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"--All United Like Sisters--": Education, Friendship, and the Bonds of Womanhood at Litchfield Female Academy, 1782--1833

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"...all united like sisters..."
Education, Friendship, and the Bonds of Womanhood
at Litchfield Female Academy, 1782 - 1833

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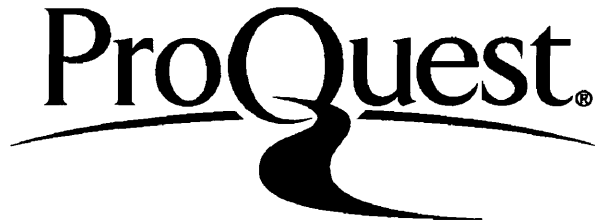
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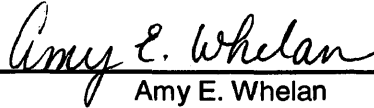
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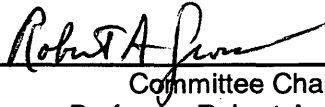
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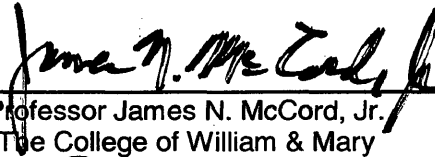


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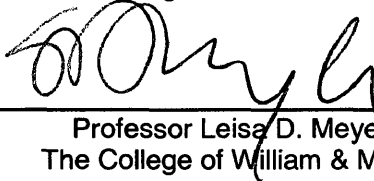
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ABSTRACT PAGE

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women, faced with new educational opportunities, began attending female academies in ever increasing numbers. At these academies, women connected with their fellow female scholars based on their new and exciting shared educational experience.

This essay examines the curriculum, living situations, social, and religious lives of the students at one such school, Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy in Litchfield, Connecticut, from 1782 to 1833. By exploring the intellectual and social culture at Litchfield Female Academy, this essay will focus on the unique female community that arose when friendship and learning came together within the academy environment. In addition, this thesis will look at how the women who attended Litchfield Female Academy carried on the ideals of sisterhood and female learning.

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Introduction

On July 27, 1816, fifteen year old Caroline Chester from Hartford, Connecticut, sat down to write in her journal. As she often did, Chester wrote about her friend Eliza. She and Eliza shared many experiences together as fellow students at Sarah Pierce's Female Academy in Litchfield, Connecticut; visits, afternoon teas, parties, and long walks. But this journal entry was not a happy one. Eliza had received a letter bearing news that she had to return home. Only then did Chester's true feelings towards her friend emerge: "Eliza is one of my best friends and I shall feel very sorry when she leaves us...I never have felt so *home sick* as I did to day..."¹ Eliza was like a sister to Chester, and so her impending departure made the young diarist pine for home. The kinship Chester felt with Eliza was familial, a sisterly affection and bond. Their shared experience at Litchfield Academy brought them together as students, but Eliza's departure illustrates how they had grown to be friends and sisters.

Two years later, in 1818, Julia Anna Shepard, a nineteen year old student, described her experience at Litchfield Female Academy in similar terms, "Our school is very interesting, all united like sisters."² Shepard was remarking on the female society she had discovered at her new school, a society that kept her from dwelling on thoughts of her home in Athens, Pennsylvania, "Were I not as pleasantly situated as heart can wish, with the best of friends and associates, and my mind engaged and interested with my literary pursuits, I should be inclined to think I was forgotten."³ Shepard, daughter of educator and Athens Academy patron John Shepard, had left her father's household to

¹ Caroline Chester, in *More Chronicles of a Pioneer School From 1792 to 1833, Being Added History on the Litchfield Female Academy Kept By Miss Sarah Pierce and Her Nephew, John Pierce Brace*, comp. Emily Noyes Vanderpoel (New York: Cadmus Book Shop, 1927), 180.

² Julia Anna Shepard, in *More Chronicles*, 199.

³ *Ibid.*, 199.

pursue her education at Litchfield Female Academy. Once she arrived, she found a home away from home, one in which her fellow scholars provided her with academic and sisterly companionship, a pleasing substitute for the support, both familial and intellectual, she had left behind in Athens.

Chester and Shepard, similar to other young girls of their generation, were experiencing the connection between female education and friendship that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result of a greater emphasis on educating middle and upper middle class women and the establishment of numerous female academies, these young women were able to reach beyond the confines of their home and community to fashion a distinct female culture in their new setting. The founding of female academies coincided with a larger shift in American society. In the late eighteenth century, the emergence of friendship as an emotional bond between two people with shared experiences and personalities was a significant change from the relationships most early Americans formed based solely on kinship and societal obligations. Female academies, as Chester and Shepard realized, separated girls from their families, but provided them an environment in which they were able to establish relationships based on a shared learning experience.

Sarah Pierce, the founder of Litchfield Female Academy, offered a challenging course of study, arranged boarding, and promoted an active social life for the scholars who attended her school. The religious phenomenon of the Second Great Awakening that swept Litchfield, Connecticut in the early nineteenth century also greatly influenced the students' experience at Pierce's academy. By examining the curriculum, living situations, social, and religious lives of the students, this essay will explore the

intellectual and social culture at Litchfield Female Academy in order to focus the spotlight on the unique female community that arose when friendship and learning came together within the academy environment. Finally, this thesis will look at how the women who experienced this distinctive sisterhood at Litchfield Female Academy passed on to subsequent generations the ideals of female learning and the bonds of “sisterly” community.

Chapter 1

“...we should have learned women.”

On August 4, 1776, as the American Revolution was beginning to grip the colonies, Abigail Adams, future first lady of the United States, wrote a letter to her husband, John. “If you complain of neglect of Education in sons,” Abigail asked, “what shall I say with regard to daughters, who every day experience the want of it.” She proclaimed, “If we mean to have Heroes Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women.”⁴ John Adams agreed,

In reading History you will generally observe, when you light upon a great Character whether a General, a Statesman, or Philosopher, some female about him either in the Character of a Mother, Wife, or Sister who has Knowledge and Ambition...and that much of his Emminence is owing to her Precepts, Example, or Instigation, in some shape or other.⁵

As the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain and the seeds of a new country were emerging, Abigail and John recognized the importance of educating future generations of citizens, both men and women. Their observations foreshadowed a shift in the educational landscape of the new republic.

