

JEMIMA WILKINSON,

RHODE ISLAND'S PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND¹



JEMIMAH WILKINSON
UNIVERSAL FRIEND

“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY

1. Refer to the her papers on microfilm in the Cornell University Collection of Regional History, Ithaca NY, 1951. There is said to be a portrait of her in Stafford C. Cleveland's 1873 HISTORY OF YATES COUNTY, NEW YORK, a book which I have yet to view, but that portrait is said probably to have been conceptual. The Yates County Historical & Genealogical Society has preserved her hat.



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GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

1645

During the civil war between King [Charles I](#) and the Parliament the town of Newcastle-on-Tyne in Northumberland had been occupied several times by one side or the other, but its critical event had come during October 1644 when it had been stormed by Scots under the Earl of Leven while they were marching through to join the Parliamentarians in the South. Captain Lawrence Wilkinson of the army of the King had in that process been taken prisoner with sequestration of his lands, which would be sold by Parliament. Through a negotiated agreement between Cromwell and the King's advocate in about 1652-1654, this loyalist Charles Wilkinson would be allowed to find refuge in [Providence, Rhode Island](#) (he would become a great-grandfather of [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), the disowned "Publik Universal Friend" of [Cumberland](#)).

WILKINSON FAMILY

There was a Maturin Bellows at [Providence, Rhode Island](#).



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1652

The Parliamentary soldier [William Edmundson](#) rode into Derbyshire and married a young woman, to whom he had been contracted before. After some time he and his wife determined to relocate to [Ireland](#), and got off the boat in the port of Dublin not long after the plague.

During this period, finally, through a negotiated agreement between [Lord Protector Cromwell](#) and King [Charles I](#)'s advocate, Lawrence Wilkinson was allowed to find refuge in [Providence, Rhode Island](#). He and his wife Susanna Smith Wilkinson, daughter of Christopher Smith, would have sons Joseph Wilkinson, born on March 2, 1654, Samuel Wilkinson, and John Wilkinson, and daughters Susanna Wilkinson, born on March 9, 1652; Joanna Wilkinson, born on March 2, 1657, and Susanna Wilkinson (again), born during February 1661/62. (It would be, presumably, this youngest son John Wilkinson who would become a grandfather of [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), the "Publik Universal Friend" of Rhode Island, and also an ancestor of Oziel Wilkinson the metal worker of Pawtucket.)

WILKINSON FAMILY

At the culmination of the rebellion which had begun in 1641 in [Ireland](#), after eleven years of intense hostilities, the island had been stripped and was "void as a wilderness." The half of the people who had attempted to oppose Cromwell who were still alive were reduced to eating human flesh, when they were not consuming carrion. The victorious English colonists brought about the sale by drovers and other intermediaries of some 35,000 to 40,000 defeated Irish warriors, to the armies of foreign powers. This "transplantation" was in all particulars an Irish [slave](#) trade "to Hell or Connaught" begun after the remaining Irish had been forced to move west of the River Shannon. By and large these men would be able to continue in the status of soldier, albeit by serving a foreign master in a foreign clime, except for some unfortunate number of the more intransigent ones, probably somewhat less than a thousand, who could not be trusted with their weapons but would instead need to be reduced as common laborers on the sugar-cane plantations of the West Indies.² As all these thousands upon thousands of defeated warriors were being transshipped out of Irish ports, some 6,000 Irish Catholic priests, Irish Catholic women, and Irish Catholic boys were in addition sent along with them for free, in order to be disposed of them locally, without any separate record being maintained of these civilian auxiliaries. This Irish slave trade would not be brought to a completion until 1657.³

ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

INTERNATIONAL SLAVE TRADE

W.E. Burghardt Du Bois: In 1652 Rhode Island passed a law designed to prohibit life slavery in the colony. It declared that "Whereas, there is a common course practised amongst English men to buy negers, to that end they may have them for service or slaves forever; for the preventing of such practices

2. As a footnote, a pointy reminder by Theodore W. Allen: "It is only a 'white' habit of mind that reserves 'slave' for the African-American and boggles at the term 'Irish slave trade'."

3. When the proposal was recently made by a black reverend in [Providence, Rhode Island](#) that we should now remove the word "plantation" from the official state name "Rhode Island and Providence Plantations" on grounds that such a word honored the state's history of human slavery, some white clown-in-denial wrote to the [ProJo](#) local newspaper and insisted that while indeed there had been slavery in [Rhode Island](#), the local historical "slaves" (this clown, or the clowning newspaper editor of the clownish ProJo newspaper, had put the term inside scarequotes) had been merely white people such as the Irish warriors who had been indentured as slaves for a period of ten years. Nothing for us to be ashamed of, he trumpeted informedly!

INDENTURE



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among us, let it be ordered, that no blacke mankind or white being forced by covenant bond, or otherwise, to serve any man or his assignes longer than ten yeares, or untill they come to bee twentie four yeares of age, if they bee taken in under fourteen, from the time of their cominge within the liberties of this Collonie. And at the end or terme of ten yeares to sett them free, as the manner is with the English servants. And that man that will not let them goe free, or shall sell them away elsewhere, to that end that they may bee enslaved to others for a long time, hee or they shall forfeit to the Collonie forty pounds."⁴

This law was for a time enforced,⁵ but by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had either been repealed or become a dead letter; for the Act of 1708 recognized perpetual slavery, and laid an impost of £3 on Negroes imported.⁶ This duty was really a tax on the transport trade, and produced a steady income for twenty years.⁷ From the year 1700 on, the citizens of this State engaged more and more in the carrying trade, until Rhode Island became the greatest slave-trader in America. Although she did not import many slaves for her own use, she became the clearing-house for the trade of other colonies. Governor Cranston, as early as 1708, reported that between 1698 and 1708 one hundred and three vessels were built in the State, all of which were trading to the West Indies and the Southern colonies.⁸ They took out lumber and brought back molasses, in most cases making a slave voyage in between. From this, the trade grew. Samuel Hopkins, about 1770, was shocked at the state of the trade: more than thirty distilleries were running in the colony, and one hundred and fifty vessels were in the slave-trade.⁹ "Rhode Island," said he, "has been more deeply interested in the slave-trade, and has enslaved more Africans than any other colony in New England." Later, in 1787, he wrote: "The inhabitants of Rhode Island, especially those of Newport, have had by far the greater share in this traffic, of all these United States. This trade in human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business has chiefly depended. That town has been built up, and flourished in times past, at the expense of the blood, the liberty, and happiness of the poor Africans; and the inhabitants have lived on this, and by it have gotten most of their wealth and riches."¹⁰

The Act of 1708 was poorly enforced. The "good intentions" of its framers "were wholly frustrated" by the clandestine "hiding and conveying said negroes out of the town [Newport] into the country, where they lie concealed."¹¹ The act was accordingly

4. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, I. 240.

5. Cf. letter written in 1681: NEW ENGLAND REGISTER, XXXI. 75-6. Cf. also Arnold, HISTORY OF RHODE ISLAND, I. 240.

6. The text of this act is lost (COLONIAL RECORD, IV. 34; Arnold, HISTORY OF RHODE ISLAND, II. 31). The Acts of Rhode Island were not well preserved, the first being published in Boston in 1719. Perhaps other whole acts are lost.

7. E.g., it was expended to pave the streets of Newport, to build bridges, etc.: RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, IV. 191-3, 225.

8. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, IV. 55-60.

9. Patten, REMINISCENCES OF SAMUEL HOPKINS (1843), page 80.

10. Hopkins, WORKS (1854), II. 615.

11. Preamble of the Act of 1712.



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strengthened by the Acts of 1712 and 1715, and made to apply to importations by land as well as by sea.¹² The Act of 1715, however, favored the trade by admitting African Negroes free of duty. The chaotic state of Rhode Island did not allow England often to review her legislation; but as soon as the Act of 1712 came to notice it was disallowed, and accordingly repealed in 1732.¹³ Whether the Act of 1715 remained, or whether any other duty act was passed, is not clear.

While the foreign trade was flourishing, the influence of the Friends and of other causes eventually led to a movement against slavery as a local institution. Abolition societies multiplied, and in 1770 an abolition bill was ordered by the Assembly, but it was never passed.¹⁴ Four years later the city of Providence resolved that "as personal liberty is an essential part of the natural rights of mankind," the importation of slaves and the system of slavery should cease in the colony.¹⁵ This movement finally resulted, in 1774, in an act "prohibiting the importation of Negroes into this Colony," – a law which curiously illustrated the attitude of Rhode Island toward the slave-trade. The preamble of the act declared: "Whereas, the inhabitants of America are generally engaged in the preservation of their own rights and liberties, among which, that of personal freedom must be considered as the greatest; as those who are desirous of enjoying all the advantages of liberty themselves, should be willing to extend personal liberty to others; – Therefore," etc. The statute then proceeded to enact "that for the future, no negro or mulatto slave shall be brought into this colony; and in case any slave shall hereafter be brought in, he or she shall be, and are hereby, rendered immediately free...." The logical ending of such an act would have been a clause prohibiting the participation of Rhode Island citizens in the slave-trade. Not only was such a clause omitted, but the following was inserted instead: "Provided, also, that nothing in this act shall extend, or be deemed to extend, to any negro or mulatto slave brought from the coast of Africa, into the West Indies, on board any vessel belonging to this colony, and which negro or mulatto slave could not be disposed of in the West Indies, but shall be brought into this colony. Provided, that the owner of such negro or mulatto slave give bond ... that such negro or mulatto slave shall be exported out of the colony, within one year from the date of such bond; if such negro or mulatto be alive, and in a condition to be removed."¹⁶

In 1779 an act to prevent the sale of slaves out of the State was passed,¹⁷ and in 1784, an act gradually to abolish slavery.¹⁸

12. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, IV. 131-5, 138, 143, 191-3.

13. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, IV. 471.

14. Arnold, HISTORY OF RHODE ISLAND, II. 304, 321, 337. For a probable copy of the bill, see NARRAGANSETT HISTORICAL REGISTER, II. 299.

15. A man dying intestate left slaves, who became thus the property of the city; they were freed, and the town made the above resolve, May 17, 1774, in town meeting: Staples, ANNALS OF PROVIDENCE (1843), page 236.

16. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, VII. 251-2.

17. BARTLETT'S INDEX, page 329; Arnold, HISTORY OF RHODE ISLAND, II. 444; RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, VIII. 618.

18. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, X. 7-8; Arnold, HISTORY OF RHODE ISLAND, II. 506.



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Not until 1787 did an act pass to forbid participation in the slave-trade. This law laid a penalty of £100 for every slave transported and £1000 for every vessel so engaged.¹⁹

19. BARTLETT'S INDEX, page 333; NARRAGANSETT HISTORICAL REGISTER, II. 298-9. The number of slaves in Rhode Island has been estimated as follows: —

In 1708, 426. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, IV. 59.

In 1730, 1,648. RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL TRACTS, No. 19, pt. 2, page 99.

In 1749, 3,077. WILLIAMS, HISTORY OF THE NEGRO RACE IN AMERICA, I. 281.

In 1756, 4,697. WILLIAMS, HISTORY OF THE NEGRO RACE IN AMERICA, I. 281.

In 1774, 3,761. RHODE ISLAND COLONIAL RECORD, VII. 253.



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1666

May 31, Thursday (Old Style): Lawrence Wilkinson of [Providence, Rhode Island](#) affirmed his allegiance to King [Charles II](#) of England (something not difficult for him to do, since he had been a Captain in the Loyalist army of King Charles I).

WILKINSON FAMILY

THIS DAY IN PEPYS'S DIARY



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1682

May 29, Monday (Old Style): Samuel Wilkinson of [Providence, Rhode Island](#), son of Lawrence Wilkinson, who had gotten married during 1672 with Plain Wickenden Wilkinson, daughter of William Wickenden, and the couple had had Samuel Wilkinson, born on September 18, 1674, John Wilkinson, born on January 25, 1678, William Wilkinson, born on August 1, 1680, Joseph Wilkinson, born on January 22, 1683, Ruth Wilkinson, born on January 31, 1685, and Susanna Wilkinson, born on April 27, 1688. On this day Samuel Wilkinson made his pledge of allegiance to King Charles II of England. (The daughter Ruth Wilkinson would marry with William Hopkins and become the mother not only of [Esek Hopkins](#), who in 1776 would become 1st commodore of an American fleet, but also of Governor [Stephen Hopkins](#), whose name would appear on the American [Declaration of Independence](#).)

WILKINSON FAMILY

THE HOPKINS FAMILY

what we have done
a protest in such
Colony
Stephen Hopkins



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1689

April 6, Saturday (Old Style): Novelist-playwright Aphra Behn, the first professional female British author, died in London.

John Wilkinson of [Providence, Rhode Island](#), son of Lawrence Wilkinson, got married with Deborah Wilkinson. They would have John Wilkinson, born during March 1690, Mercy Wilkinson, born on June 30, 1694, Sarah Wilkinson, born on June 22, 1696, Freelove Wilkinson, born on July 25, 1701, Daniel Wilkinson, born on June 8, 1703, and Jeremiah Wilkinson, born on June 4, 1707 (it was this youngest son Jeremiah Wilkinson who would become the father of [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), the “Publik Universal Friend” of [Cumberland](#)).

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1692

August 9, Tuesday (Old Style): Lawrence Wilkinson of [Providence, Rhode Island](#) died.

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1707

June 4, Wednesday (Old Style): Jeremiah Wilkinson was born in or near [Providence, Rhode Island](#), the last-born son of John and Deborah Wilkinson.

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1741

July 6, Monday (Old Style): Jeremiah Wilkinson was born in [Cumberland, Rhode Island](#), a son of Jeremiah Wilkinson:



In the northern portion of the present town [of Cumberland], adjoining [Woonsocket](#), the Ballous settled, and to the south of them a family by the name of Cook. Around Diamond Hill, the Whipples first settled, and their descendants are found in this vicinity at the present time. To the south of them the Razees, while to the east, the Tingleys made a settlement. The Metcalfs took up a tract of land lying south of the village of East Cumberland. The Wilkinsons and the Pecks took up a section and made permanent settlements. There are many farms in the town to-day, that are still held in the name of the first settlers.

Perhaps no name has become more distinguished in the history of the town, and even in the State, than that of Wilkinson. Jeremiah Wilkinson was born July 6, 1741, and early developed a great inventive genius. He was not only a worker in iron and steel, but gold and silver as well. He made the first silver spoons used in this vicinity, and several of them are now in possession of some members of the family. At an early age he made hand-cards, and invented a machine for bending the wire and cutting it at the same time. He not only made cards for carding cotton and wool, but for carding horses and cattle. He afterwards invented a machine for punching holes in the leather, into which the wires were fastened. He often found it difficult to procure the wire, and he set himself about the construction of a machine for drawing it. In this he was successful, and it is said that this was the first attempt of the kind ever made in America. His invention of cold-cut nails is world-wide; and one of the original machines is now in possession of Mr. Albert O. Razee,



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at Diamond Hill.



In April, 1776, he made tacks, with a machine of his own invention. Several pieces of furniture and machines made by him are still in existence. Among those is a tool-chest, of remarkable artistic design. He made molasses from corn-stalks. He invented a machine to grind the stalks, and the pomace was pressed in a common cider-mill. He made needles and pins, and sold darning needles, during the Revolution, for one dollar each. This man was indeed possessed of a remarkable genius, and the inventions he wrought will preserve his fame and memory forever bright in the annals of his country's history.

WILKINSON FAMILY



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1743

September 24, Saturday (Old Style): Simon Wilkinson was born in [Cumberland](#), [Rhode Island](#):



Simon Wilkinson was born in Cumberland, Sept. 24, 1743, and died July 9, 1819. He was a great mathematician, and was conversant with the science of astronomy. He could repeat the names of the principal stars, and explain many of the principles of that intricate science to his less educated neighbors, who regarded him with admiration. He was a surveyor, and was frequently called upon to settle disputes growing out of the settlement of boundaries, &c. He filled the position of justice of the peace for many years, and was considered authority upon all questions of law, and died bearing the enviable appellation of the "Peace Maker."

WILKINSON FAMILY



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1748

At Bilston in Staffordshire, England, [John Wilkinson](#) built a blast furnace that used coke as fuel.





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1752

November 29, Wednesday: Woonsocket or Quinsnicket was the [Smithfield](#) Monthly Meeting of the [Religious Society of Friends](#)'s upper meetinghouse and [Saylesville](#) its lower meetinghouse. Its area, in the Revolutionary period, encompassed not only [Providence](#), [Rhode Island](#), which did not yet have its own meetinghouse, but all of central Massachusetts. [Friend](#) Jeremiah Wilkinson's farm was across the Blackstone River from the [Woonsocket](#) upper meetinghouse in [Cumberland](#), on a rise known as Cherry Hill north of Camp Swamp and south of Hunting Hill, about four miles from the Saylesville lower meetinghouse. On this day a baby girl was born, a "birthright" Friend named after one of Job's daughters, Jemimah. She was probably the 8th surviving child of Friend Elizabeth Amey Whipple Wilkinson:

- 1739 William Wilkinson
- 1740 Patience Wilkinson
- 1740 Amy Wilkinson
- 1741 Jeremiah Wilkinson
- 1743 Simon Wilkinson
- 1745 Benjamin Wilkinson
- 1750 Marcy Wilkinson
- 1752 Jemimah Wilkinson
- 1755 Stephen Wilkinson
- 1757 Jephtha Wilkinson
- 1760 Elizabeth Wilkinson
- 1764 Deborah Wilkinson



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At any rate, Friend [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) would be part of a farm family of eight sons and four daughters, and would be about 12 or 13 years of age at the death of her mother.²⁰

WILKINSON FAMILY

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT



20. The HISTORY OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND WITH ILLUSTRATIONS, no author cited, issued by Albert J. Wright, Printer, Boston and Philadelphia, in 1878, gives the date of birth not as the 29th of November but the 19th. Another branch of the Quaker Wilkinson family in [Rhode Island](#), headed by [Oziel Wilkinson](#), presumably related to the ironworking Wilkinsons of Birmingham, England, moved to Pawtucket and became involved with [Friend](#) Moses Brown and with Samuel Slater in the creation of the 1st water-driven cotton-yarn mill in America, and thus had nothing to do with the disownment of [Friend](#) Jeremiah Wilkinson's daughter [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) and those associated with her (although that family would get into trouble with the Quakers as well, when one of its daughters, Hannah, got married with Samuel Slater, a non-Friend). Oziel Wilkinson and Company would in 1794 begin a metal-working mill near the Pawtucket Falls and in 1810 would erect a 3 1/2-story mill made of rubblestone for the manufacture of cotton yarns. His son David Wilkinson, in the machine shop on the ground floor, would invent cotton-working machinery. In 1816, the ironmaster David Wilkinson and his nephew Samuel Greene would manufacture the "Scotch" loom designed by William Gilmore, Rhode Island's first marketable power loom.



