

FROM CONSCIENCE TO LIBERTY:
DIVERSE LONG ISLAND FAMILIES IN A CRUCIBLE
THAT GAVE RISE TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

A narrative cultural history of colonial families, their principles and sacrifices in their quest for religious liberty and related civil liberties, told through stories of common people who did uncommon things

VOLUME I: 1526–1664

Part A

Margery Boyden

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Includes chapter outline and index and appendices in Part B

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8. Cultural history—Britain, Continental Europe, Colonial America with emphasis on Long Island settlers
9. Family History—Biography with emphasis on colonial Long Island families that include:

LONG ISLAND FAMILY GROUP #1: Scudder, King, Alburtus, Manje, Chamberlain, Ludlam, Estey,
Lawrence, Bartholomew, Betts, Lathrop, Hart, Stewart &c.; ASSOCIATES: Conklin, Denton, Whitehead, &c.
LONG ISLAND FAMILY GROUP #2: Townsend, Wright, Ludlam, Crabb, Coles, Gorton, Underhill, Prior,
Feake, Willets, Harrison &c.; ASSOCIATES: Williams, Bowne, Hart, Hicks, Smith, Lawrence, Tilton &c.

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INTRODUCTION

ROOTS OF THE TREE OF LIBERTY:

PEOPLE AND PRINCIPLES THAT MADE AMERICA DIFFERENT

*But the people said...that the Tree of Liberty
was too deeply rooted in the soil not to grow and flourish,
spite of all attempts to demolish it.*¹

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, American author, in 1835²

Let us not forget, it was the bitter taste of religious intolerance and persecution that brought the first immigrants to America’s New England in 1620 and larger numbers from 1630–1641. These first refugees from the Old World compared their plight to the flight from Egypt recorded in their Old Testament Book of Exodus and felt a similar sense of mission. They too had been denied the core rights of the human spirit: to freely think and choose beliefs, to obey conscience and have the freedom to worship according to their spiritual understanding and noble aspirations—the very core of that which is uniquely human. Stories of their ancestors’ courage to resist oppression were passed from father to son for generations. *Would these stories feed intolerance and revenge? Or, would they break old cycles to produce new freedoms?* Jonathan Sacks says, “If you want a free society, teach your children what oppression tastes like. Tell them how many miracles it takes to get from here to there.”³ Two stories of oppression began in England to Boston and connect through New England to Long Island, occurring about 150 years apart, but one story growing from the deep cultural roots planted by the other. The price paid and lessons learned from the sacrifices of their ancestors, whose *primary purpose was liberty to act according to the dictates of conscience*, inspired the deeply rooted commitment to liberty shown by their offspring as they faced their British Goliath. In the Patriot generation, oppression gave rise to the old elm of Boston called the *Tree of Liberty*—with its symbolism of hope. With the oppressive Stamp Act of 1765, the tree became a rallying point and its shade a sheltering place

¹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne, “The Tree of Liberty,” *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, volume 1, no. 6, (February, 1835): 241.

² American author Nathaniel Hawthorne and his mother published a quaint periodical entitled *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge* that included this symbol of the Boston *Tree of Liberty*. While Hawthorne is better known for his writings about the *persecuting* side of the hearts of Puritan leaders at Massachusetts, he was also “concerned to show that fundamental morality is not so much a series of rigorous laws to be enforced by a meddling community as it is an insight to be attained *through continuous exertion on the part of the individual conscience*.” See Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, Harry Levin, ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), xii. (Italics added.)

³ Jonathan Sacks, <http://rabbisacks.org/credo-teach-your-children-well-for-a-better-life/>. (Accessed 8/10/2018.) Moses set this pattern by instituting Passover to annually remember “the long walk” from Egypt “to freedom.”

for popular meetings. The people placed gold letters on the tree declaring: THE TREE OF LIBERTY. Hawthorne says, “This tree...was [an] offense to the British troops in Boston” who in 1775 “gave vent to their feelings and destroyed it.” This violent act was a sign of British intentions. The next years would be miserable but liberty ideas were “too deeply rooted” to be abandoned.⁴



ILLUSTRATION OF THE LIBERTY TREE IN BOSTON from Snow's *A History of Boston*⁵

The symbol caught hold in other Massachusetts towns that soon had their own liberty trees.⁶ By 1774, New York had borrowed the idea and its Sons of Liberty made “Liberty Poles” out of large sticks, instead of trees, as their symbol to rally around. British troops in New York usually responded by taking the poles down.⁷ These oppressive acts by Britain to destroy the colonists’ right to agency were not new. Tyranny 150 years earlier, with its persecuting malevolence, had provoked thousands of their Puritan ancestors to flee England for New England, convinced that they were accountable to God, not king, for their religious practice.⁸

