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CAPTURED . . . NEVER CAME BACK:
SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONG FEMALE NEW ENGLAND CAPTIVES,
1689-1763

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Barbara E. Austen

1986

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
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Barbara E. Auster
Author

Approved, April 1986

James Axtell
James Axtell

James Whittenburg
James Whittenburg

Kevin Kelly
Kevin Kelly

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ABSTRACT

From 1689 to 1763, the colonies of New France and New England were engaged in a series of border wars, many of which resulted in the destruction of frontier towns and the taking of prisoners. Over sixteen hundred New Englanders were taken prisoner by combined French and Indian raiding parties and returned with their captors to New France. At least fourteen percent of the New Englanders remained with their captors despite repeated attempts by their families or colonial governments to have them redeemed. Over one-third of these unredeemed captives were young girls or women.

Seventy-eight women and girls have been identified as remaining in New France, two-thirds of whom were under the age of twelve at their capture. Thirty-six married Frenchmen, eleven remained with the Indians, eight took vows in one of the Catholic convents, one married a Frenchman and later returned to New England, three died after being baptized by a priest, and nineteen were last reported in New France but their fates were undetermined.

Using baptismal, school, and marriage records, this study seeks to document the existence of a social network among the New England captives in New France. Social networks were an integral part of women's lives in New England villages. The transfer of these networks to New France would have eased the captives' assimilation into French society, providing tacit approval of and emotional support for those who were baptized into the Catholic religion, married Frenchmen, and then raised their children in their adopted religion.

The age of the captives, their marital status, their enrollment in a convent school, the presence of a sensory Christianity (visual and auditory enrichment of the worship service), and the missionary zeal of priests and nuns were factors in a captive's acculturation into French or Indian society and her acceptance of a new identity in that society. These factors, as well as the transfer of a social network from New England and the creation of a new network in New France contributed to the conscious and unconscious decisions of captives to remain in New France.

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Introduction

"On Tuesday, July 14th 1705 was baptized by me, undersigned priest [in Montreal], Elizabeth Casse, who, born at Deerfield in New England . . . lives with Pierre Roi, Habitant of La Prairie, Saint Lambert." Elizabeth Casse [Corse] was just one of many New England girls and women whose names appeared on the baptismal and marriage registers of Montreal and Quebec parishes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These girls and women were among the more than sixteen hundred captives taken by French and Indian raiding parties in the almost continuous border wars between New France and New England from 1689 to 1763. They were victims of a series of wars which started in Europe but inevitably involved the new world colonies as part of a continuing struggle for control of the North American continent.

Towns along the frontiers of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine were most frequently attacked. During King William's War (1688-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), and "Dummer's War" (1722-1725), the primary targets were towns along the Connecticut River and the coasts of New Hampshire and Maine. The inhabitants of such towns as Deerfield and Northfield, Massachusetts; Durham and Dover, New Hampshire; and Kittery, Wells, and York, Maine, were in almost constant fear of attack for nearly forty years, of which only twenty-four were years of declared war.

As the frontier expanded in the mid-eighteenth century, towns farther west were subject to attack. Settlements such as Charlestown, New Hampshire, and Colrain, Massachusetts, were prime targets in King George's War (1744-1748), and the Seven Years' War (1755-1763).²

Raiding parties from New France took captives of all ages and both sexes. French patrols were interested primarily in male captives, particularly from the regular troops used to defend New England towns. Almost two-thirds of the captives taken by Indian raiding parties were male, although women and children were also taken. Half of the Indians' captives were adult, and rarely were any children taken under the age of two.³

Of the 1,641 New England captives taken between 1689 and 1763, at least 229, or fourteen percent, chose to remain with their French or Indian captors. The Indians adopted fifty-two while at least 202 became French citizens. A larger percentage of female captives than male chose to remain, and captives between the ages of seven and fifteen were more likely to stay than adults. Due to the nature of the conflicts and diplomatic relations between the two governments, fewer captives remained in New France after King George's War and the Seven Years' War than had stayed after the previous conflicts.⁴

The French and Indians generally had the same motives for taking captives--their ransom value. Some Indian

captives were chosen for adoption into the tribe while others were turned over to the French, for a price. Adult males captured by French troops were primarily held for ransom or exchange; women and children were candidates for adoption into French families or entry into one of the Catholic
5
convents.

The Catholic missionaries in New France were more practical and successful in their conversion efforts among the Indians than were their Protestant counterparts in New
6
England. When English captives were brought to Montreal or Quebec, the missionaries found fertile new ground for their conversion efforts and candidates who were easier to convince than the Indians had proven to be. Captives were probably more receptive to conversion after their ordeal of Indian capture and the trek to Canada. The sudden and usually violent way in which the captives were taken from their homes was similar to the experience of Africans seized by white slave traders for export to the Americas. This disorienting and traumatic experience, coupled with the New Englanders' ingrained fear of their captors, repeatedly stressed in Protestant sermons and teachings, made the French society, with its relatively familiar European features, particularly
7
attractive.

New England captives probably found assimilation into French society easier than into Indian society. English and French cultures shared many of the same Christian and middle

class values, and the more compatible two cultures are, the easier it is for acculturation to occur. As for religious conversion, which would have been a anathema to Protestant New Englanders, objects are adopted more readily than behaviors and ideas. Objects and rituals of religion "may be integrated as long as they enhance prevailing security and orientational functions." ⁸ By adopting the "objects and rituals" of the Catholic religion, Protestant converts may have been trying to ensure their security from the "heathen" Indians from whom they recently had been delivered.

Emma Lewis Coleman's book, New England Captives Carried to Canada, 1677-1760, identifies seventy-eight women and girls from New England who remained in New France. At least two-thirds of them were under the age of twelve at the time of their capture. Thirty-six married Frenchmen, eleven remained with the Indians, eight took vows in one of the convents in Montreal or Quebec, one married a Frenchman and later returned to New England, three died in captivity after being baptized by a priest, and nineteen were last reported in New France, but their fates were undetermined. Eighty-five percent were captured before 1705 and the largest numbers were taken from Deerfield, Massachusetts; Dover, ⁹ New Hampshire; and Wells and York, Maine.

That this relatively substantial number of women chose to stay in New France when so many others returned to

New England suggests the presence of a strong network of support and education among these New England female captives, a network similar to those they had known at home. In New England, this network was best exemplified by the role of neighbor. Neighbors "sustained the community of women, gossiping, trading, assisting in childbirth, sharing tools and lore, watching and warding in cases of abuse."¹⁰ In New France, the network found its most visible expression in the processes of marriage, baptism, and conversion. The civil and parish records kept by the French contain frequent examples of New England women witnessing each other's marriages. Captives were also named as godmothers to other captives and their children, or were instrumental in converting captives on their death beds. Another type of network consisting of a small group of philanthropic French men and women also had a role in the decision of captives to remain in New France.

Other factors entered into a captive's decision to stay in New France. Marriage provided an easy way to assimilate into the new culture, and the majority of the captives were at or below the age at which most New England girls married or prepared for marriage. Several of the adult captives had been widowed and had either lost their families in the attack that resulted in their presence in New France, or had never had any children. One woman found a chance to live free from the verbal and physical abuse of her New England

husband. The unbalanced sex ratio in New France prior to about 1710 made the chances of finding a husband there particularly good, providing an additional incentive to captives to remain.¹¹

Seventeenth century Quebec and its environs could boast twenty-two missions, parishes, and Catholic institutions, while Montreal had fifteen.¹² The Ursuline nuns at Quebec and the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame at Montreal both ran convent schools that accepted English as well as French and Indian girls.¹³ Religion pervaded the life of the New England captive. In The Redeemed Captive John Williams wrote of the persistence of nuns and priests in convincing the captives to convert. "Some made it their work to allure poor souls by flatteries and great promises, some threatened, some offered abusive carriages to such as refused to go to church and be present at mass; for some they industriously contrived to get married amongst them."¹⁴ Many of the girls who married Frenchmen had been cared for, educated, and baptized by the nuns. "English girls who arrived in Montreal, Quebec, or the outlying missions encountered a world which was highly religious, oriented toward conversion,¹⁵ and at the same time, almost exclusively feminine."

The witness network, adoption by French or Indian families, and acculturation all had a strong basis in religion, and it was religion which had the strongest influence on the captives. Networks in New France would

take on a character different from--but nevertheless equal in strength to--those found in New England.

Notes for Chapter I

1. Emma Lewis Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada, 1677-1760, 2 vols. (Portland, Maine, 1925), 1:74.
2. Coleman, chaps. 5-21; Douglas Edward Leach, The Northern Colonial Frontier, 1607-1763, (New York, 1966); Edward P. Hamilton, The French and Indian Wars (New York, 1962).
3. Alden T. Vaughan and Daniel K. Richter, "Crossing the Cultural Divide: Indians and New Englanders, 1605-1763," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 90, pt. 1 (October 1980), 73-77.
4. *Ibid.*, 60-64, 70.
5. James Axtell, The European and the Indian (New York, 1981), 66-71, 173; Vaughan and Richter, 68, 73-77; Coleman, 1:51, 2:390-391.
6. Axtell, European and Indian, 66-71.
7. Reactions of captives to their seizure has strong parallels with post-traumatic stress syndrome which has recently received a great deal of media attention in relation to hostages taken by terrorists. In addition to the symptoms of stress seen in hostages on their return, several of the hostages taken from the TWA plane in Lebanon felt empathy for their captors' cause and felt a certain degree of bonding with them during the time of captivity. This same sort of bonding may have occurred between New England prisoners and their French and Indian captors. George J. Church, "At Last the Agony is Over," Time 126 (July 8, 1985), 14, 17; "The Hard Road to Freedom," Newsweek (July 8, 1985), 19, 20.
8. "Acculturation: An Exploratory Formulation," The Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation 1953, American Anthropologist 56 (1954), 973-994.
9. Coleman, vols. 1 and 2.
10. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives (New York, 1981), 9.
11. Coleman, vols. 1 and 2.
12. Répertoire des actes de baptême, mariage, sépulture, et des recensements du Québec ancien, 23 vols. (Montreal, 1980-), table of contents. Hereafter cited as QR.
13. Coleman, 1:51.
14. John Williams, The Redeemed Captive, Edward Clark, ed. (Amherst, Mass., 1976), 76.
15. Ulrich, 212.

Hooped Skirts and Powdered Wigs

By the late seventeenth century, the New England colonies were a study in contrasts, from sizable cities on the coast to scattered settlements on the western and northern frontiers. Abundant land and a degree of personal as well as political and economic freedom drew people away from the relative safety of cities to the unknown dangers of the frontier.