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1765

Amey Elizabeth Whipple Wilkinson, the mother of the Wilkinson family of [Cumberland](#), [Rhode Island](#), died.
Refer to MEMOIRS OF THE WILKINSON FAMILY IN AMERICA.

WILKINSON FAMILY



MANY STRANGE TALES have emerged from the southeastern section of Ledyard, Connecticut, where descendants of the Rogerine Quakers settled in the eighteenth century, and where religious zealotry and Sabbathday clamor were for a long period an established, if troubling, way of life. While it is not entirely clear whether she had any direct connection with the small band of "quaking" fanatics organized by John Rogers of New London in 1674, Jemima Wilkinson was surely a product of the region's fervent religious climate, her legend a monument to its very fundamentalism.

Born in 1752 into a large Quaker family, Jemima grew up on her father's marginal farm in Cumberland, Rhode Island. Although she had little formal education, she is reputed to have been an enthusiastic reader from a very early age. Her favorite childhood books were weighty volumes on Quaker theology and history, and, of course, the Bible. In fact, they say she was so well versed in the Good Book that she was able to spout long passages of scripture almost verbatim, and even her ordinary speech was so laced with biblical phrases that it came out modified King James.

Sometime between her early teens, when her mother died, and her mid-twenties, Jemima made her way to Connecticut –no one knows why or under what circumstances– and came to live in the town of Ledyard. Little is known about this phase of her life, except that she seems to have been regarded by her neighbors as more than a bit eccentric (maybe it was the biblical lingo), a young woman with a mind of her own who was inclined to do her duty as she saw fit, and devil take the hindmost. Jemima Wilkinson was apparently well on the road to anonymity, when at the age of twenty-four, sorely troubled, they say, by the area's bitter religious strife, she took a positive step that would change her life: she took sick and "died."

Following her untimely "demise," Jemima was dutifully laid out for burial and relatives, friends and neighbors gathered around the coffin to pay such last respects as they could muster. The hand-wringing and tears of the mourners were said to have been copious – and, according to some who were present at the services, richly insincere. Then, so the story goes, just before the pine box containing Jemima's body was to be lowered into the ground, a friend lifted the lid so that the funeral guests could gaze one final time upon the face of one whom most were secretly pleased to see pass on to another world. No one could have



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predicted what would happen as the cover opened.

Instead of a pallid face in sweet repose, what should appear to the wondering eyes of the huddled crowd but the slender figure of an obviously vital Jemima Wilkinson rising from the coffin, a blush upon her cheeks and exultation in her voice. If she was going to be buried today, Jemima vowed, she alone would preach the interment sermon. But, she intoned, she wasn't about to be buried, this day or any other day soon.

As the startled mourners drew back in awe, the now animated lady stood bolt upright in her casket and launched into a colorful explanation of her astonishing return from the dead. "Yes," she said, "I have passed through the gates of a better world, and I have seen The Light. But they asked me to return to you, my brothers and sisters, a second Redeemer, to show you the way to salvation." In impassioned tones she described the heaven she had visited, the mission she was about to undertake, the souls she would save. The day of her resurrection, Jemima assured her stunned audience, would mark the beginning of a moral regeneration for the whole world.

Finally, she begged her listeners not to be afraid, for they had, indeed, witnessed the death of Jemima Wilkinson. "The Jemima Wilkinson ye knew is truly dead and buried," she cried. "My rebirth has endowed me with a new name. Henceforth, brothers and sisters, I shall be known as the 'Publick Universal Friend,' for such will I be to all in this sinful world." Whether Jemima had gone through what today would be called a "near-death experience," undergone a true mystical vision or induced in herself a kind of catatonic trance, few who heard her resurrection speech were unimpressed with its sincerity and persuasiveness.

Well, you can imagine that it didn't take long for word of Jemima Wilkinson's unexpected return from the dead to spread through southeastern Connecticut – and beyond. Farmers and their families rode into Ledyard village by the wagonfull to see for themselves the living, breathing proof of the miracle in their midst. And she gave everyone who came within earshot plenty of the gospel according to Jemima. Tinkers and tradesmen, peddlers and woodsmen, soldiers and drovers began to swell the congregations which gathered to hear her preach. For weeks, she was the leading attraction in southeastern Connecticut, and she might have gone on forever if the whispering campaign hadn't started.

"She always was a little queer," they began to say. "Damned work of the Devil," others muttered. "An obvious trick to make fools of us all" still others claimed. The debunking of Jemima Wilkinson grew more insistent as the weeks passed. Finally, the born-again evangelist decided that the time was ripe for seeking greener pastures. Having convinced a small group of loyal followers to pack up their worldly possessions and set out with her into the sunset, the "Publick Universal Friend" and the



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"Jemimaites," as they were first called, decamped for westward places yet unknown, their hopes high, their zeal undiminished.

The historic annals report that the Jemimaites settled for a brief period, probably in the early 1780s, in New Milford, where, according to a contemporary account, a number of persons in the northeastern part of the parish were attracted to their fellowship. Although they built a house of worship, they soon sold the church and their private properties and removed with their leader to the wilderness of Tioga County, in northeastern Pennsylvania. Perhaps the reason for this final move out of New England had something to do with the continuing hostility shown by the conservative Puritans toward Jemima and her followers. Tradition reveals that in New England, at least, the charismatic leader's name was synonymous with fraud and delusion. While the Pennsylvania settlement lasted only a few years, it seems to have been successful in attracting additional believers to the "Jemimakin" (as it was then called) circle. But once again the need to spread Jemima's word struck the activist sect, and once more the little colony pulled up stakes, moving en masse to a new vineyard. This time, Jemima decreed that the promised land lay nearly a hundred miles to the northwest, through country which was virtually a trackless wilderness. In order to show their respect for their leader and also to reduce the wear and tear on her person from what promised to be a difficult journey – the Jemimakins constructed for her traveling comfort a magnificent sedan chair complete with well-padded seats, a garish paint job and the initials "P.U.F." emblazoned on each side. Jemima was loaded aboard and, carried by her adoring proselytes, she led her followers through the woods, all the way to the northern shore of Lake Keuka in Yates County, New York. "We will set down our roots here," declared the Publick Universal Friend, "and we shall call this place 'The City of Jerusalem.'" And so it was that in the year 1787 the wandering Jemimakins found what would prove to be their final harbor.

Given the circumstances surrounding the extraordinary "birth" and dynamic life of Jemima Wilkinson, Publick Universal Friend, it is not surprising that a lively legend tradition followed in the wake of her 43-year preaching career – and flourished long after it ended. While never as widely known or as varied as the anecdotes about Lorenzo Dow, her male counterpart and contemporary, nevertheless, the Jemima legends were told and retold for generations in the regions through which she passed, from her native Rhode Island to her final home in New York State. In the manner of true folk narrative, the settings for the various stories changed according to the individual storyteller. They were always localized, since identifying a place known to the audience added an important note of "factual truth" to the legend-teller's tale.

Probably the anecdote most frequently associated with Jemima Wilkinson was the one about walking on water. Told in every region where her ministry was remembered, the story has been



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associated with many locations where it was supposed to have taken place, including several rivers and ponds in Rhode Island, the Housatonic River near New Milford, the Schuylkill River above Philadelphia and Keuka Lake in New York State. And while the legend typically varied in other details as it spread in oral tradition, the most common version was remarkably stable. It went something like this: Challenged by many skeptics and some unabashed non-believers to prove that she had the divine power she claimed for herself, Jemima Wilkinson agreed to duplicate in public Christ's feat of walking on water. A time and place for the performance were agreed upon and advertised as widely as possible, for Jemima knew that the effectiveness of miracle-working was directly proportional to the number of people worked. Once a satisfactory crowd had gathered at the appointed hour, near the designated body of water, Jemima materialized, dressed in her customary long, flowing robes, and launched into a vigorous sermon on faith, frequently punctuated by the question, "Do ye have faith?" But at the end of her long exhortation, the question and response having been built to a near-frenzy, Jemima would suddenly stop. With her shining eyes fixed directly on the audience, she then posed the critical question: "Do ye have faith? Do ye believe that I can do this thing?" "We do. We believe," screamed the crowd. "Ah, it is good," Jemima declared. "If ye have faith, ye need no other evidence." With that, she gathered her robes about her, turned with a flourish – and departed.

Another legend frequently (but not exclusively) associated with the Publick Universal Friend involved her alleged ability to raise the dead. Like the walking-on-water story, this one recounted an event staged to impress critics, suggesting that in patriarchal, Puritan New England, anyway, miracle workers, especially if they happened to be women, were constantly called upon to give proof of their divine powers. Further confirmation of this may be gained from the fact that the same raising-the-dead story was sometimes connected with Mother Ann Lee, the Shaker prophetess. Nevertheless, since the legend does bear some relation to the story of Jemima Wilkinson's own "rebirth" in Ledyard, it was perhaps natural for the folk to make her the usual central figure in the anecdote. A common version went this way: In order to demonstrate her ability to raise the dead, Jemima Wilkinson persuaded one of her faithful followers to pretend to be dead. The "deceased" was wrapped in a winding shroud, placed in a coffin and taken to a cemetery, ready for burial. Again, since the demonstration had been widely advertised, a good crowd had assembled to bear witness to the miracle. Just as Jemima was about to reach the dramatic climax of her performance, an army officer stepped out of the crowd, interrupted her sermon and asked if he could put his sword through the corpse prior to resurrection – just to make sure the subject was dead. As he pulled the sword from its scabbard, the "corpse" jumped out of the coffin and beat a hasty retreat, his winding sheet flowing out behind him like a flag of surrender.



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One final legend told about Jemima is probably typical of a whole cycle of off-color yarns about her which once circulated in folk tradition. Since most of them were a bit too racy for print, they have been lost in time. But surviving stories like the following lend further credence to the belief that the New England suspicion of the Publick Universal Friend was related as much to her sex as to her alleged miraculous powers: One day Jemima Wilkinson was called upon to pay a visit to Judge William Potter, a prominent citizen of Kingston, Rhode Island, who was feeling poorly and in need of spiritual comfort. The Judge's wife, who had been away when Jemima arrived at the house, came home unexpectedly and found the Universal Friend in her husband's bedchamber, in rather intimate proximity to the ailing jurist. When Jemima attempted to explain the nature of her ministry, Mrs. Potter cut her off abruptly. "Minister to your lambs all you want," the angry woman was supposed to have said, "but in the future, please leave my old ram alone!"

In the final thirty-two years of her life, Jemima Wilkinson apparently ministered very successfully to her "lambs" in the City of Jerusalem, New York. As a matter of fact, her reputation in Yates County as a "sincere, kindly, benevolent woman" (so different from her New England image) was such that the town she founded beside Lake Keuka grew and flourished. In later years, long after Jemima's passing, when the first post office was pending for the City of Jerusalem, the federal government asked the residents if they would be willing to rename their settlement: something shorter, perhaps, with a less biblical ring to it, but appropriate, of course. Since everyone in town had originally followed Jemima Wilkinson from Pennsylvania or Yankee Connecticut, they agreed to call their town "Penn Yan." Thus Penn Yan, New York, was born and officially registered in Washington, D.C. It is said that the redoubtable Jemima Wilkinson retained her hold on the hearts and spirits of her followers until the day of her second –and permanent– death in 1819. And while no vestige of the religious order of Jemimakins remains today in the lovely wine country around Lake Keuka, the town of Penn Yan remains to this day a permanent monument to a remarkable and resolute woman, who rose from the dead in Ledyard, Connecticut, captured the imagination of thousands in her time and conquered both a natural and spiritual wilderness.

**LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT'S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN'S STORIES.
LIFE ISN'T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.**

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)**PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND****JEMIMA WILKINSON****GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM****1768**

In this year [Friend John Woolman](#) wrote CONSIDERATIONS ON PURE WISDOM AND HUMAN POLICY.



This was not, however, the sort of reading material being favored by the now-motherless 16-year-old [Friend Jemimah Wilkinson](#) in [Cumberland](#), [Rhode Island](#). She was, instead, making a study of the religio-pornographic titillations of the Reverend [George Whitefield](#).
–She had embarked on her personal road to self-entitlement and to perdition.

[WILKINSON FAMILY](#)**1763-1769**

Religious Conversation with a Company met to see the Tricks of a Juggler – Account of John Smith's Advice and of the [tree] — Proceedings of a Committee at the Yearly Meeting in 1764 – Contemplations on the Nature of True Wisdom – Visit to the Families of Friends at Mount Holly, Mansfield, and Burlington, and to the Meetings on the Sea-Coast from Cape May towards Squan – Some Account of Joseph Nichols and his Followers – On the different State of the First Settlers in Pennsylvania who depended on their own Labour, compared with those of the Southern Provinces who kept Negroes – Visit to the Northern Parts of New Jersey and the Western Parts of Maryland and Pennsylvania; also to the Families of Friends at Mount Holly and several parts of Maryland – Further Considerations on keeping Slaves, and his Concern for having been a Party to the Sale of One – Thoughts on Friends exercising Offices in Civil Government.

Friend [John Woolman](#): THE latter part of the summer, 1763, there came a man to Mount Holly who had previously published a printed advertisement that at a certain public-house he would show many wonderful operations, which were therein enumerated. At the appointed time he did, by sleight of hand, perform sundry things



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which appeared strange to the spectators. Understanding that the show was to be repeated the next night, and that the people were to meet about sunset, I felt an exercise on that account. So I went to the public-house in the evening, and told the man of the house that I had an inclination to spend a part of the evening there; with which he signified that he was content. Then, sitting down by the door, I spoke to the people in the fear of the Lord, as they came together, concerning this show, and laboured to convince them that their thus assembling to see these sleight-of-hand tricks, and bestowing their money to support men who, in that capacity, were of no use to the world, was contrary to the nature of the Christian religion. One of the company endeavoured to show by arguments the reasonableness of their proceedings herein; but after considering some texts of Scripture and calmly debating the matter he gave up the point. After spending about an hour among them, and feeling my mind easy, I departed.

Twenty-fifth of Ninth Month, 1764. – At our Yearly Meeting at Philadelphia this day, John Smith, of Marlborough, aged upwards of eighty years, a faithful minister, though not eloquent, stood up in our meeting of ministers and elders, and appearing to be under a great exercise of spirit, informed Friends in substance as follows: "That he had been a member of our Society upwards of sixty years, and he well remembered that, in those early times, Friends were a plain, lowly-minded people, and that there was much tenderness and contrition in their meetings. That, at twenty years from that time, the Society increasing in wealth and in some degree conforming to the fashions of the world, true humility was less apparent, and their meetings in general were not so lively and edifying. That at the end of forty years many of them were grown very rich, and many of the Society made a specious appearance in the world; that wearing fine costly garments, and using silver and other watches, became customary with them, their sons, and their daughters.

"These marks of outward wealth and greatness appeared on some in our meetings of ministers and elders; and, as such things became more prevalent, so the powerful overshadowings of the Holy Ghost were less manifest in the Society. That there had been a continued increase of such ways of life, even until the present time; and that the weakness which hath now overspread the Society and the barrenness manifest among us is matter of much sorrow." He then mentioned the uncertainty of his attending these meetings in future, expecting his dissolution was near; and, having tenderly expressed his concern for us, signified that he had seen in the true light that the Lord would bring back His people from these things, into which they were thus degenerated, but that His faithful servants must go through great and heavy exercises.

Twentieth of Ninth Month. – The committee appointed by the Yearly Meeting to visit the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings gave an account in writing of their proceedings in that service. They signified that, in the course of the visit, they had been



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apprehensive that some persons holding offices in government inconsistent with our principles, and others who kept slaves, remaining active members in our meetings for discipline, had been one means of weakness prevailing in some places. After this report was read, an exercise revived in my mind which had attended me for several years, and inward cries to the Lord were raised in me that the fear of man might not prevent me from doing what He required of me, and, standing up, I spoke in substance as follows:

"I have felt a tenderness in my mind towards persons in two circumstances mentioned in that report; namely, towards such active members as keep slaves and such as hold offices in civil government; and I have desired that Friends, in all their conduct, may be kindly affectioned one towards another. Many Friends who keep slaves are under some exercise on that account; and at times think about trying them with freedom, but find many things in their way. The way of living and the annual expenses of some of them are such that it seems impracticable for them to set their slaves free without changing their own way of life. It has been my lot to be often abroad; and I have observed in some places, at Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, and at some houses where travelling Friends and their horses are often entertained, that the yearly expense of individuals therein is very considerable. And Friends in some places crowding much on persons in these circumstances for entertainment hath rested as a burden on my mind for some years past. I now express it in the fear of the Lord, greatly desiring that Friends here present may duly consider it."

In the fall of this year, having hired a man to work, I perceived in conversation with him that he had been a soldier in the late war on this continent; and he informed me in the evening, in a narrative of his captivity among the Indians, that he saw two of his fellow-captives tortured to death in a very cruel manner. This relation affected me with sadness, under which I went to bed; and the next morning, soon after I awoke, a fresh and living sense of divine love overspread my mind, in which I had a renewed prospect of the nature of that wisdom from above which leads to a right use of all gifts, both spiritual and temporal, and gives content therein. Under a feeling thereof, I wrote as follows: —

"Hath He who gave me a being attended with many wants unknown to brute creatures given me a capacity superior to theirs, and shown me that a moderate application to business is suitable to my present condition; and that this, attended with His blessing, may supply all my outward wants while they remain within the bounds He hath fixed, and while no imaginary wants proceeding from an evil spirit have any place in me? Attend then, O my soul! to this pure wisdom as thy sure conductor through the manifold dangers of this world.