Abigail had cause for complaint in her letter to John. Americans, prior to the Revolution, had not thought women’s education to be that important. As Mary Beth Norton argues, “If a girl knew the rudiments of learning, that was thought to be more than sufficient for her limited needs”⁶ as a pre-Revolutionary wife and mother.

⁴ Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor, eds., *My Dearest Friend: Letters of Abigail and John Adams* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 140-141.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 256.

However, the leaders of the new republic emphasized the importance of women's role in maintaining a successful nation. A little more than a decade after Abigail and John Adams' exchange, in 1787, Benjamin Rush addressed visitors to the Young Ladies' Academy in Philadelphia. Rush, a medical doctor, educator, and avid proponent of the ideals of the American Revolution, declared, "The equal share that every citizen has in the liberty and the possible share he may have in the government of our country make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government."⁷ As Abigail and John Adams had discussed and as Rush was arguing, women deserved an education that would enable them to teach their (male) children how to be moral and virtuous citizens and leaders. Scholars have coined the term "Republican Motherhood" to describe this post-Revolutionary argument for greater educational opportunities for women.⁸

In order to accommodate the growing interest and desire for improvement in women's education, female schools had to be built. Therefore, between 1790 and 1850, many educational leaders supervised the creation of all-female academies and seminaries. John Poor founded the first recognized female academy in Philadelphia in 1787, of which Benjamin Rush was an original trustee. Over one hundred pupils enrolled at the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia within the first year. Poor's successful venture was followed by some of the most celebrated and influential female schools in the history of women's education, including Catherine Fiske's academy (1814) in Keene, New

⁷ Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts on Female Education," in *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), 28.

⁸ Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 11, 189-231.

Hampshire, Emma Willard's Troy Seminary (1821) in New York, and Zilpha Grant's Ipswich Seminary (1828) in Derry New, Hampshire.

The number of enrollees at these schools testified to the popularity of women's learning institutions. From 1792 to 1833 Sarah Pierce educated about 2,000 young women at Litchfield Female Academy. Between 1814 and 1837, more than 3,000 students attended Catherine Fiske's academy, and Troy Seminary educated more than 12,000 women in the fifty years following its inception in 1821.⁹

Not only did women have more choices in which schools they wanted to or could attend, but the curriculum at these schools changed dramatically from the basic subjects of reading and writing that young girls learned previously to the Revolution. For example, at the Young Ladies' Academy, each student received a diploma detailing that she had successfully passed examination "in spelling, reading, writing, English-grammar, arithmetic, geography, rhetoric and composition."¹⁰ In the 1820's, female academies began offering students a more advanced curriculum that included philosophy, chemistry, botany, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, logic, and astronomy. Often, the women who attended these schools were introduced to courses of study that resembled those taught at male colleges. Clearly, women's educational expectations through the academies had progressed from simply learning how to read and write.

⁹ Mary Kelley, "Learned Women in Nineteenth Century America," (lecture, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA), 5.

¹⁰ "A Pamphlet on the Young Ladies Academy", quoted in Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: Octagon Books, 1980), 337.

Chapter 2

“...a fine society of...girls.”

The beginning of the academy movement not only presented women with new educational opportunities, it also introduced women to a different female community than they had previously experienced. While women had always been involved in female networks that aided them in performing their prescribed roles, these relationships had largely been based on family and community ties. However, in the eighteenth century women began to view their ties to other women as sisterly bonds.

Esther, mother of Vice-president Aaron Burr,¹¹ left one of the earliest accounts of a colonial woman's life in the form of a journal that she used to correspond with her friend Sarah Prince. Her words to Prince shed some light on what friendship meant to women.

Burr's mid-eighteenth century journal is an example of one of the earliest discussions of sisterhood and the importance of a female network. Burr continually refers to her friends as “the Sisterhood.” For example, on June 17, 1756, Burr wrote to Prince, “Love to *Julia* and all the Sisterhood for whom I feel a great friendship altho' some of 'em are unknown to me by sight...”¹² As Carol Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker argue, this sisterhood was based on a sense of a shared gender identity, common experiences, and the fact that women spent much of their time with other women. However, Karlsen and Crumpacker also identify the influence of the Second

¹¹ Esther Burr's daughter, Sally, married her tutor, Tapping Reeve. The couple settled in Litchfield, CT where Reeve tutored Sally's brother, Aaron, in law, leading to the establishment of Litchfield Law School, the first law school in the nation. Reeve would become one of Sarah Pierce's staunchest supporters.

¹² Carol F. Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker ed., *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 209.

Great Awakening and evangelical Protestantism as crucial to the recognition of a sisterhood among women.

Burr further discovered female companions through the common experience of religion and defined female friendship through the language of religion. Often the emotions that accompanied religious beliefs were similar to and connected with the emotions that resulted from friendship and sisterly affection. Burr compared her religion and relationship with God to friendship, “Nothing is more refreshing to the soul (except communication with God himself) than the company and society of a friend—One that has the spirit off [sic], and relish for, true friendship—this is becoming the rational soul—this is God-like.” Burr then continued to write on the importance of friendship, describing intimate relationships as “the Life of Life.”¹³

Burr’s description of a “sisterhood” reflects a change from the more traditional eighteenth century view of women’s bonds. Female associations occurred for many reasons and existed on many different levels. Family connections were the first bonds that women experienced. Mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and nieces formed kinship networks that provided the basis for women’s social world. These female kinship networks often extended to include neighbors, and were “structured around the intimate events of family and personal life.”¹⁴ The attendance at and care of the life rituals of marriage, birth, sickness, and death were ascribed female roles. Women’s relationships were defined, as well as strengthened, by their participation in these events.

In 1801, Martha Ballard, a Maine midwife, tended at the deathbed of her niece, Parthenia Pitts. She described Parthenia’s passing in her diary:

¹³ Ibid., 185.

¹⁴ John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 122.

September 1. Old Mrs Pollard & Mrs Barton watcht till near day when I rose & they retired to take some rest...She (Parthenia) Expird in a very short space without struggle Except distress for Breath. We have reason to hope our loss [is] her gain. I came home from Mrs Pitts' after we had performed our last office of friendship Except her interment. It is four months this day since I was Calld to see my dear Neace who was seisd with this her last illness...¹⁵

Ballard's diary entry reflects not only the more complex nature of women's bonds; but reinforces traditional female relationships from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. Martha and Parthenia were kin, but also neighbors and friends. Tied by blood, in the end they were connected by women's role as caregivers. The presence of Mrs. Pollard and Mrs. Barton also highlights the idea that women formed relationships based on assigned female roles and neighborliness.

