puritan Nomenclature} (London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), 223-225. Fannasibilla Temple, christened in 1602, he explains as a combination of Fanny and Sybil, while Johnamaria Ansloe, 1640, represents a blend of John and Maria, the latter one of the earliest middle names. On Maria, see ibid. 215-218. In later years, he notes Howe-Lee Warner, baptized in 1721, Francis-Gunsby Ayerst, 1728, and James-Smith Horne, 1746.

\textsuperscript{201} [Thatcher], \textit{Traits of the Tea Party}, 28.
of name typically reserved for the sons of kings and peers?

On at least one occasion, the name reputedly caused Hewes some difficulty. After getting himself into trouble with a local justice for stealing apples, Hewes was called to account for his crime; after asking him to state his name, and receiving it in full, the justice refused to believe him, calling him a lying “rascal” and threatening to beat him until he confessed his true name. Only confirmation of his name from one of his aunts set him free.\textsuperscript{202} His name was not one people expected to find attached to a poor shoemaker’s apprentice and petty thief, and seemed even more unusual to those not accustomed to hearing it.

Recovering what Hewes was routinely called by those who knew him is difficult, as his biographers injected their own voices as well as recording Hewes’ own self-conscious remembering. James Hawkes refers to him with the formal “Hewes.”\textsuperscript{203} His second biographer, Benjamin Bussey Thatcher, however, was more creative, and in addition to “Hewes,” identifies him as “Robert,” “Bob,” “George,” and even “Twelves.”\textsuperscript{204} Thatcher recreates a purported conversation between Hewes and his mother in which she calls him both “Bob” and “Robert,” and another where his brother Samuel addresses him as “Bob,” and he responds by calling him “Sam.”\textsuperscript{205} Nicknames had deep roots in English culture, and had historically served as a means of

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid. 31-33. This aunt, the “Widow Pearson” was probably Hewes’ mother’s younger sister, Sarah, who married Ebenezer Payson of Roxbury on Aug. 20, 1734. See William B. Trask, “The Seaver Family,” \textit{NEHGR} 26 (July 1872):306. Hewes’ aunt likely intervened on his behalf at this juncture because his parents were both dead by the time he was apprenticed.


\textsuperscript{205} Ibid. 24-25, 35-36. In the former conversation, Hewes calls his mother “ma’am” in reply. In the latter, Samuel also calls out to another of their brothers, Shubael, as “Shube.”
differentiating same-named individuals. Yet the formality of the New England social hierarchy restricted the use of diminutive forms (for both sexes) to children. Marked by familiarity, only members of the immediate family would address or refer to an individual by a nickname after he or she became an adult, and even then, they subscribed to certain rules of deference. Thatcher’s depiction of Hewes’ mother calling him by a nickname, then, is plausible, and even his older brother’s use of the familiar form makes sense, given their age difference. However, Hewes likely would not have spoken so informally in return, since age, like class and gender, dictated his place in the social hierarchy. Familial relationships, even within a single generation, were shaped by differentials of power.

Yet, Hewes’ experiences in the Revolution necessarily affected his

206 Bardsley, Curiosities, 5-6, 8, 90-91.
208 Samuel Hewes was born July 12, 1730, making him twelve years older than George Robert Twelves. See [Appleton], Report of the Record Commissioners, 198. As the elder brother, and eldest son, Samuel might have called his brother Shubael “Shube.” Shubael Hewes was born Oct. 27, 1732. See ibid. 208.
209 For an example of the youthful Hewes’ observance of the customs of deference, see Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 3-4, citing [Thatcher], Traits of the Tea Party, 52-55. For another example of the (tense) power dynamic between elder and younger brothers, see Benjamin Franklin’s complaint against his brother James: “Though a brother, he considered himself as my master, and me as his apprentice . . . while I thought he demeaned me too much in some he required of me, who from a brother expected more indulgence.” Although James frequently beat him, Franklin admitted his complicity in their disagreements, declaring, “perhaps I was too saucy and provoking.” See Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin . . . (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co.; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1888), 29-30.
recollection of the past; during the course of the war, “he cast off the constraints of deference” to realize his own self-worth in a “moment of equality.”210 Just as he remembered throwing chests of tea into Boston harbor alongside the elite John Hancock, so too could he remember his brother, dead since before the war, treating him as equal rather than inferior.211 Furthermore, in the years preceding his interview with Thatcher, Hewes had resided successively with several of his children.212 Reconstructing his memories from his vantage point in the 1830s, he could easily have transferred his experiences in the nineteenth-century domestic sphere, where the family was in the midst of a transformation from patriarchal control to maternal guidance and spiritual revivals urged Christian “marks of affection” between siblings, onto his own childhood experiences.213 Hewes and his biographers operated within a shared cultural context of what belonging to a family meant and subscribed to a shared “logic in familial genealogies” that defined how kinship could be remembered and articulated.214

