

IN HER OWN WORDS:  
BRINGING ELIZABETH HUNTINGTON TO LIFE

My decision to script a first-person interpretive tour of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House was inspired by a discussion in David Glassberg's Public History course in the spring of 1996. Nearly every member of the group felt that first person interpretations were problematic (at best) and hokey and innacurate (at worst). I knew their prejudices against first-person interpretations were justified. I also knew that the resources for an unusually sound one existed among the Porter-Phelps-Huntington papers in the Amherst College Library Archives. Museum Director Susan Lisk was interested in a first-person interpretation from a woman's perspective and urged me to create a script.

I chose as my subject Elizabeth Whiting Phelps Huntington. As the third generation (indeed, the third Elizabeth) to live at Forty Acres, she fell at a midpoint in the museum's history. I chose 1820 as the year to represent her; she had been living in Hadley since 1816, given birth to her last child, and both her parents had died. To support the script, I drew from the papers of three generations of Elizabeths. Porter's letters, Phelps' diary and fifteen-year long correspondence with Huntington, as well as Huntington's spiritual diary and letters gave me the words for the script.

With the exception of a few transitional passages, and several quotes from her mother, the script is literally in Elizabeth Huntington's own words. Her phrases form a cadence that is distinct from 20th century speech. She describes to visitors common daily events, revealing her perceptions of three very contemporary themes: religion, race, and gender.

The tour's strength lies in the interpreter's ability to move through time. I wished to avoid a strict portrayal during which the guide never breaks character (to the curious guest's frustration). 'Modern' questions cannot be answered by an interpreter who won't step out of role. The museum's current interpretation reflects all the generations that lived there - well past Elizabeth Huntington's death in 1848. The many artifacts that postdate my subject contributed to the decision to script the tour as a performance. My approach allows visitors to suspend their disbelief when they see anachronisms among the furnishings.

The program's value lies in its adaptability. It may be presented as a theater performance (with ticket prices to reflect its intimacy); as a "special" tour during normal museum hours; possibly even as an off-season walk on the grounds. The script is easily changed to accomodate special interests: the documents describe concisely the garden plantings, the food prepared, the clothing worn, and the servants employed. Another advantage to this program is it has little or no implementation expense.

The program's only expenditure would be for costume, if desired. This tour-based approach could be implemented at any historic site or house museum having access to letters or diaries of the people who lived there.

The tour begins as the interpreter greets the guests in the corn barn exhibit space and escorts them to the front door of the house. She reminds visitors that the emphasis of the program is not on the house's furnishings, but on Elizabeth's words and thoughts. Before she opens the door, she explains the concept of the interpretation, and that she will "become" Elizabeth Whiting Phelps Huntington when they cross the threshold. Ideally she will remain in character throughout the performance, creating a theatre-inspired spell during which the guests will lose their sense of the present. She will break character (if necessary) to answer questions, resuming the performance after visitor curiosity has been satisfied.

As the interpreter moves from the public rooms in the front of the house to the private family rooms in the back, the tone of the performance becomes more intimate. When guests enter the house, Elizabeth speaks with reserve; by the end of the performance, she shares her opinions and emotions freely. In the front hall, she says,

We came from our home in Connecticut after my father, Charles Phelps, passed from this to a higher calling. My mother dwelt alone on the farm until her advanced age and ill health and Mr. Huntington's small salary as pastor

in Middletown [Connecticut] prompted my good husband and I to bring our family of nine children back to Hadley. It was not the first time we returned to find refuge in this valley. In February 1809, we arrived 'to spend a few months<sup>1</sup>, till Mr. H[untington could] find a place to settle...

This is the dining room, what used to be the kitchen. My parents made considerable changes in the house in the 1790s, making it much more modern and convenient than the way I remember it as a child. My husband and I are more inclined to spiritual than temporal pursuits, and have done nothing significant to the farm since we moved here. Years after Mr. Huntington and I were married, my parents were still generous with their harvests and often sent us quantities of food from the farm. They once sent a barrel loaded full of sundry items: a wooden pail full of honey from one of the beehives and half-dozen bottles of Metheglin which they sent by boat, but the a cold spell froze the river and damaged and delayed the barrel.<sup>2</sup>

Another time, Father put up 'a half barrel of good pork' for me, and mother saved 'a good cask of suet' ready to go with the pork, but it could not be sent until the 'black cow' calved --you see how dependent we are on homely things out here in the country.<sup>3</sup>