As the nineteenth century progressed, women moved beyond the boundaries of kinship relationships to form personal friendships based on shared experiences outside of the family network. The friendship of Mary Lyon and Zilpha Grant exemplifies this changing atmosphere. Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, enjoyed a lifelong friendship with Grant, another pioneer in women's education. The two women met in 1821, while Lyon was a student at Byfield Seminary in Massachusetts. Grant was the assistant of the school's founder, Reverend Joseph Emerson.¹⁶ From their first acquaintance, through the trials each faced while establishing her own female learning institution and the fact that Lyon and Grant were competitors, these women sustained a strong and mutually supportive friendship.

¹⁵ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 253.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Alden Green, *Mary Lyon and Mount Holyoke: Opening the Gates* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1979), 21.

Often, Lyon and Grant were far apart but maintained their relationship through vigorous correspondence. When Lyon was working to build Mount Holyoke, an institution that when completed would rival Grant's Ipswich Seminary, she often wrote to her friend. In an 1836 letter, Lyon complained of the difficulties she was facing in attempting to build Mount Holyoke,

Another dark cloud seems now to be gathering over our prospects—perhaps one of the darkest that has ever hung over our enterprise... Tues. night after I left you I spent at Belchertown, & Wed. Mr. Hawks & myself went to Mr. Tyler's, to talk over the subject with him & Mr. Bowdoin about building... Mr. Tyler... dislikes the appearance of the site, & thinks it is an inconvenient place to build. We found that his dislike had grown stronger, & was much increased when he found Mr. Bowdoin was not in favor of it.¹⁷

Lyon was frustrated with the building committee's disagreement, and although the topic of Mount Holyoke was probably somewhat sensitive between the two women, Lyon and Grant's friendship was strong enough to transcend any jealousy that may have emerged. These two women formed a friendship within the larger context of the female educational world and continued to support each other through years of trying to provide the same environment for other young women.



When women's education started to become popular in America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, giving rise to the establishment of female academies, the idea of a female community was not a new one. However, as Mary Kelley argues,

¹⁷ Mary Lyon to Zilpha Grant, 18 July 1836, Mary Lyon Papers, Mt. Holyoke College Archives.

The recent scholarship on nineteenth-century female friendship has made much of the bonds forged by students at academies and seminaries. Historians have highlighted the shared gender identity, the mutual supportiveness, and the deep affection that are manifest in these intimate relations. They have also debated the degree to which these homosocial ties were based on sexual attraction. Surprisingly, however, they have neglected one of the most important dimensions of these relationships. Female friendship and female learning intersected at academies and seminaries, supplementing and reinforcing each other on a daily basis.¹⁸

Thus, when Sarah Pierce opened the doors to Litchfield Female Academy in 1792, her school became one of the first to introduce girls to a female culture based on a shared educational experience. A new female community began to blossom, one in which Caroline Chester and Julia Anna Shepard discovered a “fine society of little girls”¹⁹ with whom to share their new educational adventure.

¹⁸ Kelley, “Learned Women”, 16.

¹⁹ Shepard, in *More Chronicles*, 199.

Chapter 3

“...by cultivating the solid branches of education, our young women will arise to instruct and enlighten.”

Born in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1767, Sarah Pierce grew up under the care of her older brother, Colonel John Pierce, after the death of their father in 1783. Colonel Pierce had played a significant role in the Revolution, becoming Paymaster General of the Continental Army in 1778. After the death of his father, Colonel Pierce had the daunting task of providing financial support to his entire family. Recognizing that his sister could help in this regard, Colonel Pierce sent Sarah to New York to train to become a teacher with the specific idea that she would return to Litchfield and open a school for girls.²⁰ Although Sarah Pierce was sent to school for the purpose of eventually assuming some of the financial responsibility for her family, she herself was able to take advantage of the new educational opportunities for women that emerged after the Revolution.

Amidst the fervor of republican ideology championed by men like Benjamin Rush, Pierce established Litchfield Female Academy in 1792. Indeed, Pierce herself recognized the significance of educating women to be good citizens and prepare them for their duties as mothers and teachers of future generations. Her own words testified to her belief in the “Republican Motherhood” ideology,

A free government like ours can only be supported by the virtue of its citizens...It is indispensable to the existence of a republic to be moral and religious. Who then can calculate the beneficial effects resulting from the early habits of piety and morality planted by maternal wisdom upon the rising generation. And may we not hope that the daughters of America will imitate the example of the Spartan and Roman matrons in the day of their glory, who

²⁰ Lynne Templeton-Brickley, “Sarah Pierce’s Litchfield Female Academy, 1792-1833” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985), 12, 22-23.

taught their children to love their country beyond every earthly object...May we not hope that by cultivating the solid rather than the ornamental branches of education, our young women...will arise to instruct and enlighten...²¹

Pierce wished for American women to emulate the classical republican women of Greece and Rome with respect to child rearing. As she envisioned, by earning an education, women could teach their children how to be true patriotic citizens and ensure the continuation of a moral and virtuous America.

Such heightened interest in women's education served as a backdrop for Pierce's academic undertaking and, as the Honorable Samuel Church sermonized at the 1851 Centennial Celebration of Litchfield, Connecticut, "A new tone to female education was given by the establishment of a Female Seminary, for the instruction of females in this village, by Miss Sarah Pierce, in 1792...Miss Pierce...devoted herself and all of her active life to the mental and moral culture of her sex." Certainly, by the time Litchfield Female Academy closed in 1833, the school had grown substantially since Pierce opened the doors in 1792. Litchfield town lore describes the fledgling school as "begun with one pupil in Miss Pierce's dining-room."²² Six years later the dining room was too small to accommodate the growing number of pupils in attendance. Tapping Reeve, founder of Litchfield Law School and a prominent citizen of the town, began soliciting money from Litchfield's leading male citizens. The twenty-five donors raised \$385 for the building of a schoolhouse, consequently named Litchfield Female Academy. Although these men contributed the money to expand the school, none of the subscribers were interested in serving as trustees or directors. Pierce conducted the educational endeavor on her own.

²¹ Sarah Pierce, in *Chronicles of a Pioneer School from 1792-1833, Being the History of Miss Sarah Pierce and Her Litchfield School*, comp. Emily Noyes Vanderpoel (Cambridge, MA: The University Press, 1903), 218-219.

²² Vanderpoel, *Chronicles*, 6.