Perhaps more telling than his biographers’ rendering of his name are the records where Hewes identified himself in the course of routine public transactions. Beginning with his choice of a guardian in 1757 to act “in my

210 Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 55-57.
212 [Hawkes], Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party, 94-97. Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 73.
214 Halbwachs, Collective Memory, 68-69.
Name” after his father’s death, Hewes used his full name.\textsuperscript{215} A 1774 newspaper article describing an altercation between Hewes and customs officer John Malcolm included all four of his names.\textsuperscript{216} Similarly, he appears in the 1800 U.S. federal census as “George R. T. Hewes,” an abbreviation necessitated by the available space and the haste of the census taker.\textsuperscript{217} The same designation headlines Hewes’ military pension application from 1831; not until the twenty-second page of his forty-seven-page file does his name appear written out in full.\textsuperscript{218} Yet its presence suggests that he continued to identify himself with it. The repeated abbreviation of his two middle names reveals how others tried to render his name more manageable, to make it fit. Those initials and the names they represented meant something to him--he never styled himself as just George.

Why, then, did Hewes’ parents bestow such an unwieldy name on him in the first place? What did his name mean in a cultural sense? Scholars have long since established the value of names as “an ideal cultural metric,”


\textsuperscript{216} Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 46. Young cites the Massachusetts Gazette of January 27, and February 3, 1774. A version of the story appeared also in the New-York Journal, February 17, 1774. As in his baptismal record, his given names were connected by hyphens.


reflective of communal social norms. Theoretically open to free choice, names are constrained in practice by the risk for the child of transgressing the limits of cultural ideology, as Hewes and his parents found out. Names carry psychological implications for both bearers and givers. They can serve as moral or spiritual imperatives; as one seventeenth-century Puritan minister declared, “a good name is as a thread tyed about the finger, to make us mindful of the errand we came into the world to do for our Master.”

Yet names can also act as visible reminders of familial relationships, linking kin networks together with the promise of capital—spiritual, social, and financial. If “He that hath an ill name is halfe hanged,” then preserving a good name matters a great deal. One interpretation of this proverb has long been recognized: the importance of protecting one’s own reputation as a safeguard

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219 Wilbur Zelinsky, “Cultural Variation in Personal Name Patterns in the Eastern United States,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 60, no. 4 (December 1970): 744. Zelinsky argued that names were ideal because they were characterized by “sensitivity; ubiquity; durability; simplicity; purity; and accessibility.” Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 542.


222 Schwartz, “Calling Changes by Name,” 52-53, 55-56, 86. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 552-553. Idem, “Population, Family, and Society in Hingham, Massachusetts, 1635-1880” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1976), 85, 317-318. Following the same logic, he declared that “Naming a son for a wife’s brother, for example, surely made less sense if the uncle lived 50 or 100 miles away rather than just down the road.” For the families I encountered, the opposite seemed to hold true, with more boys sharing the names of their relatives if those relatives lived at a distance. This suggests something other than a monetary benefit in the namesake tradition. Main, “Naming Children,” 11-12. Main claims that parents acting as namesakes for their children linked them to their own covenanted status; I extend this spiritual role to the use of necronyms, since parents preferred to believe that their deceased children had received divine salvation.

against certain failure and ruin. However, another has received scant attention in the literature: the role namesakes played in providing credit and building social capital across generations.

Maintaining a good name capitalized on one’s onomastic inheritance to benefit the individual within his or her lifetime, but also improved the legacy of the family for future generations. Each bearer of the name acted as a steward, cultivating an onomastic legacy that extended beyond the surname to a wider network of kin and reinforced the ties created by the marriage bond. This necessarily involved risk and weighty responsibility as well as opportunity. One could just as easily bankrupt the family’s social credit as enhance it, thereby besmirching the name. Early New Englanders certainly recognized the value of reputation, connecting spiritual and material wellbeing. They also

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224 In 1710, Lord Cornbury wrote that “An honest Man’s Reputation is dearer to him than either” his life or his property. See Patricia U. Bonomi, The Lord Cornbury Scandal: The Politics of Reputation in British America (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press for the OIEAHC, 1998), 49. See also ibid. 119, where a supporter of Cornbury declared that his opponents were “murdering the Reputation and good names” of innocent men. For the role of extended familial networks in supplying credit and capital, see Margaret R. Hunt, The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 22-29.

225 Judge Samuel Sewall, for instance, called a daughter Judith because “the Signification of [the name] very good,” and prayed that it would inspire her to “follow her Grandmother Hull, as she follows Christ.” See Milton Halsey Thomas, ed. The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729, Vol. 1 (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973), 264-265.


