

“Those Who Did Not Extend Their Connections Were the Happiest”: Loyalist Women, Exile, and Marriage in the Post-Revolutionary World

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In early September 1788, Hetty (née Robie) Sterns took a moment out of her busy day to scribble a short reply to a letter she had received from her mother, Mary Bradstreet Robie, in Massachusetts. From her home in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Sterns could only “snatch a few moments” as she juggled caring for two young children, one of whom had not fully recovered from a frightening illness that had reduced the girl “to a mere skeleton.” Fortunately, Sterns believed that the worst of the sickness had abated, and with one crisis averted, she turned her attention to the “shocking” and “unexpected” news her mother relayed from New England. “My tears flow as I write,” she explained, “I must take my leave. It is wrong for me to dwell up on the subject.” “What shall I say upon the subject of losing my dearest sister?” she asked.¹

Despite Sterns’ mournful prose, her older sister, Mary, was not dead. Instead, she had recently agreed to marry Joseph Sewall, a merchant from a prominent New England family. In sharp contrast to Sterns’ grief, her mother approached the coming union with almost palpable jubilation. “It affords me a satisfaction I did not expect to receive in this life,” Robie wrote of the engagement, “as I think she has a greater chance for happiness with him than I ever expected would fall to the lot of a child of mine.”² Sterns could not share her mother’s excitement. She did not fault her sister; after all, as a married woman herself, Sterns recognized that marriage and motherhood were necessary rites of passage for women who hoped to shed the confines of her father’s home.³ As she explained, “Happiness is not the lot of many in this world, and if she had the prospect of it, no one can or ought to blame her for grasping at the hold.” But the news caused Sterns to reflect on her own nuptials: a bond which bound her to Halifax and to exile. “Trials like

¹ Hetty Sterns to Mary Bradstreet Robie, September 8, 1788, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA [hereafter MHS].

² Mary Bradstreet Robie to Thomas Robie, July 28, 1788, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

³ On marriage in the eighteenth century, see Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America’s Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 4-6.

those I have lately experienced have almost, for a time, led me to think that those who did not extend their connections were the happiest,” Sterns lamented.⁴

Exploring how sisters Mary and Hetty Robie “extended their connections” demonstrates that although white loyalist women mirrored both their male loyalist counterparts and women across the Anglo-Atlantic and in many ways, their experience as exiles intimately affected their approach to marriage in two distinct ways.⁵ First, the Robie sisters’ experiences suggest that even as more women across the late eighteenth-century British Atlantic were moving away from viewing marriage as an economic and social arrangement and instead giving more credence to the value of romantic love between partners, exile forced refugee loyalist women to think both more conservatively about marriage and more pragmatically about potential spouses.⁶ Although two years younger than her sister, Hetty Robie married first. In 1785, at the age of only 19, she married fellow Massachusetts refugee, Jonathan Sterns, a man 15 years her senior. Sterns, a lawyer by trade and a budding politician of the loyalist political faction in Halifax, appeared a safe—perhaps even advantageous—partner.⁷ When Mary wed three years later, she too chose a partner she believed would provide her family stability; but by 1788, this meant she had to look beyond Nova Scotia.⁸ Having traveled back to Massachusetts in 1784 and again in 1787, Mary Robie was able to find an American husband, and through the marriage, a road to repatriation for most of her family. The Robie sisters married dissimilar partners. But they chose their respective spouses for much the same reason: each believed their husband offered stability in a world that was otherwise unpredictable.

Second, the Robie sisters’ paths to marriage suggest that although wartime loyalties were perhaps the defining characteristic of their parents’ lives and the lives of male heirs, past allegiances meant little to daughters navigating the post-revolutionary world. In what remains the only study of loyalist families in exile, Ann Gorman Condon notes, “Loyalist children were deeply affected by their parents’ history...these children were raised with enormous affection and care,

⁴ Hetty Sterns to Mary Bradstreet Robie, September 8, 1788, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

⁵ This study does not touch on the experience of black refugee women. For more on the study of black loyalists in the Maritimes, see Harvey Amani Whitfield, “White Archives, Black Fragments: Problems and Possibilities in Telling the Lives of Enslaved Black People in the Maritimes,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (September 2020): 324-345 and *Biographical Dictionary of Enslaved Black People in the Maritimes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022).

⁶ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in the England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 270-324; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-183*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 76-77; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 43 and Marlene LeGates, “The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 24.