In New France, much the same picture evolved. The majority of the population in 1700 lived in rural areas. Most of the habitants were farmers living on rangs that fronted the St. Lawrence River and extended into the countryside on either shore. Instead of receiving land from town proprietors as in New England, the habitant of New France "received as much land as he could till free for the clearing of it, and paid seigneurial dues . . . amounting to only 10 percent of his income from the land." ¹ The seigneurial system, similar to the manor system in New York, and its long, narrow rangs meant that settlements were widely scattered, not centered around the meeting house as in established New England villages. Each seigneury did, however, have at least one parish church.

The population of New France in 1698 was 13,815 as compared to over 50,000 in the three New England colonies of Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. ² The military nature of society in New France and the lure of quick profits

in the fur trade resulted in a sex imbalance that lasted into the early eighteenth century. Immigration consisted primarily of single young males, not families, as was usually the case in New England.³

Social status was important in New France, especially in the cities. Canadian society "placed the accent, not on the basic bourgeois values of thrift, industry, and prudence, but on the gentlemanly ones of honor, courtesy, and breeding."⁴ New France followed a military ethos both socially and politically. Military careers provided a means of climbing the social scale, and officers and merchants alike strove to enter the ranks of the noblesse.⁵

The French in Canada also subscribed to conspicuous consumption. The Jesuit priest François Xavier Charlevoix, in a journal of his voyage to North America, contrasted the attitudes and daily lives of the English and French. In the English colonies, "there prevails an opulence which they are utterly at a loss how to use; and in New France, a poverty hid by an air of being in easy circumstances, which seems not at all studied . . . the French inhabitant again enjoys what he has acquired, and often makes a parade of what he is not possessed of."⁶

For the young captive from York, Maine, New France offered comforting similarities and disconcerting differences. At the time of the French and Indian attack in 1692, York had a population of not more than 500,

scattered in three distinct and widely separated settle-
⁷ments. The houses were built of wood and were connected
 by dirt roads or paths. Each district had its own meeting
 house, also built of wood and devoid of decoration. It was
 here that the minister preached long sermons about the
 punishments of hell for children who were not obedient to
 their parents. Girls might be taught housewifery and
 rudimentary reading by their mothers or perhaps attend
 classes conducted by the town schoolmaster.

After sojourns of varying lengths with the Indians,
 captives were usually brought to one of three cities--
 Montreal, Quebec, or Trois-Rivieres. Montreal was the center
 of the fur trade and, as a result, the focus of great
 activity. Once a year, until about 1680, the city hosted the
 Indian fair which was much like a carnival; it also
 witnessed the assembly and departure of the canoe fleets.
 Between 600 and 800 soldiers, nearly half of the civilian
 population, were regularly stationed at Montreal from 1685 to
 1713. Officers walked the wooden pavements in their
 colorful uniform coats worn over velvet waistcoats, swords
 buckled at their sides and their queued periwigs topped by
⁹gold-trimmed tricorne hats.

In the marketplace at the heart of the city, bordered by
 the homes and stores of the principal inhabitants, the York
 captive would encounter tradespeople in fine linen and lace;
 working-class people dressed in short pantaloons and colored

waistcoats; soldiers in white uniforms; fine ladies in hooped skirts and powdered wigs; working women in short skirts that showed not only their ankles but also the calves of their legs; and Indians either half-naked or with a blanket
10
draped over their shoulders.

The city of Montreal was crowded and busy even when the market was not open. Public and private buildings in the city included a school, court, prison, dockyard, six or seven granaries and warehouses, a barracks, an imposing parish church, four convents, and the Hôtel-Dieu (a hospital for habitants) and general hospital (for indigents). About 200 wooden one-story houses lined the dozen or so streets that intersected the two principal streets paralleling the river. Interspersed throughout the city blocks were grand courts and gardens that gave the city a feeling of
11
openness.

Public prayers and processions, jubilees, and masses marked the celebration of thirty-seven holy days of obligation in the Catholic calendar. The spectacle of these ceremonies was often enhanced by the presence of the
12
governor, the intendant, and other notable visitors. The parish churches were decorated with statues, tapestries, and silver and gold communion vessels, and priests wore velvets and furs and carried candles and crosses, providing a visual feast for the observer.

The same religious celebrations could be found in

Quebec, the religious center of the colony. By 1700 the city had a population of about 2,000. The focal point of the social world was the governor's residence, located in the upper town. When Governor Frontenac arrived for his second term in 1689, the city took on the atmosphere of a miniature royal court. Nobility, officers and soldiers, political figures, rich tradespeople, and nuns and priests inhabited the upper city. The lower town was inhabited by merchants, laborers, and artisans and craftsmen who often engaged in more than one trade.¹³ Trois-Rivières, although also a seat of government, was a small, peaceful city in comparison to Montreal and Quebec.¹⁴

Captives were adopted into French families which averaged six to seven children; families in Massachusetts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries averaged three to four.¹⁵ Parental attitudes toward children were reportedly more tolerant in New France, due in part to the religion, and to the supposed influence of the Indians with their seeming total lack of child discipline.¹⁶ French children were less likely to hear repeated warnings from the priest of their imminent descent into hell if they failed to be saved and live a godly life in complete subjugation to their earthly and heavenly fathers. Instead, children were indulged, and religion was more of a celebration than a harangue. The Catholic calendar contained fifty-three religious feast days, and worship focused on the Virgin Mary.

If enrolled by her adoptive family in one of the convent schools, a female captive was taught to render the Virgin Mary honor, homage, and obedience as a loyal subject and devoted child. Mary was seen as Mother, Queen, and Protector, and she set an example for young girls to set aside worldly pleasures. "In every convent, the Blessed Virgin [was] especially chosen for the first and chief superior."¹⁷ In the convent, girls were taught reading, writing, housewifery, and the catechism. Unlike the coeducational New England town schools, here the captive was in an exclusively feminine environment. In the words of a cloistered nun, in the convent "when one is weary of attendance to duty, another supplies her placeHer labor and good conversation will not be forgotten Here . . . one is able to pray for me to God, to console me when sick, another . . . will consult together with me like a friend and all will love me truly, without guile, without flattery."¹⁸ Young women had a choice in New France: to stay within this supportive, closed community, or to marry. The majority chose the latter.

The York captive would have found the institution of marriage very similar to what she had known in New England. Women married between the ages of 20 to 22, men slightly later, between 25 and 27.¹⁹ Banns were published before the ceremony and a dowry or marriage settlement was customary. However, the marriage settlement was almost always defined in

a marriage contract, a practice rarely followed in New
20
England.

Under the marriage contract, a woman's property was afforded more legal protection in New France than in New England. As in New England, all a woman's personal or movable property automatically became her husband's upon marriage. However, in New France, family real estate inherited by either spouse did not become part of the "community of goods" put under the husband's control. A husband could not sell, lease, or deed his wife's real property, although he could sell a harvest or invest the rents from her real estate with her consent. In New England, unless the land was put into a trust, real property was under the managerial control of the husband and as soon as the couple had a child, the property became his for life. Women in New England had no legal right to devise their real property, a right they enjoyed in New France.

In both New England and New France, a woman could not appear in court or engage in business without the consent of her husband unless he was a poor provider or deserted his family. At her husband's death, a widow had the right to her dower, usually one-third to one-half of her husband's property in New England or the same proportion of the community of goods in New France. The dower was a life interest in the property and did not include the right to devise or sell. In New France, a widow had the option of

recovering, in whole, her portion of the communal goods. Dower in both colonies could not be used to settle a husband's debts and both English and French widows were entitled to personal effects such as jewelry and clothing. 21 Greater legal rights for women in New France resulted not only from the basis of French law in the Roman code, but also from the relative scarcity of women in the seventeenth century. A similar situation occurred in the English colony of Maryland in the seventeenth century; women there also enjoyed greater legal rights for a period of time when men 22 outnumbered women.

Keeping house, childbearing, raising families, informally trading, gossiping, and helping on the farm or with the family business were universal experiences for women in colonial New France and New England. With a minimum of effort, New England captives could fit into this new, French society. Women in New France had a greater degree of freedom in dress, education, and property rights, but what probably appealed most to the young captive from York or the other small New England towns were the bustle of city life, the beauty and ceremony of Catholic services and celebrations, and, for a time, the favorable sex ratio that made finding a husband and a new identity relatively easy.

Notes for Chapter II

1. William J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France," in Dale Miquelon, ed., Society and Conquest: The Debate on the Bourgeoisie and Social Change in French Canada, 1700-1850 (Toronto, 1977), 125; Louise Dechêne, Habitants et marchands de Montreal au XVIIe siècle (Paris, 1974), 122, 374.
2. Guy Frégault, "The Colonization of Canada in the Eighteenth Century," in Miquelon, 85; Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1977, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1975), 2:1168.
3. Jacques Henripin, La Population Canadienne au Début du XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 1954), 13, 18, 20; Dechêne, 99.
4. Yves F. Zoltvany, The French Tradition in America (New York, 1969), 24.
5. Eccles, "Military Establishment," 122.
6. Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, Journal of a Voyage to North America Undertaken by Order of the French King Containing the Geographical Description and Natural History of the Country, particularly Canada, P. de Charlevoix trans., 2 vols. (London, 1761), 1:111-114, quoted in Zoltvany, Tradition, 150.
7. Charles Edward Banks, History of York, Maine, 2 vols. (Boston, 1931), 288.
8. Raymond Douville and Jacques Casanova, Daily Life in Early Canada (New York, 1967), 93, 95; Dechêne, 83.
9. Douville and Casanova, 96.
10. Ibid., 96; Dechêne, 364.
11. Dechêne, 361-363.
12. Ibid., 460, 470-71; Douville and Casanova, 99.
13. Douville and Casanova, 82-85, 135, 192.
14. Ibid., 87-88, 91.
15. Henripin, 52; Dechêne, 111; Hubert Charbonneau, Vie et mort de nos ancêtres (Montreal, 1975), 195; Philip J. Greven, Jr., Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970), 30; Jere R. Daniell, Colonial New Hampshire: A History (Millwood, N.Y.: 1981), 140; John Demos, A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (New York, 1970), 64, 68; Kenneth Lockridge, A New England Town: The First Hundred Years (New York, 1970), 66, 143n. There apparently are no specific demographic studies done for New Hampshire or Maine due to the lack of records available.
16. Dechêne, 434.
17. Glimpses of the Monastery, 2d ed. (Quebec, 1897), 229-230 (hereafter cited as Glimpses).
18. Ibid., 199.

19. Henripin, 20, 101; Charbonneau, 158, 165; Greven, 36, 120.
20. Marylynn Salmon, "The Property Rights of Women in Early America: A Comparative Study" (PhD. dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, April, 1980), 164.
21. Salmon, 4, 89, 119-121, 124-125, 133; Yves F. Zoltvany, "Esquisse de la Coutume de Paris," Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française, 25 (December 1971).
22. Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth Century Maryland," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 34 (1977), 542-571.