227 Parents especially feared the profligacy of impulsive young men, which threatened both the family’s finances and its reputation. See Hunt, Middling Sort, 47.

understood the value of mobilizing kinship ties for social and economic success, which were intertwined with New England’s religious mandate.\textsuperscript{229}

At first glance, George Robert Twelves Hewes’ lengthy given name suggests a hope of aspirations to upward mobility, and that may have factored into his parents’ decision. This was not a family-wide trend, as none of Hewes’ ancestors, nor any of his first cousins held multiple given names.\textsuperscript{230} George Hewes (the father) borrowed heavily and partnered with his brother, Robert, to start a tannery in Boston in 1729. By 1740, the business venture had failed and the brothers were embroiled in a series of protracted lawsuits with their creditor; both spent time in debtor’s prison.\textsuperscript{231} What must have seemed a promising future a few years earlier had dimmed, but the situation was not altogether hopeless. The family still had enough money to send Hewes to school for a few years, and his mother had the means to purchase a young slave girl.\textsuperscript{232} Hewes remembered his father hoping to “‘mak[e] a minister, or something’ . . . of him,” suggesting high hopes for the boy’s future.\textsuperscript{233} As he sat for his interview with Thatcher, Hewes may have reflected on his father’s high hopes for him because in that moment, he had finally “made something” of himself. He crafted the narrative of his life to realize this earlier goal as a way of

\textsuperscript{229} For financial improvement through the adoption of sons by childless or sonless couples, see Moses Bullen Harding, who “was named for Moses Bullen, and was brought up in his family, though not related to him.” in William S. Tilden, ed. \textit{History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts, 1650-1886} . . . (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1887), 409. Also, John Hancock, who was adopted by his childless uncle, Thomas Hancock, in Wood, \textit{ Radicalism of the American Revolution}, 47. Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns,” 553. For the social currency of kin, see David Hackett Fischer, \textit{ Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America} (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 40-42. Fischer argues that intermarriage among Puritan ministerial families allowed them to secure their elite status into the nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid. Trask, “Seaver Family,” 303-323.

\textsuperscript{231} Young, \textit{ Shoemaker and the Tea Party}, 17-18, and 213n17.

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid. 18. [Thatcher], \textit{ Traits of the Tea Party}, 18-23, 31.

\textsuperscript{233} [Thatcher], \textit{ Traits of the Tea Party}, 16. Hewes admitted that “The clerical project, however, was abandoned of necessity,” possibly as a result of the family’s ongoing financial struggle. (17)
structuring his life course in a meaningful way.\textsuperscript{234}

Hewes understood that he was named firstly for his father, but the way he described this connection speaks directly to the character of eighteenth-century New England onomastics. In explaining his first name to Hawkes, he stated simply: "My father’s Christian name was George."\textsuperscript{235} Similarly, Thatcher began his description of Hewes’ namesakes with the phrase, “Besides his father,” as he had supplied George Hewe’s name earlier in the text.\textsuperscript{236} That was all; the link between father and son needed no explanation. Hewes made no mention of his father’s grandfather of the same name, who had left no namesake son.\textsuperscript{237} In his mind, a boy who shared his father’s name was named for his father, a testament to the persistence of the strength of the tradition of reproducing the patriline by name both at the time of his birth and at the time of his recollections.\textsuperscript{238}

Secondly, Thatcher explained the “Robert” portion of Hewes’ name as for the uncle of his previously “alluded to” and “for whom he was named.”\textsuperscript{239} Curiously, Hewes does not mention that portion of his name at all in Hawkes’ biography, skipping directly to the “singular name” of “Twelve,” which he

\textsuperscript{234} For the construction of autobiography to make sense of life and supply meaning, see Bruner, 39-45.
\textsuperscript{235} [Hawkes], \textit{Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party}, 18.
\textsuperscript{236} [Thatcher], \textit{Traits of the Tea Party}, 26. His father first appears on p. 10.
\textsuperscript{237} Putnam, \textit{Lieutenant Joshua Hewes}, 311-313. Since Hewes’ father died when he was only seven, he may not have known of the earlier namesake. Hewes might also have commented on the coincidence of sharing his name with George Washington, who had met during the Revolution. Even had he known, however, he probably would not have speculated on the possible connection between their names. Washington himself was part of a contingent named for the English monarch George III, whose birth four years prior to Hewes undoubtedly featured prominently in the Boston newspapers. See George R. Stewart. \textit{American Given Names: Their Origin and History in the Context of the English Language} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 32, 127 ‘George.’
\textsuperscript{238} Halbwachs, \textit{Collective Memory}, 57. Halbwachs asserts “Depending on whether descent is established along paternal or maternal lines, the son already does or does not receive the name of his father and is or is not a part of his family.”
\textsuperscript{239} [Thatcher], \textit{Traits of the Tea Party}, 23-26. In the previous chapter, Thatcher had written of an occasion where Hewes’ uncle Robert conspired with him to help him evade a whipping from his schoolmaster, against his mother’s wishes.
attributed to the “Christian name” of his mother’s great uncle, “for whom she appeared to have a great veneration.” “Why he was called by this,” Hewes declared, “... I never knew.” 240 Thatcher expounds on the “origin of a portion of the cognomen which it would be otherwise no easy matter to explain,” attributing the name to the same maternal relative. However, Thatcher further declares that Hewes’ mother insisted on the name, “that nothing would satisfy her but to append his designation also to the rest.” 241