Desire for liberty of conscience was as deeply rooted in New York as it was initially in Massachusetts. Most 1640s–1660s’ English Long Island settlers came with the Puritan migration to Massachusetts Bay Colony. Though exiles themselves, soon after their arrival in 1630 Massachusetts leaders began to suppress religious rights and differing opinions, persecuting some and returning some fellow exiles again to a crucible of religious discrimination and persecution from which they had hoped immigration would free them. An interesting irony is how roles sometimes reverse between being the persecuted and the persecutor. Due to discriminatory persecution by Boston’s leadership in the 1640s, Long Island’s towns began to fill

⁴ Hawthorne, 241 and Part B, “Consider the Abuses As Well as Uses of the Tree of Liberty...” 700–703, 706–709.

⁵ “Liberty Tree, 1774” from Caleb H. Snow, *A History of Boston*, (Boston: Abel Bowen by Munroe and Francis, 1825), contributed to Wiki Commons by AC8 Sn612 825h, Houghton Library, Harvard University, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Houghton_AC8_Sn612_825h_-_Liberty_Tree.jpg.

⁶ Thomas J. Campanella, *Republic of Shade: New England and the American Elm*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 34.

⁷ Campanella, 37.

⁸ John Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal, ‘History of New England,’ 1630–1649*, v. 2, 237–239. In Winthrop’s “Little Speech on Liberty” in 1645, he differentiated between *natural liberty* (“I mean as our nature is now corrupt”) entailing “liberty to do evil as well as to good” and community civil liberty based on moral law and “the covenant.”

with sincere English religious refugees from a variety of denominations. Despite differences, there were things that these religiously diverse early Long Island settlers had in common: many had already sacrificed much for their loyalty to God. Most sought liberty to worship according to conscience and the spiritual light God had given them—to worship with integrity, with authenticity to beliefs ingrained in them and in their religious cultures. Like the dictionary defines, they held these rights as inalienable: as in “unable to be taken away from or given away by the possessor: *freedom of religion, the most inalienable of all human rights.*”⁹ Today, Jews, Muslims,¹⁰ Christians and others share these ideals: a person’s conscience is accountable to God.

The story of America’s early religious refugees shows how religious persecution and the power of the forces of good and evil were not theoretical to them nor merely the subject of philosophical discussions—they had actually experienced the effects of both forces as described in their Bible¹¹ so the Bible’s rendition of the overarching battle between good and evil was well understood.¹² Subjected by monarchy and its hierarchy who were fallible men, many strongly believed their minds had been created with the obligation to choose between God’s laws, men’s ideas and a devil’s counterfeits. Their Bible states clearly: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” In fact, their holy book teaches how to be freed from the bondages of sin, evil and death¹³ and that no earthly power can take away from them He who gives everlasting liberty. Describing oppressors and religious persecutors, their Bible states: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.” In this world, “offenses will come”¹⁴ against believers but God’s promises of true and everlasting liberty to the faithful and final justice to persecutors vitalized these early exiles. For centuries, tyrannical rulers controlled and dictated their subjects’ modes of worship. Their Bible refers to those willing to give “the word of their testimony” though it might cost them their lives. Out of loyalty to God and His first commandment, many in

⁹ *New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2014.

¹⁰ Freedom toward others’ faiths, Quran 2:56. “Islam means ‘surrender’...surrendering to the will of God.” Muslims also follow “Judeo-Christian figures...who...were significant prophets before Muhammad.” Khan Academy, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/cultures-religions-ap-arhistory/a/introduction-to-islam-2>.

¹¹ See Genesis 3, Old Testament, Holy Bible. For its prominence in colonial times, all references from the Bible in this work will use the King James Translation authorized by James I in 1604 and published in 1611.

¹² Revelation 12 describes the *founder* of this evil as a “great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world...[that had been] cast into the earth, and his angels with him.” The apostle Paul juxtaposed how these challenges were set in motion in the world but the mind or soul is created free to choose God or not. According to Paul, God gives mortals different spiritual gifts, thus differences in understanding, along with each person’s “thorns in the flesh” or weaknesses due to their human condition. Mankind may make choices but is subject to the consequences of those choices. 1 Corinthians 12 and 2 Corinthians 12, New Testament.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 3:17–18, New Testament, Holy Bible.