The Gauntlet

During the border skirmishes between New France and New England, French troops and the Indian raiding parties accompanying them generally had the same motives for taking captives--their ransom value. However, some Indian captives were also taken for adoption.¹ Traditionally Indians, particularly the Iroquois, waged wars to replace deceased relatives or to assuage their grief through revenge. A captive taken during these wars was adopted by a bereaved family and given the name of the deceased member. The transfer of names was known as "requickening," a means of "physically and spiritually replacing deceased relatives." Thus, the deceased's memory and "his personality and social role were assured survival."² In addition to taking the deceased's name, an adoptee also assumed the attendant "rights and obligations--the same dignities [and] honors" of his or her predecessor.³ Adoption served both a practical and a spiritual function--it also replenished the tribe's population. The most famous of the Indian captives, Eunice Williams, provides evidence of the persistence of the adoption motive for taking captives. Repeated attempts by both French and English governments to have Eunice "redeemed" from the Indians failed. The Mohawks with whom she lived "would as soon part with their hearts as the child."⁴

The acculturation of New England captives into Indian life began on the trail to Canada. Their captors provided

them with moccasins, introduced them to Indian foods (which many New Englanders thought was a starvation diet), and taught them wilderness survival skills.⁵ When the returning party arrived at the Indian village, the captives, dressed and painted as Indians, were taught to perform a war dance and song and then were made to run the gauntlet. The gauntlet was "a purgative ceremony by which the bereaved Indians could exorcise their anger and anguish, and the captives could begin their cultural transformation."⁶ Those who showed no fear or hesitation were prime candidates for adoption and subsequently were "baptized." The Indian baptism ceremony of immersion and bathing symbolically washed out the captive's white blood. Dressed in new Indian clothes and appropriately decorated, the adoptee was then welcomed to the tribe by one of the chiefs and introduced to his or her family of adoption.⁷

For the young captive who had probably seen her family killed during the Indian raid and had been forcibly wrenched from everything familiar in her young life, the custom of adoption eased her transition into Indian society. She was provided with a ready-made, pre-defined identity within a caring family and community. The assimilation undoubtedly was easier for younger captives and the Indians chose their adoptees carefully, keeping primarily young children and young women who were often the mothers of the captive children.⁸ Under the Indians' care, the captives were

taught to "think, act and react like Indians [so they would] effectively cease to be English and would assume an Indian identity."⁹

Surviving the fear of capture, the gauntlet, and "baptism," the captives found that they had "emerged with their persons intact and a solemn invitation to begin a new life, as full of love, challenge, and satisfaction as any they had knownThe sudden release from anxiety into a realm of affirmative possibility must have disposed many captives to accept the Indian way of life."¹⁰ They were accepted into the community in accordance with the trust they earned. They were given the freedom to wander at will, marry whom they chose, and to share in the affairs of war and peace. Life among the Indians, said two captives who chose to remain, embodied "the most perfect freedom, the ease of living, [and] the absence of those cares and corroding solitudes which so often prevail with us."¹¹

Mary Jemison, captured in 1758 at the age of fifteen, found women's chores among the Seneca Iroquois "not severe." Work was nearly the same from year to year. In the summer, women planted, tended, and harvested their corn together with "no master to oversee or drive us, so that we could work as leisurely as we pleased." Cooking was one of the major chores but few utensils were used so care of them was minimal. In the hunting season, women brought home the game killed by the men, dressed it, preserved the eatable meat

and prepared the skins. They did not have to learn or perform such tasks as spinning, weaving, or knitting.¹² Women's roles were not increasingly restricted by the proliferation of material goods that tied wives to the house as occurred in eighteenth-century English colonies.¹³

In Indian families, the discipline of children was based on dignity and honor, not on fear of damnation or the use of the rod, as was often found in Puritan New England families.¹⁴ Young children were not corporally punished because they were not considered to be at the age of reason. When they were old enough, the Indians believed children would follow the light of reason and correct themselves. The instruction of Indian children consisted of inculcating the idea of glory to be attained through skill and courage, using examples of their ancestors. Striking and punishing children were not considered proper;¹⁵ hence, foreign observers often described Indian childrearing as permissive.

Fifty-two captives reportedly remained with their Indian captors; eleven girls from New England have been identified in the records.¹⁶ Those eleven captives were brought to Indian missions instead of villages and therefore had a better chance of having their names recorded. Others may have found their way to the missions, but having already adopted Indian names, they cannot be easily identified.

All but two of the captive girls were under the age of twelve at capture and so would have been more easily

assimilated by the Indians. Their memories of their New England lives and families were shallower, not as ingrained, and hence more easily replaced or erased. The youngest of the girls was three, the oldest seventeen. Eight of the eleven were captured in Deerfield in 1704. Although only three girls were involved in the network of witnessing baptisms and marriages, the majority were from the same town and nine of the eleven were captured in the same year, implying an informal network among the captives, one that took other forms than witnessing Catholic ceremonies.¹⁷

The two Indian captives most actively involved in the network of witnesses were Sarah Hanson and Abigail Nims. Abigail was captured at Deerfield in 1704 at the age of three and taken to the mission of Sault-au-Recollet. She was baptized in June 1704 by Father Antoine Meriel in Montreal and given the name Marie Elisabeth. At the mission, she lived with the Indian woman Ganastarsi and may have had contact with another New England captive, Mary Sayward, also known as Sister Marie des Anges, the superior of the convent school established there by the Congrégation de Notre Dame. Reportedly, the Sister heard Abigail say that she wished to live and die among the Indians, a wish she later realized. In July 1715 she married Joseph Rising, also known as Ignace Raizenne in the French records, another Deerfield captive. Their son, Jean-Baptiste Jérôme, married Marie-Charlotte, the daughter of Sarah Hanson and Jean-Baptiste Sabourin,

in 1762. Abigail's granddaughter, Marie-Josephe Seguin-Laderoute, married Paul Sabourin, another child of Sarah Hanson, in 1752. Sarah herself was captured from Dover, New Hampshire, in 1724 at the age of sixteen and taken to the Sault-au-Recollet mission. She was not baptized until 1727¹⁸ at the mission's new location at Lac des Deux Montaignes.

The two missions to which captives were taken were Caughnawaga (Sault Saint-Louis) and Lac des Deux Montaignes, earlier called Sault-au-Recollet. Both missions moved several times in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as the soil became depleted and French settlements encroached on the area. The missionaries were concerned about the negative influences of French behavior,¹⁹ particularly alcohol abuse, on their new Indian converts.

The Indian lifestyle at the mission was more sedentary and regulated than in the villages. The missionaries believed they could convert the Indians only if they could keep them in one place under constant surveillance and instill in them some European values such as agricultural production and a sedentary lifestyle. The Indians raised poultry, horses, and pigs as well as the customary corn and other vegetables. Men still hunted from September to February and went on the war path, which enabled them to maintain some flexibility in their lives. The French missionaries realized they could not entirely erase Indian²⁰ values and lifestyles; they had to work within them.

In 1682 Caughnawaga, perhaps the best known of the Indian missions, had sixty cabins with 120 to 150 families, a chapel with three bells for a carillon, and the general appearance of a large, well-ordered farm. By 1700, the mission had grown to 350 "warriors," and continued to grow in the
21
early eighteenth century.

Daily routine at the mission consisted of three morning masses starting at 5:00 a.m. in the summer. The bells were rung to awaken the mission at 4:00 a.m. and to announce two of the three masses. During the services, the Indians sang their prayers in Huron. They were arranged in two choirs which sang alternately, one choir of men, the other of women. The third mass of the morning was specifically for children and stressed the catechism. From 8:00 to 11:00 in the morning, the priests visited the Indians in the fields or cabins or made books for them. Prayers continued throughout the day--on their way to work, for their "examination of the conscience" at 11:00 a.m., on their way home, and again in the evenings. The evening services started with the childrens' prayers and catechism, followed by the adults
22
with their evening prayers and Vespers.

In their ceremonies and conversion efforts, the missionaries appealed to all of the Indians' senses. Medals, rings, crucifixes, and rosaries held by native hands helped them recall the priests' oral messages in much the same way the Indians used wampum belts and medicine sticks.

The bright colors and shiny surfaces of these objects dazzled the Indians' eyes as did the wooden crosses, candles, silk-draped altars topped with silver chalices, rich brocaded chasubles, and pictorial images of the Christian story. Incense teased their nostrils while holy wafers appealed to their sense of taste. Their ears were assailed by hymns and chants, and the peal of bells. ²³ Picture books were used to teach the Gospel, the practices of virtue, the ceremonies of the mass, the torments of hell, and the creation. The ceremonies of the mass, candlelit processions, and the mysteries of the sacraments added to the sensory appeal of the Catholic religion which the missionaries used to their best advantage. ²⁴ Lacking the ability to convey the intricacies of Christian ideology through the Indians' language, the missionaries used sensory experience to attract and hold the natives' attention and to teach them abstract ideas, a method particularly effective with children.

Sensory Christianity was only one of several facets of life in the Indian missions which would have appealed to young New England captives. Although only three Indian captives definitely engaged in the network of witnesses (two of them extensively), the fact that seven of the nine girls who remained with the Indians were from Deerfield suggests that having one's friends close by probably made the decision to stay more palatable. While evidence does not exist to support the idea of a witness network, it is only logical

that the Deerfield girls engaged in some form of communication among themselves, even if it were only to maintain childhood friendships.

The almost immediate restoration of an identity with established expectations which the girls experienced on adoption into the Indian tribe eased the trauma and disorientation of their capture and trek north and also contributed to their willingness to stay. Discipline was not harsh and the relatively few threats of damnation or physical punishment, must have afforded these girls, the majority under the age of twelve, a certain sense of freedom. The relatively easy lifestyle described by Mary Jemison and the cooperative nature of Indian women's work also afforded the older girls a degree of freedom from the often onerous chores they had undoubtedly already assumed in their New England families.

Strangers in a strange land, these young female captives found acceptance and adoption into a caring community instead of the death or damnation they had been taught to fear from birth. For these young minds, the Indian way of life held certain attractions that influenced their decisions to remain with their captors.