"Doth pride lead to vanity? Doth vanity form imaginary wants? Do these wants prompt men to exert their power in requiring more from others than they would be willing



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to perform themselves, were the same required of them? Do these proceedings beget hard thoughts? Do hard thoughts, when ripe, become malice? Does malice, when ripe, become revengeful, and in the end inflict terrible pains on our fellow-creatures and spread desolations in the world?

"Do mankind, walking in uprightness, delight in each other's happiness? And do those who are capable of this attainment, by giving way to an evil spirit, employ their skill and strength to inflict and destroy one another? Remember then, O my soul, the quietude of those in whom Christ governs, and in all thy proceedings feel after it.

"Doth He condescend to bless thee with His presence? To move and influence thee to action? To dwell and to walk in thee? Remember then thy station as being sacred to God. Accept of the strength freely offered to thee, and take heed that no weakness in conforming to unwise, expensive, and hard-hearted customs, gendering to discord and strife, be given way to. Doth He claim my body as His temple, and graciously require that I may be sacred to Him? Oh that I may prize this favour, and that my whole life may be conformable to this character! Remember, O my soul! that the Prince of Peace is thy Lord; that He communicates His unmixed wisdom to His family, that they, living in perfect simplicity, may give no just cause of offence to any creature, but that they may walk as He walked!"

Having felt an openness in my heart towards visiting families in our own meeting, and especially in the town of Mount Holly, the place of my abode, I mentioned it at our Monthly Meeting in the fore part of the winter of 1764, which being agreed to, and several Friends of our meeting being united in the exercise, we proceeded therein; and through divine favour we were helped in the work, so that it appeared to me as a fresh reviving of godly care among Friends. The latter part of the same winter I joined my friend William Jones in a visit to Friends' families in Mansfield, in which labour I had cause to admire the goodness of the Lord toward us.

My mind being drawn towards Friends along the seacoast from Cape May to near Squan, and also to visit some people in those parts, among whom there is no settled worship, I joined with my beloved friend Benjamin Jones in a visit to them, having Friends' unity therein. We set off the 24th of Tenth Month, 1765, and had a prosperous and very satisfactory journey, feeling at times, through the goodness of the Heavenly Shepherd, the gospel to flow freely towards a poor people scattered in these places. Soon after our return I joined my friends John Sleeper and Elizabeth Smith in a visit to Friends' families at Burlington, there being at this time about fifty families of our Society in that city; and we had cause humbly to adore our Heavenly Father, who baptized us into a feeling of the state of the people, and



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strengthened us to labour in true gospel love among them. Having had a concern at times for several years to pay a religious visit to Friends on the eastern shore of Maryland, and to travel on foot among them, that by so travelling I might have a more lively feeling of the condition of the oppressed slaves, set an example of lowliness before the eyes of their masters, and be more out of the way of temptation to unprofitable converse; and the time drawing near in which I believed it my duty to lay my concern before our Monthly Meeting, I perceived, in conversation with my beloved friend John Sleeper, that he also was under similar concern to travel on foot in the form of a servant among them, as he expressed it. This he told me before he knew aught of my exercise. Being thus drawn the same way, we laid our exercise and the nature of it before Friends; and, obtaining certificates, we set off the 6th of Fifth Month, 1766, and were at meetings with Friends at Wilmington, Duck Creek, Little Creek, and Motherkill. My heart was often tendered under the divine influence, and enlarged in love towards the people among whom we travelled.

From Motherkill we crossed the country about thirty-five miles to Tuckahoe, in Maryland, and had a meeting there, and also at Marshy Creek. At the last three meetings there were a considerable number of the followers of one Joseph Nichols, a preacher, who, I understand, is not in outward fellowship with any religious society, but professeth nearly the same principles as those of our Society, and often travels up and down, appointing meetings which many people attend. I heard of some who had been irreligious people that were now his followers, and were become sober, well-behaved men and women. Some irregularities, I hear, have been among the people at several of his meetings; but from what I have perceived I believe the man and some of his followers are honestly disposed, but that skilful fathers are wanting among them.

We then went to Choptank and Third Haven, and thence to Queen Anne's. The weather for some days past having been hot and dry, and we having travelled pretty steadily and having hard labour in meetings, I grew weakly, at which I was for a time discouraged; but looking over our journey and considering how the Lord had supported our minds and bodies, so that we had gone forward much faster than I expected before we came out, I saw that I had been in danger of too strongly desiring to get quickly through the journey, and that the bodily weakness now attending me was a kindness; and then in contrition of spirit, I became very thankful to my gracious Father for this manifestation of His love, and in humble submission to His will my trust in Him was renewed.

In this part of our journey I had many thoughts on the different circumstances of Friends who inhabit Pennsylvania and Jersey from those who dwell in Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina. Pennsylvania and New Jersey were settled by Friends who were convinced of our principles in England in times of suffering; these, coming over, bought lands of the natives, and applied to



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husbandry in a peaceable way, and many of their children were taught to labour for their living. Few of these, I believe, settled in any of the southern provinces; but by the faithful labours of travelling Friends in early times there was considerable convincement among the inhabitants of these parts. I also remembered having read of the warlike disposition of many of the first settlers in those provinces, and of their numerous engagements with the natives in which much blood was shed even in the infancy of the colonies. Some of the people inhabiting those places, being grounded in customs contrary to the pure truth, were affected with the powerful preaching of the Word of Life and joined in fellowship with our Society, and in so doing they had a great work to go through.

In the history of the reformation from Popery it is observable that the progress was gradual from age to age. The uprightness of the first reformers in attending to the light and understanding given to them opened the way for sincere-hearted people to proceed further afterwards; and thus each one truly fearing God and labouring in the works of righteousness appointed for him in his day findeth acceptance with Him. Through the darkness of the times and the corruption of manners and customs, some upright men may have had little more for their day's work than to attend to the righteous principle in their minds as it related to their own conduct in life without pointing out to others the whole extent of that into which the same principle would lead succeeding ages. Thus, for instance, among an imperious warlike people, supported by oppressed slaves, some of these masters, I suppose, are awakened to feel and to see their error, and through sincere repentance cease from oppression and become like fathers to their servants, showing by their example a pattern of humility in living, and moderation in governing, for the instruction and admonition of their oppressing neighbours; these, without carrying the reformation further, have, I believe, found acceptance with the Lord. Such was the beginning; and those who succeeded them, and who faithfully attended to the nature and spirit of the reformation, have seen the necessity of proceeding forward, and have not only to instruct others by their own example in governing well, but have also to use means to prevent their successors from having so much power to oppress others.

Here I was renewedly confirmed in my mind that the Lord (whose tender mercies are over all His works, and whose ear is open to the cries and groans of the oppressed) is graciously moving in the hearts of people to draw them off from the desire of wealth and to bring them into such an humble lowly way of living that they may see their way clearly to repair to the standard of true righteousness, and may not only break the yoke of oppression, but may know Him to be their strength and support in times of outward affliction.

We crossed Chester River, had a meeting there, and also at Cecil and Sassafras. My bodily weakness, joined with a heavy exercise of mind, was to me an humbling dispensation, and I had a very



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lively feeling of the state of the oppressed; yet I often thought that what I suffered was little compared with the sufferings of the blessed Jesus and many of His faithful followers; and I may say with thankfulness that I was made content. From Sassafras we went pretty directly home, where we found our families well. For several weeks after our return I had often to look over our journey; and though to me it appeared as a small service, and that some faithful messengers will yet have more bitter cups to drink in those southern provinces for Christ's sake than we have had, yet I found peace in that I had been helped to walk in sincerity according to the understanding and strength given to me.

Thirteenth of Eleventh Month. – With the unity of Friends at our monthly meeting, and in company with my beloved friend Benjamin Jones, I set out on a visit to Friends in the upper part of this province, having had drawings of love in my heart that way for a considerable time. We travelled as far as Hardwick, and I had inward peace in my labours of love among them. Through the humbling dispensations of divine Providence my mind hath been further brought into a feeling of the difficulties of Friends and their servants southwestward; and being often engaged in spirit on their account, I believed it my duty to walk into some parts of the western shore of Maryland on a religious visit. Having obtained a certificate from Friends of our Monthly Meeting, I took leave of my family under the heart-tendering operation of truth, and on the 20th of Fourth Month, 1767, rode to the ferry opposite to Philadelphia, and thence walked to William Horne's, at Derby, the same evening. Next day I pursued my journey alone and reached Concord Week-Day Meeting. Discouragements and a weight of distress had at times attended me in this lonesome walk, but through these afflictions I was mercifully preserved. Sitting down with Friends, my mind was turned towards the Lord to wait for his holy leadings; and in infinite love He was pleased to soften my heart into humble contrition, and renewedly to strengthen me to go forward, so that to me it was a time of heavenly refreshment in a silent meeting. The next day I came to New Garden Week-Day Meeting, in which I sat in bowedness of spirit, and being baptized into a feeling of the state of some present, the Lord gave us a heart-tendering season; to His name be the praise. Passing on, I was at Nottingham Monthly Meeting, and at a meeting at Little Britain on First-Day; in the afternoon several Friends came to the house where I lodged and we had a little afternoon meeting, and through the humbling power of truth I had to admire the loving-kindness of the Lord manifested to us.

Twenty-sixth of Fourth Month. – I crossed the Susquehanna, and coming among people in outward ease and greatness, supported chiefly on the labour of slaves, my heart was much affected, and in awful retiredness my mind was gathered inward to the Lord, humbly desiring that in true resignation I might receive instruction from him respecting my duty among this people. Though travelling on foot was wearisome to my body, yet it was



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agreeable to the state of my mind. Being weakly, I was covered with sorrow and heaviness on account of the prevailing spirit of this world by which customs grievous and oppressive are introduced on the one hand, and pride and wantonness on the other.

In this lonely walk and state of abasement and humiliation, the condition of the Church in these parts was opened before me, and I may truly say with the Prophet, "I was bowed down with the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it." Under this exercise I attended the Quarterly Meeting at Gunpowder, and in bowedness of spirit I had to express with much plainness my feelings respecting Friends living in fulness on the labours of the poor oppressed negroes; and that promise of the Most High was now revived, "I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My glory." Here the sufferings of Christ and His tasting death for every man, and the travels, sufferings, and martyrdom of the Apostles and primitive Christians in labouring for the conversion of the Gentiles, were livingly revived in me, and according to the measure of strength afforded I laboured in some tenderness of spirit, being deeply affected among them. The difference between the present treatment which these Gentiles, the negroes, receive at our hands, and the labours of the primitive Christians for the conversion of the Gentiles, were pressed home, and the power of truth came over us, under a feeling of which my mind was united to a tender-hearted people in these parts. The meeting concluded in a sense of God's goodness towards His humble, dependent children.

The next day was a general meeting for worship, much crowded, in which I was deeply engaged in inward cries to the Lord for help, that I might stand wholly resigned, and move only as He might be pleased to lead me. I was mercifully helped to labour honestly and fervently among them, in which I found inward peace, and the sincere were comforted. From this place I turned towards Pipe Creek and the Red Lands, and had several meetings among Friends in those parts. My heart was often tenderly affected under a sense of the Lord's goodness in sanctifying my troubles and exercises, turning them to my comfort, and I believe to the benefit of many others, for I may say with thankfulness that in this visit it appeared like a tendering visitation in most places.

I passed on to the Western Quarterly Meeting in Pennsylvania. During the several days of this meeting I was mercifully preserved in an inward feeling after the mind of truth, and my public labours tended to my humiliation, with which I was content. After the Quarterly Meeting for worship ended, I felt drawings to go to the women's meeting for business, which was very full; here the humility of Jesus Christ as a pattern for us to walk by was livingly opened before me, and in treating on it my heart was enlarged, and it was a baptizing time. I was afterwards at meetings at Concord, Middletown, Providence, and Haddonfield, whence I returned home and found my family well. A



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sense of the Lord's merciful preservation in this my journey excites reverent thankfulness to Him.

Second of Ninth Month, 1767. — With the unity of Friends, I set off on a visit to Friends in the upper part of Berks and Philadelphia counties; was at eleven meetings in about two weeks, and have renewed cause to bow in reverence before the Lord, who, by the powerful extendings of His humbling goodness, opened my way among Friends, and I trust made the meetings profitable to us. The following winter I joined some Friends in a family visit to some part of our meeting, in which exercise the pure influence of divine love made our visits reviving.

Fifth of Fifth Month, 1768. — I left home under the humbling hand of the Lord, with a certificate to visit some meetings in Maryland, and to proceed without a horse seemed clearest to me. I was at the Quarterly Meetings at Philadelphia and Concord, whence I proceeded to Chester River, and, crossing the bay, was at the Yearly Meeting at West River; I then returned to Chester River, and, taking a few meetings in my way, proceeded home. It was a journey of much inward waiting, and as my eye was to the Lord, way was several times opened to my humbling admiration when things appeared very difficult. On my return I felt a very comfortable relief of mind, having through divine help laboured in much plainness, both with Friends selected and in the more public meetings, so that I trust the pure witness in many minds was reached.

Eleventh of Sixth Month, 1769. — There have been sundry cases of late years within the limits of our Monthly Meeting, respecting the exercising of pure righteousness towards the negroes, in which I have lived under a labour of heart that equity might be steadily preserved. On this account I have had some close exercises among Friends, in which, I may thankfully say, I find peace. And as my meditations have been on universal love, my own conduct in time past became of late very grievous to me. As persons setting negroes free in our province are bound by law to maintain them in case they have need of relief, some in the time of my youth who scrupled to keep slaves for term of life were wont to detain their young negroes in their service without wages till they were thirty years of age. With this custom I so far agreed that being joined with another Friend in executing the will of a deceased Friend, I once sold a negro lad till he might attain the age of thirty years, and applied the money to the use of the estate.

With abasement of heart, I may now say that sometimes, as I have sat in a meeting with my heart exercised towards that awful Being who respecteth not persons nor colours, and have thought upon this lad, I have felt that all was not clear in my mind respecting him; and as I have attended to this exercise and fervently sought the Lord, it hath appeared to me that I should make some restitution; but in what way I saw not till lately, when being under some concern that I might be resigned to go on a visit to some part of the West Indies, and under close engagement of spirit seeking to the Lord for counsel herein, the



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aforesaid transaction came heavily upon me, and my mind for a time was covered with darkness and sorrow. Under this sore affliction my heart was softened to receive instruction, and I now first perceived that, as I had been one of the two executors who had sold this lad for nine years longer than is common for our own children to serve, so I should now offer part of my substance to redeem the last half of the nine years; but as the time was not yet come, I executed a bond, binding myself and my executors to pay to the man to whom he was sold, what to candid men might appear equitable for the last four and a half years of his time, in case the said youth should be living, and in a condition likely to provide comfortably for himself.

Ninth of Tenth Month. – My heart hath often been deeply afflicted under a feeling that the standard of pure righteousness is not lifted up to the people by us, as a Society, in that clearness which it might have been, had we been as faithful as we ought to be to the teachings of Christ. And as my mind hath been inward to the Lord, the purity of Christ's government hath been made clear to my understanding, and I have believed, in the opening of universal love, that where a people who are convinced of the truth of the inward teachings of Christ, are active in putting laws in execution which are not consistent with pure wisdom, it hath a necessary tendency to bring dimness over their minds. My heart having been thus exercised for several years with a tender sympathy towards my fellow-members, I have within a few months past expressed my concern on this subject in several meetings for discipline.

THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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1770

In the previous year the [South Kingstown, Rhode Island](#) monthly meeting had taken the issue of abolitionism in New England to the New England [Yearly Meeting](#) of the [Religious Society of Friends](#), which had appointed a committee to study the matter and report back in the following year. At this year's meeting, the committee recommended that all New England [Quakers manumit](#) all [slaves](#) owned by them, excepting only the very old and the very young. The Yearly Meeting embraced this recommendation.²¹

Up in the northern reaches of the [Rhode Island](#) colony, in [Cumberland](#), motherless [Friend Jemimah Wilkinson](#), age 18, was very happy that this was happening. She was decidedly opposed to human slavery. However, apparently without as much parental guidance as she needed, she was also being caught up emotionally in the religious re-awakening that was following the visits of the Reverend [George Whitefield](#) to New England. She would be becoming involved with the New Light [Baptists](#) of Ledyard, Connecticut, known also as "Rogerenes." Her attendance at such meetings would lead in August 1776 to her being [disowned](#) by her Quaker meeting, the [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#) monthly meeting of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) — and then she would in effect transform herself into a New-Age "channeler" for a spirit from the Other World, and create her own religious climate centered around her own person and her own personal whims.²²



21. For the benefit of non-[Quakers](#), I need to point out what this means. It means that there was not one single Friend who was so troubled by this as to stand in its way!



JEMIMA WILKINSON

PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND

GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

Summer: Ann Lee was arrested for disturbing the peace of Manchester, England. I'm not quite sure what it was that this [Quaker](#) lady did, that the authorities had been able to notice, but what she had been able to notice was interesting: she had a waking vision in which she saw Adam and Eve together, fucking, for the first time ever in the history of this universe. She had suddenly become most intensely aware that it wasn't eating apples, that was Original Sin, not at all — but something else, something rather more “carnal” than “vegetable.” This appreciation of the inherent sinfulness of all sensuality made her “Mother” Ann Lee. The appreciation that the male principle needed to be balanced by the female principle, and thus that the first coming of Jesus Christ as a boy-type would need to be balanced by a [Second Coming](#) as a girl-type, combined with the fact that she was herself a girl-type, also produced in her the awareness that she was “the female Christ.”²³ Thus the “Shaker” faith.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

22. Examples of this sort of religious misconduct have always abounded. There has been, for instance, in our own time, “Judge” J.F. Rutherford of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society who channeled bigtime by receiving the concealed true meanings of Scripture direct from God as the occasion arose, and there has been the bestselling Jane Roberts, a housewife from upstate New York who was channeling “Seth,” and there has been the touring-circuit phenomenon J.Z. Knight who was channeling a Cro-Magnon warrior who identified himself as “Ramtha,” and of course, there has been the indefatigable and terminally enthusiastic Shirley MacLaine. The spiritual entities channeled have been variously assigned inventive names such as Ashtar, Aurora, Bashar, Emmanuel, Jesus, K17, Kuthumi, Lazarus, Lily, Mafu, Mary, Mentor, Merlin, Monka, Phebious, Ra, Ramtha, St. Germaine, Zolar, Zoosh — and in this indicated early instance in a Quaker or Baptist context, “Divine Spirit.” (You know the old one about how many legs a dog has, if you call its tail a leg, the answer being four and the reason being that calling a tale a leg doesn't make it a leg? Well, in this context, calling self-privileging by the name “Divine Spirit,” in very much the same manner, doesn't evade the sin of self-privileging.)