The present use of the old dairy is combination conservation space/museum office, and is only occasionally included on the standard tour. It remains essentially unchanged from the late eighteenth century, painted white and with broad work shelves running the length of the room. Stepping across the threshold, Elizabeth says,

The dairy has always been a large part of the farm work. My mother was often up as early as three in the morning to churn, 'that the butter might be worked in the cool air'<sup>4</sup>. She felt herself a lady of leisure when she 'had two days [together],<sup>5</sup> that [she]...indulged [herself] in bed, till near .5.,'<sup>5</sup>

"No wonder she felt so, for"<sup>6</sup>

the same old round of business is constantly pursued, by the time of bed, our wearied limbs, are weary eno'...cheese, cheese, hay, hay, cooking, cooking--it seems like holding breath, churning every other day sometimes...

I however, am '...very comfortable--I live much more at ease-and have much less care and perplexity than before...since I have been placed in this situation-and have a little more leisure.'

Getting and keeping domestic help was increasingly difficult for the Porter-Phelps-Huntington women. During the performance, Elizabeth discusses servants in the kitchen and keeping room.

A number of servants are required to maintain the farm. Some folks hear that we have servants and negroes, and think we must be living high, but they are sorely needed to accomplish the work that must be done...We do have trouble keeping them...they are often lacking in proper morals and decision and will keep no position for long.

Soon after I changed my station from daughter to wife, I feared what any newly married woman does -- that I might find myself without help in the house and unable to do the heavy work myself. I wrote and asked Mother for advice:

...my girl is a homebody - and rather stay there, in rags and poverty; than live out, and earn something for herself she intends leaving us a week from today--what I shall do then is uncertain, I know not what we can do --..this I am sure--if nothing happens I am able to do my own work - it may come hard, as you say, but perhaps it will be good for me - if you can hear of a good girl that we could take, it would be a fine thing for us -

We have often relied on black servants for help on the farm. In my parents' and grandparents' day they kept a few slaves and had not to rely so much on hired labor. After we stopped keeping slaves, mother seemed to prefer black or Indian servants to white ones. Not two years after I was married and gone to Litchfield, Mother wrote,<sup>12</sup>

you must know I am my own negro--for Zerviah left us last Tuesday--& I feel as if I could do along considerable well if there was no making or mending...

A year after my dear father passed from this to a greater life, my mother was pleased to obtain "an Indian woman...from Connecticut...who [appeared] to be everything" she could have wished for. The girl she had before "was

released from" them in a "very peculiar manner only one day before this came." But the providence Mother had "such full dependence on" did not sustain, and the "Indian woman left [them] in one week and one day, her husband came and took her with him." Mother remarked at the time, "thus are our pleasing prospects often cut off--and well it is so, teaches patience & a proper submission to allotments." It was a great misfortune, for the woman "did a deal of hard dirty work, & did it indeed very well." Mother had "anticipated a great benefit from her strength & good management," and where to find [another] of her quality they knew not.<sup>14</sup>

Climbing the staircase to the bedchambers above, Elizabeth begins discussing her eleven children. In these more private rooms, the script reflects some of her spiritual diary entries. "On the 24th of May this year (1820), my eldest son Charles will be eighteen years old,"<sup>14</sup>

I would thankfully remember the goodness of God at his birth and all the mercies which have followed us ever since...I have daily entreated God to give him a new heart, and I have been anxiously looking for some evidence of his being at least desirous of becoming a Christian.<sup>16</sup>

"He is now at college, in Cambridge. I fear for him there, without the guidance of his loving parents; 'I desire to be thankful that he is not left to commit open scandalous sin, but this is not enough--I want to see him following the way of holiness.'"<sup>17</sup>

As for my other sons, William "is a child of wrath"<sup>18</sup> and Theophilus, nine years old in 1820 "still remains stupid,"<sup>19</sup> and will not accept grace as "year after year rolls on."

Elizabeth speaks of her daughters in the Northeast chamber where some of their childhood needlework hangs above the fireplace. Describing the 1817 birth of her youngest daughter, Elizabeth reminds the visitors that childbirth was an event more to be feared than rejoiced in, both for mother and child.