Notes for Chapter II

1. Axtell, European and Indian, 173; Vaughan and Richter, 77.
2. Vaughan and Richter, 73-77.
3. Axtell, European and Indian, 188.
4. Coleman, 1:54-59; George Sheldon, A History of Deerfield, 2 vols. (Deerfield, Mass., 1896), 1:347.
5. John Williams, The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion (Northampton, 1853), 145-149, provides a good account of a captive's trek to New France. (Hereafter cited as Williams 1853).
6. Axtell, European and Indian, 186.
7. Ibid., 187-188.
8. Ibid., 172, 175.
9. Ibid., 198.
10. Ibid., 190.
11. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Letter from an American Farmer (New York, 1957), 208.
12. James E. Seaver, A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison (Canandaigua, N.Y., 1824), 46-47, as quoted in James Axtell, The Indian Peoples of Eastern America: A Documentary History of the Sexes (New York, 1981), 138-139.
13. Cary Carson and Lorena Walsh, "The Material Life of the Early American Housewife," paper delivered at Conference on Women in Early America, Williamsburg, Va., November 1981.
14. Father Joseph François Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times, ed. and trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1974-1977), 1:358, 360-61, 364-65, as quoted in Axtell, Indian Peoples, 38-41.
15. Ibid., 38-41.
16. Coleman, chaps. 5-21. Captives with the Indians were a Doloff girl from Exeter, New Hampshire; Joanna Ordway of Haverhill, Massachusetts; from Deerfield, Mercy Carter, Mary Field, Abigail French, Mary Harris, Hannah Hurst, Joanna Kellog, Abigail Nims, and Eunice Williams; and Susan Hanson from Dover, New Hampshire.
17. Coleman, chaps. 5-21.
18. Coleman, 1:239, 2:102-110; Institut Généalogique Drouin, Dictionnaire National des Canadiens Français, 1680-1760, 3 vols. (Montreal, 1958), 2:1129, 1211, 1227.
19. William C. Sturtevant, ed., Handbook of North American Indians, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1978-1980), 15:469-473; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, 73 vols. (Cleveland, 1896-1901), 62:169, 68:275. Hereafter cited as JR.
20. Richard Conkling, "Legitimacy and Conversion in Social Change: The Case of French Missionaries and the

- Northeastern Algonkian," Ethnohistory, 21/1 (Winter 1974), 7.
21. JR, 62:169-173, 66:205, 68:231; E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 15 vols. (Albany, N.Y., 1858-1887), 4:474.
 22. JR, 60:277-287, 62:171-175, 68:271-273; Henri Béchar, The Original Caughnawaga Indians (Montreal, 1976), 130-131.
 23. Axtell, European and Indian, 70.
 24. JR, 62:173; James P. Ronda and James Axtell, Indian Missions: A Critical Bibliography (Bloomington, Ind., 1978), 8; Béchar, 147.

The Household Friends of her Infancy

From the first settlements in the early seventeenth century, the Roman Catholic Church played a leading role in the settlement and life of the colony of New France. As early as 1610 priests were in Canada converting Indians and ministering to colonists. The primary stated purpose of the Company of New France, the body charged with settling the colony and making it economically viable, was to convert Indians. In 1625 the first Jesuit missionaries arrived in New France and by 1635 had founded a college in Quebec to educate sons of the upper class. Four years later, the first women's orders were established in Quebec. Montreal was settled as a missionary outpost and as a community based on religious precepts. These efforts were the result of a religious revival that shook France in the first half of the seventeenth century. "New orders . . . were established to combat heresy, raise the religious and moral tone of society, and convert the pagan in all parts of the world."¹ This revivalism was carried to New France, a vast area ripe for missionary activity.

Settlement of new lands frequently followed the path prepared by missionaries. By 1713 forty Indian missions had been established on both sides of the St. Lawrence River from Kamouraska to Chateauguay, a distance of over 240 miles. Villages of more or less fervent Catholics grew up around these missions.² Each village and each seigneurie along the

river had its parish church serviced by country priests, Jesuits, Sulpicians, or Recollets. Like the large city cathedrals, small country churches were lavishly decorated by their parishoners with embroidered or woven tapestries and golden vessels.

Missions established farther west not only brought religion to the Indians but also to soldiers at the outposts and to coureurs de bois who passed through or used the forts as a base. Here the Roman Catholic Church provided the early settlers "with a sensual and spiritual link to the world they had left, as well as assurance of recompense in the next. The liturgy, the consolation of confession, the other familiar rights, were exactly the same."³

Even more important than issuing strictures against sin, cultivating the role of the good citizen, and instructing habitants in religious dogma and doctrine was the role of the church in fostering a sense of community in an otherwise dispersed population. "The parish was the link binding together a population often widely scattered" and as such, "ensured family solidarity, fostered traditions, and built up a moral and religious inheritance."⁴ Jean-Baptiste de Saint-Vallier, the second bishop of Quebec from 1688 to 1727, described each home in New France as a "small well-disciplined community in itself, where family prayers are said morning and evening, where the rosaries are said, where individual consciences are examined before meals, and where

the fathers and mothers of families deputize for the priest by superintending the behavior of their children and their servants." ⁵ Although Saint-Vallier was undoubtedly biased and perhaps too idealistic in his opinion of the religious tenor of the Canadian family, the family was the major source of social control in a colony that was decentralized and lacked a traditional police force and other forms of institutionalized social control. The large number of parishes in the colony, the elaborate gifts the parishoners made to decorate their churches, and the intensity with which they sought to have their children instructed in the catechism at a convent or local parish school illustrate the important part religion played in the habitants' lives. "For the habitants, the creation of a parish was a symbol that marked the end of the struggle to 'domesticate' the strange country, the return to a form of normal social life. The church and the curé were the pivots of their religion," ⁶ and the family was the pivot of the church.

Religion extended into the secular government of New France as well. The bishop was a member of the Sovereign Council, the leading administrative, legislative and judicial authority in the colony. At the local level, priests directed the ecclesiastical courts and committees for the care of the poor. By exerting pressure in New France and in the mother country, the church sought to stop the liquor trade with the Indians and to influence the government's

Indian policy in the western territories. Church influence in the latter area was significant because the government depended on the missionaries to keep the Indians allied with New France. These alliances prevented English expansion into the fur trade, the life blood of the French colony.

Women as well as men had a role in the religious life of the colony. The first Ursuline and hospital sisters to arrive in 1639 founded a school and hospital for Indian girls. When the girls proved averse to European ways, the nuns turned their attentions to French settlers and their families. From Montreal the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame went into the countryside to provide schools for habitant girls. Hospital sisters established Hôtel-Dieu in Montreal and Quebec for the care of habitants and hospitals for the care of the indigent. The nuns' influence was directed through their charitable works. They brought religion directly into the home and had contact with large numbers of people while providing necessary services such as housing and hospital care.⁷

The intendant and other nobles of the colony frequently visited the convents, especially when vows were conferred. Wealthy widows became long-term visitors or pensionnaires perpetuels, living within the convent but not taking vows. The honored visitors whom the nuns entertained and the gifts of money, land, or services the convents received, offered to ensure a person's inclusion in the sisters'

prayers, are just two examples of how the people of New France showed their esteem for the women's orders.

The Sieur Gervais Baudin (ca. 1645-1700), the physician to the Ursulines, presented a large gift to the convent in return for memorial masses or communion at his death. Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Couillard de l'Espinay (1657-1735), a government official and seigneur, gave a piece of woodland in exchange for perpetual prayers for him and his wife. Monsieur Antoine Buteau bequeathed all his goods after his only child took her vows at the convent. These gifts of money and land meant that the nuns had to act as business-women and landlords. In fact, the Ursulines were seigneurs; they owned and managed the seigneurie of Sainte-Croix below Quebec and undertook to build a church for the parishioners there.

Women also played a role in the devotional activities of the church in New France. The Sisterhood of the Holy Family, a confraternity within the church made up of habitant and noble wives, had as its object to inspire a true and firm piety in all Christian families and to help in the conversion of the heathen. Women in the sisterhood aspired to such virtues as affection, respect, and obedience to their husbands. Saint Anne was the patron saint of the Canadians. The church of Ste.-Anne-de-Beaupré became the object of pilgrimages and was famous for producing miracles. Worship of the Virgin Mary was of prime importance; four holy

days were celebrated for her and she was the patron saint of
the Jesuit Church in Quebec.¹¹

Another example of the value of women in the religious life of New France was the importance placed on education. Even when money was scarce and travel hazardous, families made sacrifices when it was a question of the moral and educational well-being of the children. Magistrates, laborers, farmers, all brought their daughters to the monastery. Ecclesiastical and civil authorities expressed their belief in education by defraying costs, either in part or in full, of the enrollment of young girls in the Ursuline convent school.¹²

The Ursulines had two schools, a boarding school and a day school, the pensionnat and externat. The government of the boarding school was nominated by the superior and included a mistress-general and a staff of teachers and aides. The mistress-general welcomed the students, placed them in an appropriate class, and checked on their progress. She was the intermediary authority between the superior and the teachers and was also responsible to the students' parents.

The curriculum in the early eighteenth century consisted of reading, grammar, arithmetic, penmanship, religious instruction including sacred history, and recitation in prose and verse "to impart a taste for reading, as well as to ornament the memory and improve the mind." Children went to

the convent school to form their spirit and their conscience, and to learn "the love of God, the fear of offending Him, respect for authority, the fidelity to order and duty, habits of virtue and self-government." Skills such as embroidery, needlework, and domestic economy were also part of a girl's education. The curriculum was designed to prepare girls for their aim in life: "living according to the precepts of religion, and performing well the duties of one's station in society." An historian of the Ursulines claims that their students became strong and generous women who contributed to the formation of Canadian society.¹³ If service in one of the religious orders or a good marriage can be considered contributions to the formation of society, then the students at the convent lived up to the Ursuline historian's expectations.

Marguerite Seigneuret, once a student with the Ursulines, married Louis Godefroy de Normanville, the king's attorney in New France. Her son René Godefroy de Tonnancourt was a "protector" of the Ursulines, providing them with funds and two of his daughters who joined the order. Marguerite also acted as godmother for several New England captives. Genevieve Roussel (d.1738), another student at the convent, was the wife of Louis Chambalon (ca. 1663-1716), merchant and royal notary. The couple cared for the son of Chambalon's first wife and saw him ordained a priest in 1706. They also took in a young woman who later became an Ursuline. Former

student Catherine Thierry (1640-1690) formed a partnership in 1688 with a Quebec merchant who, in return for one-third of the profits, helped her manage her husband's business. Her husband was Charles Le Moyne de Longueuil, soldier, interpreter, trader, seigneur, and the richest Montreal citizen of his time.¹⁴ The social and religious influence of these married women by virtue of their husbands' standing within the community and the charitable and religious works of the women's orders were substantial contributions made by Ursuline students to the society of New France.