⁷ On Jonathan Sterns, see Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Vol. 17, 1768-1771* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1975), 434-435; B.C. Cuthbertson, “Unjacke, Richard John,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed January 28, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/unjacke_richard_john_1753_1830_6E.html and Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill Queens University Press), 126-134.

⁸ On loyalist disillusionment in Nova Scotia, see MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 166; Stephanie Kermes, “‘I wish for nothing more ardently upon earth, than to see my friends and country again’: The Return of Massachusetts Loyalists,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 30, no. 1 (Winter, 2002): 30-49; Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), chapter 5 and Kacy Dowd Tillman, *Stripped and Script: Loyalist Women Writers of the American Revolution* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019), 46.

but also with firm discipline and fond expectations. Children were expected to carry the torch.”⁹ This was certainly true for men in the Robie family. Simon Bradstreet Robie, younger brother of the Robie sisters, felt compelled to study law and enter Nova Scotian politics, even after his family’s repatriation to Massachusetts. When he died in 1858, a monument placed on his grave at Camp Hill Cemetery in Halifax underscored the importance of his family’s history to his legacy. “He was a descendant of the Venerable Simon Bradstreet, The last Charter Governor of Massachusetts,” the slab still reads, “And has left a name worthy of his family.”¹⁰ His sisters’ paths to marriage also demonstrate the importance of parental expectations. Robie family patriarch, Thomas Robie, likely introduced Sterns to his daughters with the hopes of cementing the family’s place in loyalist Nova Scotia through a marital connection. His wife almost singlehandedly arranged the marriage between Sewall and her daughter Mary. But much unlike their brother’s connection to the family’s past, neither Robie sister appear to have had “a preoccupation...with their parents world” nor an urge “to redeem and vindicate the parental sacrifice.”¹¹ Mary and Hetty had come to Nova Scotia at the respective ages of ten and eight. They might have been loyalists in name, but their experience as exiles actually led them to look suspiciously on political attachments.¹² Hetty Robie married a loyalist, but because of the opportunity she hoped it presented her family and not because of her husband’s loyalism. Ultimately, she came to resent her marriage not because of her husband’s past allegiance but because as a woman the connection bound her to his future. When Mary returned to Massachusetts, she harbored little, if any, hesitations about marrying an American. “Every body in this Town would be glad to have you return,” she wrote to her father before her marriage.¹³ Both Mary and Hetty Robie understood their marriages set a course for the future suggesting that loyalist daughters were more akin to their British and American contemporaries than loyalist sons, who saw marriage as way to redeem the past.

Thomas Robie left Marblehead, Massachusetts for Halifax in early May 1775 bringing with him his wife, Mary Bradstreet, and their four children, Mary, Hetty, Simon Bradstreet, and Thomas. Unlike many other British sympathizers, including Thomas’ cousin and Massachusetts Attorney General Jonathan Sewall, Robie chose to flee to Nova Scotia rather than seek shelter with the British forces in Boston.¹⁴ Robie’s gamble on Nova Scotia paid off, at least during the war. The influx of capital that followed the British navy to Halifax during the war provided Robie with a nearly endless stream of customers to his importing business. He purchased a lot near the

⁹ Ann Gorman Condon, “The Family in Exile: Loyalist Social Values After the Revolution,” in *Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759–1800*, Margret Conrad ed. (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1997), 49.

¹⁰ On Simon Bradstreet Robie, see *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society Vol. 10* (Halifax: William Macnab & Son, 1921), 1-15 and J. Murray Beck, “Robie, Simon Bradstreet,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 30, 2022, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/robie_simon_bradstreet_8E.html.

¹¹ Condon, “The Family in Exile,” 51.

¹² On the difference between loyalism and loyalist, see Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, “Loyalism and the British Atlantic 1660-1840,” in *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*, eds. Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 5-6. See also, Tillman, *Stripped and Script*, 21-24.

¹³ Mary Robie to Thomas Robie, October 29, 1787, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

¹⁴ On Sewall and Robie’s relationship, see Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

waterfront on the bustling Granville Street from Peter McNabb for £345 in 1780 as a sign of his family's growing influence.¹⁵

The peace between Britain and the American States in 1783 dramatically changed the Robies' situation as a flood of destitute refugees arrived on Nova Scotian shores. Some refugees, like fellow New England loyalist Mather Byles III, believed the new arrivals would strengthen the exiled loyalist political position. "Our Refugee Party will be very strong this winter," Byles mused in a letter back to his aunts in New England.¹⁶ But others, especially loyalist women, thought less about politics and more about the colonial government's unpreparedness. "I have been a great deal engaged in some painful and melancholy scenes, which have almost effaced the pleasing ones," Mary Robie wrote, "If I look round me, what thousands I may I see more wretched than myself." The refugees had come to Nova Scotia for a variety of reasons, but the most salient element of the loyalist experience in exile, even for those spared the worst of the poverty, was the seemingly inescapable suffering.¹⁷

