

Boston Bastardy Documents 1750s & 1760s

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Voluntary Exam of Mary Sweetser

THE voluntary Examination of Mary Sweetser, singlewoman, of Charleston in the County of Middlesex taken on Oath before me, Thaddeus Stevens Esq. one of the Justices assigned to keep the Peace in and for said County, “on or about the 25'th Day of December last past and on or about the 22'd Day of January then next following and diverse Times between the s'd 25'th day of December & the s'd 22'nd day of January at Charlestown afores'd in the Cham'r of her Fathers' dwelling House, Moses Abott of Charlestown aforesaid Mariner pretending Courtship & Marriage to the s'd Mary, prevailed with her, and at the times afores'd had the Carnal Knowledge of her Body on the Days afores'd & at Sundrey Times between the s'd Days, and at one of the s'd Times he the s'd Moses Abbot got her with Child of the Bastard with which she is now pregnant”, and prays that he may be apprehended and dealt with relative to the Accusation, as the law directs.

[Signature of Mary Sweetser]

Taken, signed and sworn to, on the first Day of September in the Year of our LORD, One Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty

Before me, [signature of Stevens] *Justice of the Peace.*

Mary Sweetser's Appearance in Court, December 9th, 1760

Mary Sweetser of Charleston in the county of Middlesex Spinster comes into Court and Confesses herself guilty of the Crime of Fornication She having had a Female Bastard Child born of her Body at Charleston aforesaid on the thirteenth day of September last, begotten on her Body as she saith by Moses Abbott of Charlestown.

The Court having considered her offense order that she pay a fine of five shillings and that she pay costs and stand committed until the Sentence is performed.

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Recognizance of Elizabeth Finley

MEMORANDUM,

That on the Twenty First day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty one Elizabeth Finely spinster of Marlborough personally appeared before me, Ezra Taylor Esquire, one of the Justices of the Peace for the said County of Middlesex and acknowledged herself to be indebted to the Court

THE CONDITION of the above-written RECOGNIZANCE is such, That if the said Elizabeth Finely of Marlborough, shall personally appear at the General Sessions of the Peace next to be holden within Middlesex County to prosecute her complaint against James Townshend, labourer from Bolton in Worcester County Begetting her with Child and not depart without license; then the above-written Recognizance to be void and of none effect; otherwise to abide in full force, power and virtue. Taken and acknowledged Before me [signature of Ezra Taylor] Justice of the Peace

Deposition of Kezia Goddard, Concord, 9 Sept 1762

I Kezia Goddard of Marlborough being of lawful Age do testify and say that being at the travail of Elizabeth Finley I heard Granny Stevens, when s'd Finley was in travail ask s'd Finley, whose the Child was, to which she replied James Townsends. The Granny ask'd the Question a second Time, whether she could safely say it was James Townshends, to which s'd Finley replied yes. I then ask'd Her My self, How she came to know it was James Townsends, if the Case was as I heard it, that it was so dark she did not know who it was, till she ask'd and, She s'd it was James Townshend. She made Me no Answer till Mrs. Stephans ask'd, saying Betty is it so, She answered it was dark. The third time the Granny laid it to Her she said, I tell you James Townshend.

Eliabeth Finely's Appearance in Court, December 1761

Elizabeth Finely of Marlborough in the county of Middlesex Spinster comes into Court and Confesses herself guilty of the Crime of Fornication She having had a Female Bastard Child born of her Body at Marlborough aforesaid begotten on her Body as she saith by James Townsend of Bolton in Worcester County.

The Court having considered her offense order that she pay a fine of ten shillings and that she pay costs and stand committed until the Sentence is performed.

[Note: James Townshend denied being the father of was found to be the father of her child by the Justices of the Peace.]

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Recognizance of Aaron Abbe

MEMORANDUM,

That on the Fourth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty five Joseph Abbe -Hopkinton blacksmith - and Aaron Abbe – blacksmith and minor - personally appeared before me, Simpson Jones, one of the Justices of the Peace for the said County of Middlesex and acknowledged himself to be indebted to the Court

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THE CONDITION of the above-written RECOGNIZANCE is such, That if the said Joseph Abbe and Aaraon Abbe, shall personally appear at the General Sessions of the Peace next to be holden within Middlesex County to answer to the complaint of Anna Andrews, singlewoman from Hopkinton against the said Aaron Andrews for Begetting her with Child and not depart without license; then the above-written Recognizance to be void and of none effect; otherwise to abide in full force, power and virtue. Taken and acknowledged Before me [signature of Simpson Jones] Justice of the Peace

Deposition of Stephen Clark (all misspellings in original document)

Stephen Clark testifieth and Saith that at Concord on the 11 Day of September instant that Mr Joseph Abbe of Hopkinton took me the Deponent aside and asked me Wheather he Could Not befrind him abought the afair Concerning his Sone and Anna Andrews for I understand you Coarted her some when you were young and had Carnal Knolage of her I

Tould I Never had and I Know Nothing but Shee is as onst a Girl as Ever was & Says the S'd Abbe you No need to be afraid Says he for you may Sware you Knew a man that had Carnal Knolage of her for Said her I will Give Conciderable if you will befriend me and I tould him I Could Not and So we parted
Signed [signature of Stephen Clark]

Appearance of Anna Andrews in General Sessions, September 1865
Anna Andrews of Hopkinton in the county of Middlesex Singlewoman comes into Court and Confesses herself guilty of the Crime of Fornication She having had a Bastard Child born of her Body at Hopkinton aforesaid begotten on her Body as she saith by Aaron Abbe of Hopkinton in Middlesex County.