Terms for boarding at the school were moderate. Payment was often made in goods and provisions, firewood, or building materials. The government supported the boarding school as well, and not infrequently fees were also paid from the alms-box of the convent. Some pupils entered the school at a young age and stayed seven to eight years. Generally, students were between ten and eleven and came to prepare for first communion, staying from two to five years. At age fourteen or fifteen they were considered mature enough to make a decision about taking vows as a nun.¹⁵ If a positive decision was made, a girl underwent six years of a novitiate. At the time of taking her final vows, she laid aside her family name "and the spouse of Christ is henceforth known by some appellation that serves to remind her of heaven more than of earth."¹⁶

The day school or externat "provided for the religious

instruction and primary education of all classes, rich and poor, in the city." ¹⁷ The stay in the school was usually shorter and the education not as complete as in the pensionnat. Costs for schooling were defrayed in part by the government, which paid an average of 1000 livres per year, and by a foundation left by Madame de la Peltrie, the secular foundress of the Ursulines in Quebec who was dedicated to converting the Indians. The foundation paid for six Indian girls and several French girls as well. Additional money came from friends in France and different Ursuline communities, from devotional gifts in Canada, and from the coffers or through the frugality of the nuns themselves. The number of students in the school varied because they entered and left throughout the course of the year. In general, there was a gradual increase in the total number of students over the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, with the day school enrolling more than the boarding ¹⁸ school.

A student at the Ursuline convent was warmly welcomed "as if the inmates of the convent were the household friends of her infancy," ¹⁹ a feeling heightened by the practice of calling the nuns "mother." L'abbé Bougand considered the convent at Trois-Rivières a warm and close community. He characterized the convent as a "theater of a holy and serious education," a place of silent cloisters and large tranquil gardens, with blessed images and soft pious songs sung at

each hour. No matter which way the young girl looked, she saw only peace, modesty, and mental repose. Slowly, this peace penetrated, "this soft mental repose grasps her soul; the taste of holy joy, of pure and peaceful pleasures are born in her and prepare her admirably to the hidden life of the wife and mother."²⁰ Life in the convent was structured and secure, where "each hour has . . . its allotted occupation, from the time when the bell at four o'clock announces the hour to rise, till the signal for retiring before nine in the eveningIt is the family circle, without its anxiety and cares; it is society, without its tedious forms and shallow compliments."²¹

This is the sort of environment a substantial number of New England women and girls encountered upon redemption from their Indian captors in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Torn from their families and homes, forced to trudge through snow to the Indian settlements in northern Maine and Canada, and often fearing for their lives, the captives had their first contact with the French through the missionaries. Many of these men took it upon themselves to redeem New England captives from Indian hands, placing them either with Canadian families or with one of the religious orders.²² In either case, the captives were well cared for, instructed in the Catholic religion, baptized, and made into "good citizens."

According to the Ursuline historian, New England

captives were welcome in Canada. They were treated well by Canadian families who gave the captives the "honor" of adoption or protection. Historically, orphans in New France had been well cared for by the crown or by stepparents and this care was readily extended to "orphans" of Indian captivity. An adoptive family usually included enrollment in one of the convent schools as one of the "honors" they provided their new charges, so most captives had some contact with the teaching sisters. It was the care provided by both the secular and religious communities, among other factors, that influenced many captives to accept the Catholic religion and stay in New France.²³

At least seventy-eight captives chose to remain in Canada after their capture. How much of a role did the convent schools play in that decision? An examination of the registers from the Ursuline pensionnat in Quebec reveals that that this role was considerable. The registers begin in 1641 and continue through the middle of the nineteenth century. Between 1690 and 1760, twenty-six English girls were enrolled at the pensionnat. The difficulty in identifying them is that only their first names, which are usually baptismal names, were recorded, along with the appellation "anglaise" or "angloise."²⁴

Among the captives, nineteen were either baptized or married in Quebec and of them, four became nuns, three with the Ursulines and one at the Hôtel-Dieu; two were adults

and probably were not considered eligible for the pensionnat; and eight were enrolled at the school. The five remaining Quebec residents may be among those entries in the register stating simply "angloise." (See table 1).

Thirteen of the twenty-six students at the Ursuline school can be tentatively identified (see table 2) and all but four can be put in Quebec at some major point in their lives (either at baptism or marriage). Of those thirteen, six married, three became nuns (one at the H^otel-Dieu in Montreal), one died three years after her enrollment, and three have unknown histories, which means they may have eventually returned to New England. Among the sponsors for these students are the governor and intendant of Quebec, the governor of Montreal, and Mademoiselle Pinaud, an unknown benefactress of five students.²⁵ The fact that the governor and intendant sponsored captives illustrates the importance not only of the girls themselves for both humanitarian and political purposes, but also of a proper Catholic education for the socialization of these girls as good Canadian citizens.

Although the population of female captives remaining in New France is small and identification sometimes tenuous, the effect of an Ursuline education on a captive's decision to stay was significant. Over half of those who remained in Quebec were students at the pensionnat. Attending school did not ensure that the captive would stay in New France, but it

TABLE I

New England Female Captives in Quebec

Name	Age	Quebec affiliation
Abigail Brackett*	9	baptism, marriage
Helen Davis*	13	baptism
"Marie Anne" Davis	6	nun of Hôtel-Dieu
Sarah Davis*	11	Ursuline nun
Hannah Dunkin	12	marriage
Louise Foster*	16	baptism at Ursulines de Trois-Rivières
"Marie Louise" Hocman Hoar	widow	baptism
Dorothy "Jeryan"	?	Ursuline nun
Abigail Kimball*	8	marriage
Katharine Stevens*	12	marriage
Mary Stilson	?	baptism, marriage
Rachel Storer*	17	baptism, marriage
Mary Swarton	12	marriage
Barsheba Webber	3	baptism, marriage
Elizabeth Webber*	?	marriage
Esther Wheelwright*	7	Ursuline nun
Abigail Pitman Willis	32	marriage
Elizabeth Willis	8	marriage
Judith Willis*	13	marriage

 * student at Ursuline pensionnat

Data compiled from Emma Lewis Coleman, New England Captives Carried to Canada, 2 vols. (Portland, Maine, 1925), and Registre des entrées et sorties des petites filles françaises et sauvages des 1641 and Livre des entrées et sorties des Pensionnaires 1719 à 1839 at the Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec, Quebec, Canada.

TABLE II

English Students at the Ursuline Pensionnat

<u>Register entry</u>	<u>New England captive</u>	<u>Date of capture</u>	<u>History</u>
1690 deux angloise de Trois-Rivières			
1691 Marie Catherine	Katherine Stevens	1698	m. Quebec
1695 Marie Françoise	Judith Willis	1689	m. Quebec
1696 Thérèse Huilier			
Agathe langloise			
Marie Anne langloise	Sarah Davis	1690	Ursuline nun
une petite anglaise			
1698 Gabrielle Louise Braquil	Abigail Brackett	1691	m. Quebec
1701 Marie Louise Anglaise	Abigail Kimball	1697	m. Quebec
1702 Agathe Clerque	Agatha Clark (unknown in N.E.)	(1703)	(m. Quebec)
1704 angloise	(Rachel Storer?)		
1706 angloise			
1707 Marie Elisabeth angloise	Elizabeth Webber	1689?	m. Quebec
Elisabeth angloise			
Hélène		1704	d. 1710
1708 Marie françoise Angloise			
1709 petite Angloise nomée Esther	Esther Wheelwright	1703	Ursuline nun
Anne Marie anglaise			
1713 Angelique langlois	Ruth Littlefield	1703	Hôtel-Dieu nun in Montreal
1720 Catherine Persan	Hannah Parsons	1703	m. Montreal
1747 Marie Louise langlois	"Marie Louise" Foster	1747	?
1753 Elisabeth Prisque	Elizabeth Price of Prescott?		
1756 Anglaise			
1757 Methe Angloise	Mary Phipps	1755	?
---- Rebecca			

* m. denotes marriage; d. denotes death

Data compiled from RES, LES, QR, and Coleman, vols. 1 and 2.

certainly increased the chances. These figures also refer solely to the pensionnat--it is uncertain how many New England girls were influenced by an education and contact with the nuns at the externat.

The influence exerted by the convent was more than educational. From as early as 1701 there was at least one nun with the Ursulines who came from New England and who could empathize with the captives' plight and perhaps even converse with them in their own tongue.²⁶ The convent itself offered a closed, supportive, female community in stark contrast not only to their captivity but to anything these girls had known in New England.

A similar examination of the convent school in Montreal, unfortunately, is not possible. The records of the Congrégation de Notre Dame were destroyed in a series of devastating fires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, considering that the majority of captives were taken to Montreal and that Father Antoine Meriel, who spent his personal fortune converting them, was father confessor to the convent, it is safe to assume that a picture similar to that in Quebec would appear. Twenty-three girls, about one-third of all captives, are known to have been at a convent school, whether at Montreal, Quebec, or one of the missions.

The stories of two students at the Ursuline pensionnat illustrate the captives' encounters with religious life in New France. Judith Willey was captured in 1689, at the age

of thirteen, along with her mother and sister. Separated from what was left of her family, she was placed in the service of the hospital sisters of St. Joseph in Montreal as their ouvrier or porter. At her baptism in 1692, her godfather was Governor Frontenac and her godmother was the wife of the intendant.²⁷

In 1695, as "Thérèse Huiller," she was enrolled as a pensionnaire with the Ursulines at Quebec, and two years later she apparently decided to become a nun. However, the sisters felt she had "neither the capacity nor the health to be a religieuse." Instead, she applied to be accepted as a pensionnaire perpetuelle, living with the sisters but not taking vows, a somewhat less rigorous lifestyle. Although her pension and trousseau, the fee she paid for acceptance, were small, the sisters consented out of charity because she was a "poor yet virtuous stranger." Her entrance was finally prevented by the father superior, whom neither prayers nor entreaty could dissuade. Despite these setbacks, Judith²⁸ remained in Quebec and within the year was married.

Esther Wheelwright had more success in entering the Ursuline community. Captured at the age of seven in 1703, she lived for six years among the Abenakis before her redemption by Father François Bigot. He brought her to Quebec where the governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, took her into his family and placed her with his daughter in the Ursuline pensionnat. After two years of study, the governor

withdrew the girls from the school and introduced them to Quebec and Montreal society. Within two years, the pull of the convent brought Esther back to the Ursulines where she took the white veil of the novice. She took her final vows in 1714 in the presence of Governor Vaudreuil and other nobles of Quebec. The story does not end here, however, because in 1760 she was elected to the first of three terms as superior of the convent, the highest position in the Ursuline community.