The tone attributed to Hewes’ mother again suggests the intrusion of Hewes’ (and Thatcher’s) remembrance of the past. Unlike in the seventeenth century, when naming children was the exclusive prerogative of fathers, mothers began to participate in the selection of names over the course of the eighteenth century. 242 Women, however, still usually phrased their input in the form of a request rather than a demand. By the nineteenth century, the naming of children had become a matter of maternal choice, with the father surrendering his primary role in the selection of names, and also giving mothers unprecedented power to educate and socialize children. 243

Yet the unusual urgency of Abigail’s plea points to another, more pressing, reason for adding the name of one of her relatives to Hewes’

240 [Hawkes], Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party, 18.
241 [Thatcher], Traits of the Tea Party, 27.
242 Schwartz, “Calling Changes by Name,” 104. For example, when Abigail Adams gave birth to a stillborn daughter in 1777, she wrote to her husband John lamenting that she had hoped to name the child “after my own dear Mother, and was much gratified by your mentioning it and requesting it.” Abigail Adams to John Adams, 12 August 1777, in Founding Families: Digital Editions of the Papers of the Winthrops and the Adamses, ed. C. James Taylor (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2007). (Accessed 9 April 2017) http://masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=AFC02d250 At the same time that Cotton Mather was making such decisions unilaterally, John Paine and his wife Bennet (Freeman) Paine were sharing the task. John recorded in his diary on March 8, 1705/6, “I had a Son Born which we Named Josiah...” He used “we” again when referring to the naming of additional children in 1707 and 1714. See John Paine, “Deacon John Paine’s Journal,” ed. George Ernest Bowman, parts 4 and 5, The Mayflower Descendant 9 (April and July 1907): 50, 137.
appellation--credit. In 1742, George and Robert Hewes were financial failures who had spent time in debtors' prison and were still fighting their creditor in court. Their names, including the surname, like their credit, were tainted, and could put the young Hewes at a disadvantage. By tying Hewes to her own ancestors, his mother supplied him with valuable social capital, the potential for financial capital and the security of a good name. Young acknowledges the economic value of Abigail’s family in providing “connections” for Hewes to set up shop as a shoemaker using the bequest (and possibly the tools) of her cordwainer father, Shubael Seaver, but their network of social credit offered far greater potential.

An examination of the vital records of Roxbury, and Braintree, where Hewes’ maternal ancestors made their homes, discloses no such great-uncle. Instead, the records reveal that Hewes’ mother’s maternal grandfather was named Robert Twelves, calling into question the sole attribution of Hewes’ second name to his father’s brother Robert. However, in cases where a child shares his or her name with multiple identically-named relatives, the intended namesake remains uncertain; sometimes the possibility to honor multiple kin

244 Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 18, 213n17. Their father Solomon was also imprisoned for debt.
246 Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 19. Shubael Seaver left Hewes and his three brothers each a legacy of £2 17s. 4d. (18)
connections at once contributed to a name’s appeal.248

George’s brother Robert was, in some respects, a potentially attractive namesake. At the time of Hewes’ birth, George and Robert lived and worked near each other in related trades, had recently partnered and taken on debt together, and were presently involved as co-litigators against their creditor.249 The brothers were already linked economically and affectively, but recent financial setbacks might have strained their relationship. By naming his son for his brother, George might have hoped to smooth over lingering tension and reinforce the bonds that united them. Robert was a childless bachelor, and himself the namesake of their maternal grandfather, Robert Calef.250 Calef likely provided considerable social capital to his namesake as a wealthy merchant and clothier and the author of More Wonders of the Invisible World, a scathing critique of the Salem Witch Trials and of Cotton Mather in particular.251 However, Robert Hewes could offer no financial capital to a namesake, and the lawsuit likely stretched the limits of his social capital. Significantly, Hewes and his younger brother Daniel chose Robert as their guardian in 1757, suggesting that he maintained enough credit to be trusted with the protection of their good

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249 Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 18-19. They had jointly run a tan yard. Now George was a butcher, tallow chandler, and soap maker, while Robert was a glue maker. Both relied on the offal from animal carcasses to supply the raw materials for their trades, and George’s butchery probably contributed to both of their stocks.