23. Notice carefully that a member of the Quaker meeting in [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), the monthly meeting that included at that time [Cumberland](#) and the city of [Providence](#), would soon be wandering down this same path of “channeling” or “religious identity politics.” (I refer of course to the upcoming case of “Universal Friend” and “Spirit of Truth” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), who would be carrying her followers off into the wilds of the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York.)

WILKINSON FAMILY



PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND

JEMIMA WILKINSON

GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

1776

February: At the women's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), "Lower house Preparative Meeting [[Saylesville](#)] informing that Patience Wilkinson hath had an illegitimate child²⁴ and also that [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) but seldom attends Friends Meetings nor makes use of the plain Scripture Language, This Meeting appoints Lydia Wilkinson and Mary Olney to Labor with them for said offenses and Report to this meeting in the 4th month next."²⁵

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

April: At the women's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), "Lydia Wilkinson & Mary Olney are to visit Patience & [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) (Daughters of Jeremiah) make report they have performed their visit which was not to satisfaction. The same committee continued to further Labour with them for said offenses and Report to this meeting in the Eighth month next."

QUAKER DISOWNMENT



May: Panic swept [Charleston, South Carolina](#) when a British armada carrying more than 3,000 British regulars was sighted offshore. Oh, this is bad, this is very bad.

A call for American independence from Britain, the Virginia Declaration of Rights was drafted by George Mason (1725-1792) and amended by Thomas Ludwell Lee (*circa* 1730-1778) and by the Virginia Convention. Mason wrote "*That all men are born equally free and independant [sic], and have certain inherent natural right, of which they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the Means of acquiring and possessing Property, and pursuing [sic] and obtaining Happiness and Safety.*" [Thomas Jefferson](#) would draw from this document when a month later he worked over an early draft of the [Declaration of Independence](#). In 1789 it would be accessed not only by [James Madison](#) in drawing up the Bill of Rights to the US Constitution but also by the *Marquis de Lafayette* in drafting the French Declaration of the Rights of Man.



But that was in Virginia and applied to people who were safely pro-war. For people who were anti-war

24. Eventually Patience Wilkinson would marry, in upstate New York, with a son of Judge William Potter of [South Kingstown, Rhode Island](#).

25. We may presume that this Friend Lydia Wilkinson would have been a close older relative who might succeed in placing herself *in loco parentis* for these motherless teenage girls.

[HDT](#)

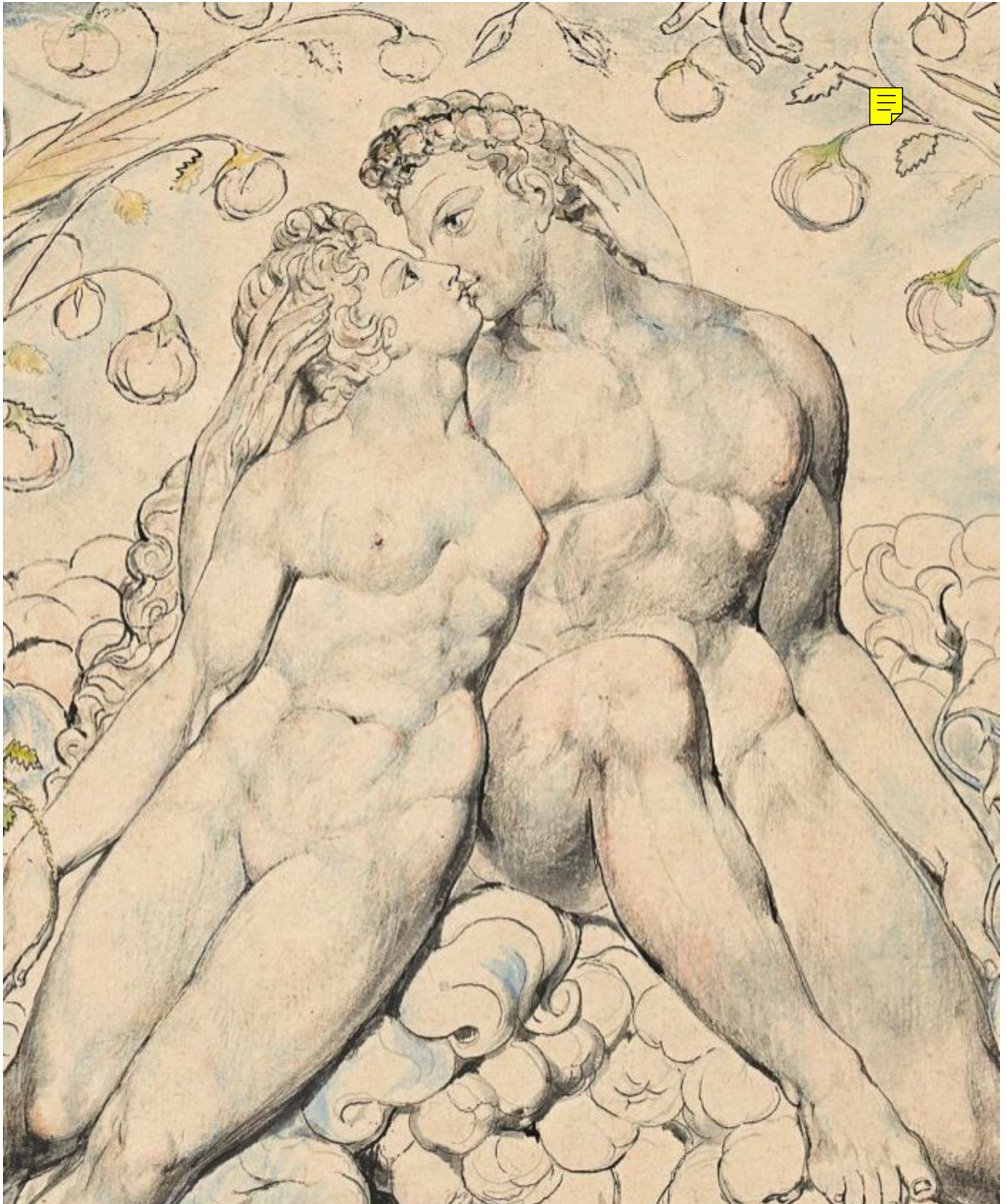
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there weren't all that many rights available in America:



Pennsylvania Quakers ... experienced significant harassment for their pacifism and neutrality. Their numbers were already greatly reduced by the disciplinary renaissance of the 1750s, and they faced a real schism from "Free Quakers," who both supported the Revolution and rejected pacifism. As a result "orthodox" Friends found themselves hunted down in a colony they had founded and long governed. In May 1776 a stone-throwing mob forced Philadelphia Friends to observe a fast day that the Continental Congress had proclaimed. A Berks County mob shackled and jailed Moses Roberts, a Quaker minister, until he posted a \$10,000 bond guaranteeing his "good" behavior. Philadelphia patriots also exiled seventeen Friends to Virginia in 1776 for nearly two years so they would not interfere with revolutionary activities. Patriots celebrating the surrender of Cornwallis in October 1782 ransacked Quaker homes that had not displayed victory candles.

Clearly, there were in [Rhode Island](#) a few Quaker men who were attempting to avoid persecution by the usual coterie of Those-Who-Aren't-With-Us-Are-Against-Us "patriots." For, at the men's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at [Smithfield](#), "*Two of the Committee to labour with Stephen & Jephtha Wilkinson for attending Training etc. report that they have labored with them and they appear to have frequented Trainings for Military service and endeavour to justify the same, and seldom attended friends meetings, and gave but very little satisfaction for their said conduct. Therefore this Meeting puts them from under their care, until they shall condemn said conduct to the Satisfaction of friends, which we desire they may be enabled to do — Jona Arnold is desired to inform them of their denial, Right of appeal and report to next monthly Mtg. to which time the drawing of a Testimony of their deniels [sic], in order to be published, is referred. — L. Lapham, Clerk.*"

QUAKER DISOWNMENT



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July: At the men's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), "Jona. Arnold & Jephtha Wilkinson's Deniels [sic] which was read and referred to next monthly meeting for Consideration."

THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT



August: At the women's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at the upper meetinghouse in [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), "Patience Wilkinson hath been laboured with on account of her having an Illegitimate Child and not appearing in a State of Mind Suitable to Make Satisfaction therefore this meeting Disowns her from membership. [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) hath been laboured with for not attending Meeting and not using the plain language, finding no amendment this meeting puts her from under there [sic] care. (Both daughters of Jeremiah Wilkinson). Mary Brown and Mary Olney are to draw a Denial against Patience and Jemimah Wilkinson and bring to Next Monthly Meeting."

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

Meanwhile, at the corresponding men's meeting, "The testimonies of Stephen & Jephtha Wilkinson's Deniels Referd [sic] to this meeting was Considered; and Being Drawn Seperate [sic], and Dated from this meeting, were approved of & signed by the clerk. The women's meeting Informs that they have rec'd Sarah Buffum (wife of Jedediah) a member of our Society and Disowned Patience and Jemima [sic] Wilkinson (Daughters of Jeremiah)."

THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

September: At the women's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at the upper meetinghouse in [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), "The Committee presented the Denials of [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) approved & Signed by the Clerk. Also one for Patience Wilkinson Signed by the Clerk, both Daughters of Jeremiah Wilkinson. Benjamin Arnold appointed to read the Denials of Jemimah Wilkinson & Patience Wilkinson at a Publick Meeting at the Lower House. Lydia Wilkinson is appointed to enform [sic] Jemimah & Patience of their being Disowned."

QUAKER DISOWNMENT



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October: At the women's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at the upper meetinghouse in [Smithfield](#), "*Lydia Wilkinson continued to enform [sic] Patience and [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) of their being disowned from Friends and report to this Meeting.*"

There was, meanwhile, an outbreak of typhus in [Rhode Island](#), that evidently came with the *Columbus*, a ship of war carrying prisoners. As a girl, Friend Jemimah Wilkinson had experienced evangelical sermons by the Reverend George Whitefield and had been inspired by the female leader Ann Lee ("Mother Ann") of the Shakers. At about the age of 18, she had become involved with the New Light [Baptists](#) or "Rogerenes" of Ledyard, Connecticut. At this point, while suffering under the spiritual distress of being [disowned](#) by her monthly meeting of the Society and contemplating the long road of atonement and spiritual rectification that would be necessary before such a disownment could be erased, probably while in Ledyard, as a victim of the typhus epidemic she fell into a prolonged coma — and upon reviving, she would proclaim that her soul had gone to Heaven and had been replaced in her body by "Spirit of Life." God had sent this apparition to inhabit her body in order to warn earthly creatures of His impending wrath. Discontinuing the use of the name "Jemimah Wilkinson" and denominating herself instead "Publik Universal Friend," she would preach, attired in something suggestive of men's rather than of women's clothing, through Connecticut and Rhode Island. The preserved image we have of her portrays her while attired in a rather standard clerical gown and collar over her men's clothing:



For a time her friend [Moses Brown](#) had been taken by her pretensions, but at the point of her disownment, he was able to stand aside. Here is the account of this by the Los Angeles newsman and storyteller Charles Rappleye on page 187 of his recent *SONS OF PROVIDENCE: THE BROWN BROTHERS, THE SLAVE TRADE, AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2006) — an account in which he has exaggerated some of the details (such as the precise number of hours that she was uncommunicative, and the conceit that she had been "pronounced dead") and gotten other details bass-ackward (for instance suggesting that she had been opposed to war when in fact she and her family were at odds with the Quaker Peace Testimony, sending a number of the Wilkinson sons to Washington's army):

Moses' quest for meaning drew him to another homegrown mystic during the early days of the war, a tall, striking woman named Jemima Wilkinson. As deep and stoic as was Job Scott, Wilkinson was extravagant. She called herself "the Public Universal Friend," and mesmerized audiences for hours by proclaiming moral convictions she said were acquired by revelation, or simply by delivering from memory lengthy quotations from the Bible. Some of her contemporaries considered her a charlatan, but she had



JEMIMA WILKINSON

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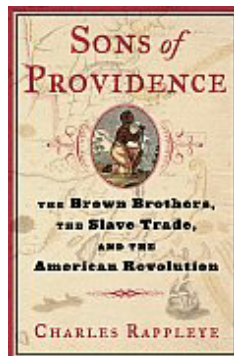
GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

genuine charisma, and won a following among powerful people in Rhode Island, including several prominent judges.

Moses knew Wilkinson from her youth. Her father, a Quaker farmer, was a cousin to Israel Wilkinson, the ironworker long associated with the Browns, and also to Stephen and Esek Hopkins, connections that ensured her entrée to the elite families of Rhode Island. Jemima was intrigued early on by a variety of religious doctrines, including those of the New Light Baptists and the Quakers, but her transformation took place in 1776, when she contracted a case of typhus. Beset with fever and delirium, she was pronounced dead, but she arose after thirty-six hours, and proclaimed her own resurrection.

In the following months, Jemima Wilkinson renounced her former worldly identity and began holding ad hoc prayer meetings in country glades or borrowed meetinghouses. She preached a sort of radical strain of Quakerism, damning war, slavery, and matrimony in sermons that often ran over two hours. Her traveling services evolved into a sort of religious circus, featuring appearances by devotees who dubbed themselves Prophet Daniel and Prophet Elijah and who mimicked Wilkinson by professing visions and delivering messages from on high.

Moses was intrigued by Wilkinson and attended several of her meetings. He was impressed with her knowledge of the Bible, but more than that, Moses was drawn to her story of divine inspiration. From the time of his own revelation, while walking home from Anna's grave, Moses looked for similar signs of God's active hand. Another adherent was Moses' uncle Elisha Brown, who attended several of her meetings and, convinced "that she was a messenger from God," invited her to his home, where they spent several evenings discussing her message and the controversy she caused among Rhode Island Quakers. Fortunately for Moses, however, he could not accept her as a prophet, and when the New England Meeting formally ostracized Wilkinson and barred attendance at her meetings, Moses was able to watch the proceedings with a sense of bemused detachment.



Jemimah would establish congregations at New Milford, Connecticut, and at Greenwich, Rhode Island. She did nothing to restrain enthusiastic followers who acclaimed her as the Messiah, and occasionally a stone would be thrown at her.

A memorandum of the introduction of that fatal Fever, called in



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the year 1776 the Columbus fever, since called the Typhus.... The ship called *Columbus* which sailed out of [Providence](#) in the state of Rhode Island, being a ship of war, on her return brought with her prisoners this awful and alarming disease of which many of the inhabitants in Providence died. On the fourth of the tenth month it reached the house of Jemima Wilkinson, ten miles from Providence.... A certain young woman, known by the name of Jemima Wilkinson, was seized with this mortal disease. And on the 2nd day of her illness was rendered almost incapable of helping herself. And the fever continued to increase until fifth day of the week, about midnight she appeared to meet the shock of Death; which (released) the Soul.

What was it she preached? –Generally, she favored celibacy and plainness of dress, and opposed slavery. As an intellectual record it's not all that impressive. She totally bought into the Puritan vision of the inherent depravity of humankind. Various [Quakers](#), especially those favorable to the American cause in the Revolution, would follow her in approximately a similar manner to the manner in which the Shakers followed Mother Ann Lee. The [Religious Society of Friends](#) would be disowning a number of these Friends as they made themselves guilty by association. Although her brother Stephen Wilkinson and sisters Mercy Wilkinson, Betsey (?) Wilkinson, and Deborah Wilkinson followed Universal Friend in her relocation to upstate New York, her father Jeremiah Wilkinson, who had admittedly at times served as her escort but had never been a convert, and her brother Jeremiah Wilkinson, eventually would resume association with the [Smithfield](#) Friends.

Jemima Wilkinson was born in Cumberland, Nov. 19, 1752, and is, without doubt, the most singular as well as celebrated female character Rhode Island has ever produced. When she was about eighteen years of age, she became very much impressed with matters of a religious nature. A great religious excitement prevailed about this time in the county of Providence, and soon spread itself all over the State, through the efforts and preaching of George Whitefield. Jemima became very much interested and a great change came over her life. From a gay, spirited girl she became a sort of recluse, and spent her time in the study of the scriptures and deep meditation.

In 1775 she was stricken with a severe fever, and during her illness she pretended to have a vision from on high, and received a call, as she was pleased to term it, to go out and preach to the sin-burdened world. She arose suddenly one night, demanded her clothes, and appeared to be in a trance. The next Sabbath she preached her first sermon under the old oak tree we have mentioned in another part of this work. Her words made a decided sensation upon her hearers. She styled herself the "People's Universal Friend," and ever afterward was known by that appellation. She travelled through the country preaching her peculiar doctrine and soon surrounded herself with many devoted followers. For some six years she made her home at Judge Potter's, in [Kingstown](#). The Judge was a wealthy land-holder and became one of her most devoted admirers. When others began to desert her and cry her down as an imposter and a selfish, scheming woman, the Judge became all the more infatuated, and no means were spared to sustain her cause and protect her from the calumnies of her enemies. Wherever she went, the Judge was her companion, and when she finally resolved to leave her native





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State and settle in the wilds of western New York, Mr. Potter was among the most prominent advocates of this movement. He at last became embarrassed financially, and his fine estate was sold, and in his old age he was compelled to live in straitened circumstances, a victim of infatuated devotion to this artful adventuress. She claimed for herself supernatural powers, and great crowds often congregated to witness some of her wonderful performances. She several times attempted to raise the dead, and her failures were attributed to want of faith in those who had assembled to witness the verification of her pretended supernatural powers. She removed with a few followers to Yales County, N. Y., and settled at a place which they called New Jerusalem. Here she spent the remainder of her eventful life, and died July 1, 1819. After her death her followers remained for several years and kept up their peculiar organization.