The men were content only to send their daughters and other family members, such as sisters and nieces, to be educated.²³

As the years progressed, the school's popularity and enrollment grew. In 1802, 68 students attended Litchfield Female Academy. By 1811, that number had risen to 87. And in 1816, at the school's peak, 157 students were enrolled at the school. A comparison of student enrollment between Pierce's school and Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, the most prominent male academy in New England, reveals Litchfield Female Academy's prestige as an educational institution. While 68 students attended Litchfield Female Academy in 1802, only 57 students were enrolled at Phillips Academy in 1803.²⁴ While this discrepancy does not suggest that female education was surpassing male education, it reflects a growing interest in women's education, and at the very least shows how popular Litchfield Female Academy had become since Pierce taught her first pupil in the dining room of her home.

Parents and students from all over the United States welcomed this devotion to female learning and were eager to take advantage of the proper education that Pierce offered. Between 1792 and 1833, less than twenty percent of the students were actually from Litchfield. Enrollment from other cities and towns in Connecticut was just over fifty percent, while the remainder of students traveled from all over the country to attend the school including Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Georgia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, South Carolina, Washington DC, Rhode Island, Maine, Michigan, Kentucky, and Florida. Even Canada, the West Indies, and Ireland were represented.²⁵

²³ Templeton Brickley, 46-48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

²⁵ Templeton-Brickley, 61.

A majority of these students hailed from affluent families of the upper class and the upper-middle class who held a “belief in the general good of education...that education had a human worth and value, regardless of the sex of the student.”²⁶ However, girls like Julia Anna Shephard, whose families were not wealthy but did have educational backgrounds also studied at Pierce’s school. While these parents also held the belief that education was a worthwhile pursuit, these students attended school for another, more practical reason. The training provided at Litchfield Female Academy could lead to a teaching career that would eventually help to supplement the family income or support an unmarried woman. Julia’s time at Pierce’s school included a turn as an assistant teacher. She would eventually go on to teach at Ithaca Academy.

Years later, Pierce noted in her farewell address in 1832, the school held the “belief...that the female intellect was as susceptible of as high & extensive cultivation as that of man; though, from her different destination in Society, & her various employments, a different education must be pursued.”²⁷ To that end, Litchfield Female Academy not only offered students the opportunity to study English grammar, composition, geography, history, sacred history, mathematics, moral philosophy, logic, Latin and Greek, and a variety of sciences including natural philosophy, chemistry, botany, mineralogy, astronomy, and entomology, but also ornamental arts, including music, drawing, painting, and embroidery. Pierce was so devoted to the curriculum of her school that, unable to find a satisfactory history book with which to teach her students, she published her own. Entitled “Sketches of Universal History Compiled from Several Authors for the Use of Schools”, this book combined “with great cleverness...an

²⁶ Ibid., 86.

²⁷ Sarah Pierce, “Farewell Address on Leaving Litchfield Academy”, October 23, 1832, in *Chronicles*, 303-304.

abridgement of ancient history, from the best sources...[with] Russell's 'Modern Europe'...and Ramsay's 'American Revolution'", bringing the students "down nearly to [their] own time."²⁸

It was also Pierce's devotion to the curriculum that allowed for the course of study at the school to be so advanced. Pierce was a good teacher who recognized that she could offer to her students only what she had been taught herself. However, as noted above, she believed women capable of much more. To provide more for her students than she was capable of doing, Pierce welcomed her nephew, John Pierce Brace, to the school in 1814. She had been his teacher as a boy, and subsequently paid his tuition to attend Williams College to complete his education. It was John Pierce Brace who offered mathematics, the sciences, moral philosophy, and Latin to the young women at Litchfield Female Academy.²⁹

The girls who attended Litchfield Female Academy found themselves studying an intense curriculum. Thus, the female community that emerged at the school was first influenced by the girls' relationships as fellow students. The young women often used the term "scholars" to describe the other girls in the class. When Caroline Chester returned to school, she noted that although many young women had returned home, several "new scholars have supplied their places."³⁰ When Eliza Ogden, a student at the school from 1816-1818, took a walk to Pine Island in Litchfield, she wrote in her journal that "part of the scholars accompanied me."³¹ The idea that these women viewed themselves and their peers as scholars is significant in that it illustrates that the

²⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe, in *Chronicles*, 181.

²⁹ Templeton-Brickley, 123.

³⁰ Caroline Chester, in *More Chronicles*, 164.

³¹ Eliza Ogden, in *Chronicles*, 161.

friendships they formed began as a direct result of the environment in which they found themselves.

Pierce also influenced the relationships that developed between the students by pairing the girls together. Older girls were often assigned younger girls to mentor. These more experienced students were responsible for acquainting the younger students with the workings of the school. On June 4, 1816, Chester recorded in her journal, "I must not forget to mention that to day at school Miss Pierce put *Mary Elizabeth Cobb* a sweet little girl from Albany under my care...I hope she will be very industrious and improve in all her studies, that she may gratify her friends and Miss Pierce who is very anxious to have her..."³² By placing Cobb under Chester's tutelage, Pierce was helping to foster a sisterly bond between the two girls based on a shared experience as students.

As scholars and friends, the students not only helped each other but were also concerned with how each other excelled at her lessons. As illustrated above, Chester desired Cobb to work hard and perform well. The students were critiqued on every aspect of their behavior, in and out of the classroom, by teachers and by the families with whom they boarded. When Chester received a good certificate, she "was happy to find that almost all the scholars had the same."³³

In addition, the students respected the intelligence and willingness to learn that they found in one another, forming attachments based on these intellectual attributes. Chester "was very much gratified by reading *Miss Abby Smith's Journal*...I think she possesses a very superior mind and an excellent understanding."³⁴ This reflection not only exemplifies one student's appreciation for another's intellect, but also illustrates

³² Caroline Chester, in *More Chronicles*, 171.