250 Putnam, Lieutenant Joshua Hewes, 321, 323. Robert did eventually marry and produced a namesake son of his own in 1751. This younger Robert is almost certainly the “cousin” Robert Hewes whom Hewes recalled meeting with on his 1821 visit to Boston. See [Hawkes], Retrospect of the Tea-Party, 77.

251 Ibid. 317-318.
While the ‘Robert’ in Hewes’ name could serve to honor multiple relatives, the ‘Twelves’ unmistakably recalls his maternal grandmother and her paternal ancestors. In contrast to the humble origins of Hewes’ father’s family, his mother’s family “was a shade different,” wealthier and of higher status, making them appealing namesakes. In particular, Abigail’s maternal grandfather, Robert Twelves, was a prominent resident of Boston and Braintree, who had served as an ensign in King Philip’s War and later as a lieutenant of the Braintree militia. Described as a “Carpinter” in a 1672 Boston deed, his death record declared that he had “erected the south church at Boston.” George and Abigail carried six of their nine children, including Hewes, to Boston’s Old South Church for baptism. Although the “cedar meeting-house” built by Twelves in 1669 had been torn down and replaced with a new brick building in 1729, Hewes’ parents likely remembered the

254 Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 16.
physical connection between the name and the place.\textsuperscript{257} They may have hoped that their son would benefit from the social capital Twelves’ good name could supply, especially in the congregation he had helped to build seventy years prior. Furthermore, since Robert Twelves left no namesake son of his own, bestowing his name on Hewes also served a commemorative function.\textsuperscript{258} By giving him this name, George and Abigail made their son into a living receptacle of Twelve’s memory, attempting to ensure that his name would not fade into oblivion.

However, the meaning of Hewes’ names did not withstand the test of time. As an adult, he did not even recognize Twelves as his namesake. Part of this lapse in memory probably resulted from the premature death of his parents. Hewes lost his father in 1749, when he was only seven, and his mother a few short years later.\textsuperscript{259} In 1756, Hewes’ maternal grandfather, Shubael Seaver, died; Shubael’s wife, Abigail (Twelves) Seaver had predeceased him.\textsuperscript{260} Thus “abruptly separated from his family,” by the age of fourteen, and lacking “images reconstructing for a moment the group and the milieu from which [he] had been torn,” he lost any “incomplete memories” that

\textsuperscript{257} [Thomas Pemberton], “References to the Topographical and Historical Description of Boston,” in \textit{Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society}, ser. 1, vol. 4 (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1795; John H. Eastburn, 1835), 211.

\textsuperscript{258} Harris, “Peter Brackett,” 284-285.


remained. The people most likely to have explained the significance of his name to him, the ones who could help him recall those hazy memories, were all dead. After spending some years with his father’s relatives in Wrentham (possibly even before his mother’s death), Hewes became the ward of his uncle Robert Hewes. Childhood separation from the “milieu” of his maternal kin combined with the affective ties he formed with his paternal relatives to shape his memory of his name’s meaning.

Moreover, although the patriarchal focus of the family diminished somewhat in the years leading up to the Revolution, Hewes most likely grew up in households where an authoritarian father governed his dependents. Community emphasis on patriarchal power combined with the patrifocal nature of his own family ties to lead Hewes to assume that his name evoked a paternal connection. Indeed, male relatives dominated Hewes’ childhood recollections. After declaring that his parents had “six sons and five daughters,” he provided only the names of his brothers. The only women named in either of Hewes' biographies are his mother, Abigail, and his wife,


264 [Hawkes], Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party, 18. Hewes was at least partly mistaken. Extant records name seven sons and two daughters born to George and Abigail. There may have been more daughters, but they probably died in infancy.
Although his biographers may bear some of the responsibility for this omission of women, Hewes is at least complicit in the portrayal of them primarily as bearers of children and connections to other men.