The history of this woman has been written by several different parties, and the fallacy of her pretended inspiration received the verdict it so justly merited. And yet, that she was a woman possessed of more than ordinary abilities and some admirable traits of character it would be more than folly to deny. She lived in an age when ignorance and superstition in matters of religion were more prevalent than now, and it is not strange that she drew to her faith many good and honest people. Experience teaches that there is no creed without its believers and no delusion without its dupes. The saying that "murder will out" is accepted as truth, and the excitement attending the supposed celestial powers of this artful woman was shrewdly turned to account, and avarice preyed upon credulity. A great revolution is silently making its way through the world by the developing influences of education, the freedom of thought and the press, and will end in promoting the highest interests of the race, and remove forever the last vestige of religious superstition and fanaticism.

The Old Baptist Church at Abbott's was situated on the east side of the Lanesville road, upon the site now [1878] occupied by D.A. Thompson's house. It was built about the year 1700. It was a wooden structure, two stories high, with a large gallery. Its size was 30 x 60 feet, and it was torn down in 1825. Under an oak-tree that stood in front of this church, the celebrated Jemima Wilkinson made her first speech, and was listened to with attention.

The Baptist Catholic Society was chartered January, 1797. It held its meetings during warm weather in the shade of the old oak-tree at Lonsdale. These meetings were discontinued about 1860.

The old oak-tree in Lonsdale is an historical relic of the past. It is held in great veneration by the citizens of the place, and an iron railing has been placed around it. The tree is supposed to be three hundred years old, but is now [1878] rapidly going to decay. It is said, by good authorities, that these trees are



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one hundred years maturing, they flourish another hundred, and decay in the third and last hundred years.

([Friend Jemimah Wilkinson](#) was not the only American woman to begin cross-dressing in this year. In Middleborough, Massachusetts, the mind of a 16- year-old indentured servant, Deborah Sampson, was becoming “agitated with the enquiry — why a nation, separated from us by an ocean ... [should] enforce on us plans of subjugation.” Sampson would resolve to make herself into “one of the severest avengers of the wrong” and through flattening her breasts with a bandage would enlist in the Revolutionary army as a common soldier. She was at this point also involved with the New Light [Baptists](#), although she would get in trouble with them and be expelled, and although she would be detected in the army and discharged. She would then transform herself more completely and competently, into the Revolutionary soldier Robert Shurtleff, for 17 months an enlisted man in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment of the Continental Army. She would suffer war wounds in an encounter with a Tory militia while on a scouting expedition in the New York countryside but, at a later point, would fall ill with a fever and be discovered again to be of the female persuasion. With “chastity inviolate” — but of course they checked this out— she would receive a revolutionary veteran’s pension. Her grave in Rockridge Cemetery is marked as that of “a revolutionary soldier.” She married, so after her death her husband received the monetary equivalent of a revolutionary veteran’s widow’s pension.)

**WHAT I’M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND
YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF**



JEMIMA WILKINSON

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GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

1777

January: A resident of the New York colony, John Cumming (this is **not** the Dr. John Cuming of Concord, Massachusetts), went to the city of New-York to determine how best he might handle his delicate political situation, his delicate political situation being that he was a Loyalist rather than a revolutionary. While in the city he refused a commission in the British army.

People were trying to kill each other at the Assumpsick Bridge in Trenton, New Jersey.

At the women's meeting for business of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) at the upper meetinghouse in [Smithfield, Rhode Island](#), "*Benjamin Arnold informs this meeting that he hath read the denials of Jemimah and Patience Wilkinson agreeable to appointment.*"



JEMIMAH WILKINSON

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

Three more [Quaker](#) men of Worcester County, Massachusetts were imprisoned for adhering to the Peace Testimony.

THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY

CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



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1778

May 25, Sunday: A British force of 500 men, including Hessian troops, marched through [Warren](#) and down the main street of [Bristol, Rhode Island](#) (now known as Hope Street), setting fire to many buildings and taking several citizens as prisoners to [Newport](#). The posh residence of the family of Captain [Mark Anthony DeWolf](#) at the south corner of Burton and Hope streets was one of the 19 torched (the DeWolfs had fled to a farm in Swansea). Most of the houses burnt were the barracks of American troops or homes of prominent “rebels.” (Bristol now boasts the oldest continuous 4th-of-July celebration in America. First staged in 1785, it was begun by Bristolians who had taken part in the revolution.)

CELEBRATING OUR B-DAY

After the failure of the American drive to recapture [Newport, Rhode Island, Jemimah Wilkinson](#), who had become known as “The Universal Friend,” and some of her associates, obtained General John Sullivan’s permission and the British commander’s permission to pass through the military lines and pay a visit to England. It has been suspected that her agenda was to pay an evangelical visit to King George III.



This agenda would fail of accomplishment, but she would succeed in winning over Judge William Potter of [South Kingstown, Rhode Island](#). He would in 1780 create a sanctuary for her and her little group of admirers on his estate at [Little Rest](#) (now [Kingston](#)).

Universal Friend would be going on preaching trips escorted by her father. Eventually her father would be replaced at her side, first by Judge Potter and then by her cadre of women friends. Her caravan —usually 12, riding two by two behind her spirited horse with her seated on a stunning white leather and blue velvet saddle— would find its way to Philadelphia and Worchester in Pennsylvania. Meetinghouses would be established, initially in South Kingston at the home of Judge Potter and then also in New Milford, Connecticut.²⁶

26. We are tempted to disrespect such a person as a mere self-deluded religious poseur — but in all fairness, if we do so there are any number of posturing males, cut from the same broadcloth, even today on the tube, whom we should also “diss.”



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The town of [Acton](#) was keeping tabs on how much the revolution was costing them:

4 men	Rhode Island	2¼ months	May and June	at £6=£24
4 men	Northern Army	4 months	Aug. to Dec.	at £24=£96
4 men	Northern Army	1½ months	Oct. and Nov.	at £9=£36
4 men	Cambridge	5 months	Nov. to April	at £12=£48
6 men	Cambridge	3 months	April to July	at £7¼=£43½

A full estimate of the services cannot be made. This town had the honor of furnishing several officers during the revolutionary war. Lieutenant Colonel Francis Faulkner and Captain Simon Hunt were in the battle at White Plains, and at other times were also engaged in actual service. The constitution was adopted by more than two thirds of the votes of the town.²⁷

27. [Lemuel Shattuck](#)'s 1835 [A HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF CONCORD;....](#). Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company; Concord MA: [John Stacy](#)
(On or about November 11, 1837 [Henry Thoreau](#) would indicate a familiarity with the contents of at least pages 2-3 and 6-9 of this historical study.)



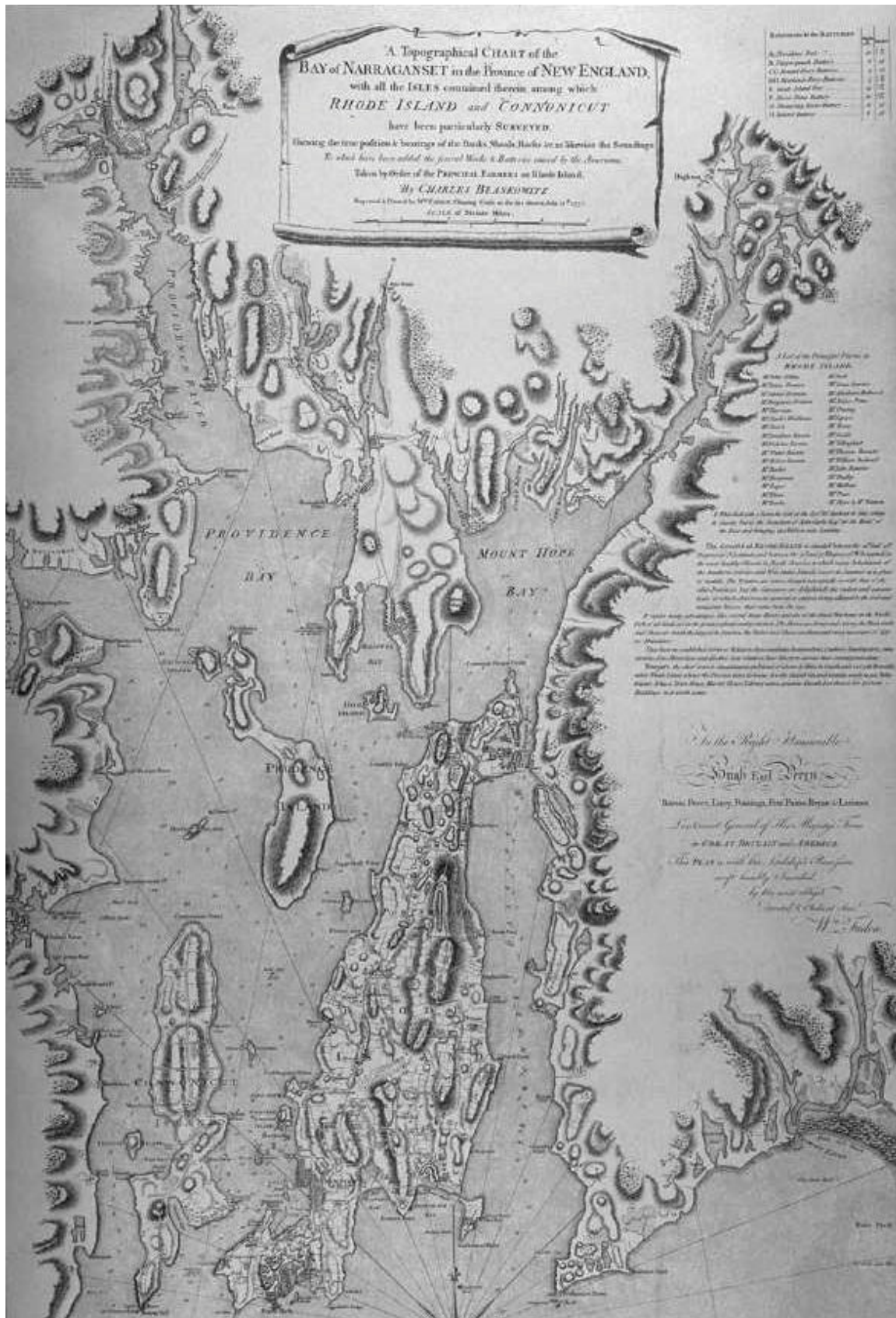
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1779

[[Jemimah Wilkinson](#)], SOME CONSIDERATIONS, PROPOUNDED TO THE SEVERAL SORTS AND SECTS OF PROFESSORS OF THIS AGE . . . BY A UNIVERSAL FRIEND OF MANKIND ([Providence](#), [Rhode Island](#), 1779)

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.

[HDT](#)[WHAT?](#)[INDEX](#)**PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND****JEMIMA WILKINSON****GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM****1780**

Judge William Potter had manumitted his slaves and was providing a sanctuary for “The Universal Friend” ([Jemimah Wilkinson](#)) and her band of followers at “the Old Abbey” on his estate at Little Rest (the village of [Kingston](#)) about a mile to the north of [South Kingstown, Rhode Island](#). To house his guests he made such large additions to his already large mansion (14 new rooms) that he was obliged to undertake a mortgage he would not be able to maintain. According to a record that has survived, the Judge’s daughter Susannah Potter “died in the arms of The Friend.” Dr. Joshua Babcock of [Westerly](#), a friend of Benjamin Franklin, had become one of her followers. She remained on friendly terms with [Stephen Hopkins](#), former governor of Rhode Island, a cousin. (She was also related to [Esek Hopkins](#), first commodore of the American navy.) She had influence among the [Quakers](#) of Cape Cod. Since she was not an advocate of the Quaker Peace Testimony, she was able to speak at a “Free Quaker” meeting of the disowned Friends, in Philadelphia.

**THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY**

Jemimah came to be known not only as “The Universal Friend” but also, inside her band of disciples, as “Beft-Friend.” Upon one occasion in New Milford, Connecticut, she would proclaim a 30-day fast on bread and water — and her disciples would obey. (What are beft-friends for? :-)



JEMIMA WILKINSON

PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND

GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

April 1, Saturday: “Universal Friend” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) had prophesied the end of the world for this day, or, at least, had allowed some of her disciples so to speculate:

stroyed from off the earth ; and then the faints would live here a thousand years, which would begin sometime the first of April, 1780, being about forty-two months after her first beginning to preach, which was not so fully and plainly held forth by her as by some of her Apostles ; but the time expired, and nothing of that nature happen'd : a while after on the 19th of May was the dark day, and then she made application of that's being the fulfilling of her prediction and what was to happen, and so that doctrine seem'd to die away, and there wasn't much said about it afterwards, only it would be in the Lord's own time, &c.

HERE COME DA JUDGE!

May 19, Friday, mid-morning: As Friend [John Greenleaf Whittier](#) would later record it, this was “the famous Dark Day of New England,” which was “a physical puzzle for many years to our ancestors”:

'Twas on a May-day of the far old year
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell
Over the bloom and sweet life of the Spring,
Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon,
A horror of great darkness, like the night....



For days the sun had been shining on the northeastern United States from New Jersey to Maine with a reddish hue out of a sky of dull yellow. At mid-morning on this day a blanket of darkness descended and the birds sang their evening songs and the cows began walking back to their barns. Noon was nearly as dark as night, and outdoor travel became difficult. New Haven's [Connecticut Journal](#) reported that inside houses, candles were lit as if it were evening. Samuel Williams of Bradford, Connecticut would report that “In some places, the darkness was so great, that persons could not see to read common print in the open air.... The extent of this darkness was very remarkable.” The Reverend [Timothy Dwight](#), Yale College president, would report that “It was the general opinion that the day of judgment was at hand.”

The followers of “Universal Friend” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), having been disappointed that the [millennium](#) had not appeared on April 1st, wondered whether this “Dark Day” might be the end, but again they were



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disappointed, and again they fell back and regrouped:

stroyed from off the earth ; and then the saints would live here a thousand years, which would begin sometime the first of April, 1780, being about forty-two months after her first beginning to preach, which was not so fully and plainly held forth by her as by some of her Apostles ; but the time expired, and nothing of that nature happen'd : a while after on the 19th of May was the dark day, and then she made application of that's being the fulfilling of her prediction and what was to happen, and so that doctrine seem'd to die away, and there wasn't much said about it afterwards, only it would be in the Lord's own time, &c.

People were supposing that a biblical prophecy had come true and Judgement Day had arrived (Abanes, Richard. END-TIME VISIONS. NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998, page 217).

The House of Representatives in Hartford, Connecticut adjourned on account of the darkness. At the urging of Colonel Abraham Davenport, however, the governor's council continued its meeting: "Either the day of judgment is at hand or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I wish to be found in the line of my duty."

The Reverend [William Miller](#) and others would not be able to resist seeing in such heavenly displays a fulfillment of words associated with Jesus Christ, "Immediately after the tribulation in those days shall the sun



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be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (MATTHEW 24:29). This darkening of the sun, combined with the stars falling in November 1833, would convince many devout believers that the second advent of Jesus was indeed near.

HERE COME DA JUDGE!

From the town records of Ipswich we learn that:



Darkness came on like that of an eclipse. By 9 o'clock, A.M., persons could not see to weave. Candles were lighted to dine by. As the day began prematurely to put on the appearance of twilight, cattle lowed, and fowls went to roost. The darkness of the succeeding evening was almost palpable. Many feared and trembled, lest the end of all things had come. They alone are truly wise, who seek the Lord when the bow of his mercy is over them, as well as when they hear his thunders, and behold his lightnings.

From the diary of Phineas Sprague, as well as from many, many other sources, we can be assured that this day was indeed a quite unusual and memorable one:

This day was the most Remarkable day that ever my eyes beheld the air had bin so full of smoak to an uncommon degree So that wee could scairce see a mountain at two miles distance for 3 or 4 days Past till this day after Noon the smoak all went off to the South at sunset a very black bank of a cloud appeared in the south and west the Nex morning cloudey and thundered in the west about ten oclock it began to Rain and grew vere dark and at 12 was allmost as dark as Nite so that wee was obliged to lite our candels and Eate our dinner by candel lite at Noon day but between 1 and 2 oclock it grew lite again but in the Evening the cloud caim over us again the moon was about the full it was the darkest Nite that ever was seen by us in the world.

This atmospheric effect probably was caused by numerous forest fires in upstate New York and in Canada. In [Boston](#) the air was observed to smell like a “malt-house or coal-kiln,” and something resembling ashes settled on pools of rainwater. However, refer also to the date October 15, 1785 for a comparison volcanic phenomenon.



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1783

With the departure of the British army, the Quaker meetinghouse in [Flushing](#) on *Paumanok* Long Island was returned to the control of the Friends, and meetings for worship were resumed there.



At this point 4 [Rhode Island](#) meetinghouses were available for Quaker worship: Mendon, what would become the upper and lower [Smithfield](#) meetinghouses, and Providence. Whereas previously the Quakers who met in the new meetinghouse on Main Street in [Providence](#) had been considered to be merely a “worship group” affiliated with the Providence Monthly Meeting, a worship group that happened to be meeting to worship locally for convenience rather than going on the carriage ride all the way north to the Smithfield meetinghouse on the one side of the river or the [Saylesville](#) meetinghouse on the other side of the river, at this point the affiliations and the names were rearranged. Henceforth the group that was attending the Smithfield meetinghouse and the “Lower Smithfield” meetinghouse near Saylesville would be considered to constitute a separate Smithfield Monthly Meeting of the [Religious Society of Friends](#). (That is, there would be two monthly meetings rather than one, and the name “Providence” would adhere to the group that actually was inside the town of Providence.)²⁸

28. I have not been able to establish whether or not this split had anything to do with the current state of affairs in Smithfield and Saylesville, having to do with the disownment of the charismatic “Universal Friend” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), who at this point was still active in the area.



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Abner Brownell (1756-1851), setting out to “diss” the sect that was collecting around the delusional [Rhode Island](#) “Universal Friend” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), had Timothy Green print for him in New London, Connecticut a 44-page booklet which he entitled **ENTHUSIASTICAL ERRORS, TRANSPIRED AND DETECTED, BY ABNER BROWNELL, IN A LETTER TO HIS FATHER, BENJAMIN BROWNELL.**

(as on the following screens)



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WHAT?