("It was)

a little before one in the morning--after a very distressing labor of 36 hours...at first there was hardly any sign of life, but by the blessing of God, she was recovered, and is now healthy and promising."<sup>20</sup>

Outside the tiny closet room that served as Charles Phelps' and then Dan Huntington's study, the interpreter describes the minister's struggle to find a pulpit of his own to occupy in Massachusetts. Elizabeth says,

Day before yesterday was our annual Thanksgiving Day--Mr H.- was at Chicopee where he has been preaching nearly three months: now he has done, and for the three [future?] months has engaged to supply Mr. Taggart's pulpit, at Colrain--it is quite remarkable, that, since we came to Hadley, he has hardly been disengaged a sabbath--this I may remember with gratitude, not only because he may be an instrument of doing good in the kingdom of Christ, but on account of the assistance which it affords, in supporting our family - which is so large and expensive.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Huntington and I are doing our best to see that the children will all be able to seek an education; the boys at Cambridge and the girls at Miss Willard's in Troy. We don't know what the future will hold for us, as we no longer seem to agree with the prevailing ministry here--time will tell.<sup>22</sup>

The last room on the tour is the Huntington's bedroom on the first floor, directly off the front hall. The bedroom was first her parents' room, and the Huntingtons took it over when they moved in. In perhaps her most personal space, Elizabeth relates to her guests events and feelings that would not be discussed with anyone other than very close family members. Here again, the use of the first person interpretation as



performance allows visitors to suspend disbelief that such matters would be mentioned in a real setting. The script calls for Elizabeth to say,

Before his death, my father suffered increasingly feeble health, and caused my mother no end of worry and frustration. For several weeks one summer, he suffered from 'a great large boil...on the seat of his body' which gave him considerable pain<sup>23</sup> on the board seat of the wagon as he oversaw the haying.

how careful the husbands are, to inform the wives of their pains and aches, while the wives try, how long they can get well and the matter never transpires--many times they think that pains, and aches, are the lot of women more<sup>24</sup> than men, let us try to reap good from it in some way...

I am going on in the same round of domestic cares which [my mother had been] so long accustomed to - sometimes it sits very uneasy on me, but generally - I<sup>25</sup> can bear with the fatigues and troubles of it very well...

[But] surely I have had a wrong temper of late...it is apparently the dictate of providence I should do the business which is allotted for me & may I not find as much communion with my savior, ...exercise as much love & benevolence to my fellow mortals (perhaps more kindness & pity) as when sitting in my parlor...These are not words, of course...but dictates of my heart - & a heart too which has been shamefully rising against my occupation and business in life.<sup>26</sup>

As to my business in life, I do thank you for your visit, but as you can see, I am in my working clothes and it is past time for the dinner to be in the pots. The children have been remarkably quiet this afternoon and that usually means they are up<sup>27</sup> to some mischief--forgive me, but I must see to the baby.

The interpreter opens the door and lets the visitors out, then follows them into the yard and closes the door on the performance, breaking the spell and returning to the present.



In writing a script for the first person interpretation of Elizabeth Huntington, I hoped to bring home the point that the nature of human concerns has not changed at all. We still worry about servants, although in the guise of childcare; we struggle to complete our tasks and make ends meet within the limits of a 24 hour day; we are concerned about the state of our souls through the breakdown of civility in society. My goal was to bring history to life to visitors to the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum so that they might understand that the people of the past are not strange and foreign creatures, but reflections of ourselves.

## NOTES

The Porter-Phelps-Huntington Papers are housed in entirety at the Amherst College Library Archives.

1. Fellows, Carrie A. "In Her Own Words: A Visit with Elizabeth Whiting Phelps Huntington," unpublished paper, 1997; and Elizabeth Whiting Phelps Huntington (EWP) Diary, February 18, 1809, Amherst College Library Archives, Box 14, Folder 5.
2. Fellows, "Visit;" and Elizabeth Porter Phelps (EPP) to EWP, November 28, 1809, B6 F4.
3. Fellows, Carrie A. "First Person Interpretive Tour," unpublished paper, Porter Phelps Huntington House, 1996; and EPP to EWP, February 9, 1810, B6 F4.
4. EPP to EWP, July 10, 1807, B6 F3.
5. Ibid.
6. Fellows, "Visit."
7. EPP to EWP, July 10, 1807, B6 F3.
8. EWP Diary, February 24, 1816, B14 F6.
9. Fellows, "Tour."
10. Fellows, "Visit."
11. EWP to EPP, March 18, 1801, B13 F1.
12. Fellows, "Tour."
13. EPP to EWP, October 22, 1802, B6 F1.
14. Fellows, "Tour;" and EPP to EWP, July 10, 1807, B6 F3.
15. Fellows, "Tour."
16. EWP Diary, May 24, 1820. Amherst College Library Archives, B14 F5.
17. Fellows, "Tour," and EWP Diary, May 24, 1820, B14 F5.
18. EWP Diary, July 16, 1820, B14 F5.
19. EWP Diary, July 11, 1820, B14 F5.
20. EWP Diary, June 15, 1817, B14 F6.
21. EWP Diary, November 30, 1816, B14 F6.