Matrilineal kin networks remained valuable sources of credit, but they only survived when continued contact reinforced the familial bonds. Changing surnames rendered maternal relatives invisible without prior knowledge of the relationship. Even Hewes’ uncle Robert’s prominent namesake—Robert Calef—apparently faded from memory. Perhaps Calef’s value as a source of social capital faded as the years since his death increased and Robert Hewes grew into the name, making it his own, for better or worse. That Hewes did maintain a familial connection to another descendant of Calef, Dr. Joseph Warren, highlights the importance of relationships between the living to perpetuate kin networks created by the dead. In Hewes’ case, demographic chance also played a role. Although Hewes’ parents drew roughly equally on maternal and paternal ancestors when naming their children, only one of his surviving siblings bore the name of a maternal relative—his brother Shubael. Without the visible reminder of children who could make demands on the resources and credit of their namesakes, the bonds between the families attenuated. This society was not strictly patriarchal, but nor was it entirely matrilineal, where “the child ... consider[ed] his mother and her parents as his nuclear family, at

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265 [Hawkes], *Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party*, 18, 27. In Hawkes’ account, Hewes states that he “married the daughter of Benjamin Sumner.” [Thatcher], *Traits of the Tea Party*, 24, 63-64.
266 Hewes’ paternal grandmother, Martha (Calef) Hewes and Warren’s maternal grandmother, Mary (Calef) Stevens, were sisters. See Putnam, *Lieutenant Joshua Hewes*, 317-318. [Thatcher], *Traits of the Tea Party*, 132. Thatcher has Warren address him as “Cousin Hewes,” which may be a bit too informal, given the social distance between the two men.
267 Eight of George and Abigail’s nine children bore familial names; four shared their names with maternal- and five with paternal relatives, counting Hewes in both categories. Two of the four children who died were named for Abigail’s kin. See Putnam, *Lieutenant Joshua Hewes*, 318-319. Trask, “The Seaver Family,” 306.
the same time neglecting his father, whose ancestors [we]re not his own.”

Maintaining maternal connections required work and familial memory, and the early deaths of both George and Abigail Hewes interrupted the transmission of that memory.

Unfortunately, Hewes’ unusual name did not provide the advantages his parents hoped for. Robert Twelves proved a less-than-optimal source of onomastic credit for several reasons. In addition to leaving no namesake son, Twelves left no surviving sons at all. Unlike in the Seaver family, where Hewes’ uncles Shubael III and Peter, and their sons, maintained the presence of the surname, there were no living families by the name of Twelves in Boston during Hewes’ lifetime. Furthermore, the church Robert Twelves had built in 1669 was not the same one that Hewes’ parents carried him to for baptism.

Although the Old South congregation maintained its continuity, time had eroded the old cedar meeting house until it was “quite decay’d with Rottenness” and could not be saved. The loss of the old church in 1729 erased Twelves’ visible imprint on the landscape. Without the site of memory, his name lost its currency. The only remaining marker of Twelves’ existence, his headstone, lay eleven miles distant in Braintree. Not only had Hewes lost his tangible link to Twelves, the entire community shared in his forgetting. Tellingly, Hewes’

268 Halbwachs, Collective Memory, 59.
270 Boston News-Letter, March 6, 1729. Quoted in Mary Farwell Ayer, “The South Meeting-House, Boston (1669-1729),” NEHGR 59 (July 1905): 266. When workers tore it down, they were surprised that the extensive damage had “not buried [the congregation] in a heap of Ruins” the previous Sunday.
baptism was inscribed in the same book that recorded the baptisms of two of Twelves' children, seventy years prior, but even the minister failed to notice.\textsuperscript{272}

Instead, Hewes invented a derivation for the third part of his given name. “Twelve[s]” became the “Christian name” of his mother’s great uncle.\textsuperscript{273}

Although he claimed not to know why the man had been so called, the name he assigned to his youngest son indicates that he interpreted it as a numerical designation. Born in 1791, George Robert Twelves Fifteen Hewes served as both Hewes’ namesake and a reminder of how many children he had fathered.\textsuperscript{274} To emphasize their shared name, Hewes' full name was included in the birth record. Despite not knowing exactly who Twelves was, Hewes knew he was important. He may have believed he was perpetuating a familial tradition of assigning names to indicate birth order. Although there was an English precedent for such names, usually in Latin, Massachusetts families seldom used them.\textsuperscript{275} Hewes’ choice to bestow his own name in its entirety illustrates his confidence that he had made a good name for himself, one that

\textsuperscript{272} “Baptisms, 1669-1875,” in the Old South Church (Boston, Mass.) records, RG0028 (Boston, Mass.: Congregational Library and Archives), 21, 24, 126.

\textsuperscript{273} [Hawkes], \textit{Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party}, 18.


would serve his son well. He may have viewed the unusual length of his name as advantageous; by adding a fourth given name to his son’s appellation, he ensured that the boy would stand out even as middle names grew common. From his own understanding of what the name meant, Hewes created a new familial tradition.