The caring, well-regulated and service-oriented life of the convent appealed to both these New England girls who wanted to take their vows. However, more than just the supportive atmosphere must have drawn them. This was a community of relatively autonomous women, women who owned property and in effect governed themselves with a minimum of male interference which may have appealed to some of the girls. The power within and without the convent that Esther had as superior was something unheard of in New England. Women comprised the majority of Protestant congregations, but men wielded all of the financial, civil and ecclesiastical power. Had Esther returned to New England she never would have exercised the type and extent of power she did as superior: leading a community of women, issuing policy, making social and political contacts with the elite of the colony, or managing finances.

Even those sisters not at the level of superior enjoyed

a certain amount of prestige. Nuns were held in great esteem by the community, affected public opinion, performed active social services, helped to train and educate children, and as a group owned land, acted as seigneurs, and managed money. This expanded role for women, at least in relation to New England conditions, translated into the secular community as well. Women in New France had greater legal rights than did women in New England. They could own land and run businesses. Their property was protected in marriage contracts and their care after the death of their husbands was also assured by virtue of the contract. They could also dispose of their property in their own wills. Women were also expected to take an active role in social welfare. Nobles' wives were often required to canvass the neighborhood for donations for the poor. ³⁰ The Sisterhood of the Holy Family, Sainte Anne, and the Virgin Mary put women in a prominent position within religious life as well.

The appeal of women's roles in religion and the beauty and ceremony of church services were not the sole factors in attracting New England girls to the Catholic religion. Priests and nuns took a very active role in converting captives. François Bigot's sermon when Esther Wheelwright took her final vows provides insight into the pressures applied to the captive to make her convert.

"By what marvels of God's goodness do you find yourself today, my sister, happily transplanted from a sterile and

ingrate land, where you would have been the slave of the demon heresy, to a land of blessing and promise, where you are about to enjoy the sweet freedom of the children of God," began the father. He related her capture and captivity and the sorrowful circumstances in which he found her "in order to prove to her that in all her perils, privations, and sufferings, she had been uplifted and led by the hand of God." Bigot continued, expressing gratitude that her parents could no longer stand in the way of her happiness. "So long as you were not of an age to dispose of yourself, Providence suspended the natural tenderness of your father and mother, and abated the eagerness of their first pursuit of their child." Now, at the age of eighteen, Esther was free to make her own choice. Her parents could "no longer oppose the choice you have made of a holy religion and a condition of life which they disapprove, only because they know not its excellence or its sanctity," he told Esther.³¹

The clergy's interest in conversion came from the missionary focus of the religious orders in New France, primarily humanitarian in intent but also motivated by the political and religious threat posed by Protestant neighbors. Each English convert struck another blow against heresy and marked a psychological victory against New England.

To attain their ends, nuns and priests used persuasion, separation, education, as well as threats and physical punishment. They took advantage of the circumstances

surrounding the New Englanders' Indian capture. For most of their lives, New England Protestants had been told that Indians were the minions of the devil and that captivity among them was tantamount to living in hell.³² The long, difficult trek north, the seeming barbarity of the Indians and their "uncivilized" way of life undoubtedly bore out that belief. Once redeemed by the French, the captives' main fear was that of being returned to the Indians. Missionaries in the Indian villages ministered to the tribes and through them tried to gain English converts for the Church by using both blandishments and the threat of Indian anger. Upon her return to New England, Mercy Short, who was captured in 1690 and eventually redeemed, was subject to ravings in which she saw herself in the Indian camp where French Canadian priests used "the threat of the Indians to force her to take their communion."³³ Samuel Williams, in correspondence with his father, the minister John Williams, both in captivity in 1704, claimed he was told that unless he converted he would be returned to the Indians. Evidently the threat, along with separation and physical punishment, worked, for young Samuel³⁴ abjured and was baptized in 1705.

The cases of Mercy Short and Samuel Williams were used as propaganda against the Catholics by such Puritan ministers as Cotton Mather and John Williams, so their veracity must be questioned. However, the recalcitrant convert or one as important as Samuel Williams, the son of a Protestant

minister, may have led the clergy and nuns to use Indian threats as a last resort.

The religious and educational climate of New France undoubtedly had a large effect on female captives' decision to remain and on their socialization into French society. The role of women in the Catholic religion and in the church contrasted with that in New England, offering more freedom and authority. Education was more nearly universal in New France than in New England. Instruction in the home was supplemented by a stay of from four weeks to two years in a convent school, surrounded entirely by females, especially girls of the same age. Girls in New England were taught either at home, in the homes of neighbors or relatives, or perhaps in the local school with both boys and girls and by a male teacher. They never had an opportunity to experience living in an entirely female community.

Captives who became nuns also must have influenced their young charges, although only two were active in the witness network. Sarah Davis, who took her vows in 1701, had the opportunity to influence at least seventeen "anglaise" in the Ursuline pensionnat. Captured in 1690 at Casco, Maine, Sarah was redeemed from the Indians the following year by Jesuit missionary Jacques Bigot. Bigot took her to Quebec where she was baptized as Marie Anne, lived with several French families, and in 1696, at the age of seventeen, went to live with the Ursulines. Conditionally accepted into the

novitiate in 1699, Sarah professed in 1701 and took the name Sainte-Benoit, eventually progressing to the position of "Mother."³⁵

Abigail Kimball entered the Ursuline school the same year Sarah professed. She and Elizabeth Webber, who entered the school in 1706, both married in Quebec. If Sarah served as a teaching sister, she may have taught future nuns Esther Wheelwright and Ruth Littlefield.³⁶ Esther, together with Dorothy Jeryan, had contact with at least six and five New England captives, respectively, while living as sisters in the Ursuline convent.³⁷ New England nuns in Montreal probably had a similar influence--both Lydia Longley and Mary Sayward took their vows in 1699 and had the potential to influence a great many girls.³⁸

Religion and convent schools certainly were not the only factors that influenced captives' decisions to stay. A number of captives who were baptized returned to New England; only eight women chose to become nuns; not all who attended convent schools remained in New France. However, religion and education played a significant role in a captive's decision to stay and in her socialization into the society of New France.

Notes for Chapter III

1. William J. Eccles, France in America (New York, 1972), 24-39.
2. Les Ursulines de Quebec depuis leur établissement jusqu'à nos jours, 2 vols. (Quebec, 1878), 2:88.
3. Eccles, France in America, 58.
4. Douville and Casanova, 127.
5. Ibid., 128.
6. Dechêne, 465.
7. Jan Noël, "New France: Les femmes favorisées." Atlantis 6 (Spring 1981), 87-88; Ursulines de Quebec, 1:429.
8. Ursulines de Quebec, 1:141-144, 2:457, 470; Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1:80-81.
9. Ursulines de Quebec, 2:147-149.
10. Douville and Casanova, 128.
11. Ibid., 128-129.
12. Ursulines de Quebec, 1:490-491.
13. Glimpses of the Monastery, 209-212 (hereafter cited as Glimpses); Les Ursulines des Trois-Rivières depuis leur établissement jusqu'à nos jours, 2 vols. (Trois-Rivières, 1888), 1:484 (hereafter cited as Ursulines des Trois-Rivières); Ursulines de Quebec, 1:489.
14. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1:463-465, 2:129-130, 252-253; Ursulines de Quebec, 2:508-509.
15. Glimpses, 213-214.
16. Ibid., 191, 214.
17. Ibid., 213.
18. Ursulines de Quebec, 1:192; Glimpses, 214.
19. Glimpses, 209.
20. Ursulines des Trois-Rivières, 1:486-487.
21. Glimpses, 200. The convent school was probably very similar to the environment found in women's colleges of the late nineteenth century. The colleges consisted of of one building where female students lived and learned under the watchful eye of their teachers. A mother-daughter relationship was recreated between college teacher and student as it was between sister and student in the convent. College administrators imposed a strict regimen as a means of creating inner order through a regulated outer order, again similar to the practice in the convents. The fostering of this mother-daughter relationship and the strict regimen were designed to enable teachers, and nuns, to keep control over the students' actions and lives. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930s (New York, 1984), 4-58.
22. Drouin, 3:1577, 1831; Ursulines des Trois-Rivières, 1:197.

23. Ursulines de Quebec, 2:48, 222. Stephen Williams frequently recounted French kindnesses during his Indian captivity. Williams 1853, 145-152. 24. Registre des entrées et sorties des petites filles françaises et sauvages de 1641, Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec, Quebec, Canada (hereafter cited as RES); Livre des entrées et sorties des Pensionnaires 1719 à 1839, Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec (hereafter cited as LES).
25. RES; LES; Coleman, chaps 5-21; QR, vols. 1-23.
26. RES; LES.
27. QR, 5:np.
28. Conclusions des assemblées des Discrettes de 1687 à 1865, 29, Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec; Actes des Assemblées Capitulaires de 1686 à 1802, 58, Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec; Annales manuscrites des Monastère, tome 1, 91, Archives du du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec; René Jetté, Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Quebec (Montreal, 1983).
29. Coleman, 1:398; C. Alice Baker, True Stories of New England Captives (Cambridge, Mass., 1897), 50-68.
30. Dechêne, 391-439; Zoltvany, "Esquisse," 368-370.
31. Collection Esther Wheelwright, Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec; translation in Baker, 54-55.
32. Richard Slotkin, Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860 (Middletown, Conn., 1973), 109, 119.
33. Ibid., 138. Mercy Short's ravings may have been the result of recurrent dreams of the traumatic event of her capture. Recurrent dreams are often associated with post-traumatic stress syndrome. Mardi J. Horowitz et. al., "Signs and Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," Archives of General Psychology 37 (January 1980), 86.
34. Williams, 86-87.
35. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 3:167-168; Glimpses, 182-183; Ursulines of Quebec, 1:457-458.
36. LES; Cyprien Tanguay, Dictionnaire Généalogique des familles Canadiennes, 7 vols. (Montreal, 1871-1890), 5:337; Ursulines de Quebec 2:94-104, 173-176.
37. Jetté, 313; LES; RES; Coleman, 1:427-428; Glimpses, 184.
38. Jetté, 471, 1040.

The Supportive Power of Female Networks

Women and girls stayed with their French and Indian captors more often than men and boys. This can be explained in large part by "the primacy of marriage, the influence of religion, and the supportive power of female networks."¹ The influence of religion has been discussed in the previous chapter. An analysis of Canadian marriage records allows a closer examination of the primacy of marriage and the existence of female networks. Baptismal records also provide insight into networks. Baptism was probably a more important event than marriage for the captive because it marked her initiation into the Catholic church, "the cancelling of the whole of the past [and] the pledge of actual help in the future."² Godparents took that pledge of help, promising to raise and educate children as Christians should their parents die. It was not a responsibility to be taken lightly as the choice of godparents for captives and their children proved.