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ENTHUSIASTICAL E R R O R S,

Transpired and detected,

By ABNER BROWNELL,

In a Letter to his Father,

BENJAMIN BROWNELL.



But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the Truth of the Gospel. Gal. 2. 14.

For he that biddeth him God speed, is Partaker of his evil Deeds. 2 Epist. John, 11 Verse.

And have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them—And be not ye Partakers with them. Eph. 5. 11 and 7.

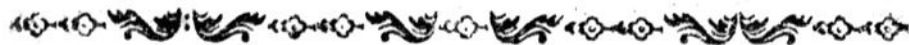
For their Folly shall be manifest unto all Men. 2 Tim. 3. 9.

But ye have not so learned Christ: If so be ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus. Eph. 4. 20, 21.

Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord. 2 Cor. 6. 17.

And go ye not therefore after them. Luke 21. 8.

This Witness is true. Titus 1. 12.



Printed for the Author, in the Year 1783.



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The story he tells is that of an exhorter to goodness rather than of a proclaimer of new doctrine:

and then she will read to them a Description that she has, that the Turks gave antiently concerning our Lord Jesus Christ's outward Appearance, his Shapes, Stature, Features and Complexion, and Habit, with a long loose Gown, and his Hair being black, and curled in his Neck, or upon his Shoulders, and parted upon the Top, after the Manner of the Nazarenes, and then that they may look upon her and see how near she resembles those Descriptions; and so from
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Although Jemimah Wilkinson has been characterized as a cross-dresser, we can see that if she was such, she was such not by the standards of our time (trousers, jacket and tie, etc.) but by the standards of that time (bareheaded indoors, mannish hat outdoors, hairdo not notably of a feminine style).

First then, I shall proceed as I propos'd, to shew how I was attached to her Doctrine. In the Year 1778, I heard of a remarkable Person of a Female Preacher from a back Town of Providence, call'd Cumberland, about which there was a Report of something very remarkable and extraordinary, that she was a Person that was said had been dead for the Space of an Hour, and by the mighty Power of God had been rais'd immediately to a State of Health, and had an immediate call to appear in public Testimony to preach to the People: I hearing of her being invited down to Tiverton, I went as by Invitation of my Father with his Company, it being late when we got there, she was in the Improvement of her Sermon; the first outward Appearance seem'd to be something singular and extraordinary, appearing in a different Habit from what is common amongst Women, wearing her Hair curl'd in her Neck, without any other Covering on her Head, except it was when she travel'd out, she put on a Hat much like a Man's, only the Brim flap'd down; her Visage appeared a good Deal bright, with a very agreeable Aspect in her Countenance; her Voice very grum and shrill for a Woman, and seem'd to deliver her Discourse very pathetical and engaging, in
which

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It would seem that she had prophesied the end of the world, or, at least, allowed some of her disciples so to speculate, the end being on or about April Fool's Day of 1780, or perhaps the "Dark Day" of May 19, 1780:

stroyed from off the earth ; and then the saints would live here a thousand years, which would begin sometime the first of April, 1780, being about forty-two months after her first beginning to preach, which was not so fully and plainly held forth by her as by some of her Apostles ; but the time expired, and nothing of that nature happen'd : a while after on the 19th of May was the dark day, and then she made application of that's being the fulfilling of her prediction and what was to happen, and so that doctrine seem'd to die away, and there wasn't much said about it afterwards, only it would be in the Lord's own time, &c.

(The disreputable information which this former follower had to offer about his former leader consisted merely in the fact that when he had tried to have something of his printed, without first clearing it with "Beft-Friend" Jemimah Wilkinson, for a period the copy of his writing from which the printer had been setting type had been taken from the printer's office, evidently so that Universal Friend might satisfy herself that the writing was not directed against her.)

September 22, Monday: The Reverend John Pitman noted in his journal that while in [Rhode Island](#) he "took my Brothers wife to pautuckset saw Jemimy Wilkerson the Imposter with the number of Deluded Creatures that go about with her standing &c in the Road about 4½ miles from [Providence](#)."

JEMIMAH WILKINSON



JEMIMA WILKINSON

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1786

In approximately this year the followers of [disowned](#) “Universal Friend” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) hired Abraham Dayton, Thomas Hathaway, and Richard Smith to scout a site for their “New Jerusalem” refuge. Passing through the valley known as Wyoming in upstate New York, the trio encountered a backwoodsman named Spalding who directed them to the Yates County region around Seneca Lake. Heading upriver until they fell upon the track left by General John Sullivan’s genocidal army, they arrived at the foot of Seneca Lake, and on Cashong Creek found a pair of French traders, De Bartzch and Poudry, who assured them of the attractiveness of the area.

QUAKER DISOWNMENT



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1787

June: When William Worrall and his [slave](#) stole some sheep, this was witnessed by other [St. Helena](#) slaves who reported the offence. Since of course the word of a slave could not be taken against the word of a free man, Worrall's slave was tried and convicted but all that would happen to Worrall himself was that he received £15 compensation for the loss of his slave.

ST. HELENA THE HISTORIC

Two cases in this month of this year raise the interesting question of why, if we USers are so wonderful, sometimes folks do everything they can to put distance between themselves and us. The two cases are a band of religious refugees fleeing into the wilderness, and a band of free black Americans attempting to flee back to Africa. As follows:

- 25 followers of [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), the [disowned](#) Universal Friend, among whom were the families of Abel Botsford, Peleg and John Briggs, and Isaac Nichols, met at Schenectady, New York and loaded themselves into a bateaux destined for their promised land. At Geneva they found one solitary, unfinished log cabin, that of Jennings. They went up the east side of Seneca Lake to Apple Town and there, for several days, they searched for a mill site (the first grist mill in upstate New York would be constructed by Richard Smith, Joseph Parker, and Abraham Dayton, on a site a few miles from Penn Yan later to be occupied by the Empire Mills). They would purchase, at auction, some 14,000 acres at a little less than 2s. per acre, and then they would purchase land for their settlement of Jerusalem for 1s., 2d. per acre.

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

- When Revolutionary veteran Prince Hall had offered to lead a contingent of 700 black soldiers from the [Boston](#) area to put down Shays' Rebellion in western Massachusetts, officials had elected to deploy instead only white troops. This was considered such a serious insult, that Hall obtained 70 signatures of black Bostonians on a petition to the General Court, for funds to transport Africans back to Africa:

[W]e find ourselves, in many respects, in very disagreeable and disadvantaged circumstances; most of which must attend us as long as we and our children live in America.





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July: Isaac Hicksled was killed by a shark while swimming near the [St. Helena](#) landing place.

25 followers of [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), the disowned Universal Friend, journeyed from Connecticut to the Mohawk River, then to Seneca Lake, New York where they arrived near today's Dresden. Jemimah herself was not among them, and would follow only after some of the initial hardships had been reduced: "We go to prepare a place for you."

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

November 25, Sunday: The following, about an al fresco Sunday afternoon performance outside the courthouse in New Haven, Connecticut at which [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) preached, is from the literary diary of the Reverend [Ezra Stiles](#):

25. Ldsdy.... At IV^h P.M. Mrs. Jemima Wilkinson held a religious Meet^g at the Courthouse. I attended. There might be 300 Persons present. I never saw her before. She has 3 or 4 Men & 3 or 4 Women her Companions. They with her were seated in Chairs upon the upper broad stair. Here with them she kneel^d & prayed, then stood & preached or discoursed in the grave, tonic & unconnected Manner of the Friends or Quakers. She desisted after phps. near an hours Discourse in w^c she said many pious good Things & Exhortⁿ to Virtue, with many Texts repeated without Connexion. Then sat down & Mr. Avery her Companion then spake 3 or 4 Minutes. She arose & spake again-& again-then kneeld & prayed & then wished a Blessing. I spake to her after the whole was concluded,

In the Even^g my D. Emilia & Ruth visited her at Mr. Shipmans where she drank Tea. She invited her to breakfast with us....

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November 26, Monday: According to the literary diary of the Reverend [Ezra Stiles](#), Universal Friend [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) politely responded declining an invitation to breakfast:

This Morn^g Emilia sent a Billet to the Universal Friend invit^g her & her Companions to Breakfast. She excused, as soon to sett off for Philad^a but on her Return would comply with her Request. She is about aet. 30, strait, well made, light Complexion, black Eyes, round face, chesnut dark Hair. Wears light cloth Cloke with a Cape like a Man's-Purple Gown, long sleeves to Wristbands-Mans shirt down to the Hands with Neckband purple handkerchief or Neckcloth tied round the neck like a man's-No Cap-Hair combed turned over & not long-wears a Watch-Man's Hat.-Voluble Tongue-decent & graceful & grave.

Universal Friend Jemimah's note has been preserved (although she would return through New Haven in November 1788, she would neither then call upon Emilia nor inform her that she was nearby):

Friend Stiles,

I except thy favour but as we are on so long a journey and our



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brekfast is now preparard think it most expediant to go on as fast
as is possible. But when I return in the Spring if it's then thy
desire & request I see nothing but it may be so. My love to thee
& family.

New haven the 26th of the 11th 1787. THE UNIVERSAL FRIEND.

See also this Diary, Oct. 20, 1779, and Feb. 14, 1781.

VIEW VOLUME ONE

VIEW VOLUME TWO

VIEW VOLUME THREE



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1788

378 members of disowned [Jemimah Wilkinson](#)'s Society of Universal Friends, but not as yet she herself, arrived at the middle of the west shore of Seneca Lake in upstate New York to found a settlement which they would name New Jerusalem.



QUAKER DISOWNMENT

October 8, Wednesday: James Wilkinson was born in [Cumberland, Rhode Island](#):



James Wilkinson was born Oct. 8, 1788, and died July 19, 1862. He early developed an inventive turn of mind, and many of his productions were executed with remarkable skill and have made his name famous in New England history. Specimens of wire are said to be now in existence at the wire-works at Winchester, Mass., drawn by him, and are so fine that the orifice through which the wire was drawn will scarcely admit the rays of light. He was also an excellent mathematician and was exceedingly skillful with the pen and pencil. As a designer he had few equals, and many of his works were exceedingly curious, as is evidenced from the minute trap he made, from steel, for catching flies. It was so small that it could be covered with a common writing-pen, and was quite successful in the accomplishment of the purpose for which it was designed.



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1789

Spring: In upstate New York, the Markham-White party renewed its journey from the Susquehanna. Reaching the head of Seneca Lake, one of the men herded the animals to the northern end while the others rafted their belongings up to Geneva. Then they all continued on to Canandaigua. Phoebe Markham and her baby boy remained there as a housekeeper for Oliver Phelps while the rest of the party continued on to the Genesee River.

Elnathan Gooding's brother rejoins him at Bristol, New York, following a visit back to New England.

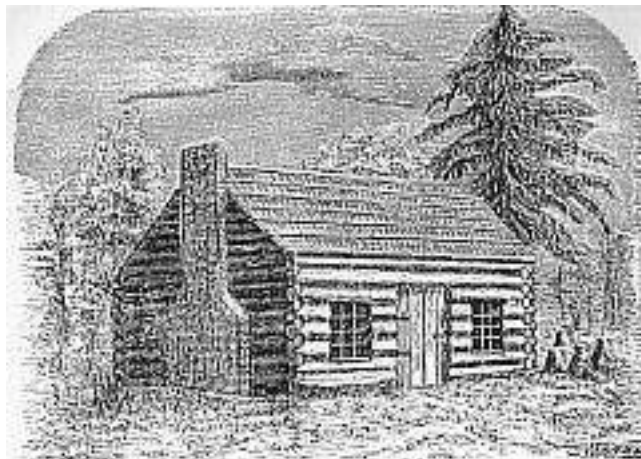
Some of the initial hardships of life in the wilderness having been reduced, [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), the [disowned](#) "Universal Friend," joined her followers at their new Jerusalem refuge in upstate New York.

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

The society built its community around a log-cabin meetinghouse near the present town of Torrey adjoining Seneca Lake. According to HISTORY & DIRECTORY OF YATES CO., NY:

By 1789, she had persuaded her followers, who were drawn from the states of Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, that they should move into a separate community, a "New Jerusalem," and thus she was the leader of the first white man's community established in what was then called the Genesee country in the Finger Lakes region of New York state.

This drawing of the meetinghouse of the Society of Universal Friends in Yates County, New York is per the memories of Henry Barnes, who had attended services there as a child:



According to page 32 of HISTORY & DIRECTORY OF YATES CO., NY:

In 1790 a national census was taken. A return of the Deputy Marshall of New York shows that there were 1,047 inhabitants on the seven Ranges of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and west of the Genesee River.... If we add, however, the Friend's Settlement east of the Pre-emption Line, numbering 260



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persons.... Of these inhabitants, there were in Township number 7, first Range, Milo, 66; number 8, Benton, 25; number 8, second Range, then Augusta, now Potter, 38. This would give us 388 for the population of what is now Yates County in 1790. It will be seen that the Friend's Settlement was at that time much the largest and most important community west of Seneca Lake, and even west of Fort Stanwix and the Susquehanna River. It is spoken of in one of Mr. [Charles] Williamson's earliest letters as "a very industrious community who have already made considerable improvements, having completed an excellent grist and saw mill sometime since. It is expected there will be double their present number before a twelvemonth."

However, in 1794 a dispute over land titles would split the movement, causing Universal Friend to move her colony to what would be named Jerusalem, in the "Finger Lake" district.





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December 2, Wednesday: In [Providence](#) and [Pawtucket, Rhode Island](#), [cotton](#) from the slave plantations of the American South and from the slave plantations of the West Indies was being woven into cloth for resale to its growers. The operation, run by the merchant [Moses Brown](#), was on a small scale. On this date [Samuel Slater](#),



a young man recently arrived from England after working in cotton spinning mills, applied for a job with Brown. Slater alleged an intimate knowledge of the British thread-spinning machinery: "I flatter myself that I can give the greatest satisfaction in making machinery, making as good yarn, either for stocking or twist, as any that is made in England."



Samuel [Slater] was a stalwart, handsome, rosy-cheeked youth of twenty-one when he came to America. Moses Brown sent him to [Oziel Wilkinson](#)'s, in Pawtucket, as a suitable place for him to board. When he entered Wilkinson's house Hannah and another of Oziel's daughters were working in the kitchen. Seeing a stranger, girl-like, they fled to an inner room; but Hannah, with maidenly curiosity, looked through a hole in the door and was favorably impressed with the young Englishman's appearance. Samuel saw the eyes and resolved to win them. The young people were both smitten, but the Wilkinsons were [Friends](#) and did not approve of Hannah's marrying a man of another faith. They proposed to send her away to school, but Samuel declared he would follow the girl to the ends of the earth if need be. The parents wisely concluded to withdraw their opposition and the lovers were allowed to marry. In the words of Slater's biographer, Hannah was a "lodestone" that kept him in Pawtucket. Had it not been for her influence and sympathy, he might have given away to discouragement at the many difficulties he was obliged to encounter in making the new machines and running them



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successfully. In telling the story of Slater we must not forget the woman who assisted him in winning his great success. The machines are supposed to have been started up temporarily in October, 1790, but the first record of their work commences with December 20, 1790.

READ EDWARD FIELD TEXT

QUAKER DISOWNMENT



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1790

Wearying of persecution, the followers of “Universal Friend” ([Jemimah Wilkinson](#)) founded a colony they named “New Jerusalem” on a gorgeous stretch of land at the head of a finger lake in northwestern New York State, near the present Penn Yan. There she would attempt without any success to convert local native Americans.

Palmyra miller Noah Foster traveled as far as New Jerusalem to have his grain processed at Richard Smith’s mill.

Dissension would eventually develop in the Jerusalem sanctuary because “Universal Friend” as she aged would become rather demanding of gifts and special treatment, and would institute various punishments for the breaking of her bossy rules. Finally the community would solve its little problem by building a home for her at a considerable distance from the other homes. She would spend her last years in isolation and after her death on some day in 1819 she would be interred in an unmarked grave and the Jerusalem community would disperse.



Refer to D. Hudson, MEMOIR OF JEMIMA WILKINSON (1824, reprinted 1972) and to H.A. Wisbey, PIONEER PROPHETESS (1964).



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1791

Colonel Timothy Pickering, Canandaigua lawyer Thomas Morris, the Reverend Kirkland, Horatio Jones, and Jasper Parrish negotiated with native headmen Red Jacket, Cornplanter, and Good Peter (the Indian preacher) and local tribes at New Town point (Elmira, New York). Nearly 500 Senecas encamped at Friend's Landing on Seneca Lake. At the request of Good Peter, "Universal Friend" [Jemimah Wilkinson](#) made an appearance. Her topic was "Have We Not All One Father?" Good Peter's sermon following her sermon, "Universal Friend" requested that his words be interpreted. Good Peter declined to provide this interpretation, commenting succinctly "if she is Christ, she knows what I said."

Following this conference, a delegation of Seneca headmen set out to visit President George Washington at the nation's capital, Philadelphia.

Noting "the great advantages which had resulted to Boston from the bank established there," [Moses Brown](#) and [John Brown](#) helped a group of wealthy merchants found, and John served as the chief executive officer, and Moses served as a director of, the first bank in [Rhode Island](#), incorporated in [Providence](#) and named the "Providence." (During June 1865 this institution would be reorganized as a national bank and renamed the "Providence National Bank.")

Four guys – [Samuel Slater](#), and a woodworker, and an elderly black employee of the merchant [Moses Brown](#), and the ironmaster [David Wilkinson](#) of Slater Mill in [Pawtucket](#) (meaning "waterfall") near North Providence, – bankrolled by a 5th guy, said Friend Moses, and using the water power of the [Blackstone River](#), with children working his "spinning jennies" in the production of yarn made of [cotton](#) from slave plantations, were at this point able to begin the farming out the large quantities of manufactured yarn to local women who were to work in their homes for piecework wages, weaving this yarn into cloth on consignment. The English thread-spinning technology had been duplicated entirely from Slater's memory.

This mill would begin to operate satisfactorily as soon as they had made a correction in the slope of the carder teeth he had specified.