Hewes’ descendants also looked to his name as a family precedent. His nephew and niece, children of his brother Shubael, each gave one daughter three forenames. At least two of Hewes’ grandchildren and three of his great-grandchildren bore three given names. Although a few boys named “George” or “George Robert” appeared among Hewes’ descendants, none after his son were recorded with the full name. Hewes himself had become the namesake, the ancestor “whose memory ha[d] become the object of a cult” of filial devotion, and his full name was not necessary to evoke the connection. Whether a number or a person, Twelves no longer mattered. Though Hewes bore his name, he had “eliminat[ed] in thought and memory the dead from whom the names [we]re taken” With the “rediscovery” of Hewes in the 1830s and the publication of his two biographies, he became a celebrity, increasing the status of his name for its attachment to him alone. Hewes, not

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276 Young, Shoemaker and the Tea Party, 69. Young calls the name a “badge of distinction.”
277 Putnam, Lieutenant Joshua Hewes, 351-352. Mary Ann Bulkeley Hewes and Ann Fry Hewes Hunneman; each girl bore the full name of a female relative, including her maiden surname—a connection that would have remained otherwise invisible.
279 Halbwachs, Collective Memory, 73. Given the increased use of initials instead of full names among nineteenth-century people in Putnam’s genealogy, one of Hewes’ descendants might have borne the full name. Much of the information on these generations came from correspondence, and might not have been reported to the author.
280 Ibid. Hewes’ great-grandson, Horace Greeley Hewes, who compiled the information on Hewes’ branch of the family for Putnam’s genealogy, lived in Braintree, where Robert Twelves had lived and died nearly three hundred years before. Yet he did not observe the onomastic connection, probably because he had no reason to suspect it. See Putnam, Lieutenant Joshua Hewes, 367-368.
his ancestors, had become the source of social capital, cloaked in patriotic
significance as a participant in the Tea Party, the Boston Massacre, and the
Revolution. Between 1876 and 1881, a G. R. T. Hewes, possibly a great-great
grandson, appeared in the Sacramento city directory, a testament to the spread

Hewes and his family may have forgotten who Robert Twelves was, but scholars of Boston’s Old South Meetinghouse did not. They did, however, transform the memory of his role in the church’s construction. An 1890 history of the church claimed of the 1729 edifice that “Robert Twelves is said to have been the builder.”\footnote{Hamilton Andrews Hill, History of the Old South Church (Third Church) Boston, 1669-1884, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1890), I: 450. Hill also notes that the “Trustees [Thomas Savage, Edward Rawson, William Davis, Hezekiah Usher, Senr., John Hull, Peter Olliver, Joshua Scottow, Edward Rainsford, Richard Treudsall, and Jacob Elliot] long since built and erected on part of the above granted premisses a large spacious and faire meeting house.” The context makes clear that they were responsible for financing and organizing the building project. Twelves’ father-in-law, Peter Brackett, was among the organizers of the Old South Church its first deacon. He likely influenced the selection of Twelves as the builder. See ibid. 113-114, 146-147, 273-274.} This claim was repeated over the next decade, even as scholars established Joshua Blanchard as the brick mason responsible for the church’s facade.\footnote{Abram English Brown, “The Builder of the Old South Meeting-House,” The New England Magazine new ser., XIII, no. 4 (December 1895): 392-393. Hamilton Andrews Hill, “Governor Winthrop’s Homestead,” in ibid., no. 6 (February 1896): 735.} Mary Ayer attempted to correct this misinterpretation in 1905, but this did not stop the persistent attribution of the brick church to Twelves.\footnote{Ayer, “The South Meeting-House,” 265. Ayer wrote of the discovery of the only known engraving of the original cedar meetinghouse.}
builder of the extant Old South Church, including the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission. Architectural historian John Fitzhugh Millar went further, crediting Twelves as the possible builder of several other buildings based on stylistic similarities with the Old South. “[W]e know from the records, that the architect of this building was called Robert Twelves,” he asserted, but “Nothing at the moment is known about Twelves...such as whether he was an old man in 1730 when the Meeting House was built, or whether he actually designed any other buildings.”

When the National Park Service prepared a historic structures report on the Old South church in the 1980s, however, they found no evidence to corroborate claims that Twelves had been involved in the construction.

Despite the lack of extant records indicating that Twelves designed or built the 1729 church, the link has proved difficult to sever. The phrasing of the claim provides a clue: Twelves was “said to have been the builder.” This is an oral tradition, repeated until it attained myth-like status, though still open to the fallacies of memory. Additionally, it marks a rupture. After a period in which Twelves was forgotten (Hewes’ lifetime), his memory was revived and


286 John Fitzhugh Millar, The Architects of the American Colonies or Vitruvius Americanus (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1968), 183. Although Millar gestures at records, he does not cite any.

287 Michelle LeBlanc (MLeBlanc@osmh.org), Education Director of the Old South Meeting House, “RE: Your Old South Web Request,” email to to the author, October 24, 2007.