³³ *Ibid.*, 179.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

how Pierce influenced the formation of relationships amongst the students. By assigning the girls to read their classmates' journals, Pierce was compelling the students to learn about each other's lives and encouraging them to interact. Mary L. Wilbor, a student in 1822, described fellow scholar Miss Austin in her journal, "She is possessed of a superior mind and I think has paid some considerable attention to the cultivation of it." Consequently, Wilbor wrote, "I think I like her better than any young lady that boards at Miss Pierce's."³⁵

Student relationships often blossomed into close personal friendships and Pierce encouraged her students to engage in an active social life that only further enhanced the relationships the girls formed in the classroom. Wilbor wrote of the walks she took with friends and of enjoying afternoon tea together. In one journal entry, Wilbor writes, "Spent the afternoon in Martha Denison's room with Miss Perkins. Martha read aloud..."³⁶ In another entry, "Went to the Lodge Library with Miss Frances Smith...Just returned from a visit to Misses Betts & Shelton where Miss Perkins and I spent a very pleasant evening."³⁷ Pierce also helped to strengthen the social life of the students by extending invitations to the girls for various gatherings. On May 30, 1822 Wilbor wrote, "Miss Pierce entertained us at breakfast...I know I shall be happy this summer I like Miss Pierce very much and I am sure she will do everything to render me so."³⁸

Pierce was not only concerned with her students' scholarly pursuits and social lives. She was also their guardian while they attended the school. To that end, Pierce

³⁵ Mary L. Wilbor, in *Chronicles*, 235.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 235.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

“did not make a value distinction between social and intellectual development”³⁹ and set up her school so that the classroom and society were not considered two separate entities in the students’ lives. In fact, Pierce involved the entire community in the lives of the students by instituting a family boarding system. Far from destroying the female culture that grew in the academy, this boarding system strengthened the ties between the young female students.

In 1826, Pierce and Brace outlined the “Terms of Tuition” for incoming students. One item on the list read “Board in respectable families near the Academy, from \$1.75 to \$2 per week, exclusive of washing.”⁴⁰ A widely accepted practice, the family boarding system enabled parents to send their daughters to be educated without having to worry about any loss of familial influence. The girls would still be under the care of a family unit, thus assuring parents that those values for which they were responsible for instilling in their daughters, for example discipline, morality, and proper etiquette, would not be neglected.

Local households accepted students of Litchfield Female Academy as family members. Students, in turn, adopted their hosts as surrogate parents. As in all families, parents and children had roles to fulfill. The parents, as an extension of Litchfield Female Academy and Miss Pierce, were guardians and disciplinarians, while the students were expected to behave appropriately as children and guests, as well as participate in the running of the household. Caroline Chester learned the hard way that disobedience would not be tolerated in her host family’s home. One evening, after leaving a party at half past nine on a cold winter’s night,

³⁹ Templeton-Brickley, 391.

⁴⁰ “Litchfield Female Academy/Terms of Tuition,” in *Chronicles*, 259.

...I found when I reached home that a keener blast awaited me...I opened the door...no one was in the room, but soon Dr. [Sheldon] came...and he said—why are you home at this late hour? I told him my excuse, he interrupted my by saying that it was but a poor excuse...he concluded by saying that if I ever staid out again he certainly would lock the door if it was after nine.⁴¹

The girls, who studied together as scholars, also lived together as sisters. In this way, the family boarding system strengthened the relationships of the girls and reinforced the female network that had begun in the classroom. As Lynne Templeton-Brickley suggests, “The extremely cramped living arrangements of the family boarding system in Litchfield had a direct relation to the formation of deep and intimate friendships between students. Sharing rooms and even beds, often sleeping four or more to a room, bedtime became a time the young women shared their innermost thoughts, secrets, fears and hopes.”⁴²

Mary Wilbor shared a room with three other students, Miss Austin, Miss Buell, and Miss Perkins. In Wilbor’s student diary, one particular entry depicts for the reader how such close quarters enabled the girls to get to know one another intimately.

Miss Austin has a great deal of humour but her spirits are easily depressed. I should like to fathom the character of my bedfellow Miss Buell for I think her a singular girl, she has a singular peevishness of temper which is very unpleasant; I do not know but that is her only fault, for she is a very pleasant companion, and that excepted she is a very agreeable girl...Anna Maria Perkins of Ohio also sleeps in the room with us, she is a very good companion and peculiarly amiable.⁴³

⁴¹ Chester, in *Chronicles*, 154.

⁴² Templeton-Brickley, 364.

⁴³ Mary Wilbor, in *Chronicles*, 236.

Wilbor is candid about her roommates, complimenting them on their amiability, but also critical of certain aspects of their personality that only one who shared an intimate acquaintance would be able to observe.

Wilbor's journal provides a glimpse at just how much the family boarding system influenced the personal friendships between these young women. Not only did the students' living situations help to create relationships as Templeton-Brickley theorized, but the friendships themselves actually influenced where and with whom the students boarded. In a previous entry, Wilbor recorded in her journal that another student, Miss B. "has left our house for that of Dr. Sheldon, probably because her friend Miss A. boards there."⁴⁴ Miss B. likely formed a close relationship with Miss A. while in the classroom and subsequently moved to a different host family in order to spend more time with her friend. Clearly, the family boarding system played a role in the development of student bonds, at times even after the bonds had already been established.

The students were a part of the household, which in the nineteenth century was considered the female domain. The ideology of "separate spheres" has tended to dominate contemporary historical discussions on nineteenth century gender roles, exaggerating the distance between the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of work and economics and the limited participation of males in the private world and women in the public. While the public and private spheres were more fluid than these discussions allow, there is still truth to the idea that women were responsible for the household in which they lived. Mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters worked together to provide a comfortable home for their families. Women were bound together by their

⁴⁴ Ibid., 235.

roles as women and as keepers of their households, whether in their families or within the entire community. Furthermore, as Catherine Kelley asserts, “Elevating domesticity’s potential to bind women together over its power to bind them down, many scholars have emphasized the relative autonomy of women’s sphere, arguing that nineteenth-century women succeeded in forging a distinct, and distinctly female, culture.”⁴⁵ As members of and participants in the female sphere of the home, the students of Litchfield Female Academy were participating in a larger female network that linked many American women in nineteenth century society. Just as the classroom environment helped to form a female culture, so too did the “boarding out” domestic environment in which they lived.

⁴⁵ Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women’s Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 21.

Chapter 4

“...to spend a happy eternity together.”

In 1814, Eliza Ann Mulford, a young lady from New Haven, Connecticut, sat down to copy the Litchfield Female Academy’s “Rules for the School and Family”. Rule number five plainly stated, “It is expected public Worship be attended every Sabbath except sickness or some unavoidable circumstance prevents, which you will dare to produce as a sufficient excuse at the day of Judgement.”⁴⁶ From the school’s inception in 1792, Sarah Pierce emphasized the importance of religion to her students. She was concerned with the young women’s personal salvation and conversion, but also believed religious instruction to be an important part of the curriculum.