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(Obviously, our Bill of Rights was arriving, in this former colony that had been the very last to ratify the Constitution, not one instant too soon. :-)





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Water power would replace at least for the most part the brute labor that had been being provided by animal and human treadmills:



(The treadmill illustrated above was one in use for punishment at the Brixton House of Correction in 1821. Prisoners walked the treadmill for ten minutes and then had a five minute breather. Talking was forbidden. Although the treadmill at Coldbath Fields prison drove a flour-mill, in other prisons the power produced was not utilized. Of course, in factories the treadmill was not for punishment and the power was always utilized.)



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Mr. [Samuel Slater](#) was able to get his hands on eight children between the ages of 7 and 12 as his first work crew in his factory at Slater Mills, to tend his water-powered carding and spinning machines — machines which were utterly lacking in any safety guards over their power belts and pulleys. Clearly, the only families which would put their children to this sort of dangerous labor were families which were desperate to get food on their table and shelter over their heads. Get this, such children might otherwise be destitute and victimizable! Slater made no agreements that these children, who should have been in school, would be trained as apprentices in any craft: they were not indentured to learn a lifetime skill, but were to be mere low-wage machine fodder without a future, in his dark Satanic mill. You can visit this mill today. It's right off the freeway but now it is deceptively lovely and lonely and silent there. There is nothing whatever about the place which might cause child abuse to spring to one's mind.

Get ready, here comes the unholy alliance of “the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom”!

By 1810 the United States would boast 87 such cotton mills, able to provide employment for 4,000 workers, some 3,500 of whom would be women and children who might otherwise be destitute and victimizable.²⁹

We owe so much to technology and the profit motive! (Don't let Adam Smith's invisible hand slap you in the face. :-)

White imitation slaves are infinitely superior to black real ones, because there's never any agitation to [emancipate](#) the imitation white ones — if they get old or sick or get caught in the machinery and injure themselves, you can just tell them to get lost!

By 1796 there would be three forges, a tanning mill, three snuff mills, an oil mill, a clothiers works, three fulling mills and two nail mills, at this falls on the [Pawtucket](#) River, all being run by water power rather than muscle power. Human workers were being allowed to use their brains rather than their brawn — isn't that superior?

April 23, Saturday: James Buchanan, who would be the US President from 1857 to 1861, was born.

Jeptha Wilkinson was born in [Cumberland, Rhode Island](#):



He also was a man of extraordinary inventive genius, and his name is embalmed in the history of the celebrated reed-machine. He received for his patent in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, \$17,777 in gold. He was mobbed in England by those whose occupation was materially affected by the introduction of his invention. The Colt revolver is said to be this man's invention, and that Mr. Colt obtained the patterns from a French officer, to whom Mr. Wilkinson had intrusted them for his own personal inspection. Mr. Colt, it is claimed, made a copy of these models and got them patented upon his return to America. However the case may be, Mr. Colt has at least reaped the greatest pecuniary benefit, and has the honor of the invention, although he himself

29. As [Friend Moses Brown, Rhode Island](#)'s premiere industrialist, had pointed out,

“As the manufactory of the mill yarn is done by children from 8 to 14 years old it is a near total saving of labor to the country.”



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lays no claim to being the original inventor of this celebrated instrument. After years of severe labor, and many disappointments, Mr. Wilkinson brought out his great invention, and one that stamps his name among the world's illustrious benefactors. The rotary cylindrical printing-press was the offspring of his genius, and although patented and claimed by other men, the honor belongs to Mr. Wilkinson, and justly merits the recognition its importance demands.

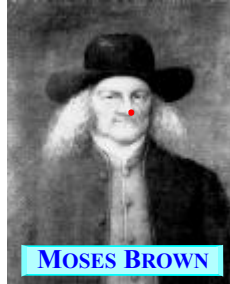


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November 12, Saturday: [Moses Brown](#) and [Oziel Wilkinson](#) registered their deed to an irregular plot of seven acres,



bearing two dwelling houses, a barn, and a corncrib, with water rights (this is the essential phrase: “with water rights”), on the bank of the [Blackstone River](#) next to the steepest waterfall there, where [Samuel Slater](#)’s mill was to be constructed.



Although now this land is part of the town of [Pawtucket](#) (the town’s name meaning “waterfall”), the two capitalists registered their deed as then part of North [Providence](#). The price paid had been “\$350 Spanish mill

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dollars” and Brown owned three shares in the property to Wilkinson’s one share.



RHODE ISLAND





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1794

In New York, John Stevens demonstrated a steamboat.

David Wilkinson, a son of [Oziel Wilkinson](#), in company with Elijah Ormsbee, also built a steamboat, in which they made a trip of three and a half miles, from Winsor's Cove to [Providence, Rhode Island](#). They did not seem impressed with the idea that the scheme could be made of practical value and after their "frolic" (as Wilkinson called it) was over, they dismantled the boat. In the course of his reminiscences, sent, in after years, to the society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry, Wilkinson says that while they were engaged in the construction of this steamboat a young man from Connecticut, who gave the name of Daniel French, came to his shop in [Pawtucket](#), and asked and obtained leave to look over the steamboat. He examined everything carefully, and seemed greatly interested. Many years afterward, while riding by rail from Utica to Albany, Mr. Wilkinson says, he fell into a conversation with a gentleman regarding Fulton's steamboat, and the gentleman declared that Fulton never would have succeeded had he not kept an ingenious Connecticut Yankee locked in for several weeks to draw plans for him. On inquiring the name of the Connecticut Yankee, Mr. Wilkinson was told it was "Daniel French."

READ EDWARD FIELD TEXT

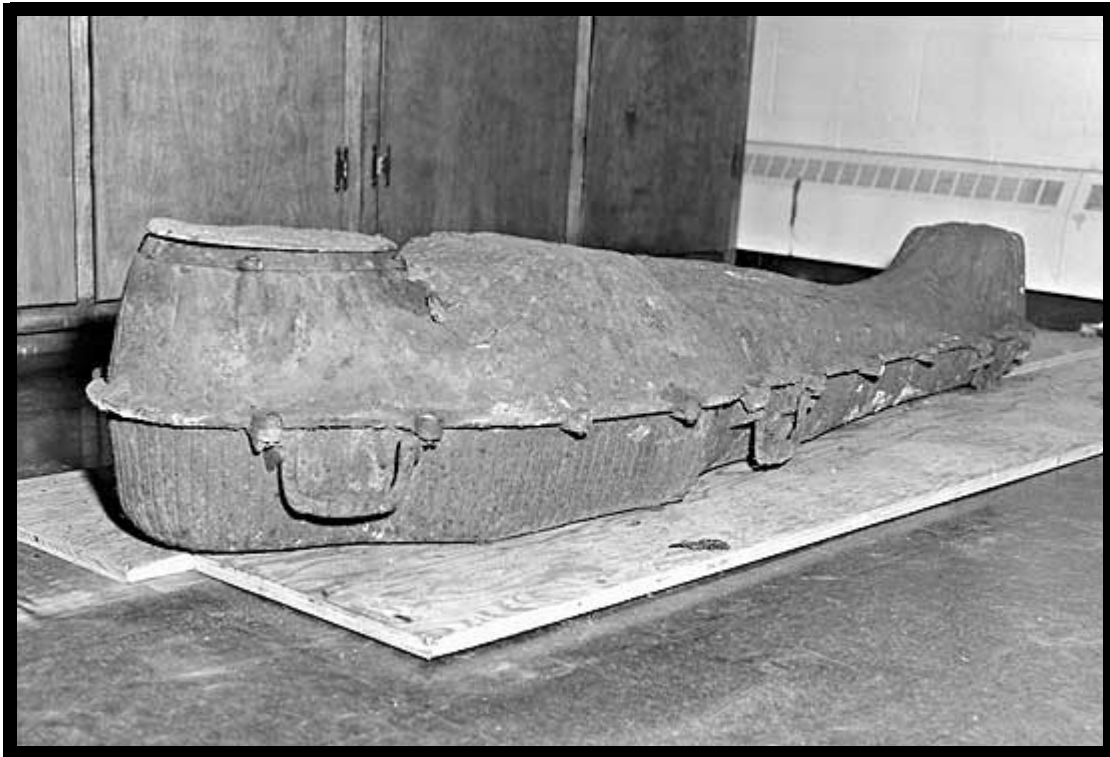
November: "Universal Friend," [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), preaching on the topic "Have We Not All One Father?," attended the Council of the 6 Nations at Canandaigua, in the vicinity of Seneca Lake in upstate New York. In this year her Society of Universal Friends had had Bailey print in Philadelphia a doctrinal pamphlet consisting largely of BIBLE quotations, THE UNIVERSAL FRIEND'S ADVICE TO THOSE OF THE SAME RELIGIOUS SOCIETY. Having migrated from [Rhode Island](#) to near Torrey, at this point they had become involved in a dispute over land titles that had split the movement, and Universal Friend was relocating with those still loyal to her to what is now Jerusalem, at the head of Crooked Lake (also in the "Finger Lake" district, now called Keuka Lake).



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July 14, Thursday: A force of Spanish guerrillas was routed by the French at Medina del Río Seco. The French put thousands of them to death, sacked the town, entered the largest church and indulged themselves in a mass rape of nuns.

[John Wilkinson](#) died. The body would be placed in a coffin fashioned of cast iron.



Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

*5th day 14 of 7 M 1808 / At Meeting my mind frequently turn'd
on an occurrence that may probably happen at the Meeting House
on the eleventh of next M - In the eveng at D Buffums with my H*

[RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS](#)



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1810



July 26, Thursday: [George Gordon, Lord Byron](#) arrived in Patras.

DeWitt Clinton, one-time Governor of New York State, was visiting John C. Spencer, who had served as Secretary of War, in Canandaigua. At the local coachmaker's shop, a "plain coachee with leather curtains" with an inscription on its back in large letters **V*F** was in for repairs. This was brought to his attention as belonging to the prophetess [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), who resided with 30 or 40 followers at Crooked Lake some 25 miles to the southeast. "She is opposed to war, to oaths, and to marriage; and to her confidential friends she represents herself as Jesus Christ personified in the body of Jemima Wilkinson."

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

5th day 26th of 7 M 1810// Our first meeting was a dull heavy time Our friend H Almy spoke feelingly & pertinently to the state of it as he expressed it, a "Dumb stupid Silence" seemd to prevail, I thought I was favor'd with ability to wrestle a little but it was not to much effect – In the last (Monthly Meeting) it seemd as if I had more life than in the last, & spoke to the buisness with a good degree of Satisfaction to my own mind – David Bowen & Elizabeth Folger Chase published their intentions of Marriage – We had no company at Dinner – After dinner We attended the funeral of Elizabeth Stanton from my fathers house, many people attended & I thought it was a good solid opportunity.

—

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August 9, Thursday: DeWitt Clinton recorded in his diary a reading of a pamphlet about an interview a Mr. Eddy had had with Universal Friend (he had not himself met her) at her settlement of Jerusalem in upstate New York: "I ... purchased a pamphlet relative to [Jemimah Wilkinson](#).... Mr. Eddy, who visited her at the Crooked Lake, says, that she is about fifty-seven years of age, of Rhode Island, but of what sect he could not learn. That she has about forty or fifty adherents, the principal of whom is Rachel Miller [actually, Rachel Mallin], aged upwards of forty, formerly a Quaker seamstress, of Philadelphia, in whose name the title deeds of the property are held. That she lives in a handsome, plentiful style, and is about completing a very large and elegant house, on a commanding position. That a large tract of land was purchased from Gorham and Phelps for eighteen cents an acre, but what proportion is held by Rachel, for the Friend, as she is called all over the country, he does not know, as some of her followers have receded from her and appropriated part of the land to their exclusive use. That her dress, countenance, and demeanor are masculine in a great degree; and that her conduct is marked by garrulity and vanity; and that when closely questioned she evinces great irritation. That she adopts the [Quaker](#) style of preaching; like them she is opposed to oaths and war, and does not prohibit, although she discountenances, marriage. That her discourses, as well set as conversational, are texts of Scripture combined without regularity or connection, but indicative of a retentive memory. That she has no peculiar creed, unless in relation to herself; that in this respect she veils herself in mystery, and does not distinctly say what being she is, although she represents herself as a spirit from heaven, animating the defunct



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body of Jemima Wilkinson. But what kind or order of divine being, whether the soul of a departed saint, an angel, or a second Christ, she does not communicate to the profane. Her power is founded on the extreme ignorance of her followers, operated on by her impudence and cunning. Vain, ignorant, and talkative, but shrewd to a degree, she will maintain her dominion, notwithstanding, over some of her sect – a dominion tottering, however, with the decadence of her mind and the failure of her personal charms. When interrogated as to her doctrine, she referred to a book published by Bailey, of Philadelphia, of five or six pages, consisting merely of salutary advice written by her, and full of Scripture quotations, but containing no peculiar creed or dogmas [THE UNIVERSAL FRIEND'S ADVICE TO THOSE OF THE SAME RELIGIOUS SOCIETY].”

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

5th day 9th of 8th Mo// I have just read the account of the death of our friend Deborah Derby of Old England, she with Rebecca Young paid a religious visit to America & attended the Yearly Meeting of New England in the 6th M 1795. I well remember the gospel labors of these Sweet & valuable Women, & to hear of the death of the oldest & most experienced I think is much to be regretted, especially to friends of her own nation

From the (London) Gentleman's Magazine.

"Died at her seat at Colebrook Dale, Deborah Derby, widow of Samuel Derby, Colebrook Dale, Shropshire aged about 58. This worthy woman had been a very acceptable Minister among the Society of Friends for 30 Years. She paid a religious visit to the meetings of Friends in America (having the plenty & accomodations of this World, in which she abounded) with earnest desires to promote the great cause of Christianity in those remote regions"

I had a destitute meeting, & was disappointed for I was in hopes to have felt more of the sap of life to arise than I did, feeling as I apprehended in a pretty good frame of mind before I went –

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1816



The artist John Lee Douglas Matthews (1780-1834), who signed his paintings J.L.D. Mathies and was the brother of the [Prophet of the God of the Jews Matthias](#),³⁰ himself a Jewish free-thinker, sought out and painted the portrait of “Universal Friend,” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), who had reached the age of approximately 64. It seems likely that this is a degraded image of that canvas, which is now at the Yates County Genealogical & Historical Society in Penn Yan, New York, along with her side saddle and her beaver hat:



30. The kingdom of this brother [Matthias, the Spirit of Truth, the Prophet of the God of the Jews](#), would in the 1830s atop Zion Hill in Sing Sing, New York consist of his three sons William, James, and John Matthews, Elijah Pierson and his daughter Elizabeth Pierson and possibly her half-sister for whom we do not have a name, Sylvester Mills, Isabella Van Wagenen ([Sojourner Truth](#)), Catherine Galloway and her child or children for whom we do not have names, Benjamin and Ann Folger, with their children Catharine, Edward, and Mary Ann, Lewis Basel, Henry Plunkett, a Dutchman named Anthony for whom we do not have a last name, Mr. Thompson and his wife Elizabeth and their children for whom we do not have names, and Isabella Matthews Laisdell.



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1819



July 1, Thursday: [John Keats](#) wrote from Shanklin on the Isle of Wight to Fanny Brawne:

My dearest Lady – I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a Letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night – 'twas too much like one out of Rousseau's Heloise. I am more reasonable this morning. The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much: for at night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical Chamber is waiting to receive me as into a Sepulchre, then believe me my passion gets entirely the sway, then I would not have you see those Rhapsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another, for fear you should [think me] either too unhappy or perhaps a little mad.

I am now at a very pleasant Cottage window, looking onto a beautiful hilly country, with a glimpse of the sea; the morning is very fine. I do not know how elastic my spirit might be, what pleasure I might have in living here and breathing and wandering as free as a stag about this beautiful Coast if the remembrance of you did not weigh so upon me I have never known any unalloy'd Happiness for many days together: the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours – and now when none such troubles oppress me, it is you must confess very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me.

Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. Will you confess this in the Letter you must write immediately, and do all you can to console me in it – make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me – write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been. For myself I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form: I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days – three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain. But however selfish I may feel, I am sure I could never act selfishly: as I told you a day or two before I left Hampstead, I will never return to London if my Fate does not turn up Pam or at least a Court-card. Though I could centre my Happiness in you, I cannot expect to engross your heart so entirely – indeed if I thought you felt as much for me as I do for you at this moment I do not think I could restrain myself from seeing you again tomorrow for the delight of one embrace.

But no – I must live upon hope and Chance. In case of the worst that can happen, I shall still love you – but what hatred shall I have for another!

Some lines I read the other day are continually ringing a peal in my ears:



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*To see those eyes I prize above mine own
Dart favors on another—
And those sweet lips (yielding immortal nectar)
Be gently press'd by any but myself—
Think, think Francesca, what a cursed thing
It were beyond expression!
J.*

*Do write immediately. There is no Post from this Place, so you
must address Post Office, Newport, Isle of Wight. I know before
night I shall curse myself for having sent you so cold a Letter;
yet it is better to do it as much in my senses as possible. Be
as kind as the distance will permit to your
John Keats
Present my Compliments to your mother, my love to Margaret and
best remembrances to your Brother – if you please so.*



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(The letter would be posted on the 3d.)

Dissension had developed in the Jerusalem, New York sanctuary of the followers of “Universal Friend,” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), as she had become rather demanding of gifts and special treatment, and had come to institute various punishments for infractions of the rules of the Society of Universal Friends. Finally the community resolved its problem by erecting this two and a half story Federal-style mansion for its inspirational leader at some considerable distance from the other homes. It is now referred to as “Friend House” and is not open to the public:



After spending her last years in isolation, at the age of 67 the religious leader died (or “left time” as her followers described it), and would be interred in a temporary vault in the building’s cellar while her followers faithfully waited for her to come back into animation, and watched as signs of decay accumulated. As her will attests, she had never swerved from the pronouncement she had originally made under the oak tree in [Cumberland, Rhode Island](#) after recovering from [typhoid fever](#), that she had died and her spirit had been replaced with “Divine Spirit.” (Her Jerusalem community would, within the following two decades, entirely disperse. At some later date the decomposing body has been removed from its temporary vault for burial at an



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unmarked location on the property.)



Last Will and Testament:

The last Will and Testament of the person called the Universal Friend of Jerusalem, in the County of Ontario, State of New York, who in the year 1777, was called Jemima Wilkinson, and ever since that time, the Friend, a new name which the mouth of the Lord hath named.

My will is that all my just debts be paid by my executors, hereafter named.