288 Hill, History of the Old South Church, 450.

289 Nathan Wachtel, “Introduction,” History and Anthropology, 2, no. 2 (1986): 208-210. Wachtel asserts that despite the association of oral history with witnessing and authenticity, it like all memories, is subject to retrospective organization and inherently unstable.

73
reattached to the Old South Meetinghouse in the late nineteenth century. The purpose his memory then served becomes clear only in the context of the church’s history.

In the early 1870s, the congregation of the Old South Meetinghouse relocated to a new building in Boston’s Back Bay, where most of the parishioners then resided. After brief use by the city of Boston during the rebuilding that followed the Great Fire of 1872, the old meetinghouse stood empty. Initial efforts at preserving it for its historical significance, both by the former congregation and the public, fell short due to lack of funds. By 1876, financial constraints put the future of the Old South Church in jeopardy as the congregation considered selling it to raise much-needed capital to pay off the costs of the new building. It was auctioned as architectural salvage that June, prompting a public fundraising campaign to save the historic structure. Mary Hemenway provided the single largest donation, half the cost of securing the building. Hemenway’s gift was not merely representative of antiquarian devotion; her interest in preserving early American history, which she carried out through a series of funded lectures at the Old South, a set of published leaflets, and an essay competition for students, was tied to an educational mission meant to promote “virtue and patriotism” through the study of great

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290 Benjamin B. Wisner, *The History of the Old South Church in Boston, in Four Sermons* . . . (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1830) makes no mention of Twelves in conjunction with either the cedar meetinghouse or the brick one that replaced it.

291 Hill, *History of the Old South Church*, II: 524-529. The new structure is sometimes designated the New Old South Church. Their departure was hastened by the great Boston fire of 1872, when the meetinghouse was damaged.

292 Ibid. 530-546. This was complicated by infighting over the relocation and protracted litigation with the state over their right to dispose of the building that threatened to bankrupt them in the process.

293 Michael Holleran, “Roots in Boston, Branches in Planning and Parks,” in Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 57-59. This was the first major preservation effort in Boston, following the galvanizing destruction of the John Hancock house. It set the tone for the preservation movement in Massachusetts and helped to shape a broader American preservation movement.
men whose deeds have glorified our nation’s annals.” Her aims were symptomatic of a wider preoccupation with saving “colonial fragments” that began in the 1870s and 1880s as Americans struggled with “a sense of history, of memory, and of cultural loss.”

Coincident with the centennial, when celebrations looked to the past as a means of charting the progress of the present and commemorating American achievements, the church became a symbol of Boston’s past, a rare survivor of the fire that had wiped out so much of the city’s historical fabric. Additionally, the focus on the deeds of great men made the absence of a known builder for the Old South Church even more conspicuous. As the focal point of Hemenway’s historical project, the church needed its own great man. Although the origin of the resurrection of Twelves’ association with the Old South remains unknown prior to the printed history of the church in 1890, it likely dates to this period. Hemenway herself may have helped to spread the conviction that Robert Twelves, architect, deserved a place among the great men whose stories she promoted as moral and patriotic lessons. The church’s custodians adopted the name of Twelves to fit the ideology they had created surrounding the building and its significance to Boston’s (and by extension, America’s) patriotic past. They used him to legitimate their invented


295 Quoted in Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 146-147. Architecture featured prominently in this period, which also witnessed the beginnings of the colonial revival style.

296 Ibid. 136-137 discusses the tension between progress and remembrance surrounding the centennial.

297 The connection with brick mason Joshua Blanchard was not discovered until 1895, the year after Hemenway’s death. See Brown, “Builder of the Old South Meeting-House,” 390-393.
With this, the memory of Twelves came full circle. Abigail Hewes had bestowed his name hoping that it would provide her son with a social advantage. Her objective failed, however, because circumstances created a discontinuity, both within the Hewes family and in the congregation of the Old South Church. For Hewes, the name meant something different; it was a mark of distinction tying him to a vague matrilineal ancestral tradition, one that he attempted to perpetuate by giving his own son a name with a number in it. Hewes' descendants allowed the name to fall out of use because, from their perspective, he was the illustrious ancestor whose reputation promised an advantage. “George Robert” evoked the memory of Hewes for them in a way that “Twelves” or “Fifteen” did not. Just as the name lost its significance for the family, it took on new significance for the church itself. As the building moved from a site of worship to a site of memory, it took on symbolic meaning that depended on the connection between people and place. The attribution of the building to Twelves supplied a beginning for its biographical arc, making the narrative of its history into a life story that began, as Hewes’ did, with the name of a father.

298 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory, 99. Kammen argues that Victorian Americans “hungered” for tradition, and used newly created traditions to forge a national consciousness built on a common heritage.


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