Of the seventy-eight captives who remained in New France, about one-third were between the ages of twelve and twenty-one when captured, the age at which most girls married or prepared for marriage. Six captives whose ages are known were over the age of twenty at the time of their capture. At least four of them were widows and one, Abigail Willey, found relief from a physically and verbally abusive husband through her captivity.³ On September 27, 1683, Abigail had

petitioned the General Court of New Hampshire for a divorce. She stated she had lived an unquiet and uncomfortable life with her husband, Stephen Willey, "often suffering much by sore and heavy blows received from his hand . . . as also by frequent threatening to take away my life by the evil disposition of his own mind . . ." ⁴ Whether widowed or suing for divorce, these women had no ties to New England and hence were free to enter into marriage in New France. Marriage provided easy assimilation into French society, with ⁵ women assuming the status of their husbands.

Thirty-seven female captives married in New France, most to Frenchmen, a few to English residents of the colony, and several to Indians. ⁶ It is through the records of their marriages and of the captives' own baptisms as well as those of their children, that contact among these women can be documented. Contact through witnessing at weddings and baptisms was a continuation of female networks commonly found in New England communities, characterized as the "friendly neighbor" by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in her book ⁷ Good Wives. In all, more than seventy-six percent of the New England women who married in New France were part of the ⁸ witnessing network.

When Elizabeth Price Stevens, a young widow captured from Deerfield in 1704, married Jean Forneau on February 3, 1706, four New England women were witnesses. Mrs. Hannah Parsons, Esther Sayward, Margaret Otis, and Catherine

Dunkin witnessed the ceremony along with Philippe Robitaille, the husband of captive Grizel Warren Otis, and Samuel Williams of Deerfield. Elizabeth Hurst married Thomas Becraft, an Englishman, in October 1712 with her stepfather William Perkins and friend Freedom French as witnesses and in 1729 Esther Sayward again witnessed a New England captive's wedding when Hannah Parsons married Claude-Antoine de
 9
 Berman.

New England captives frequently served as godparents for the children of other captives. Freedom French witnessed the baptism of her sister Martha's son and the son of Mary Swarton. Martha French in turn witnessed baptisms for the children of Marguerite Field, Freedom French, Anne Heard and
 10
 Elizabeth Price Stevens.

The older the captive was at her capture, the more likely she was to become part of the network. Nineteen captives over the age of twelve participated while only eight did not. Among those under twelve, only fourteen were part
 11
 of the network as opposed to twenty-three who were not.

Being from the same town and having female relatives in captivity also contributed to the number of networks in which a woman participated. Of the eighteen captives from Deerfield who remained in New France, ten were part of the network; three of the five Dover, New Hampshire, captives and four of the six captives from Wells, Maine,
 12
 participated.

Captives taken from the same town had a greater chance of having relatives with them in captivity. Among the Deerfield captives were cousins Mary Brooks and Mercy Carter and cousins Elizabeth Corse and Martha, Abigail, and Freedom French. Mary Field and Elizabeth Price Stevens, also of Deerfield, were second cousins. Esther Wheelwright had three cousins with her in captivity, Esther and Mary Sayward and Hannah Parsons. In addition, several mothers were captured with their daughters, including Grizel Warren Otis with daughters Margaret and Rose; Abigail Willey and daughters Judith and Elizabeth; and Sarah Jeffreys Hurst with her daughter Elizabeth. While not all of these women and girls were part of the witness network, seventy-one percent of the captives who did participate had relatives with them in New France.¹³

The concentration of captives in Montreal and Quebec also affected the amount of witnessing; sixty-nine percent of those who were baptized in Montreal were part of the network. Numbers alone can account for some of the networks. However, it was also in Montreal that Father Antoine Meriel, chaplain of the Hôtel-Dieu, director and confessor of the pupils of the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame and a priest of the parish of Notre Dame, spent his personal¹⁴ fortune converting English captives, both male and female. Eighty-five percent of those who had contact with Meriel were in the network and almost two-thirds of the women who married

in New France had been baptized or married by Meriel. A substantial number had one or more children baptized by him as well.¹⁵ He appears to have been a key in influencing captives to convert and remain in New France. Little is known about Meriel, but he may have had sufficient contacts within the upper classes of Canadian society to introduce captives to influential and wealthy mentors, creating a different kind of network with as much or greater influence on captives' decisions to remain as did the New England network.

Baptism in Quebec did not predispose captives to participate in the network. However, seven of the twelve captives married in that city were active while all four of the women married at Boucherville, a nearby seigneurie,¹⁶ participated.

In the baptismal records of Montreal, Quebec, and the surrounding parishes, some French names appear frequently as sponsors or godparents for New England captives. Jacques LeBer (ca. 1663-1706), ennobled in 1696, was a seigneur and a wealthy and influential merchant of Montreal. His daughter, Jeanne-Marie, became a recluse at the Ursuline convent. LeBer was the godfather for two New England captives, Grizel Warren Otis and Lydia Longley, and witnessed the marriages of Mary Austin and Esther Sayward.¹⁷ His son Pierre was the founder of the Brothers Hospitallers along with Jean Fredin,¹⁸ secretary to the intendant Jean Bochart de Champigny.

Pierre was named as godfather for Elizabeth Price Stevens, while Fredin paid the fees for Judith Willey to attend the Ursuline's pensionnat and witnessed her marriage to Jean LeConte in 1698.¹⁹

Marguerite Bouat, the wife of merchant Antoine Pascaud of LaRochelle, was the godmother for captives Sarah Tarbel, Martha French, and Abigail Stebbins, as well as for several captives who returned to New England.²⁰ Her husband had a prosperous trade in fur, lumber and hemp which she continued after his death in 1717 with his partner, Pierre de Lestage, the husband of captive Esther Sayward.²¹ Nicolas Pinaud, a Quebec merchant, acted as godfather at the baptism of Abigail Brackett, witnessed Elizabeth Webber's marriage contract with New England captive Nathaniel (Paul) Otis and acted for Katherine Stevens in her marriage contract with Jacques Paquet because she was a minor.²² The governor of Montreal, Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, acted as godfather for captives Mary Silver and Abigail Stebbins.²³ These French citizens were all prominent people with extensive connections within the government and the upper class society of New France. Many of the captives' godparents had some kind of social, business, or political relationship and may have been instrumental in arranging good and profitable marriages for their godchildren.

The majority of captives returned to New England after stays of varying lengths. How did they differ from those who

remained? Over half of them were captured with all or part of their immediate families intact. Only eight of the ninety-seven identified by Coleman as having returned were baptized, half of them by Father Meriel. Nine were part of the French godparents' network and six were part of the English network. Four captives had direct contact with the nuns, either in the convent schools or the hospital.²⁴

Frances Noble, captured with her family at Swan Island, Maine, in 1750 at the age of three, spent a number of her eleven years of captivity in a convent. Her "protector," Monsieur Saint-Ange de Charly had her placed in the convent at Trois-Rivières. She was a student at the Ursulines of Quebec for one year and when finally redeemed in 1761 following eight years of effort, she was found in a nunnery.²⁵ Submit Phipps was captured with her mother Jemima Howe and sister Mary Phipps in 1755 at Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Both girls were under the care of Governor Vaudreuil and were enrolled at one of the convent schools in either Quebec or Montreal. Submit eventually returned to New England, albeit reluctantly, after several years in Canada. Her sister Mary went to France with Vaudreuil where she married. Apparently Mrs. Howe returned for her daughters at the end of the war in 1763, just in time to "save" Submit from a fate similar to that of her sister.²⁶

The other two captives known to have had direct contact with the nuns were Sarah Burt, captured at Deerfield in 1704,

and Sarah Gerrish, captured at Dover in 1689. Sarah Burt was captured with her husband and had a child while in Canada. The child was baptized by Meriel and the mother reportedly was employed at the Congrégation de Notre Dame. Her age and marital status undoubtedly lessened the influence of the convent and Father Meriel on her decision to remain.²⁷

Sarah Gerrish, age seven at capture, was placed in the Hôtel-Dieu by her sponsor, Madame de Champigny, wife of the intendant. When redeemed the following year, Sarah resisted and reportedly concealed a crucifix under her armpit, so attached had she become to the Catholic religion.²⁸

The captives who returned were the object of intensive efforts by the New England colonial governments to have them redeemed. In addition, they were often captured in complete families that managed to stay together in New France and apparently did not enter the convent schools with the same regularity as those who remained. As a result, they did not have the same opportunities to make the necessary contacts to establish French or English networks. In the majority of cases, the lack of a network based in New France influenced the captives' decisions about returning to New England or their acculturation into French society.

As previously noted, married captives were more likely to be part of the witness network than those who stayed with the Indians or became nuns. Esther Sayward married Pierre de Lestage twenty years after her capture in 1692 from York,

Maine. A student at the Congrégation de Notre Dame convent, she evidently was baptized there as her name appears on later records as Marie-Joseph. Witnesses at her marriage included Jacques LeBer and several other notable figures.²⁹

De Lestage was a wealthy Montreal merchant and a partner with Antoine Pascaud and his wife Marguerite Bouat until 1739. He was active in the fur trade and served as treasurer of the Marine, paying the troops stationed in Montreal. In 1718 he purchased a seigneurie to add to the two stone houses, two urban lots and two small farms he owned in Montreal. After his death in 1743, Esther formed a business partnership with his nephew which lasted seven years.³⁰ She died a rich woman in 1770, leaving millions of livres to the various religious orders, family members, and her cousin Hannah Parsons, wife of Claude-Antoine de Berman.³¹

Esther and her husband acted as godparents and witnesses for several New England captives. She was the godmother for Mary Sayward and for the daughters of Mary Austin and Priscilla Storer. She also witnessed Hannah Parson's marriage. Her husband was named as godfather for Abigail Key's son, Pierre, and for Mary Scammon's daughter Marie-Joseph.³²

Neither of Esther's children lived to maturity. After the death of her husband, she bought a house adjacent to the Congrégation de Notre Dame convent and cut a door in the wall between them so she could easily visit her childhood friends

and teachers. She also adopted two orphans whom she placed
with the nuns and who later took their vows with the order. ³³

Elizabeth Webber also probably had fond memories of the convent. Captured in 1703 from Cape Ann, Maine, she was enrolled in the Ursuline pensionnat in Quebec that same year. She was baptized and given the additional name of Marie before her marriage at age nineteen to Nathaniel Otis, grandson of Grizel Warren Otis, in 1710. Nicolas Pinaud and his wife Louise Douaire, who had raised her for eight years after redeeming her from her Abenaki captors, were present when she signed her marriage contract. Also present were Nathaniel's aunt Abigail Willey, Elizabeth Willey and her husband Pierre Perot de Rizy, and Louise Kimball (untraceable in New England), among others.