¹⁴ Matthew 10:28, 42, New Testament. God’s promised justice: Matthew 18: 6–7; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2.

the 1600–1700s were willing to pay that price. Their Bible describes the evil spirit that makes “war against the faithful”¹⁵ that has fostered tyranny and religious persecution for millennia.

Every soul and generation is tested to choose between these forces of good and evil and is measured by how they use their agency to treat others. Massachusetts had a checkered history. Because of cruel injustices at the Salem Witch Trials of the 1690s, the conscience of the people brought its leaders to repentance. By 1774, their posterity was in a new crucible of decision.

When put in its cultural context, the story of these families does not begin at Boston or New York or with taxes in 1765. This volume’s account commences in 1526 in England, 100 years before the first religious exiles arrived at Boston. Great-grandparents of New England’s first immigrants suffered the pain of oppression too. Early America’s ideas grew from centuries of struggle, on both sides of the Atlantic, for the right to worship God according to holy writ and the dictates of one’s conscience. This hopeful idea gathered other religious refugees who followed and was why America’s founders signified religious liberty as the core of civil liberty.

After the British had attacked Boston, New Yorkers foresaw an inevitable battle was coming to them even before His Majesty’s ships arrived. From 1774, New York’s Patriots and their New Jersey cousins had been meeting in grass roots county meetings to choose delegates to the provincial congresses. Each colony then chose *its* delegates to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia that had gathered to work together in protest against Parliament’s Coercive Acts and to petition for essential basic rights. Tested for nearly 150 years, the character of early American identity went beyond George Washington and Congress. It was in the hearts of rank and file, hardworking men and women that the roots of the “tree of liberty” had grown so strong. So strong that even today groups with opposing agendas may borrow its name or symbol!*

STORIES PASSED FROM PURITANS TO PATRIOTS: SCUDDERS OF LONG ISLAND FAMILY GROUP #1
The 250-year story of the *Scudder* family can represent many colonial American families and progressively document the common peoples’ responses to sovereign oppression against rights of conscience, that, in due time, contributed to the rise of American Independence. Their Oppression is first documented against a Scudder in the arbitrary rulings of the English Court of the Star Chamber in 1526, the same year printed copies of William Tyndale’s first English New Testaments were burned in London. Later, several Scudders joined the Puritan migration to New

¹⁵ Revelation 13 and James 3:17–18; James 4:1–4, New Testament. Justice for offenses: Matthew 18:6.

*Liberty Tree Foundation, <https://libertytreefoundation.org> or in some instances used by more conservative groups.

England in the 1630s and, by 1652, three Scudder brothers left the persecuting atmosphere in Massachusetts to settle at Long Island. In the 1774–1784 records of several colonies, Scudders are found unanimously engaged in the Patriot cause for responsible self-governance. Intergenerational conversations must have passed these values from parent to child to keep the dream of liberty alive. To describe their hardships, in the civilized world of 1774 *no* nation gave men self-governance. Then, most people had few or no basic civil or religious rights.

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TOWNSENDS OF LONG ISLAND FAMILY GROUP #2: A CALL FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR ALL

Often history is told through the mouths of the powerful, leaving voices of everyday people unheard. It was through the principles, common sense and consciences of commoners that the way to achieve just liberties for all became manifest. The Bill of Rights was not the first document written in America to espouse principles of religious freedom for everyone. For the first known written petition by citizens for religious liberty, we look to Flushing, Long Island to the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657. At the center of the controversy were *John*¹ and *Henry*¹ *Townsend* of LONG ISLAND FAMILY GROUP #2. Townsends, Edward¹ Hart and others involved had earlier found refuge in Rhode Island where they had honed “soul liberty” type attitudes. Others had fled Massachusetts directly to Long Island. Their colonial Dutch government denied these Long Islanders’ right to hear new Quaker preachers and some were arrested for trying to peacefully assemble in their own homes for religious discussion of these newcomers’ ideas. With civility, this group of Flushing men petitioned their government for religious tolerance for all people: for “Jews, Turks and Egyptians,” as well as for fellow Christians of differing views. Using words and ideas from scripture, these Townsend brothers and twenty-eight other men, with Edward Hart acting as scribe, were asking for a more charitable way of dealing with religious differences. Jail time and continued persecution by their Dutch colonial government was its response. Although not successful in the short term, Flushing’s attitudes towards religious and civil liberties influenced early Long Island thinking and over time more began to

END PREVIEW PART A

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Feake, Willets, Harrison &c.; ASSOCIATES: Williams, Bowne, Hart, Hicks, Smith, Lawrence, Tilton &c.

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