The Court having considered her offense order that she pay a fine of ten shillings and that she pay costs and stand committed until the Sentence is performed.

[Note: Aaron Abbe was adjudged the father of Anna's child.]

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Voluntary Examination of Hephzibah Power, 16 December 1767
THE voluntary Examination of Hephzibah Power of New Hampshire single woman taken on Oath before me, Samuel Hobart Esq. one of the Justices assigned to keep the Peace in New Hampshire, who saith, that has born a bastard Child, and that the said Child is likely to be chargeable to the Town of Pepperell in the County of Middlesex in the Province of Massachusetts, and that on or about the third day of December AD 1766, one Charles Holden of Pepperell in the County of Middlesex & Province of Massachusetts Bay Cooper, came to her Fathers House, in said Monson in the evening following said 3rd day of December & by with her, & had Carnal Knowledge of her Body, by Carnal Copulation Sundry times, whereby this Examinant then, & there became Pregnant with Child; & accordingly, on the Twentyninth day of August last past, she was delivered of a Female Child, and prays that he may be apprehended and dealt with relative to the Accusation, as the law directs.

[signature of Samual Hobart]

[No record exists of Hephzibah being fined or Charles Holden's recognizance for bastardy]

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Presentment of James Lindsay,
General Sessions Record Book, Plymouth County, January 1755
Presentment of James Linsay (East-Town Houswright), continued from May term 1754: that on or about 1 May 1753 at Bridgewater deft. an Assault did make upon the Body of Mary Packard of Bridgewater...Spinster and Singlewoman and Daughter of Joseph Packer of Bridgewater...Yeoman...he the said James then and there with force and armes threw the said Mary Down on the Bed in the Dwelling House of her said Father ... and

Contrary to the will of said Mary ruffled her ...cloths and pulld up her Cloaths as High as her Knees and pul'd out his Yard and Endeavoured to have Carnall knowledge of her ... body an verry much Terryfied, Scared and Affrightend the said Mary, the said Mary then and there being in the Dwelling House with her Sister Susanna Packard of Bridgewater ... a minor daughter of the aforesaid Joseph Packerd, the said James then and there Greatly abused, Terryfied, and affrightend her the said Mary. Linsay moved to quash the presentment on the following grounds: “(1st) Because it is Drawn So Generall and So Uncertain that he can’t tell how to make a Certain answer unto it; (2ly) if the presentment be intended a Presentment for an Assault with an intent to Ravish the said Mary it is Informall in the following particulars (1st) it is not said in said Presentment that the said James then and there did beat, wound and ill Treat the said Mary which is Necessary, nither is it therein aleged that he Did said fact with a felonious intent her the said Mary to Ravish and Carnally to know (3ly) The facts Complained of were concealed for more than a Year and not Complained of until after the Said Mary by her Own Conviction was begotten with Child by the said James. Therefore he prays this Presentment may be Quashed and Dismissed as a Vexatious and Letigious Complaint.” Motion Overruled. Deft. pleaded not guilty. Jury verdict, guilty. Court “considered ...that James Linsey is Guilty of the Offense for which he stands Indicted,” and ordered him to pay L5 fine or be publicly whipped twenty stripes and to pay costs taxed at L3.13s. and obtain sureties for good behavior, “more especially toward the said Mary Packard, for the Space of six months next Coming,” and to stand committed. Appealed, with Theophilus Howard and Thomas Linsay, sureties.

[Note: all misspellings and ... included in original text]

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Petition of Pricilla Meret heard at July 1762 General Sessions in Plymouth County
Petition of Pricilla Merret, “Singlewoman,” (Scituate): that “on the 13th of December AD 1761 the Petitioner entered a Complaint to Nathaniel Clapp, JP, ... against Isaac Litchfield of said Scituate for begetting her with child of a Bastard [sic] and ... on said 13th of December the said Justice granted a warrant for the apprehending of the said Isaac to one Abiel Tuner, one of the Deputy Sheriffs for said county, who then made search for the said Isaac but could not find him till the 17th of Aprill following and then the said Sheriff took the Body of said Isaac but the said Isaac did in a most furious manner break from said Sheriff and made his escape and has been in pursuit of said Isaac even since but cannot take him.” Court ordered a special warrant be granted against Isaac “so that he may be had at our next Court.”

[Note: He is found and ordered to pay for the child’s upkeep.]