Elizabeth was named as godmother for Katherine Steven's son François. Her own son, Philippe-Marie, had Philippe Robitaille, Grizel Otis' husband, as his godfather. Elizabeth died in 1721 and Robitaille was named guardian of
her children after her husband's death in 1730. ³⁴

Abigail Stebbins had already married a French soldier, Jacques DeNoyons, in Deerfield, when she, her husband and her younger sister were taken by the French and Indians in 1704. Abigail was baptized in May 1708 by Antoine Meriel and given the name Marguerite. Her godmother was Marguerite Bouat, her godfather Philippe de Rigaud de Vaudreuil, both of whom were part of the French witness network. Her sister Thankful was

named godmother for her son Jean-Baptiste and Esther Wheelwright was allowed to leave the convent to act as godmother when Father Meriel baptized Abigail's daughter Dorothee in 1711.³⁵

Abigail's marriage was not a particularly happy one. She and her parents had been wooed by DeNoyon's assurances that he would give her a considerable marriage settlement and that he possessed a sizable fortune in Canada. Her petition to the king in July 1708 proves otherwise. When she arrived in Canada she found "nothing not even a home [and] she has been obliged to support her family by the work of her hands, receiving nothing from her husband and as her work does not suffice to feed her numerous family, she has been advised to purchase land in Boucherville" where she lived with her husband's family. The agreement for paying for the land had been made in her own name and she hoped to pay for it through her own and her childrens' labor and by "the help she hopes for from her parents when it shall please God to give us peace."³⁶ Her petition and the fact that she was able to purchase land in her own name even when married are evidence of women's greater legal rights in New France.

Grizel Warren Otis took an active part in the witness network. Widowed when captured with two of her daughters in 1689 from Dover, New Hampshire, she was baptized Marie-Madeleine in May 1693. Her godfather, Jacques LeBer, was present at her marriage five months later to Philippe

Robitaille. The wedding was performed by Father Meriel. Emma Coleman states that Grizel Otis "seems to have befriended her fellow-captives and to have aided Father Meriel in his ministrations among them."³⁷ Stephen Williams, in a letter to his father, both in captivity in New France, described the deathbed conversions of two New England women. Abigail Turbet, a widow captured in 1703 at Cape Porpoise, Maine, reportedly was convinced by her cousin, Anne (Hannah) Batson Stilson, to convert before she died. Witnesses at the baptism included Hannah Stilson and Grizel Otis. The former was also the bearer of Esther Jones's desire to convert before her death and both Hannah and Grizel were present at this conversion as well.³⁸ Although it is not known whether these two women made a conscious decision to remain in New France, both of them were widows and had no ties to New England; Esther Jones had seen her husband and children killed in the attack on East Hampton, Massachusetts, which had resulted in her capture.³⁹

Hannah Stilson seems an unlikely vehicle for these womens' conversions. She was captured in 1703 from Kennebunkport, Maine, with her children. Her husband was captured two months later but died in captivity. A child born to her in Canada was baptized in 1703 by Father Meriel, with Jacques LeBer and Marguerite Bouat as godparents. They were also godparents at Hannah's own baptism. Hannah married James Stilson, a captive of Pemaquid, Maine, in 1705 with

only Marguerite Bouat as one of the French network participants present. Hannah and her family later returned to New England.⁴⁰ Her captivity is like that of the majority of the captives who returned except for her attempts to convert other captives. It may in part be explained by her concern that these women die at peace with God and themselves, whether the ministrations came from a priest or a minister. She may have accepted the objects and trappings of the religion to ensure her own survival and that of her children or she may have truly converted to the Catholic religion out of personal conviction. Unfortunately, Hannah's thoughts will forever remain her own.

Margaret Otis also presents an unusual picture of a captive. Unlike her mother Grizel, she was not active in the witness network. Captured when only three months old, she was baptized and given the name Christine; the rest of her childhood is unknown. At the age of eighteen, she married Louis LeBeau by whom she had two daughters. Her husband died in 1713 and the following year Thomas Baker, a former captive among the French, came to Canada as an interpreter for two emissaries sent by the Massachusetts government to redeem captives. Baker convinced Margaret to return with him to New England and be his wife, although Governor Vaudreuil refused to let her take her children because they were French citizens. Margaret named her mother and stepfather guardian of her children and ceded to them all

the lands she had inherited from her husband so they could
 41
 support her daughters.

Margaret Otis left behind her mother and her children to return to a homeland she had known for only three months and to speak a language with which she probably was unfamiliar. Although not part of the witness network, she apparently was a religious person for she was a member of the Sisterhood of
 42
 the Holy Family. What prompted her to leave this all behind is a mystery. Perhaps love does indeed conquer all.

Marriage was one of two options available to New England women living among the French and the one most often taken. The majority of female captives taken were of a marriageable age or widowed and their efforts to find a spouse were rewarded. Marriage and childbirth, traditional female experiences, provided opportunities for establishing networks as friendly neighbors supported each other through these milestones of their lives. Captives over the age of twelve who had practiced or at least observed the network among women in New England were more likely to continue it in their new home, especially with other New England women. However, they also expanded the network to include French benefactors, male and female, religious and secular, who provided material and spiritual comfort and support as the captives adjusted to their new surroundings in their new home.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. Ulrich, 208.
2. l'Abbé Adhemar D'Alés, Baptism and Confirmation, Joseph H. Howard, trans. (London, 1929), 2, 83.
3. Coleman, chaps. 5-21.
4. Coleman, 1:256-257.
5. Ulrich, 208.
6. Coleman, chaps. 5-21.
7. Ulrich, chap. 3.
8. Witnesses present at marriages and baptisms were collected from Coleman, chaps. 5-21, and QR, vols. 1-23.
9. Steven's witnesses found in Coleman, 2:115, and QR, 13:54, 93, 263; Hurst's witnesses found in Coleman, 2:92-93, and QR, 13:276; Parson's witnesses found in Coleman, 1:412.
10. Freedom French in Coleman, 2:84, and QR, 13:63; Martha French in Coleman, 1:234, 2:115, and QR, 13:186.
11. Coleman, chaps. 5-21.
12. Ibid., chaps. 5-21.
13. Ibid., chaps. 5-21; Sheldon, 2:105, 133, 156-157, 265.
14. Meriel's biography is in Coleman, 1:40, and J.-B.-A. Allaire, Dictionnaire Biographique du clergé Canadien-Français (Montreal, 1910), 383.
15. Coleman, chaps. 5-21, QR, vols. 1-23.
16. Coleman, chaps. 5-21.
17. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2:374-376, 3:407; Coleman, 1:149, 231, 240, 286.
18. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 3:15, 407, 2:377-78.
19. Coleman, 1:259, 2:114; RES, 102.
20. Coleman, 1:294; Sheldon, 2:138.
21. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2:269, 509.
22. Ibid., 2:526; Coleman, 1:159-160.
23. Coleman, 1:357; Sheldon, 2:138.
24. Coleman, chaps. 5-21.
25. Ibid., 2:252-258.
26. Ibid., 2:320-21.
27. Ibid., 2:68.
28. Ibid., 1:145.
29. Ibid., 1:240.
30. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 3:393-94.
31. Archives Nationales du Quebec, Quebec, Canada, Collection of notary Dulaurent, 10 July 1747.
32. Coleman, 1:231, 412; QR, 5:np, 13:143.
33. Baker, 86-87.
34. Coleman, 1:159-160; QR, 13:162; William A. Otis, A Genealogical and Historical Memoir of the Otis Family in America (Chicago, 1924), 80.
35. Coleman, 2:118-120, 124; QR, 15:15.
36. Pierre-George Roy, Inventaire des Ordonnances des intendants de la Nouvelle-France conservées aux archives

provinciales de Quebec (Beauceville, 1919); Coleman,
2:120-21.

37. Coleman, 1:147-149.
38. Williams, 88-90; Coleman, 1:321, 2:9.
39. Coleman, 1:318.
40. Ibid., 2:5-8.
41. Ibid., 1:149-51.
42. Ibid., 1:153.

Conclusion

New France offered certain opportunities for the female captive from New England. For widows, it offered a chance to start a new family and to regain their roles as wives and mothers. Captives with the Indians did not find the torture and death they had expected but acceptance and adoption into a caring family and often a ready-made identity. Marriage provided a defined role and status for the uprooted captive. For the girls who took their vows with one of the religious orders, the convent provided a closed and supportive female community where women exercised a certain amount of autonomy not available to New England women.

Captives shared common experiences. They often had witnessed the violent deaths of family and friends, the destruction of their homes, the fear of Indian captivity, and the physical hardship of the trek north or west. Through contact with priests and nuns, they witnessed a missionary zeal far surpassing that found in New England. Christianity, whether among the Indians, in the convent, or in the simple parish church, was a sensual experience with processions, gold crosses, incense, and rich vestments in sharp contrast with the dour religious practices of the Protestants. The cities, with their rich texture of activity and people, also contrasted with the relatively somnolent farming communities from which the captives came.

For the younger captives, the convent school eased their

entry into French society. They were taught reading, writing, housewifery, and the Catholic catechism and were treated as part of a large, caring family. In addition, they were introduced to French girls who would form the basis of a support network that often did not include their New England friends or relatives. Whether or not they were students at the convent, all the captives undoubtedly were aware of and had contact with the charitable work of the nuns and the Sisterhood of the Holy Family, worshipped the Virgin Mary and may even have made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré.

Captives over the age of twelve found their transition into French society facilitated by a continuation of support networks they had known in New England. The nature of the records in Canada limit the examination of such networks to witnesses at baptisms and marriages. A network of French godparents kept many captives in contact with each other and also introduced many of them to the higher social circles in Montreal and Quebec. New England godmothers and marriage witnesses had accepted the Catholic religion and been admitted into society. Their presence at other captives' baptisms and marriages conveyed their tacit approval of adopting a new life among the French.

As with most social history studies, no diaries or letters exist to let the historian know what these girls and women were thinking and feeling, to provide insight into why

they stayed in New France. From the evidence that does exist, however, the sensory nature of Catholic worship, the relative ease with which most captives were assimilated into Indian or French society by adoption or marriage, the religious tenor of the colony and the sense of women's role within that religion, the convent schools, the young age of many of the captives, and the presence of supportive female networks all influenced the captives' decisions to remain in New France.

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VITA

Barbara Ellen Austen

Born in Ridgewood, New Jersey, September 18, 1956. Graduated from Milford Area Senior High School, Milford, New Hampshire, June 1974. B.A. History, University of New Hampshire, 1981, with honors. Appointed Assistant Curator, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire in May 1985.

In July 1983, the author entered the College of William and Mary as a fellow in Museum Management in the Department of History.