22. Fellows, Carrie A. "First Person Interpretive Tour: Revised;" paper, 1997.
23. EPP to EWPH July 3, 1806, B6 F3; and Fellows, 1997.
24. EPP to EWPH, November 13, 1810, B6 F4.
25. EWPH to EPP, February 17, 1801, B13 F1.
26. EPP to EWPH, June 23, 1801, B6 F1.
27. Fellows, "Tour."

INTRO:

Good day. I am Elizabeth Whiting Phelps Huntington, and this is my home. Would you come inside? Have you traveled far today? (ad lib small talk regarding visitors' places of origin)

HALL:

Let me tell you a little about the house. It was built by my grandfather, Moses Porter, in 1752. The center hall plan was considered quite stylish for Hadley at that time. In 1783 and again in the late 1790s my parents made considerable changes, updating the roofline to its present shape and changing the floor plan to modernize the house. My husband and I are more inclined to spiritual than temporal pursuits, and have done nothing significant to the farm since we moved here in 1816.

We came from our home in Connecticut after my father, Charles Phelps, passed from this to a higher calling. My mother dwelt alone on the farm until her advanced age and ill health and Mr. Huntington's small salary as pastor in Middletown prompted my good husband and I to bring our family of nine children back to Hadley.

Mr. Huntington and I began our housekeeping in Litchfield, where he held the pulpit of the Orthodox Congregational Church. Our first five children were born in that community. We moved to Middletown when Mr. Huntington was called there in 1809. We were blessed with four more children while we lived in that parish. Mother graciously gave us refuge in Hadley and we moved home for good to help her with the farm in 1816, just four years ago. Our last two children were born in this house. "How swiftly has my life passed--and every succeeding year seems shorter than the last!"

LONG ROOM:

This is called the "Long Room," and since my father Charles Phelps updated it, combining several smaller rooms (including the old kitchen) it is where we receive visitors. The two portraits over the mantel were taken of my husband, Mr. Huntington, and I in 1801, on the occasion of our

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Whiting Phelps Huntington (EWPH) Diary, February 4, 1819. Amherst College Library Archives, Box 14, Folder 6 (to be referred to in future as B14 F6).

marriage. They were wrought by Mr. Huntington's nephew, Thomas Fitch.<sup>2</sup> My mother, Elizabeth Porter Phelps, used to write her journal and letters here. She told me in a letter that she "had got all [her] writing apparatus into the long room, [the] letters & papers make the table & room look like a writing office almost."<sup>3</sup> She liked to shut herself up in the long room "to have a good visit with [me]" when I was first married and living in Litchfield.<sup>4</sup> In one of her first letters to me she said, "The more I write, the more I want to."<sup>5</sup> In another letter she accused me, "I don't believe you take half the pleasure in writing to me, as I did in writing to you--for I had quite as live [lief?] write as work."<sup>6</sup> She used to say how hard it was to keep up her correspondence during harvest, but once it was 'in' writing would "not be so impossible..."<sup>7</sup>

#### DINING ROOM:

This is the dining room, what used to be the kitchen. Years after Mr. Huntington and I were married, my parents were still generous with their harvests and often sent us quantities of food from the farm. They once sent a barrel loaded full of sundry items: a wooden pail full of honey from one of the beehives, and a half-dozen bottles of Metheglin which they sent by boat, but the river froze and the things arrived damaged, when they did arrive.<sup>8</sup> Another time, Father put up "a half barrel of good pork" for me; and mother saved "a good cask of suet" ready for me to go with the pork, but it could not be sent until the "black cow" calved -- you see how we are dependent on homely things out here in the country.<sup>9</sup>

#### BUTTERY CLOSET/CONSERVATION ROOM:

The dairy has always been a large part of the farm work. Mother was often up as early as three in the morning to churn, "that the butter might be worked in the cool air."<sup>10</sup> She considered that she was "indulging" herself if she stayed in bed until "near five" when she felt she should be up tending to the dairy.<sup>11</sup> Mother was always thankful to have help. When she was able to get "another

<sup>2</sup> James Lincoln Huntington, Forty Acres: The Story of the Bishop Huntington House (New York, 1949), 29.