As her school grew during those first years, so too did the religious revivalism encompassing Connecticut. During this wave of religious fervor, a young man named Lyman Beecher began his studies at Yale Divinity School. After leaving school, he preached in East Hampton, Long Island, where his fiery sermons were published for a wider audience, leading to an invitation to become minister of the Litchfield Congregational Church. In 1810, Reverend Beecher and his young family arrived in Litchfield and immediately began a long and mutually influential relationship with Pierce and her academy.⁴⁷ Reverend Beecher’s arrival in Litchfield coincided with the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening, a movement that had started in response to the “advance of irreligion and indifference” that was spreading across the United States. The evangelical Protestantism of the Second Great Awakening emerged through

⁴⁶ “Rules for the School and Family”, copied by Eliza Ann Mulford, 1814, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, CT.

⁴⁷ Milton Rugoff, *The Beechers* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), 23.

“revivals and missionary activities...Bible, tract, and education societies, Sunday schools, attempts at moral reform, and humanitarian endeavors”.⁴⁸

Immediately upon arriving in Litchfield, Reverend Beecher commenced preaching to promote a revival in the community. His influence on the school began when his daughters, Catharine, Mary, and Harriet, became students under Pierce. In exchange for free tuition, Reverend Beecher acted as the school’s spiritual advisor. In addition, other students from the school boarded with the Beecher family.⁴⁹

Reverend Beecher’s message to the young women of Litchfield Female Academy was simple. One must find one’s way to God and be saved. Only then would one enter the gates of Heaven. This experience was known as conversion. If one was not saved, then the alternative was an eternity in hell. And he did not just deliver this message from the pulpit on Sundays. He addressed the school several times a week and visited the students in their homes. Caroline Boardman, who studied with Pierce from 1815-1816, just as the revival was taking shape in Litchfield, recorded one of Reverend Beecher’s many visits to the school. He specifically spoke to the students “who were afraid he was going to make them serious” and although “he was determined that what he said should make no impression on their minds, he asked them if they thought their immortal souls were of too little value to shed one tear for...young people were very apt to think religion gloomy, but it was more gloomy to be without it.”⁵⁰

For some, the religious element was yet another new experience to which they were being introduced at school. Charlotte Maria Smith, one of Boardman’s classmates,

⁴⁸ Charles Roy Keller, *The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 27, 43.

⁵⁰ Caroline Boardman, *Journal, 1815-1816*, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, CT, 8-9.

traveled from New York to attend the school and boarded with the Beecher family. After Reverend Beecher spoke at the school one morning, Smith lamented, “How came it to be possible that I have remained stupid so long...”⁵¹ Religious enlightenment and an education were synonymous at Pierce’s academy.

This religious phenomenon and Reverend Beecher’s influence on the students of Litchfield Female Academy cannot be overlooked when discussing friendship at the school. On a daily basis, church activities provided the girls yet another shared experience. They attended sermons, participated in prayer meetings, read scripture and sermons at school and at home, and in general, worshipped together. Religion was a part of the female community at Pierce’s academy.

Maria Amelia Clarke attended Litchfield Female Academy in 1830-1831. She wrote several letters to her friend at home, Sarah Deming, while at school. When she first arrived at the school in July 1830, Clarke complained bitterly, “Surrounded by nearly a hundred young ladies, I look in vain among them to find one congenial heart in union with mine.”⁵² However, by November of that same year, Clarke was “ever pleased with [her] school and Litchfield, although a dreary region at present, contains many near, yes dear friends.”⁵³ Clarke’s change of heart about school and her fellow classmates is explained in a subsequent letter. Clarke has put her “whole confidence in Christ.”⁵⁴ Her religious conversion enabled her not only to find God, but become a part of her school’s community.

⁵¹ Charlotte Maria Smith, *Diary*, 1816, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, CT, 4.

⁵² Maria Amelia Clarke to Sarah Deming, 12 July 1830, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, CT.

⁵³ Clarke to Deming, 25 November 1830, Litchfield Historical Society.

⁵⁴ Clarke to Deming, May 1831, Litchfield Historical Society.

While each girl hoped to experience religious conversion, thus bringing her closer to God, the girls were equally concerned for the spiritual welfare of one another. As Caroline Boardman wrote in her journal, “I have a great many friends that seem to feel very much interested in my welfare...Miss Nancy Edwards talked with me and told me she wish’d very much to have me being one of Christ’s flock...”⁵⁵

As they learned and worshiped together, the girls grew to become friends. The language articulated in the young women’s journals to describe the meaning and importance of these friendships reflected their religious experiences. The passage of time was a constant refrain in their journals. Charlotte Smith sadly proclaimed in one diary entry, “The summer is ended and we are not saved.”⁵⁶ Smith’s declaration implies that the women were running out of time, perhaps because many would soon complete their education and leave the school, or to paraphrase Reverend Beecher’s Calvinist perspective, because life was short. In either case, the young women would separate eventually, and although circumstances might prevent them from ever seeing each other again in life, spiritual conversion would ensure that these friends would find each other in heaven. As she neared the end of her academic career at Litchfield Female Academy, Smith acknowledged that she would never see many of her friends again after she left school, but it was her “sincere wish that [they] all meet on the right hand of God to spend a happy eternity together.”⁵⁷

Pierce further instilled in her students a sense of sisterhood by encouraging them to participate in charitable and benevolent work while at school. She not only believed that women not only were responsible for their own families’ religious and moral

⁵⁵ Boardman, 13-14.

⁵⁶ Smith, 18.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 66.

welfare, but could also have a lasting impact on society in general. In a play she wrote for her students, entitled “Dialogue Between Miss Trusty and her Pupils,” Pierce described her view on the role of women in society. Miss Trusty tells the scholars,

It is of little consequence, my dear young friends, whether men or women have the power of rendering most benefit to the world, but it is of the utmost importance that we perform all the good in our power, and use the talents God has bestowed upon us to improve the happiness of society. But few of our sex are called to act a conspicuous part on the grand Theatre of life, but our influence in community is notwithstanding of immense importance.⁵⁸

The students respond by asking how they, as young women without money or influence, could make a difference. Miss Trusty’s answer is simple, “Young women have the power of extending the knowledge of religion by aiding the charitable institutions established for preaching the Gospel.”⁵⁹

Smith’s journal recounts her participation in the female charitable society that had been formed at the school. One evening, after a meeting of the society, Smith wrote, “Should we by our little savings and earnings do all we can to save [the heathens] from destruction, it would afford us a great deal of pleasure to rescue one person...”⁶⁰ Smith would later go on to serve as Directress of the society and in one journal entry, she wrote that the society had met to discuss “the best way to dispose of the money now in the treasury”⁶¹ and yet another evening was devoted to “pleasantly working for the indigent students at Andover”.⁶² Thus, the young ladies of Litchfield Female Academy

⁵⁸ “Dialogue Between Miss Trusty and her Pupils,” in *Chronicles*, 213.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁶⁰ Smith, 19.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 38.

discovered another facet of the female community, working together towards the betterment of society.