Ubiquitous hardship affected how the Robie sisters viewed every element of their lives, including romantic relationships. As perhaps the most successful refugee merchant in Halifax, Thomas Robie and his wife frequently entertained passing loyalists who came through the port on their way to other regions of the empire and well-connected refugees who had made Halifax their temporary home. This traffic meant the Robie sisters had both a parade of potential suitors and personal experience with the comings and goings of many transient loyalists.¹⁸ Mary, like other late eighteenth-century teenagers, kept a diary and was particularly careful to describe her admirers. She wrote of a particular fondness between her and one of the sons of the loyalist Rev. John Wiswall, whom she had met when the two moved to Halifax as children. When he returned in August 1783, she enjoyed being in his company and reminiscing with him. "I remember perfectly well many little incidents that took place when he was here," she noted in her diary, "and it gave me great pleasure to call them to mind." Far from the dismay she felt observing loyalist hardship, when she was with Wiswall she explained, "I have frequently been happy at recalling past scenes and have found that the greater distance of time there was between the things taking place and the retrospect the more heighten'd the pleasure."¹⁹ But her happiness was short-lived. The young Wiswall could not stay. Only a few weeks later, Robie bid a sad goodbye to Wiswall and other members of her circle who departed for other settlements in Nova Scotia. Robie did not quickly forget the pain of parting.

¹⁵ Indenture between Peter McNabb and Thomas Robie, April 22, 1780, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS. On the wartime economy in Halifax, see Lewis R. Fischer, "Revolution Without Independence: The Canadian Colonies, 1749-1775," in *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1790*, ed. Ronald Hoffman et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1988), 88-125.

¹⁶ Mather Byles III to Aunts, December 24, 1783, Byles Family Papers, Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

¹⁷ Mary Robie, diary, June 4-5, 1784, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS. On the loyalist women's attentiveness to the suffering of others, see G. Patrick O'Brien, "'Gilded Misery': The Robie Women in Loyalist Exile and Repatriation, 1775-1790," *Acadiensis* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 39-68.

¹⁸ On the importance of hosting in the colonial Maritimes, see Ann Judith Poole, "Taking Tea in the Parlour: Middle Class Formation and Gender Construction in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 1760-1850," (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1986) and Bonnie Huskins, "'Shelburnian Manners': Gentility and the Loyalists of Shelburne, Nova Scotia," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 151-188. On diary keeping in the late eighteenth century, see Tillman, *Stripped and Script*, especially 13-16.

¹⁹ Mary Robie, diary, August 1, 1783, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS. As Condon notes, this type of imagining was common among loyalist refugees who lived two lives: their depressing life as refugees and their more elaborate imagined lives that allowed them to escape the confines of exile. Condon, "The Family in Exile."

Only days later, another suitor, Mr. Lee, “asked leave to pay his addresses” to the eldest Robie child. Robie knew that her parents “would have at least recommended” “an offer so apparently advantageous.” But coming so closely on the heels of disappointment, Mr. Lee’s interest invoked “so much sensibility” that she believed she could not, in good conscience, reciprocate. As she explained in her diary, “I thought myself obliged to him... but that gratitude was all the return I could offer.”²⁰ Robie acknowledged that her family would have pushed her to consider Lee; however, her recent experience with the young Mr. Wiswall may have left her wary of a relationship with, and potential marriage to, another rootless refugee.

Hetty Robie also approached marriage through the lens of exile but appears to have come to the opposite conclusion as her sister: while Mary had trepidations, Hetty saw marriage as the surest path to stability and decided she would marry frequent visitor, Jonathan Sterns. Her older sister found Sterns both pompous and obnoxious; but after an evening with him in early 1784, Hetty opened up about “her penchant for Mr. Sterns,” expressing, somewhat dramatically, “She could never love another or cease to love him.”²¹ Hetty spoke of love, but evidence suggests her family’s situation played a significant role influencing her emotions. A lawyer from Massachusetts, Sterns had come to Halifax after service in the British army and had quickly fallen in with another military refugee, Lieutenant-Governor Edmund Fanning. Fanning, himself a frequent guest of the Robies, had a somewhat strained relationship with Nova Scotia Governor John Parr, who looked down on the refugees as “unreasonable and expecting” and referred to their leaders as “discontented Rascals.”²² An ambitious colonial administrator, Fanning hoped to coalesce refugee merchants and lawyers into a political faction and appears to have counted Thomas Robie among his supporters.²³ If Mary expected her father to push her to consider a relationship with Mr. Lee, then he certainly would have also impressed on his younger daughter the benefits of an “advantageous” marriage to someone like Sterns. In August 1785, Sterns and Hetty Robie married. At 34, Sterns was notably older than his contemporaries when he wed; however, refugee men tended to marry older—Fanning, for example, married for the first time at 48. But at 19, Robie’s situation was different. Well below the average age of 23 for brides in colonial New England, Robie’s leap into marriage before her older sister suggests that refugee women felt pressure to marry earlier, and to older men, in order to establish more secure futures for their families.²⁴