<sup>3</sup> EPP to EWPH, September 13, 1802, B6 F1.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Porter Phelps (EPP) to EWPH, August 6, 1802, B6 F1.

<sup>5</sup> EPP to EWPH, March 2, 1801, B6 F1.

<sup>6</sup> EPP to EWPH, March 16, 1801, B6 F1.

<sup>7</sup> EPP to EWPH, August 6, 1802, B6 F1.

<sup>8</sup> EPP to EWPH, November 28, 1809, B6 F4.

<sup>9</sup> EPP to EWPH, February 9, 1810, B6 F4.

<sup>10</sup> EPP to EWPH, July 10, 1807, B6 F3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

woman to do the cheese she felt herself "much at ease."<sup>12</sup>

the same old round of business is constantly pursued, by the time of bed, our wearied limbs, are weary eno'... cheese, cheese, hay, hay, cooking, cooking--it seems like holding breath, churning every other day sometimes.<sup>13</sup>

#### KITCHEN:

The dairying is not the only chore we have to accomplish on the farm. I cannot manage so well as my mother did, for I have my children to keep track of, but she was a marvel. The summer I was married (1801), she admitted to having a busy week, with "about .15. men the whole time night & day" to feed --"we can do anything if we but do think we can--last Saturday we churn'd made the cheese got all the dinner in the pots--a little after .11."<sup>14</sup>

Cold weather brings its own share of work. Butchering cannot be done, for meat will not keep until the cold of late November or December. Slaughtering makes a deal of work: last fall, "fryday [we] kell'd hoggs--Satt: made candles...monday try'd [rendered] --Tuesday sausages--& by Wed...I was pretty well tyr'd out."<sup>15</sup> In February that same winter we "had .6. hogs kill'd & try'd into lard about eleven hundred weight..."<sup>16</sup>

#### KEEPING ROOM:

When I was first married, it was hard to get a girl to work. One I had "was a homebody--and rather stay there, in rags and poverty; than live out, and earn something for herself..." I was fearful I would not get another. I knew if "nothing happen[ed]" I could do my own work, and it would be good for me. However, I did write to Mother to ask her if she should "hear of a good girl that we could take, it would be a fine thing for us."<sup>17</sup>

Before my marriage, I thought of Hadley as "unpolished" and this farm as a very "rustical" place.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, I thought of it as a "solitary antique habitation" especially after I had visited Charles in Boston.<sup>19</sup> After I left this "paternal roof"<sup>20</sup> for Litchfield, I confided to my brother Charles,

<sup>12</sup> EPP to EWPH, June 18, 1803, B6 F2.

<sup>13</sup> EPP to EWPH, July 10, 1807, B6 F3.

<sup>14</sup> EPP to EWPH, July 5, 1801, B6 F1.

<sup>15</sup> EPP to EWPH, December 26, 1801, B6 F1.

<sup>16</sup> EPP to EWPH, February 2, 1802, B6 F1.

<sup>17</sup> EWPH to EPP, March 18, 1801, B13 F1.

<sup>18</sup> EWP (H) to Charles Porter Phelps (CPP), April 23, 1798, B12 F15.

<sup>19</sup> EWP(H) to Sara D. Parsons (Phelps), July 18, 1799, B12 F17.

<sup>20</sup> EWPH Diary, December 28, 1800, B14 F1.

how often I think of my beloved home, and those precious friends who reside here. how often this recollection wrings sighs from my heart and tears from my eyes, is but known to myself and in secret only do I indulge the grief which this separation occasions...<sup>21</sup>

not a month after I left Hadley for "a more conspicuous state."<sup>22</sup>

In February 1809, my husband, five children and I arrived here to "spend a few months till Mr. H- [could] find a place to settle...thanks be to [the Lord] for this comfortable retreat."<sup>23</sup> When we came back again for good in February 1816, I was very sorrowful to leave "those friends who were so strongly and truly attached to us" in Middletown.<sup>24</sup> Here at the farm, however,

my situation is very comfortable--I live much more at ease--and have much less care and perplexity than before...since I have been placed in this situation - and have a little more leisure...<sup>25</sup>

than I did in Connecticut.