I give, bequeath and devise unto Rachel Malin and Margaret Malin, now of said Jerusalem, all my earthly property both real and personal; and that is to say all my land lying in said Jerusalem and in Benton, or elsewhere in the County of Ontario, together with all the buildings thereon, to them the said Rachel and Margaret, and their heirs and assigns forever, to be equally and amicably be shared between them, the said Rachel and Margaret – and I do also give and bequeath to the said Rachel and Margaret, all my wearing apparel, all my household furniture, and my horses, cattle, sheep and swine, of every kind, together with all my farming utensils, and all my movable property of every nature and description whatever.

My will is, that all the present members of my family and each of them, be employed if they please, and if employed, supported during their natural life, by the said Rachel and Margaret, and whenever any of them become unable to help themselves, they are according to such inability, kindly to be taken care of by the said Rachel and Margaret. And my will also is, that all poor persons belonging to the society of the Universal Friend, shall receive from the said Rachel and Margaret such assistance, comfort and support during their natural life as they may need; and in case any or either of my family, or others elsewhere in the society shall turn away, such shall forfeit the provisions herein made for them.

I hereby ordain and appoint the above-named Rachel Malin and Margaret Malin, Executors of this my last will and testament.

In Witness whereof, I, the person called Jemina Wilkinson, but in, and ever since the year 1777, known as the Public Universal



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Friend, have hereunto affixed my name and Seal, this 25th day of the 2d Month, in the year of our Lord 1819.

The Public Universal Friend [L.S.]

In the presence of, &c.

Be it Remembered – That in order to remove all doubt of the due execution of the foregoing will and testament of the person who before the year 1777, was known and called by the name of Jemima Wilkinson, but since that time, as the Universal Friend, do make, publish and declare the within instrument to be my Last Will and Testament, as witness my hand and seal, this 17th day of the 7th month, 1819.

Jemima Wilkinson X

Her Cross or mark,

Or, Universal Friend.

[“Witness,” &c.]

That evening after sunset the [comet](#) that had passed unnoticed between the earth and the sun on or about June 26th, with its tail brushing over the earth also unnoticed, became visible low in the west. (So much for comets exerting a vast influence!)³¹

SKY EVENT

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

5th day 1st of 7th M 1819 / Our Meeting looked small in a great room, but I believe nearly all the members were present that are in ability to attend, & several that are not members. – I believe it was a comfortable season to some present, it was in good measure so to me. – Father Rodman delivered a short testimony

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

31. “GREAT COMET, (C/1819 N1=1819 II. Period of naked eye visibility spanned the month of Jul., T=1819 June 28. Also known as [Comet Tralles](#). Spotted on July 1st in the evening sky a little to the north of the Sun, the head being of about zero magnitude. Comet crossed eastern Auriga and was visible at both dusk and dawn for several weeks. At the end of the first week of July, 1st magnitude with a 7-8 degree tail. Comet faded rapidly as it moved toward the northeast, almost pacing the Sun. At mid-month situated in Lynx, an object of 3rd magnitude with a short tail. In the last few days of July the comet’s brightness rapidly approached the naked eye threshold.”



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1821



Disaffected follower David Hudson's tell-all HISTORY OF JEMIMA WILKINSON, A PREACHERESS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY; CONTAINING AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF HER LIFE AND CHARACTER, AND OF THE RISE, PROGRESS AND CONCLUSION OF HER MINISTRY. (Geneva, New York: printed by S.P. Hull).



JEMIMAH WILKINSON



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1829



September 5, Saturday: The Western Palladium of New Lisbon, Ohio presented one of the scurrilous urban legends that was circulating about the deceased “Universal Friend,” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#):

A late traveller relates one of Jemima’s miracles, which is quite as convincing as those of the prince bishop Bohmlee. She announced her intention of walking across Seneca Lake, and alighting from her carriage, walked to the water on the white handkerchiefs strewed in the road by her followers; she stopped ankle deep into the water, and then turning to the multitude, inquired whether they had faith that she could not; on receiving an affirmative answer she returned to her carriage, declaring that as they believed in [her] power, it was unnecessary to display it. Jemima died some years ago.

(NOTE: The mention of death would not have been an insignificant detail of the above story. In this sort of newspaper context, very much more so than in the case of a male, when a female died that was taken to constitute conclusive verification that actually she had been a trickster without any miraculous powers. ;o)

The following is a snippet from Charles Haskell’s REMINISCENCES OF NEW YORK BY AN OCTOGENARIAN:

James G. Bennett announced his editorial connection with the Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, and that he would support strict Republican [which would have been taken to mean, in our parlance of today, Democratic] usages and principles. This autumn the Park Theatre occupied the field virtually alone. The Lafayette had been burned, and the Chatham was given over to negro burlettas and the like, before vulgar audiences....



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1834



April 19, Saturday: In and around Penn Yan, New York at the head of Crooked Lake (now Keuka Lake), some members of the Society of Universal Friends were still hanging onto their faith. In Philadelphia, the Saturday Courier incautiously published a “tragical story of a Mormon preacher” who had pretended to be able to walk on water, who had been foiled by some clever Philadelphians, a story allegedly provided to that gazette “by the editor of the Independent Messenger on the authority of a gentleman from the western part of the state of New York”:

In a town where the delusion had made numerous converts the disciples were summoned to assemble in a wild place, circumjacent to a pond, on the water of which, a gifted elder announced that he should walk and preach.... But it seems there were a few wicked Lamanites, who secretly set themselves to make mischief.... They soon discovered a line of plank laid in a particular direction completely across the pond, sunk about four inches under the surface of the water.... They resolved on preventing the miracle by sawing the concealed bridge in pieces, just where it crossed the deepest and most dangerous part of the pond.... The expected day arrived, the congregation placed themselves as in an amphitheatre on the surrounding slopes and the preacher appeared at the edge of the water ... and as he paced his invisible bridge with a step apparent unearthly taught and warned the people. All ears were open, and every eye strained from its socket with astonishment. But alas! ... he stepped upon one of the detached pieces of plank sallied side-ways, and instantly plunged, floundering and sinking in the deep water mire ... the tale closes with the close of his life and the consequent close of Mormonism in that vicinity.

The Evening and Morning Star, a Mormon gazette, promptly reprinted this gazette’s story verbatim (Volume 2, Number 19, page 151) while commenting that “Some two or three years since, a similar story was hatched up by (we presume) the priests, or their dupes; but we had supposed that it had either gone back to its native region to dwell with its author the father of lies, or like its first promulgator from him, sunk into disgrace to rise no more.” The Mormon gazette’s editor, Oliver Cowdery, challenged the Courier to publish the name of its source. In fact, the story was the recycling of one of those urban legends too good not to be told, that had previously surfaced not in regard to Mormon saints but in regard to “Universal Friend,” Jemimah Wilkinson, and perhaps also in regard to other religious pretenders. In this year a travel guide, MEN AND MANNERS IN AMERICA, would pick up the story (Volume II, pages 305-6):

The banks of the Seneca, like those of the Gareloch,³² have been the chosen seat of miracles. Some years ago, a woman called Jemima Wilson [Wilkinson], announced herself as the Saviour of the world, and attracted a few followers somewhat more mad than herself. While her miraculous endowments were displayed only in the jabbering of unknown tongues, and unintelligible predictions, she stood on safe ground, but unluckily her ambition pointed to the honour of more palpable miracles. “Near Rapelyeas ferry,” says the Northern Tourist, “the frame is still

32. A salt-water inlet 63 miles long and a mile wide, to the west of Glasgow, Scotland.



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standing which Jemima constructed to try the faith of her followers. Having approached within a few [306] hundred yards of the shore, she alighted from an elegant carriage, and the road being strewed by her followers with white handkerchiefs, she walked to the platform, and having announced her intention of walking across the lake on the water, she stepped ankle-deep into the clear element, when suddenly pausing, she addressed the multitude, enquiring whether they had faith that she could pass over, for if otherwise, she could not; and on receiving an affirmative answer, returned to her carriage, declaring, that as they believed in her power, it unnecessary to display it.

This legend about “Universal Friend,” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), has also been retailed in regard to Sneece Pond and other bodies of water in [Cumberland](#) and [Smithfield](#), and in regard to Worden Pond in [South Kingstown, Rhode Island](#), and in regard to Yawgoog Pond in Exeter, to the Taunton River near Swansea, to the Housatonic River near New Milford, to the Schuylkill River near Philadelphia, and to various sites on Seneca and Keuka lakes. In its most common variant Jemimah promises to walk on the water like Christ, but when her followers attest their faith, declares there to be no need for proof. There is, however, a version in which the onlookers include skeptics, with Jemimah declaring, “Without thy faith I cannot do it,” and a version in which she attempts to walk on a platform that has been constructed just below the still surface of the lake, but someone has removed several boards from this platform, so she tumbles into the water to the delight of the skeptics.



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1835



December: The stock story of an American religious leader attempting to walk on water was repeated under the headline “THOU SHALT NOT LIE.—Moses” in Messenger and Advocate (Volume 2, Number 3, page 230).



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1839

By this point the followers of “Universal Friend,” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), in and around the town of Penn Yan, New York at the head of Crooked Lake (now Keuka Lake), had entirely dispersed. James Brown and George Clark, through marriages to heirs of Rachel Malin, had come into possession of the magnificent Friend House that Universal Friend had bequeathed to Rachel and her sister, and there was no longer that little real-estate embarrassment of there being a dead body in the basement.



Jemimah’s only residue was that doctrinal pamphlet consisting primarily of Scriptural quotations, THE UNIVERSAL FRIEND’S ADVICE TO THOSE OF THE SAME RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, that she had caused to be issued in 1794.



JEMIMA WILKINSON

PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND

GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

1844

A retitled reprint, David Hudson's MEMOIR OF JEMIMA WILKINSON, A PREACHERESS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY; CONTAINING AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF HER LIFE AND CHARACTER, AND OF THE RISE, PROGRESS AND CONCLUSION OF HER MINISTRY. (Bath NY: R.L. Underhill).



JEMIMAH WILKINSON

QUAKER DISOWNMENT

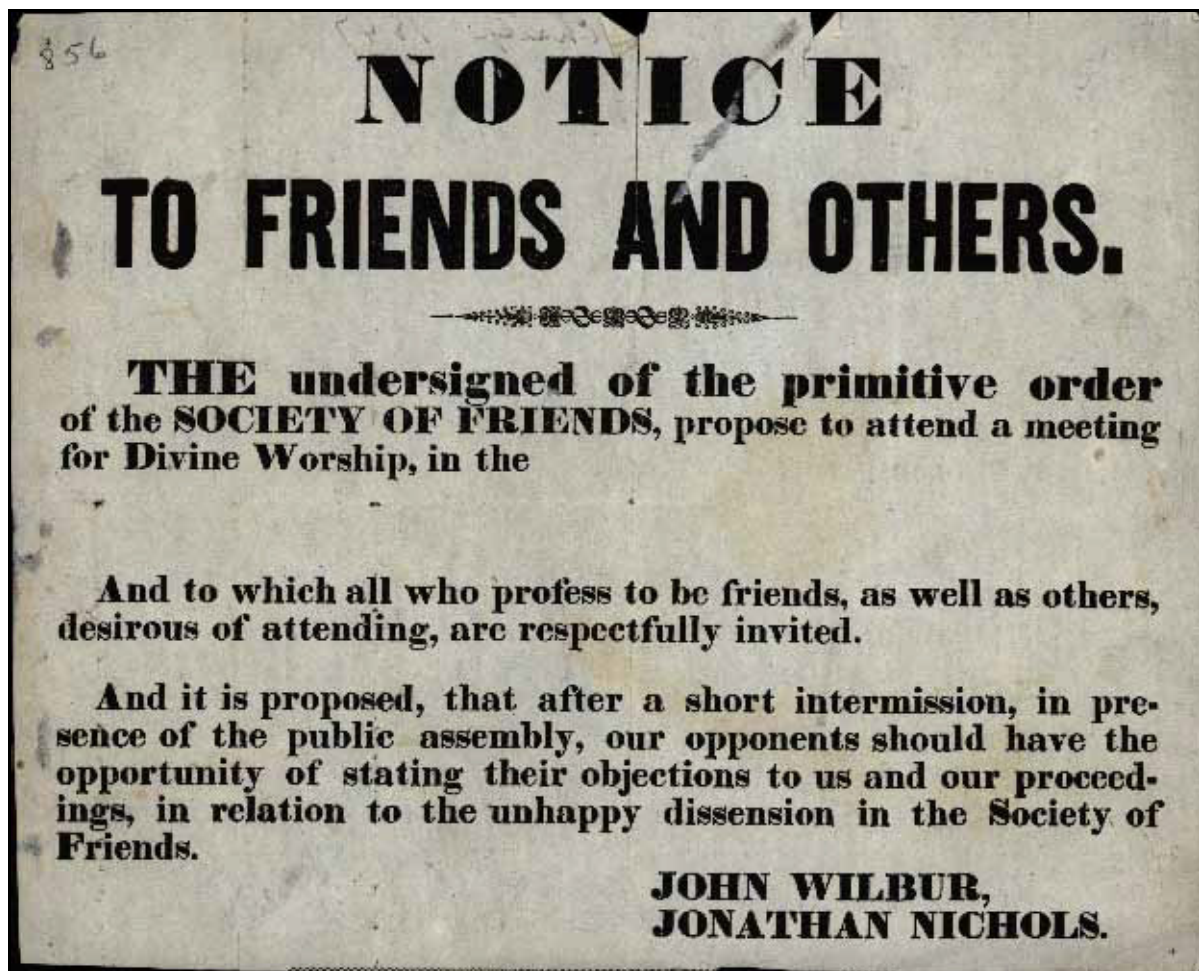


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In the New England [Yearly Meeting](#) of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) during this year and the following one, Friend [John Wilbur](#) would be maintaining that the Truth could be ascertained both from the records of past revelations encapsulated in the Scripture, and from continuing revelations which were coming from God to individuals of the present day. As an advocate of the personal Inner Light, he would be being opposed by Friend [Joseph John Gurney](#), a traveling minister from England, who would be holding that such personal revelations were of necessity pernicious should they differ in any particular from what we were deriving from a careful perusal of the Scripture. The upshot of this would be that Friend John would be [disowned](#) by the Society, and several of the monthly meetings in southern New England during this timeframe would find themselves separating into “Wilburite” versus “Gurneyite” meetings.



"Let us begin by committing ourselves to the truth – to see it as it is, and tell it like it is – to find the truth, to speak the truth, and to live the truth."

– Republican Presidential nominee

[Richard Milhous Nixon](#), 1968

(a birthright Quaker)





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1888

July 20, Friday: Moses Hartwell, nephew of “Universal Friend” [Jemimah Wilkinson](#), died in Branchport, New York at the age of 91.



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1928

Duce [Benito Mussolini](#)'s life story up to this point was offered to the English-reading public as MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY, in a translation by former US Ambassador to [Italy](#) Richard Washburn Child. In this writing he comes across as a sterling character of impeccable patriotism.

[Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#) was elected to be Governor of the State of New York.

In California during this decade, William Dudley Pelley, a scriptwriter, son of a Protestant minister of Lynn, Massachusetts, had “experienced death” for seven minutes and made contact with an oracle. His oracle would guide him to become “the Chief” of a secret Silver Shirts Legion in California, the Pacific northwest, and the deep south, fifteen thousand to fifty thousand strong. The gazette version of this American Nazi movement would be termed the Liberation.



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Führer [Adolf Hitler](#) was hard at work on a 2d-volume sequel to *MEIN KAMPF*.



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"It is not by chance that the American union is in the state in which by far the greatest number of bold, sometimes unbelievably so, inventions are currently taking place. The achievements of a thousand racially questionable Europeans cannot equate with the capabilities of a thousand racially first-rate Americans."



— Adolf Hitler, 1928





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1933

With the coming of [Adolf Hitler](#) to power in [Germany](#), active persecution of Jews would be starting.



"My feelings as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter.... As a Christian I have no duty to allow myself to be cheated, but I have the duty to be a fighter for truth and justice ... and if there is anything which could demonstrate that we are acting rightly, it is the distress that daily grows. For as a Christian I have also a duty to my own people."

— [Adolf Hitler](#), April 12, 1922



WORLD WAR II

GERMANY



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GO TO MASTER HISTORY OF QUAKERISM

The great wise poet and culture icon T.S. Eliot gave a university lecture. His audience was making a serious mistake, he indicated. They were allowing safe harbor to a “large number of free-thinking Jews.” These people, he pointed out, were “undesirable.” Why were these people undesirable? –Because a sensible nation will insist upon a “unity of religious background.” Racially, ethnically, and religiously, the “population should be homogenous.”

Go figure. The great wise poet and culture icon T.S. Eliot was not delivering this lecture at the University of Heidelberg, in the benighted Third Reich! He was delivering it, instead, at the University of Virginia, in the benighted United States of America!³³

The Nazi party, rising to power in Germany, was beginning to implement eugenic laws. American eugenicists were also busy busy busy.

EUGENICS

During the 1920s a Hollywood scriptwriter, William Dudley Pelley, son of a Protestant minister of Lynn, Massachusetts, had “experienced death” for seven minutes and made contact with an oracle. His oracle was guiding him to become “the Chief” of a secret Silver Shirts Legion in California, the Pacific northwest, and the deep south, fifteen thousand to fifty thousand strong. He was clearly modeling himself on *Der Führer*. The gazette version of this American Nazi movement was being termed the Liberation.



JEMIMAH WILKINSON

33. Some of Eliot’s friends, not his best friends but friends nevertheless, were Jews.



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1955

Ruth Upson's "New Jerusalem and the Public Universal Friend (Jemima Wilkinson)," New York Folklore Quarterly, Vol. XI (1955), page 25.



At the [Moses Brown School](#) of the [Religious Society of Friends](#) in [Providence, Rhode Island](#), Headmaster L. Ralston Thomas retired and was replaced by [Friend](#) George St. John.



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1964

Herbert Andrew Wisbey's PIONEER PROPHETESS: JEMIMA WILKINSON, THE PUBLIK UNIVERSAL FRIEND (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP).



JEMIMAH WILKINSON

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: December 17, 2014



JEMIMA WILKINSON

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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.



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