Chapter 5

“...so long as life should last...keep on improving...”

The young scholars who attended Sarah Pierce’s academy became part of a female community based on intellectual, social, and religious pursuits. Women who emerged from the intellectual sisterhood at Pierce’s school went on to share the idea of female bonding with other women, showing them what could be accomplished when women came together. As one of the first female learning institutions to introduce this notion of a female community, Pierce and the Litchfield Female Academy not only profoundly affected the course of female education, but also had a lasting influence on the future generations of women who would, through intellectual, social, and religious endeavors, change the course of American history.

The education they received at Pierce’s academy gave many young women the training they needed to pursue their own teaching career. In 1800, Pierce accompanied her cousin and student, Idea Strong to Middlebury, Vermont, where Strong was beginning a school for girls at the request of the town leaders. Strong modeled her school after the successful Litchfield Female Academy, and as a result, Middlebury Female Academy flourished. Tragically, Strong died in 1804. However, her school would live on. A young woman named Emma Hart took over the school in 1806, left after getting married to Dr. John Willard in 1809, and returned again in 1814 to head the school. Emma Hart Willard, founder of Troy Female Seminary and a staunch advocate of women’s education, thus began her career at a school that had been established as a direct result of Sarah Pierce’s influence.⁶³

⁶³ Templeton-Brickley, 555-556.

In 1818, Julia Anna Shepard had been a student at Litchfield Female Academy for only six months when Pierce asked her to teach at the school. From there, Shepard went on to teach at the Academy of Ithaca, New York. While at the Academy of Ithaca, Shepard “endeavored to arouse an interest in the subject of missions, which had become very dear to her heart during her residence in New England.”⁶⁴ Shepard thus shared Pierce’s enthusiasm for benevolent and missionary work with her own pupils.

Irene Hickox attended Litchfield Female Academy in 1820. When she returned to her home in Kinsman, Ohio, she opened up her own school for young women. Later she would go on to open two other schools for girls in Warren and Cleveland, Ohio. Pierce’s influence on Hickox’s professional life is evidenced through the curriculum she chose to offer her students, including geography, arithmetic, history, philosophy, rhetoric, and chemistry. In addition, Hickox incorporated her own version of Pierce’s school rules. Similar to the “Rules for School and Family” copied by Eliza Ann Mulford in 1814, Hickox outlined for her scholars nine articles concerning behavior. Furthermore, she “taught her pupils that so long as life should last, they should keep on improving, that their education could never be finished.”⁶⁵ This echoed Pierce’s belief that she had simply “placed [students] on the threshold of improvement” and “under whatever circumstances you may be placed it will be your aim to acquire the practical management of the powers of mind which you all possess.”⁶⁶

Catharine Beecher, eldest daughter of Reverend Beecher, was perhaps the best known of Pierce’s pupils to become an educator. She began her career as a teacher at

⁶⁴ Shepard, in *More Chronicles*, 200-201.

⁶⁵ W.A. Ingham, *Women of Cleveland and Their Work: Philanthropic, Educational, Literary, Medical, and Artistic* (Cleveland, Ohio: W.A. Ingham, 1893), 229-233.

⁶⁶ Sarah Pierce, Address at the Close of School, October 29, 1818, in *Chronicles*, 178-179.

Litchfield Female Academy. She eventually left Litchfield, and, in 1823, established the Hartford Female Seminary. Beecher's younger sisters, Mary and Harriet, both of whom had been educated at Pierce's school in Litchfield, taught at the school as well.

As the Hartford Female Seminary grew more successful, Beecher began to see a larger role for women in education. She believed that women were capable of exerting a moral influence over their community and could effect change in their society. What better way for women to help to change their community than by teaching others? These thoughts were reminiscent of Pierce's own impetus for educating women. However, Beecher represented a new generation of educator, and although influenced by Pierce, she strove to take women's education to the next level, by cultivating teaching as a women's profession and turning her school into a "training ground for teachers."⁶⁷

Later the two sisters, Catharine and Harriet Beecher, would open the Western Female Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1833. In 1850, Catharine Beecher founded her third school for women, the Milwaukee Female Seminary.⁶⁸ During this time, she also launched the American Woman's Educational Association. The goal of this endeavor was "to establish endowed professional schools, in connection with literary institutions, in which woman's profession should be honored and taught as are the professions of men."⁶⁹ Through this and other undertakings, Beecher would continue to promote her vision of women's education.

These are just a few examples of the scholars who left Litchfield Female Academy to continue Pierce's mission of educating women. By teaching a new

⁶⁷ Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 98.

⁶⁸ Barbara A. White, *The Beecher Sisters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 13, 58-89.

⁶⁹ Catharine Beecher, "An Appeal to American Women", in *The American Woman's Home* (Hartford, CT: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1985), 465-466.

generation of young girls, Idea Strong, Julia Anna Shepard, Irene Hickox, and Catharine Beecher helped to spread the sense of female community found within the academy environment that they had first encountered as students at Litchfield Female Academy. Furthermore, they trained more female teachers who could continue to influence women in the classroom.



At Litchfield Female Academy, Pierce had encouraged her students to participate in charitable activities as an extension of their religious pursuits, further strengthening the bonds between the young ladies. Having been introduced to that aspect of the female community, many women who left the academy upon the conclusion of their formal education went on to promote that same sense of community by entering into the realm of charitable and benevolent work.

Mary Lyman studied at Litchfield Female Academy in 1811. After marrying Amos Collins and settling in Hartford, Connecticut, she became involved in many charitable pursuits. She worked for the Widow's Society, the Hartford Maternal Association, and participated in many church activities.⁷⁰ Eliza Ogden attended Miss Pierce's school from 1816 to 1818. After leaving school, she married a lawyer from New York, Charles Butler. She and her husband helped to found the Protestant Half Orphan Asylum and the Union Theological Seminary.⁷¹ Frances Ann Brace, who studied with Pierce from 1822-1824, participated in many charitable endeavors including the Hartford

⁷⁰ Templeton-Brickley, 348.