#### UPSTAIRS TO : GARRET ROOMS

A number of servants are required to maintain the farm. Some folks hear that we have servants and negroes, and think we must be living high, but they are sorely needed to complete the work that must be done. Mother worked very hard, as I have told you, and even used to joke that she "could do along considerable well, if there was no making or mending."<sup>26</sup> We usually accomplish the sewing in late winter, when the cows are dry. After a visit I made her when my firstborn, Charles, was an infant, she wrote me that

I have made since you left here twelve shirts & sh--ts [shifts]--knit almost three pair of Cotten stockings besides the socks & mittens, & all the other mending which has never been properly cleared off since I came from L--d [Litchfield]...now there remains about .6. or .8. frocks & trowsers to make & repair which as soon as my thumb is well, will be attended to & perhaps done before C[hables] comes...this week is soap week.<sup>27</sup>

But I began to tell you of the servants needed to run the farm. We do have trouble keeping

<sup>21</sup> EWPH to CPP, January 25, 1801, B12 F15.

<sup>22</sup> EWP(H) Diary, November 27, 1800, B14 F1.

<sup>23</sup> EWPH Diary, February 18, 1809, B14 F5.

<sup>24</sup> EWPH Diary, February 24, 1816, B14 F6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> EPP to EWPH, October 22, 1802, B6 F1.

<sup>27</sup> EPP to EWPH, March 23, 1803, B6 F2.



them; I don't think we work them so hard they want to leave, but they are often lacking in proper morals and decision; and will keep no position for long.

Before brother Charles came to live across the way, he sold his house in Boston and rented another there "at less expence." But as to "the domesticks," "the Cook certainly must be had--the chamber maid cannot be wanting--a man or boy to do arrands, & split wood etc." can none of them be dispensed with in the city.<sup>28</sup>

We have often relied on black servants for help on the farm. In my parents' and grandparents' day, they kept a few slaves and had not to rely so much on hired labor. After we stopped keeping slaves, mother still seemed to prefer black or Indian domestics to white servants. Not two years after I was married and gone to Litchfield, Mother wrote this to me:

You must know I am ny own negro--for Zerviah left us last Tuesday--& I feel as if I could do alnong considerable well if there was no making or mending--when you come [to visit] you can sew, & I can do the work, & Mitte take care of the dear babe [my first son Charles] ...[then] what an airry castle we shall be...<sup>29</sup>

Mitte was the daughter of a new family we hired to help with the farm; they saved enough money to rent an adjoining property and farm on their own eventually, but Mitte helped my mother after I went away. Poor Mitte was less steadfast than she should have been, and we feared for her soul here; Mother sent her to me in Litchfield where she might be less likely to stray from the fold and help me with my busy household. But the misfortunes of our fellow creatures are best not spoken of.

A year after my dear father passed from this to an eternal life, my mother was very pleased to obtain "an Indian woman...from Connecticut...who [appeared] to be everything" she could have wished for. The girl she had before "was released from" them in a "very peculiar manner only one day before this came." But the providence Mother had "such full dependence on" did not sustain, and the "Indian woman left [them] in one week & one day, her husband came and took her with him." "...Thus are our pleasing prospects often cut off--and well it is so, teaches patience & a proper submission to allotments." It was a great misfortune, for the woman "did a deal of hard dirty work, & did it indeed very well." Mother and sister Sally had "anticipated a great benefit from her strength &

<sup>28</sup> EPP to EWPH, March 31, 1812, B6 F5.