²⁰ Mary Robie, diary, September 7, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

²¹ Mary Robie’s diary is full of descriptions of the many times she bickered with Sterns. After one disagreement between the two, Mary stormed to her room where she hastily scribbled in her diary, “I have been remarkably foolish all day...I retired for a few minutes to write in my Journal...I did not intend to go down till I have made a resolution not to speak so much.” Mary Robie, diary, August 3, 1783, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS. On Hetty’s feelings, see Mary Robie, diary, January 5, 1783, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

²² Quoted in MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 94.

²³ On Fanning and Thomas Robie’s relationship, see Mary Robie, diary, September 22, 1783, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

²⁴ On age at marriage, see Rosemarie Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 17. On younger sisters marrying first, see Daniel Scott Smith, “Parental Power and Marriage Patterns: An Analysis of Historical Trends in Hingham, Massachusetts”, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 35 no. 3 (August 1973): 412. Fanning’s wife was also 28 years younger than he. J. M. Bumsted, “Fanning, Edmund,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 3, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fanning_edmund_5E.html.

Unfortunately for Hetty, her marriage to Sterns provided little of the stability she likely hoped for. To the contrary, marriage made her life more chaotic. Loyalists were dismayed to find that their political ascendancy in Nova Scotia would not be immediate, and antagonism between the refugees and the pre-revolutionary colonists of Nova Scotia created a particularly volatile political atmosphere through the early 1790s. Few figures were more controversial than Sterns. Unable to shake the tincture of “Republican Spirit” that his opponents cast upon him, Sterns lost an election bid for the Assembly in 1785 and again in 1787. After his second defeat, Sterns became one of the most vocal critics of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court claiming that the judges “were not competent for the administration of Justice,” which led to his disbarring. Enraged, Sterns left Halifax, and his growing family, to plead his case in London.²⁵ Sterns’ absence took a serious emotional toll on his wife. He had written in the summer of 1788 that “nothing but the absolute necessity [would] keep him,” but more than a year later, in October 1789, Hetty wrote that she was still “hourly expecting him.”²⁶ Her wait would be much longer. Only when his complaint was rejected the following spring did he return defeated to make a public apology to the Supreme Court judges, who had him reinstated. Tensions remained high over the next decade. In 1798, a political rival savagely beat Sterns in the streets of Halifax after a disagreement. He died days later.²⁷ Widowed with nine children, and pregnant with a tenth, Hetty Sterns leaned on her younger brother, and Sterns’ *protégé*, Simon Bradstreet Robie, for financial support. When her sister’s husband met Hetty for the first time in 1800, only a year before her death, he could only comment on how great a toll the distress had taken. “She looks at least ten years older than you,” he unflatteringly relayed in a letter to his wife.²⁸

Mary’s apprehensions about marriage to a refugee proved almost providential. By the time the elder Robie sister wed in 1788, the post-revolutionary order of North America had become clearer, and she hoped to marry not just outside the loyalist circles, but away from British Nova Scotia altogether. Mary had first traveled back to New England with her mother in the summer of 1784. Although the trip was short, the elder Robie recognized that repatriation to Massachusetts was in the family’s best interests. Her husband, however, remained vehemently opposed, and Hetty’s marriage to Sterns only solidified his belief that the family’s future lay in Nova Scotia. But with the Halifax mercantile economy struggling in the postwar period, Robie allowed his wife’s eldest daughter to again return to Marblehead in October 1787 to sell goods he could not find buyers for in Halifax. The duo had success, but Mary Bradstreet’s primary ambition was to find her eldest daughter a husband. Fortunately, their business quickly caught the attention of a rival merchant in town, Joseph Sewall. By the summer of 1788, Sewall had proposed marriage, and his letter to his bride’s father in Halifax reveals that Mary Bradstreet played a significant role in their courtship. “I should not have presum’d Sir, to make this application,” he explained, “if I had not had some degree of encouragement from Mrs. Robie, for whom I shall ever entertain the most

²⁵ Jim Phillips, “The Impeachment of the Judges of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, 1787-1793: Colonial Judges, Loyalist Lawyers, and the Colonial Assembly,” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 264-332.