⁷¹ William Ogden Wheeler, *The Ogden Family in America, Elizabeth Town Branch* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1907), 319.

Female Bible Society, the Tract Society, and the Hartford Maternal Association following her marriage.⁷²

Catharine Beecher, in addition to her devotion to women's education, also supported a number of charitable causes, including protesting the removal of the Cherokee Indians from Georgia. While at the Hartford Female Seminary, Beecher "formed a women's auxiliary to aid her father and other Boston ministers who opposed this Jacksonian measure...and wrote a widely distributed pamphlet entitled *To the Benevolent Women of the United States* to forward the cause."⁷³ In addition, just as Pierce had encouraged students to aid those less fortunate, so too did Beecher. Students at the Hartford Female Seminary were active participants in benevolent activities, including, in one example, sending bandages and money to Greece.⁷⁴

Mary Lyman, Eliza Ogden, Frances Ann Brace and Catharine Beecher were certainly not the only Litchfield Female Academy students to take part in charitable endeavors after leaving the school. Their involvement in benevolence illustrates how the women of Pierce's school continued to foster a sense of female community through such work. Not only were the charitable societies in which these women participated formed and sustained by women, they often helped other women.



Many years after leaving Litchfield Female Academy, Harriet Beecher Stowe composed a letter to Miss Pierce,

In undertaking the instruction of my children in History, I am often reminded of the source from whence I drew my early historic knowledge I do not find any where a

⁷² Templeton-Brickley, 348.

⁷³ Sklar, 99.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 99.

compend as satisfactory to me as are my recollections of your History all compends are generally so dry & devoid of interest that children are disgusted by them & Rollin & others are too minute and voluminous – yours as I recollect was a happy medium between the two – I write to know whether I could procure two copies from you for the use of my family...⁷⁵

Stowe's letter serves as the perfect example of what Pierce strove to achieve at Litchfield Female Academy. Long after the conclusion of her own formal education under Pierce's curriculum, Stowe harkened back to her mentor's teaching when the time came to educate her own children. Imagine Pierce's pleasure to learn that her students were living the ideals of "Republican Motherhood" that she had so staunchly advocated at her academy.

Stowe's life work serves as an even greater testament to the influence of Pierce and the female community to which Stowe was introduced when she began her studies at Litchfield Female Academy. With *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe became an international bestselling novelist and with this work and dozens of other writings, she supported causes, promoted morality, and offered support to women.

Interestingly, under the male pseudonym Christopher Crowfield, Stowe wrote her most pointed essays concerning women's rights and the role of women in the post Civil War era. In 1865, in her *Atlantic Monthly* column entitled "Woman's Sphere", Stowe presents a dialog between Crowfield and his son-in-law, Bob, on a woman's right to vote. Crowfield, representing Stowe, argues for the vote for women:

...there are subjects on which the vote of women would, I think, be essentially different from that of men. On the subjects of temperance, public morals, and education, I have no doubt that the introduction of the female vote into

⁷⁵ Stowe, *Chronicles*, 82.

legislation, in States, countries, and cities, would produce results very different from that of men alone. There are thousands of women who would close grogshops, and stop the traffic in spirits, if they had the legislative power; and it would be well for society if they had. In fact, I think that a State can no more afford to dispense with the vote of women in its affairs than a family. Imagine a family where the female has no voice in the housekeeping! A State is but a larger family, and there are many of its concerns which, equally with those of a private household, would be bettered by female supervision.⁷⁶

Through the voice of Christopher Crowfield, Harriet Beecher Stowe brings to life Sarah Pierce's belief in the "Republican Motherhood" ideology. As Pierce herself stated more than fifty years earlier, "A free government like ours can only be supported by the virtue of its citizens..."⁷⁷ An educated and informed woman was necessary to foster a democracy that would promote "heroes, statesmen, and philosophers"⁷⁸ as Abigail Adams so eloquently stated in 1776.

In a second column entitled, "What Will You Do with Her? Or, the Woman Question", Crowfield turns to his wife to help an educated, but indigent young woman, knowing that the bonds of womanhood will solve the problem.

My usual course is to turn such cases over to Mrs. Crowfield; and it is to be confessed that this worthy woman spends a large portion of her time...in performing the duties of a self-constituted intelligence office [employment office]. Talk of giving money to the poor! what is that, compared to giving sympathy, thought, time, taking their burdens upon you, sharing their perplexities?⁷⁹

Mrs. Crowfield lends not only her practical support in solving the problem by finding the young woman a job, but she offers her emotional support by helping a "sister" in need.

⁷⁶ Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Woman's Sphere", in *The Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader* (Hartford, CT: The Stowe-Day Foundation, 1993), 402.

⁷⁷ Pierce, in *Chronicles*, 218-219.

⁷⁸ Hogan and Taylor, 140-141.

⁷⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, "What Will You Do with Her? Or, the Woman Question", in *The Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader* (Hartford, CT: The Stowe-Day Foundation, 1993), 381.

Mrs. Crowfield recognized that a well-run, moral household was the domain of educated women. Said Mrs. Crowfield,

I have always held...that family work, in many of its branches, can be better performed by an educated woman than an uneducated one. Just as an army where even the bayonets think is superior to one of mere brute force and mechanical training, so, I have heard it said, some of our distinguished modern female reformers show an equal superiority in the domestic sphere, - and I do not doubt it. Family work was never meant to be the special province of untaught brains.⁸⁰

Through the example of Mrs. Crowfield and her support of the young woman, Stowe extols the value and necessity of a female community.



Decades after encountering the world of formal education and the supportive female environment of Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy, Harriet Beecher Stowe continued Pierce's tenets, not only to "instruct and enlighten"⁸¹, but to promote the value of a supportive sisterhood. Such actions by Stowe and other graduates, like teacher Julia Anna Shepard, far exceeded Pierce's modest goals when she began teaching her first student in her dining room in Litchfield, Connecticut. These women, "all united like sisters"⁸², whether in the public or the private sphere, were the enduring legacy of Pierce, a woman who "devoted herself and all of her active life to the mental and moral culture of her sex."⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid, 396.

⁸¹ Pierce, in *Chronicles*, 218-219.

⁸² Shepard, in *More Chronicles*, 199.

⁸³ Vanderpoel, *Chronicles*, 6.

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