<sup>29</sup> EPP to EWPH, October 22, 1802, B6 F1.

good management ,” and where to find [another] woman of her quality they knew not.<sup>30</sup>

## BACK BEDROOM

On the 24th of May this year (1820), my eldest son Charles will be eighteen years old--

I would thankfully remember the goodness of God at his birth and all the mercies which have followed us ever since...I have daily entreated God to give him a new heart, and I have been anxiously looking for some evidence of his being at least desirous of becoming a Christian.<sup>31</sup>

He is now at college, in Cambridge. I fear for him there, without the guidance of his loving parents; “I desire to be thankful that he is not left to commit open scandalous sin, but this is not enough--I want to see him following the way of holiness.”<sup>32</sup>

My second son, William, will soon join his brother at Harvard. “Sixteen years ago he began an existence which will never end--but he is a child of wrath--I have no evidence of his having passed from death to life.”<sup>33</sup>

Edward turned thirteen in April; in July Theophilus will be nine; “year after year rolls on and he still remains stupid” and does not accept grace.<sup>34</sup> Theodore, my eighth child, was seven years old in March; seven years “since I was in extreme distress, and danger--but God in mercy interposed and granted me relief in an unexpected moment--may I never forget his goodness.”<sup>35</sup>

Just last year on May 28, “about 11 o'clock in the morning, I was made to rejoice in the birth of another son” --Frederic Dan--“never can I enough admire and adore the goodness of God for his mercy to me in this time of distress anxiety and danger--how much better did he deal with me than I feared.”<sup>36</sup> The baby shares his birthday with his brother John, who turned eleven the day his brother was born.<sup>37</sup>

## FLAMINGO ROOM/NORTHEAST UPSTAIRS BEDCHAMBER:

I have told you about my sons; now I shall tire you with boasting of my daughters' accomplishments. When Elizabeth was ten and Bethia eight years old, I sent them to Hadley from

<sup>30</sup> EPP to EWPH, July 10, 1807, B6 F3.

<sup>31</sup> EWPH Diary, May 24, 1820, B14 F5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> EWPH Diary, July 16, 1820, B14 F5.

<sup>34</sup> EWPH Diary, July 11, 1820, B14 F5.

<sup>35</sup> EWPH Diary, March 18, 1821, B14 F5.

<sup>36</sup> EWPH Diary, June 27, 1819, B14 F5.

<sup>37</sup> Kari Federer, Porter Phelps Huntington Papers Finding Aid, Amherst College Library Archives.

Connecticut for a visit with their grandparents. While they were here, I sent Bethia some yarn to make herself some new mittens with her grandmother's direction, and "a piece of check'd cloth" for aprons for the girls that Elizabeth was to finish (with help).<sup>38</sup> The samplers over the fireplace are some the girls wrought as children.

Mary was the last child born to us in Middletown. She was five in April; my baby daughter, Catherine Carey, was born on may 8, 1817

a little before one in the morning--after a very distressing labor of 36 hours...at first there was hardly any sign of life, but by the blessing of God, she was recovered, and is now healthy and promising.<sup>39</sup>

Bethia will be sixteen next year in October. May the God of Grace "help me to save her soul...overcome all her stupidity and shew her that she is in danger of [His] everlasting displeasure."<sup>40</sup>

#### CLOSET OFFICE/STUDY:

Mr. Huntington has not been able to find steady work in the ministry, except to supply pulpits of ministers who are otherwise unable to perform their usual duties. The year we arrived, he supplied "Mr. Taggart's pulpit in Colrain"--he also preached at Chicopee "nearly three months." Until recently,

...he has hardly been disengaged a sabbath--this may I remember with gratitude, not only because he may be an instrument of doing good in the kingdom of Christ, but on account of the assistance which it affords in supporting our family--which is so large and expensive.<sup>41</sup>

Whenever of a sabbath I am obliged to stay at home from meeting against my inclination, I try to improve myself through thoughtful reading and reflection, seeking "the blessing of God on his holy day."<sup>42</sup> But "how wicked and vile I still am!"<sup>43</sup> "I endeavor to treat the younger children--but find it difficult to make any impression open their hearts" when it is too muddy to go out or the horses are lame or engaged.<sup>44</sup> It is "remarkable that we have never been called on to mourn the loss of any of

<sup>38</sup> EWPH to Elizabeth and Bethia Huntington, January 28, 1813, B12 F6.

<sup>39</sup> EWPH Diary, June 15, 1817, B14 F6.

<sup>40</sup> EWPH Diary, October 7, 1821, B14 F5.

<sup>41</sup> EWPH Diary, November 30, 1816, B14 F6.

<sup>42</sup> EWPH Diary, July 28, 1799, B14 F1.

<sup>43</sup> EWPH Diary, May 11, 1800, B14 F1.

<sup>44</sup> EWPH Diary, January 24, 1819, B14 F6.