²⁶ Hetty Sterns to Mary Bradstreet Robie, September 8, 1788 and Hetty Sterns to Mary Sewall, October 26, 1789, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

²⁷ On the disagreement between Sterns and Attorney-General Richard Uniacke, see Phyllis R. Blakeley, “Blowers, Sampson Slater,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 3, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/blowers_sampson_salter_7E.html and Shipton, *Sibley’s Harvard Graduates, Vol. 17, 1768-1771*, 434-435.

²⁸ Joseph Sewall to Mary Sewall, July 7, 1800, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

grateful regard.”²⁹ The marriage gave the family a tangible connection back to New England. By 1790, only Hetty and Simon Bradstreet remained in Halifax.³⁰

In contrast to Mary and Hetty Robie’s experiences, the sons of loyalists had more trouble separating the prospect of marriage from their family’s history as loyalists. Decades later, in 1825, Henry Bliss, son of loyalist Jonathan Bliss and Mary Worthington, wrote his brother a letter outlining his thoughts on returning to the colony of New Brunswick, where he was born, and about marriage, which he too understood through the lens of exile. “To marry a local girl will give me some connection in the country,” he explained, “That is just what our family has always wanted.” Like the Robie sisters, Bliss too was looking for stability, a way to establish roots rather than living, as he described, “Alone and unconnected with all the society in which we lived.” In some ways, Bliss’ opinion seems to mirror the Robie sisters’ thoughts on marriage. Bliss believed that he could provide his family some permanence in what was by that time firmly British Canada through marriage to a local woman. But like other loyalist sons, Bliss’ thoughts were wound up in questions of nation building and family honor. He could not help his ruminations on his marriage prospects from coming back to the Revolution and his family’s loyalism. “I am well content with my destiny,” he noted, but also explained, “I sometimes regret that Father did not take a different side or that the side he did take was not more successful in the American Revolution.”³¹ While Hetty Sterns must have also cursed the circumstances that brought her such grief, she never saw her own despair as a product of her family’s or her husband’s past. If anything, when she lamented that “those who did not extend their connections were the happiest,” she expressed her frustrations as a woman forced on a certain path with little say of her own. Her unhappiness was not a product of her—or anyone else’s—loyalism; it had always been a possible outcome of her decision to marry.

The Robie sisters’ experiences underscore the confusion that defined life during the Revolutionary Era and the ways that uncertainty about the future affected marginalized people: in this case, loyalist women choosing marriage partners. While exiled American loyalists may have provided diverse regions of the British Empire new settlers imbibed with “the Spirit of 1783” that would reshape the empire in important ways, unmarried refugee women did not necessarily share in these benefits.³² Instead, refugee loyalist women like the Robies had to navigate a constantly evolving social and political climate, where traditional indicators of promise might become liabilities. Ultimately, the Robie sisters chose very different spouses; however, they both appear to have chosen husbands that could provide stability in an otherwise tumultuous world. Importantly for both sisters, the decision to marry, and whom to marry, were questions about the *future* rather than past. Exile forced loyalist women to see marriage more pragmatically than those

²⁹ Joseph Sewall to Thomas Robie, July 29, 1788, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS. As Linda Kerber notes in her work on women’s political rights and citizenship, it was not uncommon for post-revolutionary New Englanders to accept the repatriating sons and daughters of loyalist exiles back into society. Thomas Robie’s decision to send his wife and daughter back to Massachusetts years before he attempted a return also validates Kerber’s findings that loyalist women made more sympathetic figures because they were seen as beyond the sphere of political participation. As Kerber explains, “The revolutionary generation of men who so radically transgressed inherited understandings of the relationship between kings and men, fathers and sons, nevertheless refused to revise inherited understandings of the relationship between men and women, husbands and wives, mothers and children.” *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 9.

³⁰ Hetty Sterns to Mary Bradstreet Robie, September 8, 1788, Robie-Sewall Family Papers, MHS.

³¹ Quoted in Gorman, “The Family in Exile,” 51.

³² Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 11-14.

who had not experienced relocation, but at least for the Robie sisters, the decision had little to do with questions of wartime loyalism.